



1st February 2016

Dear parents, carers and friends of MacKillop Catholic College

Yellow Crazy Ants

Readers of the *Cairns Post* may be aware of a recent story reporting calls for the Federal Government to continue funding of containment and eradication measures for Yellow Crazy Ants (YCA) in our region.

From the outset I want to reassure the College community that the challenge presented by Yellow Crazy Ants is well managed at our school. We have ensured our construction contractors have followed *Wet Tropic Management Authority* (WTMA) protocols with regard to vehicle movements and containment of soil and vegetation on site. Further, the area we now occupy for the first stage of our school has no evidence of YCA activity and we are vigilantly monitoring to detect any signs of YCA presence. We believe we are effectively managing the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and visitors to our school, notwithstanding the presence of YCA in nearby *Stony Creek*.

The *Wet Tropics Management Authority* is the peak funded agency responsible for the eradication of this pest. When YCA activity is detected, a 100m radius control zone is declared. YCA have been detected in *Stony Creek* on the College's northern border, hence the control zone reaches 100m into our property (as it also does into the residential properties on the northern side of the creek).

The *Cairns Post* article makes reference to a letter sent seven months ago by the College to the Federal Government. It came as a result of approaches by concerned local residents, farmers and the WTMA for the College to support the lobbying of the Federal Government to extend their funding of the YCA eradication program. At that time we were just commencing construction of the school and I wrote to the Federal Environment Minister expressing our concerns regarding the potential impact of YCA on the biodiversity of the natural environment and the consequent implications for human activities (including our school). We urged the Minister to give favourable consideration to extending funding for this introduced pest's eradication.

At that point, notwithstanding WTMA's excellent initiatives, the College and the Diocese undertook to be proactive regarding YCA management on our property. To this end we have been collaborating with WTMA to minimise the YCA impact in the surrounding area, with a view to eventual eradication of the pest. An active partnership involving WTMA, our College, Cairns Regional Council and the Green Army has seen large sections of *Stony Creek* well on the way to being rehabilitated. This involves the removal of weeds and non-native vegetation which has invaded the creek, making YCA treatment so much more effective.

Once again, I reassure you that grounds we occupy for learning, sport and play have no evidence of YCA activity. We are actively supporting efforts to eradicate YCA from the neighbouring creek and are being vigilant in monitoring our boundary for YCA presence.

Fact sheets regarding Yellow Crazy Ants and the eradication strategy are available at <http://www.wettropics.gov.au/stamp-out-yellow-crazy-ants.html> and https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/76637/ipa-yellow-crazy-ants-pa28.pdf

Yours sincerely

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