

Whitsunday Islands Yellow Crazy Ant Program

(Presentation for the TMBC webinar on 'International Biosecurity Collaboration: Key Lessons from California Channel Islands and NZ/Australian Case Studies')

Scott Hardy

Manager Natural Resource Management and Climate

Whitsunday Regional Council

(September 2025)



*Yellow Crazy Ant baiting
near Airlie Beach – August 2025*



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1. Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an update on the Whitsunday YCA Program to the *Tauranga Moana Biosecurity Capital (TMBC)* webinar on 'International Biosecurity Collaboration: Key Lessons from California Channel Islands and NZ/Australian Case Studies'

2. Program overview

Location of the Whitsunday's



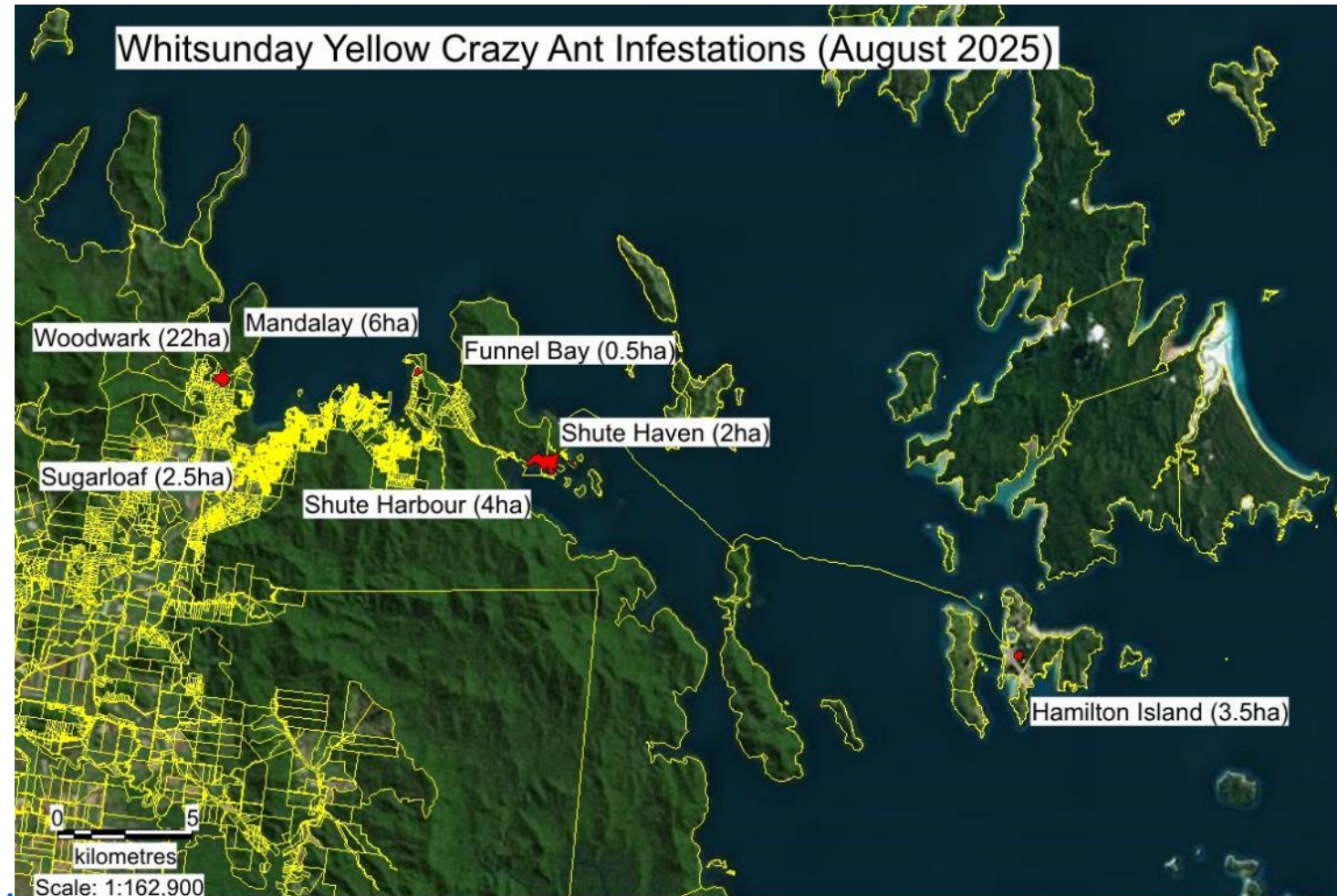
The problem - Whitsunday YCA infestations

The Whitsunday infestations (Initial size):

- The Shute Harbour 51ha. (2019)
- Funnel bay 0.7ha (2020)
- Hamilton island 8.5ha (2021)
- Woodwark – 22ha (2022)
- Mandalay = 5.5ha (2023)
- Sugarloaf = 1.7ha (2024)
- Shute Haven = 2.1ha (2024)

Current infestation (August 2025)= 40ha

- Shute Harbour 4 ha
- Funnel Bay = 0.5ha
- Hamilton island 3.5ha
- Woodwark = 22ha
- Mandalay = 6 ha
- Sugarloaf = 1.7ha
- Shute Haven = 2ha



Whitsunday YCA Program objectives

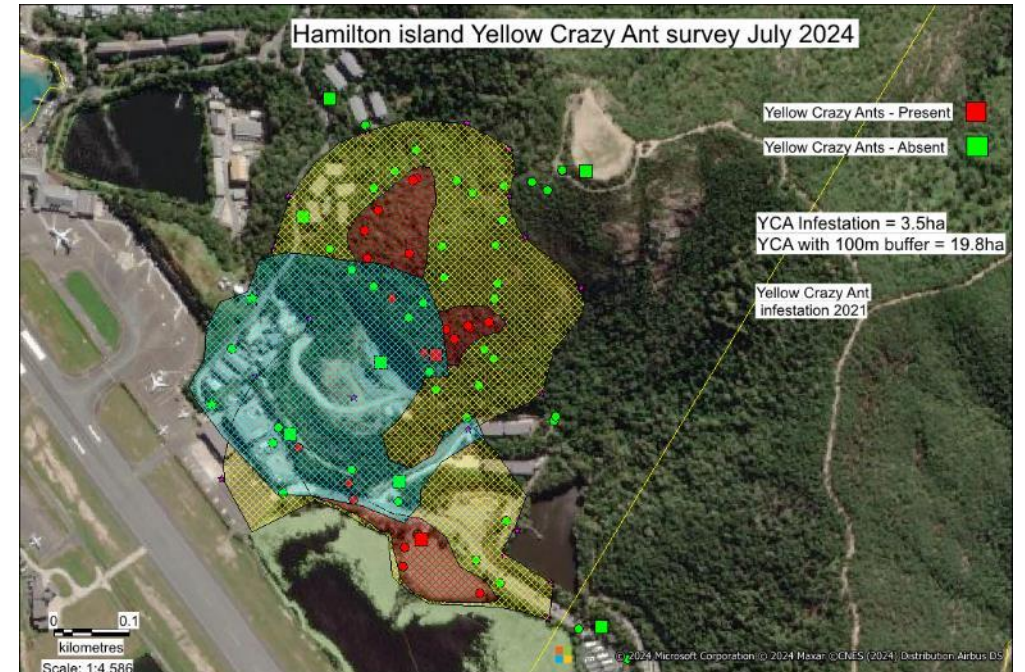
1. Aiming for localized YCA eradication
2. To prevent YCA entering Whitsunday islands (National Park and World Heritage area – Great Barrier Reef) (74 offshore islands). We have 1.23 Million visitors to the Whitsunday's each year.
3. To develop cost effective YCA treatments.
4. To develop effective communication with stakeholders and the community.
5. Aim for early detection – training the community to identify and report.
6. To use the media to publicise the issues and challenges.
7. To undertake activities to attract funding for the Program .
8. To explore ways to advocate for the Whitsunday YCA program and attract funding.
9. To use adaptative management to monitor and review processes and methods.
10. To develop processes to effectively gather data and mapping for YCA management (data and mapping is key).
11. To include experienced, knowledgeable people in the network to assist the Program.
12. To use technology and innovation where possible to make the Program efficient.



Data and mapping.... Example Hamilton Island

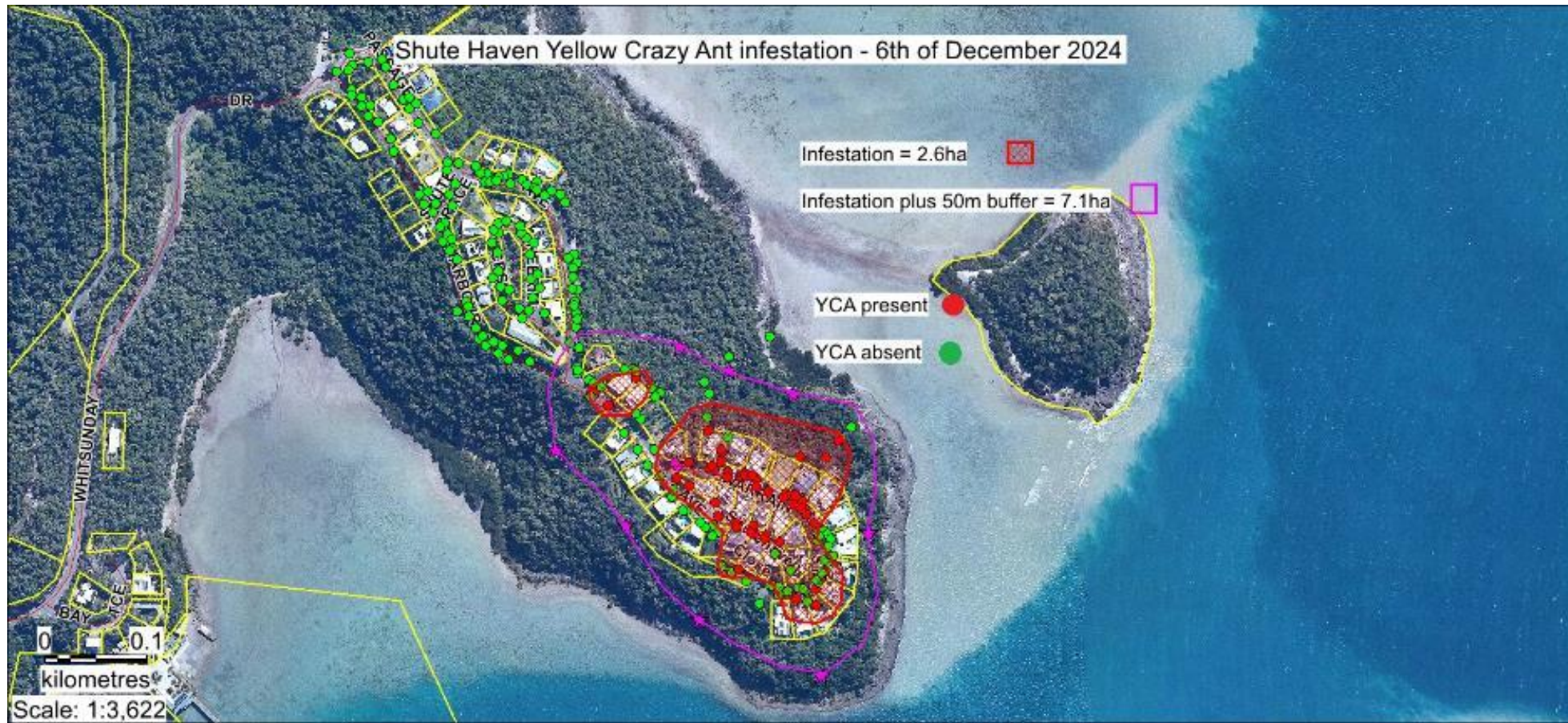


Hamilton island infestation - 2021



Hamilton island infestation 2024

Example YCA infestation: Shute haven YCA infestation – December 2024



Operations – what we do



Use of helicopter to apply ANTOFF in Conway National Park



Use of drones to apply ANTOFF (Fipronil)



ANTOFF – fishmeal base

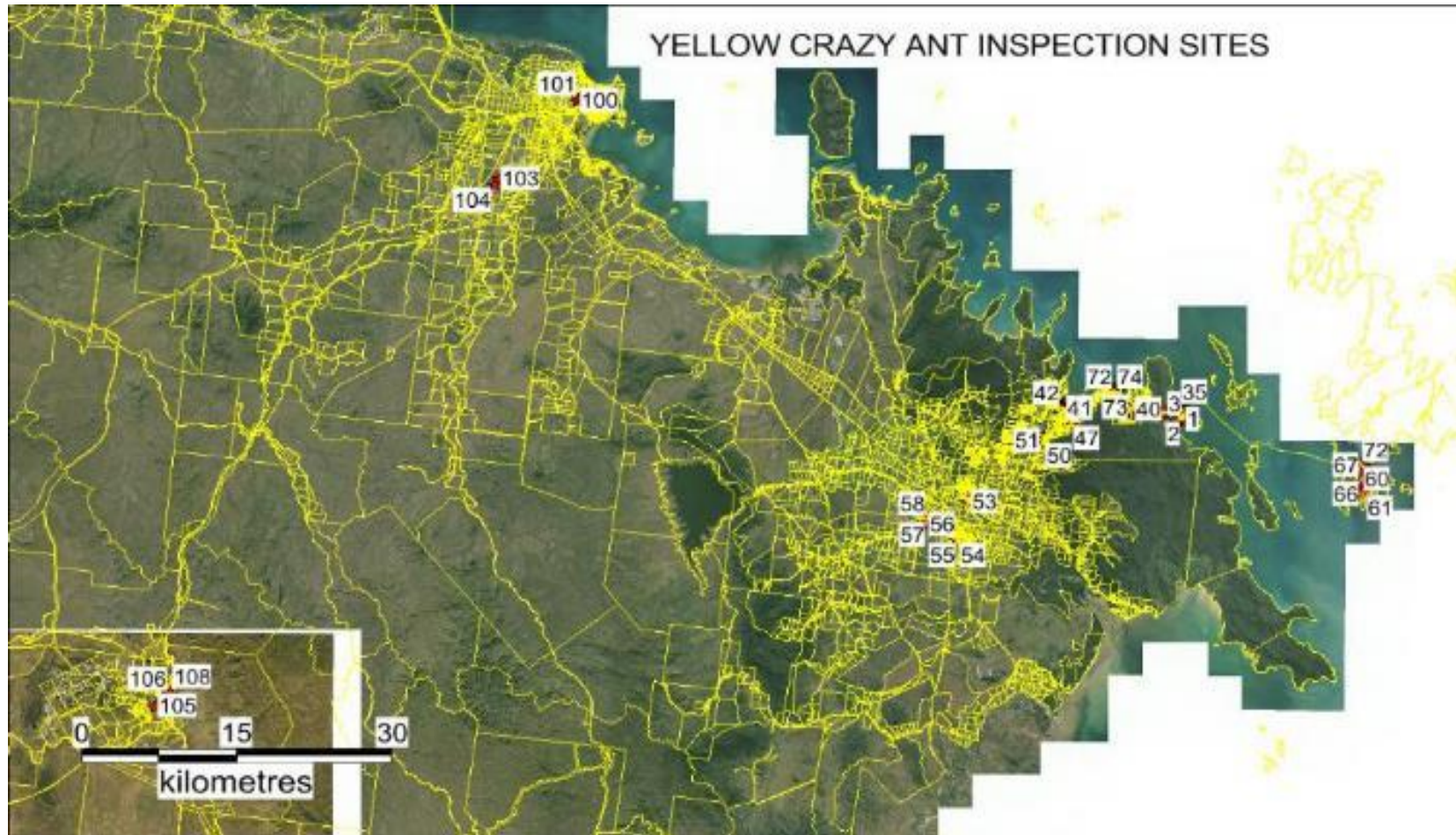


YCA monitoring cards –
YCA population density monitoring

Ground application

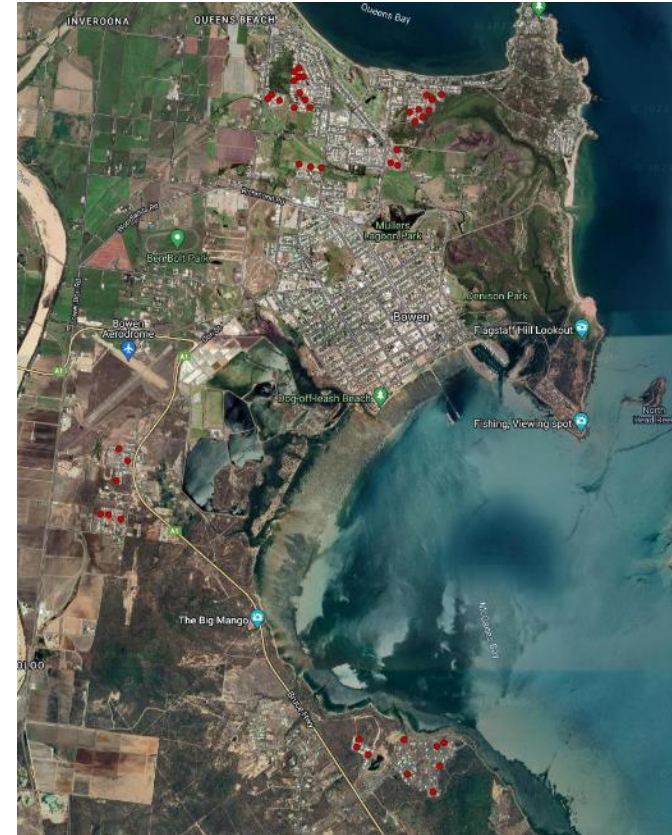


Region wide surveillance Program sites



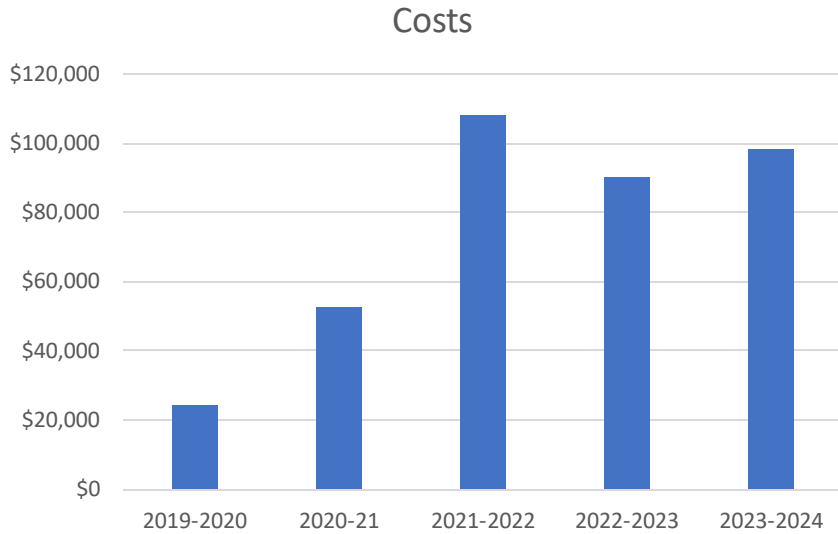
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) under take YCA surveillance on Whitsunday National Park islands

Surveillance - New urban areas - inspection and lure sites



* 42 new Urban development areas and 163 YCA card monitoring sites.

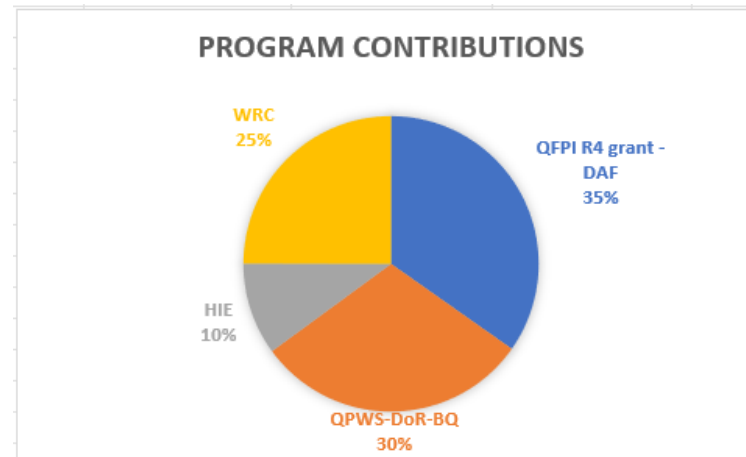
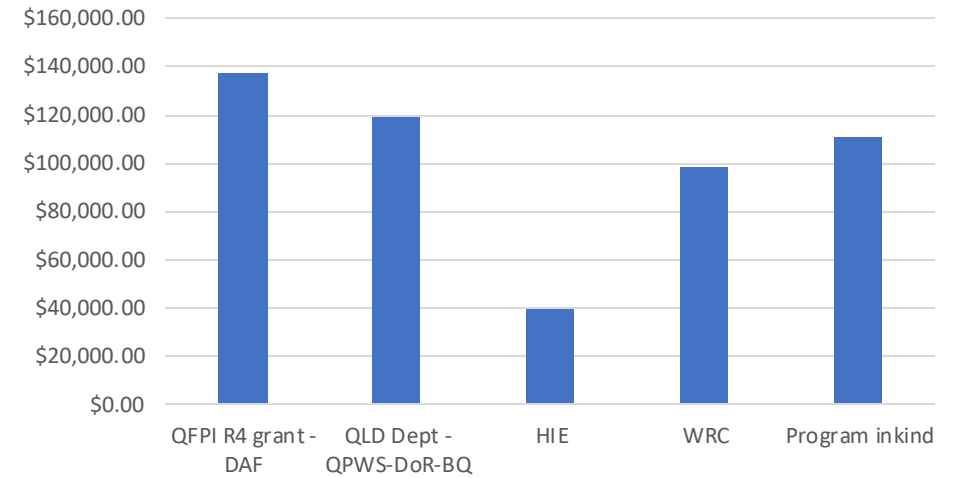
Program costs - overview



**Expenditure from:
June 2019 to June 2024 = \$374,195.00**

Operating costs for 2025-2026 is estimated at \$144,000

Program Contributions



QFPI R4 grant -DAF	\$137,730.00
QLD Dept -QPWS-DoR-BQ	\$119,600.00
HIE	\$40,000.00
WRC	\$76,835.00
Program in-kind	\$110,700.00
Total project costs	\$484,865.00



3. Current Collaboration

Shute Harbour detailed survey taskforce outcomes:

- Shute Harbour Taskforce Sept 2023 –
 - 3609 sites
 - YCA infestation area = 1.8ha
 - YCA infestation Area of Interest = 11.5ha
 - 5 Organisations – 30 staff

- Shute Harbour Taskforce Sept 2024 –
 - 8485 sites
 - YCA infestation area = 3.75ha
 - YCA area of interest = 19.4ha
 - 4 organisations – 32 staff

Short 2 minute video of the Taskforce collaboration:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gROsoztddd4>



Shute Harbour YCA Taskforce survey - September 2024

(with September 2023 Taskforce sites)

YCA infestation areas Sept 2024 = 3.75ha

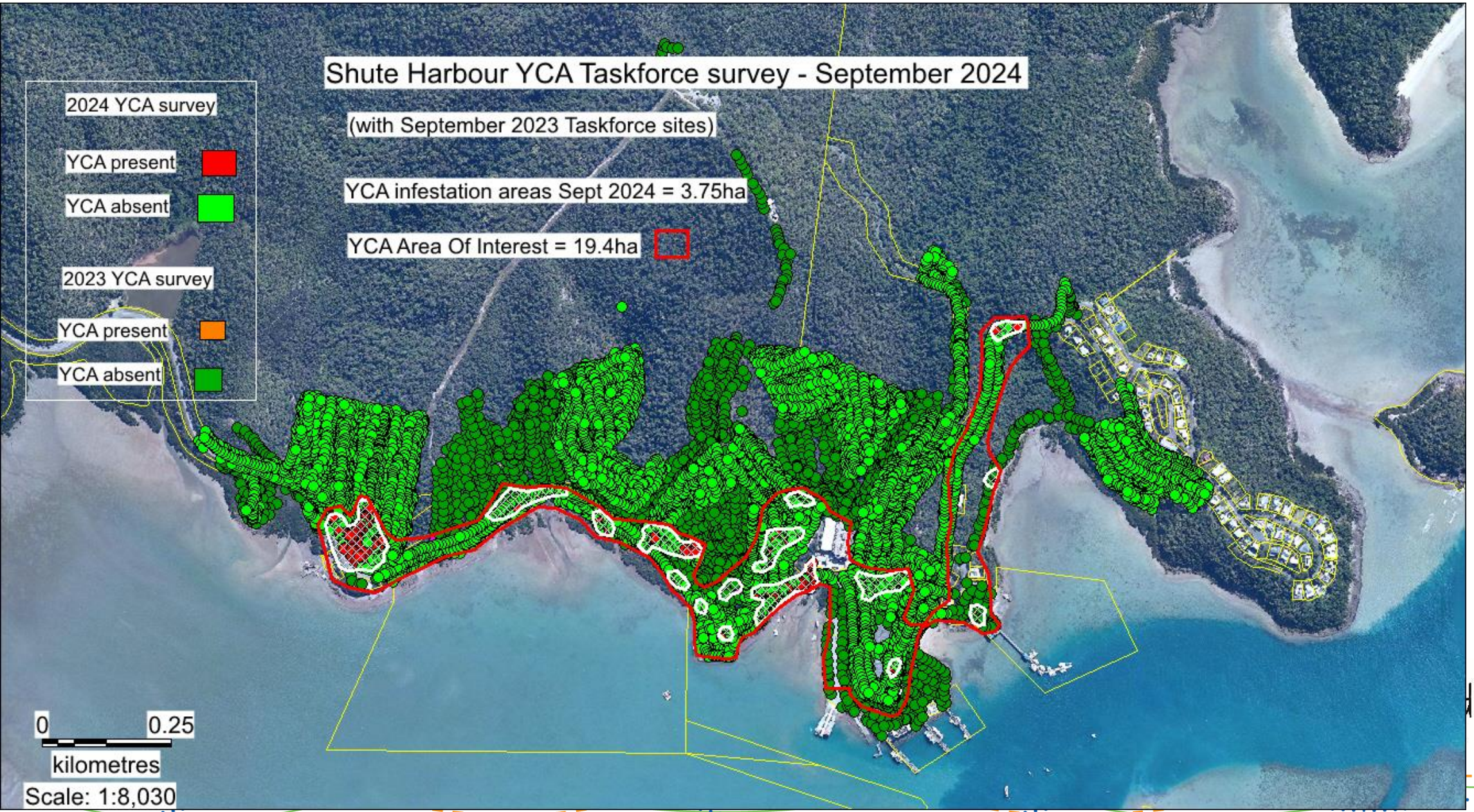
YCA Area Of Interest = 19.4ha

2024 YCA survey

- YCA present ■
- YCA absent ■

2023 YCA survey

- YCA present ■
- YCA absent ■



day



YCA baiting with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Staff.

Use of local drone contractor – Elevate NQ – very cooperative and supportive applying the agricultural drones to YCA treatment



Other projects and collaboration

- Whitsunday YCA Working Group
 - Range of State government agencies (incl. Biosecurity Queensland)
 - Wet Tropics Management Authority
 - CSIRO rep.
 - Reef Catchments NRM Group
- Biosecurity Commons modelling Case Study for Whitsunday YCA
 - Spread of infestation expectations.
 - Partners – Biosecurity QLD, Local Government Association QLD.
- Trialing the use of eDNA
 - Partnership with QPWS and James Cook University – the trialing of the use of eDNA to detect YCA from water samples – early detection.



Community engagement

- Engaging landholders with YCA:
 - Use of social media – Facebook pages for infestation areas.
 - Email lists used to send out notifications and project updates
- Contacting Whitsunday pest treatment industry
 - Emailing and discussing YCA with local pest controllers
- Contacting local building industry
 - Emailing and discussing YCA with local builders and developers
- Community groups and stakeholders
 - Provide talks to Master Builder groups in the region
 - Provide talks and updates to Conservation groups
- Regional pest management Stakeholders
 - Provide updates to regional pest management groups
 - Mackay Pest Group
 - Burdekin Dry Tropics Pest Management Group



4. Key Challenges

- Source of YCA
 - The YCA appear to be arriving into the Whitsunday's on building and construction material.
- Public perception
 - Those without YCA = “It is just an Ant”
 - Those with YCA = “when can you get rid of them”!
 - The community affected by YCA do use the local politics to raise the importance of the YCA issue to ensure some funding and resources are allocated.
 - “I can’t rent out my Air BNB because of the ants”
 - “Will the ants affect my house re-sale value?”
- More than a biodiversity and conservation issue...
 - Need to frame the YCA as a social and economic issue
- Funding
 - Sporadic State and Commonwealth funding
 - The Whitsunday Regional Council is primarily funding the treatment now.
- Government perception
 - YCA is a restricted pest – lower priority
 - YCA in the Whitsundays – small infestation – low priority?!?
- Difficult to do forward planning for budget and resources.



5. Conclusion

- The current total infestation is approximately 40ha across 7 sites
- The estimated annual cost is \$145,000 for 2025-2026
- The Program has cost \$375,000 with in-kind the total costs have been \$485,000 over the last four years.
- Future costs are difficult to determine because:
 - Un-known success of the Program
 - Un-known future YCA infestations
 - Un-known financial contributions to the Program

6. Questions

