

Murray River Council Community Grants Program 2023

Application from Bungunyah Koraleigh Irrigation Trust

Project: To boost management of Queensland Fruit Fly in
Koraleigh

Amount of funding requested: \$3,000

BKIT co-contribution: \$3,000



Background:

Up until 2017, Koraleigh had been relatively free from Qfly, however this has changed significantly over the past 6 years. The last 3 years of La Nina affecting weather conditions has increased the Qfly numbers considerably and we are determined to do what we can to regain control over this devastating pest.

BKIT has been actively working with residents over the past 3 years to better manage the effects of Qfly on home grown produce. This includes education, supply of baits and traps and, in 2022/23, data collection to identify and manage host trees. Many residents with unmanageable host trees do not have the means to remove those trees.

One of the outcomes of the information gathered in 2022/23 is the identification of several unmanaged host trees/plants in our area. We believe that if those host plants could be managed, which often means to be removed, we may have a good chance of managing Qfly in our area and enable residents to take advantage of ideal growing conditions for many fruits and vegetables.

This would provide better quality and lower cost produce for residents, of particular importance to those who live on a limited budget.

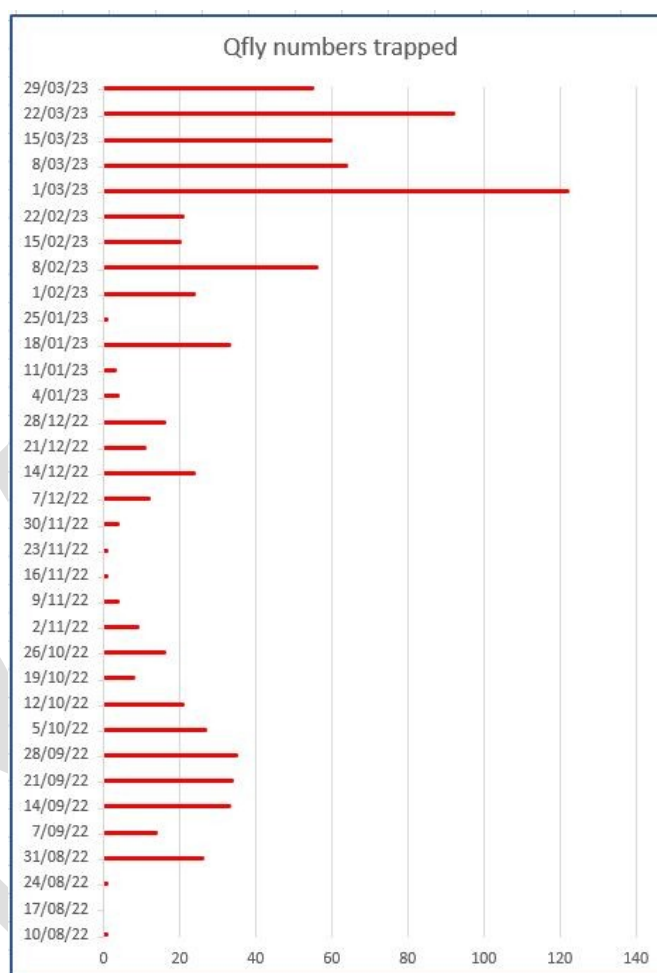
Safer growing conditions for fruit and veggies encourages residents to get outside and enjoy working in their gardens and orchards, which is a benefit to physical and mental health.

Our data collection for 2022/23 has identified many residents enjoy growing their own fruit and vegetables, but sadly that is becoming more difficult with the increasing numbers of Qfly in the region. Roughly half the landholders in the BKIT area grow some fruit or vegetables, and of those, approximately 80% of those have been involved in trapping and reporting Qfly in 2022/23.

Trapping data for 2022/23

To date our residents have trapped and reported more than 850 fruit flies for the 2022/23 season.

This number does not include all male Qflies killed as not all residents have had their male pheromone lures inside a trap to record those killed, so total numbers of Qfly killed this season will actually be much higher.



Why is an Irrigation Trust interested in Qfly management?

BKIT is operated by community members and has a strong drive to be involved in supporting the local community. It does not operate for the profit or personal gain of particular people, and is run to benefit the community through supply and maintenance of a water delivery system.

Koraleigh is a small township with limited community facilities. Since the move from our open channels to a fully piped and pressurised water delivery system, the BKIT has seen a considerable reduction in water losses. We have been able to trade surplus allocation and use those funds to firstly reduce the costs to our ratepayers of operating and maintaining our water delivery system, and then use any surplus funds to put towards community projects. One of these projects was the purchase of a 110,000-litre static water storage tank for fire fighting purposes for the Koraleigh area.

Is it worth the effort?

We believe that Koraleigh is in a good position to be able to effectively manage Queensland fruit fly as we have extensive broad acre 'buffers' to our north, south and east, and a considerable river and forest buffer to the west. This puts our township in a much better position to be able to manage Qfly than many other towns along the Murray River.

Our residents have good access to what, and our land is well suited to growing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. The presence of Qfly makes this very difficult and leads many residents to making the choice not to attempt to grow their own produce. This is incredibly disappointing. If Qfly was able to be managed the residents could improve their sustainability, and increase their self-sufficiency.

What would the grant funds be used for?

A free Qfly host tree removal program for residents (to be undertaken by qualified arborists) Free replacement trees – must be native or ornamental and not fruit bearing. Propose to purchase them from growers located within the Murray River Council area.

The trees that have been identified as the highest risk and prioritised for removal are Loquats (one of the earliest host fruits). Many of these trees were planted decades ago and are of a significant size and are therefore almost impossible to manage for Qfly.

Who will it help?

We have a total of 75 landholders in the Koraleigh Irrigation Trust area, and the Koraleigh township consists of a further 27 residential properties. We propose to make the tree removal program available to all Koraleigh residents in both the township and irrigation trust area. As we may get more requests for tree removal, than funds will cover, priority would be given to the removal of early host trees. If we remove all unmanaged early host trees, Qfly that have managed to survive winter will be far less likely to be able to live long enough to reproduce, and therefore numbers of fly will be significantly reduced and far easier to manage.

Ongoing:

BKIT will continue to source and make available the necessary traps, baits, and protection nets for the continued management of Qfly. We also plan to continue our weekly trap checking reminders sent by text to residents to enable data to be collected and hot spots to be identified.



Male 'Pro trap' contents