



# JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

THE HON DR DAVID KEMP  
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE

THE HON PETER McGAURAN  
MINISTER FOR SCIENCE

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2002

MIN 103 /02

## KAKADU BEATS ANT INVASION

In a world first, the Big-headed ant has been successfully eradicated from Kakadu National Park under a joint initiative by CSIRO and the Commonwealth Government agency, Parks Australia.

Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp and Minister for Science, Peter McGauran congratulated the work conducted by the organisations.

“This is the largest eradication of a pest ant infestation in the world and the only one to have occurred in a National Park,” Mr McGauran said.

“Through the prompt action and collaboration of CSIRO and Parks Australia a potentially devastating ecological disaster has been averted.

“Colonies of the African Big-headed ant in Kakadu were first confirmed by CSIRO last year and Parks Australia has since implemented procedures to eradicate the infestations and then prevent re-entry of the ants into Kakadu,” Mr McGauran said.

The eradication project was coordinated by Parks Australia which jointly manages Kakadu National Park with the traditional owners.

“The African Big-headed ant has been widely introduced throughout the tropical world. It is a highly aggressive species capable of forming enormous colonies containing millions of ants,” Dr Kemp said.

“In infested areas the ants virtually exterminate all native ants and reduce populations of other small creatures such as other insects by between 40 and 85 per cent. This has very serious implications for biodiversity conservation.

“The eradication has saved Kakadu National Park millions of dollars in future control programmes. We are now in a much stronger position to deal with any future outbreaks of the pest ant,” Dr Kemp said.

A paper on Big-Headed ants will be presented today by Dr Ben Hoffman CSIRO Ecologist and Mr Simon O’Connor from Parks Australia at the Joint Conference of the Ecological Society of Australia and the New Zealand Ecological Society in Cairns.

Dr Hoffman and Mr O’Connor can be contacted on 0418 820 718.

*For more information: Catherine Job (Dr Kemp’s Office) 0408 648 400  
Jodie Forbes (Mr McGauran’s Office) 0419 622 915*