



TASMANIAN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION INC.

www.tasmanianbeekeepers.org.au

President –
Mr Lindsay Bourke

Secretary-
Mrs Maxine Ewington

SUBMISSION TO
SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATION REFERENCE
COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSOCIATED
WITH THE USE OF THE BUMBLEBEE POLLINATION IN
TASMANIA FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.

The Tasmanian Beekeepers' Association Inc (TBA) is the peak body representing the Beekeeping Industry in Tasmania.

The state affiliated associations include –

- Northern Branch Tasmanian Beekeepers Association Inc (41 members)
- North West Branch Tasmanian Beekeepers Association In (58 members)
- Southern Beekeepers Association Inc (123 members)
- Tasmanian Crop Pollination Association Inc

There are presently 173 registered beekeepers in Tasmanian which includes approximately 16000 hives. (Registration is not compulsory in Tasmania.)

The TBA is concerned that the use of bumble bees for pollination in Tasmania will lead to the importation of stock to improve the genetic diversity of the current bumblebees in the State. Present research indicates that the bumble bees already in the state are inbred and not suitable for pollination. It was found that in 50% of Tasmanian nests, abnormal male bees replace half of the female forages and males make no contribution to pollination of tomatoes as males forage only for nectar (Buttermore, Pomeroy, Hobson, Stemmens, Hart 1998 'Assesment of the genetic base of Tasmania bumblebees for development as pollination agents')

Introduction of new genetics to glasshouses could lead to these bumblebees escaping and forming a feral population and this would be a new competitor in the environment for our honey bees. Bumblebees operate at lower temperatures and carry more nectar than honey bees. The competition from feral bumblebees could have a devastating effect on the honey industry should they roam to the Leatherwood and Manuka areas in Tasmania.

Tasmania has, at Tarraleah, the Black Bee Reserve declared by Tasmania's Chief vet in 2002. These black bees are the only pure British strain of black bees in the world and a new genetics of bumblebees could have an effect on these bees.

Australia does not currently have the varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*) which has devastated the honey bee population around the world. The introduction of new genetics which is more robust into Tasmania could provide a vector for this mite if and when it enters the country to be transferred quickly and having enormous consequences for the Honey Industry in Tasmania.

Tasmania at present sends package bees to Canada transshipping through Melbourne, this is a very important market for our apiarist and any biosecurity issue could shut down this market causing financial hardship to our beekeepers.