

Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts

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Mr Marcus Brandsema
Director
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Dear Mr Brandsema

Thank you for your email of 14 May 2010 seeking a letter of support regarding the use of bumble bees for pollination in protected cropping in Tasmania.

Protected cropping is a high value, growing industry around the world. Tasmania is well placed to benefit from this trend and has a number of competitive advantages including climate, hours of sunlight, water, land availability, proximity to transport infrastructure and availability of natural gas.

Opportunities exist to expand the protected cropping industry, providing additional jobs and investment into regional areas.

The Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts (the department) supports the development of the protected cropping industry and its work to build on its competitive advantages by using bees for buzz pollination of tomatoes. Bumble bees are widespread across Tasmania having been introduced into the state, most likely accidentally from New Zealand. They are very effective pollinators and are significantly more efficient and cost effective than hand pollination. Bumble bee pollinators can increase production by up to 28 per cent (in ideal conditions) at a cost of only one per cent of production.

The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* prevents the collection and use of bumble bees. Part 303GN SI (b) of the Act prohibits the possession of illegally imported specimens and the progeny of such specimens. Bumble bees fall under the definition of an illegally imported specimen and are therefore considered a pest. This inhibits their use for commercial purposes.

The department acknowledges that research is needed to fully understand the impact of bumble bees on Tasmania's natural environment. However, given that bumble bees are already established in areas where it is proposed they be used for pollination purposes and that the protected cropping proponent:

- is planning on only using bumble bees already found in Tasmania

- has no plans to seek to export bumble bees to other states
- has identified methods to ensure pollinator hives will be contained and destroyed in the protected cropping environment and
- is willing to work with the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment to maximise benefits and minimise any risks of using bumble bees

The department believes that work should be undertaken to identify ways that bumble bees can be used in Tasmanian protected cropping environments. The department also supports any efforts made to conduct thorough research into the impacts of bumble bees on the natural environment in Tasmania.

Yours sincerely



Mark Kelleher
Secretary

18 May 2010