

SUMMARY:

Pollination services provided by honeybees contributes an estimated \$2 billion to the Australian economy and 11,000 jobs directly and indirectly. The U.S. has recently Experienced what happens to their almond production when the Beekeeping Industry is decimated.

The Australian Beekeeping Industry is lacking in educational facilities and research funding .

This lack is disproportionate to the contribution of the Beekeeping Industry to the sustainability and viability of Australian Agriculture and Horticulture.

The Beekeeping Industry needs at least one centre for research and education in order to provide learning opportunities for future Researchers, Extension Officers and Entrepreneurial Beekeepers.

The most appropriate center, due to its proximity to the Federal Government Bee Quarantine facility at Eastern Creek is University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury).

Since 1988 Australian Queen Bee Exporters Pty. Ltd. has been stressing to D.E.E.T, and D.E.T. and now D.E.W.R.S. that there is a huge deficiency in training opportunities for Australians interested in pursuing a career in Beekeeping. This department has ignored our pleas for the establishment of at least one full time course. At the same time they have tried to frustrate our efforts to expand our company by sourcing labour from overseas where governments recognize the importance of beekeeping by providing Apicultural education.

Bureaucratic interference and ignorance is why many Australian beekeeping companies have been unable to expand to meet growing export demand for queen bees and package bees.

Australian Queen Bee Exporters has refused to allow our business growth to be frustrated and we have (with the aid of DIMA) grown to be the largest beekeeping company in Australia and the largest beekeeping company in the Southern Hemisphere.

Without the support of DIMA in allowing us to import skilled workers this would not have happened .

This standing committee has finally allowed us the opportunity to present a case for greater education and research support for the Australian Beekeeping Industry.

HONEYBEES BENEFIT OTHER AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES:

The sustainability and viability of many agricultural and horticultural industries relies on insect pollination.

A RIRDC sponsored survey states that 60% of all crops in Australia require insect pollination mostly by managed bees and feral colonies.

Many government departments ignore the value of honeybee pollination. It will only when decimation of the beekeeping industry occurs that our agricultural experts will recognize the need for planned pollination.

The recent decimation of beehives in the U.S. has clearly demonstrated the value of honeybees as the \$2 billion Almond Industry in California struggles.

Australian Bee Breeders exported honeybees to U.S. in February 2005 to assist with the shortfall in bees to pollinate almonds.

The decimation of the U.S. Bee Industry was as a result of a predatory mite (Varroa destructor). Although not currently in Australia it is expected to enter Australia in the future and we should be taking pre-emptive action and breeding resistant bees to minimize the initial impact.

Due to the contribution of honeybees to agriculture and horticulture generally beekeeping cannot be regarded as a stand-alone industry.

Government must recognize this contribution and support the beekeeping industry with suitable education and research facilities. It is for the national interest. Any sudden loss of honeybee pollination will immediately impact on yields of crops. Some crops will yield zero and yield from other crops will fall below economic threshold levels.

The committee should examine closely the abare report on pollination and recognize that a potential loss of \$2 billion and 11,000 jobs in the event of a sudden loss of honeybee pollination services are figures not to be ignored.

Most other countries recognize the value of honeybees and support and encourage their beekeeping industry.

Sadly, at the moment Australia seems unable to see the forest for the trees.

RESEARCH:

The best way to protect the beekeeping industry from decimation due to incursion of predatory mites is to develop lines of bees that show a tolerance or resistance to these mites.

Our industry needs a research centre to import and develop this resistance.

Just a single research centre in Australia would suffice and this centre could also fulfill the educational needs of our industry. Currently, our industry contributes to RIRDC via a research levy and these funds are matched \$ by \$ by Australian government.

Because of unique contribution by the beekeeping industry to agriculture generally we believe that a 3:1 contribution would allow for more meaningful research to be carried out by this small but vital industry.

With our industry under pressure from imported honey it is not possible for us to provide the research funding needed to protect other industries dependent upon our bees.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

If it can be agreed that the sustainability and viability of many sectors of Australian agriculture relies on pollination services then it follows that providing the necessary training facilities is an important part of maintaining a viable beekeeping industry.

The only two beekeeping courses at Hawkesbury and Gatton Colleges were closed down some years ago. Surely, an industry that contributes \$2 billion to the Australian economy and supports 10,000 jobs deserves just one educational facility.

No longer is there a source of researchers, extension workers and beekeepers with tertiary education available to our industry.

The author of this submission was educated at Hawkesbury, served 7 years as an Extension Officer and went on to develop the largest beekeeping company in Australia to-day.

Furthermore, he has pioneered the export of many value-added products that have benefited many Australian beekeepers.

The Rural Training Council is currently developing competency standards but **who** will deliver the courses.

Australian Queen Bee Exporters has been forced to rely on overseas skilled workers to expand the business. Many of the foreign workers have been educated in Beekeeping Institutes in third world countries. This is a sad indictment of the Australian education system.

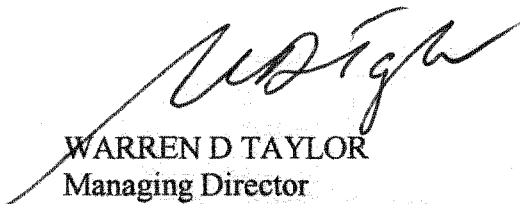
With the average age of beekeepers currently 54 it is vital that steps taken **now** to skill a new generation of beekeepers.

All we ask is to support one Beekeeping Education/Research Centre in Australia.

I am asking the committee to give our small but important industry just a little help. Give this industry the support and recognition that it deserves.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That this Committee recognise the contribution of honeybees to Australian Agriculture and Horticultural industries.**
- 2. That this Committee recommends to government that one Apicultural education/Research Centre be established.**



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