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Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

**INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN
HONEY BEE INDUSTRY**

**SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY**

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE AND FACTUAL CORRECTIONS

JULY 2007

SUMMARY

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry attended a public hearing for the Inquiry into the future development of the Australian honey bee industry on Wednesday 13 June 2007.

This document contains responses to Questions on Notice and factual corrections provided as a result of the Department's appearance before the Standing Committee.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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CHAIR: “How much cooperation has that approach had from the state and territory governments [for the Environmental Code of Conduct project]?”

The National Code of Conduct and Training Package Action Partnership Project involved workshops between industry and government representatives.

Workshops were held in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. The workshops were attended by state government officials as follows:

State:	Name:	Representing:
Queensland	Patricia Swift	Qld Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
	Dave Learoyd	Qld Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
	Bill Gordon	Qld Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
New South Wales	Mick Ryan	Rural Lands Protection Board
	Todd Duffy	National Parks and Wildlife Service
	Warick Bratby	NSW Department of Primary Industries (Forests)
Victoria	David Major	Parks Victoria
	Bill Shay	VIC Department of Primary Industries
Tasmania	Ian Marmion	Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania
	Graeme Raphall	Tas Department of Primary Industries and Water
	Robin Thomson	Tas Department of Primary Industries and Water
South Australia	Michael Stedman	Primary Industries and Resources South Australia
	Michael Stone	Primary Industries and Resources South Australia
Western Australia	Jacqui Hay	WA Department of Environment and Conservation
	Tracy Shea	WA Department of Environment and Conservation
	Malcolm Briggs	WA Department of Environment and Conservation
	Bill Trend	WA Department of Agriculture and Food

All workshop participants were invited to provide feedback. The consultation period for the draft code is still open. To date, comments have been received from the following state government representatives:

Bill Gordon	Qld Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
Bill Trend	WA Department of Agriculture and Food
Malcolm Briggs	WA Department of Environment and Conservation
Michael Stone	Primary Industries and Resources South Australia

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Mr FORREST: “What are we doing to encourage reduction of these [trade] barriers?”

The two primary ways in which the Australian Government is seeking to reduce tariff barriers for Australian exports are through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and bilateral negotiations with our trading partners. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade regularly liaise with Australia’s agricultural industries as part of this process.

A successful outcome to the WTO Doha Round of trade negotiations remains the Australian Government’s most important trade policy priority, as it offers the best long-term potential gains for Australian exporters. The Doha Ministerial Declaration mandate on agriculture calls for reforms across the three ‘pillars’: substantial improvements in market access; substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support; and the phasing out, with a view to total elimination, of all export subsidies.

While prospects for the Doha Round remain uncertain, the Government will continue pursuing free trade agreements (FTAs) where they can deliver faster results for Australian exports than through the WTO process. Australia has achieved reduced tariffs on many products through FTAs. Under the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement and the Australia-Singapore FTA, all tariffs were reduced to zero when the agreements came into force. Under the Australia-United States FTA, 66 per cent of tariffs on agricultural products were reduced to zero when the agreement began in 2005, with a further 9 per cent to be eliminated by 2009. The Australia-United States FTA immediately removed all tariffs on natural honey on 1 January 2005.

The Australian Government will continue to seek to improve and expand opportunities for Australian primary producers, including for products such as honey, via multilateral and bilateral avenues.

Australia currently has FTAs with New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. Australia is currently negotiating FTAs with Malaysia, China, Chile, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Japan and New Zealand-Association of South East Asian Nations.

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Mrs MIRABELLA: “Is there input from other government bodies in other jurisdictions perhaps [into the Environmental Code of Conduct project]?”

Please see the response to the Question on Notice concerning the Environmental Code of Conduct from page 6 of the Hansard.

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Mrs MIRABELLA: “Do you have any information regarding why beekeepers are locked out of state parks and national parks?”

This question would need to be fully addressed by the responsible management agencies. It should be noted that there are apiary sites in some national parks.

Some of the reasons that apiarists’ access to national parks is restricted by state management authorities may include:

- honey bees can compete for nectar resources, which then places pressure on native species that feed on nectar such as nectar feeding birds and native bees; and

- honey bees can take over natural tree hollows that would otherwise provide nesting sites for native fauna.

The state agencies responsible for national park management are:

New South Wales

Department of Environment and Climate Change
PO Box A290
Sydney South NSW 1232
Telephone: (02) 9995 5000

Northern Territory

Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts
PO Box 30
Palmerston NT 0831
Telephone: (08) 8999 5511

Victoria

Department of Sustainability and Environment
8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002
Telephone: 136 186

Queensland

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
PO Box 15155
City East QLD 4002
Telephone: (07) 3227 8185

South Australia

Department for Environment and Heritage
1 Richmond Road
Keswick SA 5035
Telephone: (08) 8204 1910

Australian Capital Territory

Department of Territory and Municipal Services
GPO Box 158
City ACT 2601
Telephone: (02) 6207 5111

Western Australia

Department of Environment and Conservation
168 St Georges Terrace
Perth WA 6000
Telephone: (08) 6364 6500

Tasmania

Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania
GPO Box 1751
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Telephone: 1300 135 513

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Mr Liehne: “I would need to take that on notice and give you advice as to what the sampling rate is for imported honey.”

Under the *Imported Food Control Act 1994*, honey from all countries, except New Zealand, is referred to AQIS for testing at a rate of five per cent of consignments. AQIS is advised by Food Standards Australia New Zealand of the foods considered medium to high risk, which are required to be sampled at a higher rate. Product found not to comply with Australia’s requirements is not permitted entry and must be destroyed or re-exported. Subsequent consignments from the same source are subject to 100 per cent inspection until a history of compliance is demonstrated. Five consecutive consignments must test clear before the sampling rate can be reduced to five per cent.

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Mrs MIRABELLA: What is the timeframe involved in preparing this [forest fire management] policy paper? When will a draft version be available?

At the joint meeting of the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) and the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee (NRMSC) in March 2007, the committees requested that the Forestry and Forest Products Committee (FFPC) and the Natural Resource Policies and Programs Committee (NRPPC) lead the development of a paper on the future development of a forest fire management policy and research at a national level.

The timeline for presentation of a policy paper to the Primary Industries and Natural Resources Management Ministerial Councils (PIMC/NRMMC) is unclear; however it is believed that the paper will not be ready before the first PIMC/NRMMC meetings in 2008.

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Mrs MIRABELLA/CHAIR:

A request for “more detailed information regarding the Department’s analysis of the impact of bushfires”.

DAFF collated information on the impacts of the various bushfires experienced in the significant fire season of 2006-07 and summarised the outcomes of the inquiries held after the 2003 bushfires in south eastern Australia. The information is presented in Attachment A.

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CHAIR: “Do you know if there are any proposal of plans to include the honeybee industry into [the development of a national forest fire management policy]?”

At this stage the development process for the paper will not involve consulting individual industries, such as the honey bee industry.

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CHAIR: “What does the Department see as the principal research and development needs of the industry?”

Each industry determines its specific research and development (R&D) priorities, which the industry-related rural R&D Corporation will respond to in its investment planning. The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) invests in R&D for the honeybee industry.

Five year R&D plans are developed for each of the RIRDC programmes. The current plan (2007-12) for the honey bee industry is the fifth R&D Plan for the Honeybee programme. It identifies six key objectives for investments to be made on behalf of the industry and the Australian Government.

This Plan was developed after a comprehensive review of the Australian honey bee industry was undertaken. This review was funded by DAFF as part of the Industry Partnership Programme.

The Australian Government released new Rural Research and Development Priorities for the agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food industries in May 2007. These R&D priorities are available on the DAFF website at www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/innovation/priorities. The Government expects each of the rural R&D corporations to take these priorities into account in their planning and investment strategies.

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CHAIR: “Do we need greater funding for honeybee industry related research? Do we need more money for research?”

The level of research funding for the honey bee industry is largely a matter for industry to determine, taking into account both industry and Government priorities.

The honey bee R&D programme is managed by RIRDC and funded by statutory levies paid by industry participants. The Australian Government matches the compulsory levy for R&D paid by

the honey bee industry up to a maximum of 0.5 per cent of Gross Value of Production (GVP) on a dollar-for-dollar basis on expenditure. In 2005-06 this figure was \$189,672.

RIRDC also receives Government funding through budget appropriation to fund R&D in multi-industry and national interest issues for rural industries and small industries which are not sufficiently established to have a statutory levy which would attract the Government's matching funding.

In 2005-06, RIRDC received \$12,893,000 in core appropriation funding from the Government. The RIRDC Board has discretion in allocating this funding across its three portfolios - New Industries, Established Rural Industries (which includes the honey bee R&D programme) and National Rural Issues.

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CHAIR: "Would you agree that the current funding model places significant constraints on the amount of research that can be done?"

No. The research and development corporation model provides for funding combinations of Government budget appropriation funding, compulsory levies and voluntary contributions.

The model also allows industries to cooperate and collaborate on joint research projects where there is mutual interest and efficiencies of scale to be gained.

Industries need to manage their research priorities in accord with their R&D income.

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CHAIR: "Has consideration been given to establishing a Cooperative Research Centre-style entity and how would it be funded?"

The Government is considering its response to the House of Representatives Inquiry into rural skills training and research, including the recommendation that it establish a Cooperative Research Centre-like entity to work on research, education and bee breeding for beekeeping and pollination.

However, the Honeybee Industry Linkages Workshop (23-24 April 2007) resulted in a commitment to form a strong alliance between the honey bee industry, research bodies and all industries that have a stake in pollination. The Pollination Industry Alliance will identify priority areas for research as well as opportunities for research to be funded through existing Rural Research and Development Corporations (such as those in horticulture or forestry), as well as RIRDC, for collaborative projects addressing research needs across all industries with a stake in pollination.

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Mr FORREST: "The question is whether imported and exported are having the same standards of testing. You will respond to me on notice?"

Imports and exports do not have the same standards of testing.

Imported honey is randomly tested at a rate of 5 per cent of consignments arriving in Australia. Samples drawn from the selected consignments are tested for antibiotics (chloramphenicol, nitrofurans, tetracyclines, sulphonamides and streptomycin) and screened for the presence of 49 pesticide chemical residues to ensure compliance with Australian food standards.

Exported Australian honey must meet importing country requirements but is not required to be tested prior to export. However, a small number of randomly collected samples of Australian honey drawn from annual production have been tested for antibiotics (including chloramphenicol, nitrofurans, tetracyclines, sulphonamides, aminoglycosides), macronutrient metals (selenium and zinc) and environmental contaminants (aluminium and lead) in the National Residue Survey conducted by DAFF each year.

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Mr ADAMS: “Can we get a list of the tariffs against us in the world? So if we could get a list of tariffs on honey products”.

Tariff rates for Australia’s main honey export destinations in 2005-06 were:

Country	Ad valorem tariffs %
United Kingdom	17.3
Canada	0
Saudi Arabia	5.0
Germany	17.3
Malaysia	2.0
Singapore	0
Indonesia	5.0
UAE	0
USA	1.3

Source: (CIE, 2005, p29).

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Mr ADAMS: “Is there a set of guidelines of what [the Environmental Code of Conduct] is doing?”

The first draft of the Code of Conduct was completed and presented to the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council on 9 July 2007. The following 19 points provide the draft guideline of the Code of Conduct.

1. Respect for heritage and areas of interest to indigenous Australians.
2. Display warning signs in appropriate places to announce proximity of apiary to the public.
3. Maintain stocking rates to the floral conditions prevailing. Ensure colonies have adequate stored honey.
4. Ensure that the appropriate authorities have been notified of the arrival and departure of apiaries.
5. Keep the area of the apiary clean and tidy.
6. Provide water for bees.
7. Incorporate best management practice to reduce the incidence of swarming – a seasonal occurrence in spring.
8. Maintain swarm traps in and around apiaries, particularly during the spring period.
9. Prevent the spread of soil pathogens such as phytothera and weed seeds by vehicle movements.
10. Regularly maintain and service vehicles according to manufacturers recommendations.
11. No to travel on access tracks when there is a high likelihood of damaging the track.
12. Only the immediate area of the apiary is to be cleaned of combustible vegetation.

13. Only camp on site with the approval of the property owner or manager. All presence of the camp site to be removed once the camp is finished with.
14. All fire warnings and restrictions are to be respected and local fire codes should be taken into consideration whenever working bee hives.
15. Whenever the opportunity arises, provide information on the value of nectar and pollen producing flora.
16. Locate apiaries with consideration of the general public and livestock movements. Stocking rates in urban areas should be appropriate to the circumstances – a small yard should only contain a maximum of two hives.
17. Keep records of flowering events.
18. Consider the most energy efficient manner in which the beekeeping operation is conducted.
19. Store, use and dispose of chemicals in the most appropriate manner, according to state and label requirements.

FACTUAL CORRECTIONS

Page 2 and 18: National Sentinel Hive Program

During evidence provided to the Standing Committee on 13 June 2007, conflicting evidence was provided regarding the funding of the National Sentinel Hive Program (NSHP).

In its business plan for 2007-2009, Animal Health Australia (AHA) included a line item of \$247,132 for funding the NSHP in 2007-08. This was the basis for the information provided by Mr Michael Ryan in DAFF's opening statement to the inquiry.

Subsequent to the preparation of the opening statement, officers within DAFF sought clarification from AHA on the nature and availability of the funding identified by AHA. Mr Mike Bond of AHA indicated that the line item was only notional and that the funding was dependent upon transfer to AHA of funds currently used to operate the NSHP. As correctly stated by Dr Bob Biddle at the public hearing, this figure is an estimate of the current cost of the program if all of the voluntary contributions and in-kind contributions were fully costed. The draft business plan for the NSHP will shortly be submitted to Animal Health Committee for comment. This will commence the process of seeking endorsement and funding for the business plans from jurisdictions and industries. The business plan proposes that the fully funded NSHP commence on 1 July 2008 for an initial period of three years.

Attachment A: The impact of bushfires

The 2006/07 Victorian Fires

Total area burnt since 1 July 2006 in Victoria is 1,186,496 hectares (ha).

1) The Great Divide Fire

This fire was started by lightning strikes in the mountains of north east Victoria on the evening of 1 December 2006. The fire burnt 1,046,600 ha; 670,000 ha of which is State forest. This fire was managed as two separate complexes, the Great Divide North and Great Divide South.

The Great Divide North burnt 370,600 ha. 20 homes were lost to this fire and about 1,000ha of pine plantation was burnt. A logging contractor lost \$1 million worth of equipment to the fires when he was working as part of a VicForests fire crew on a separate fire.

The Great Divide South burnt over 677,000 ha. The fire destroyed 11 dwellings and one fire-fighter was killed near Heyfield on 14 December 2006.

Resource Implications

VicForests have estimated that up to 2 million cubic metres of high value ash sawlog and up to 1 million cubic metres of other species sawlogs may have been fire affected, however they are still assessing the full extent of the damage and the extent to which salvage is necessary. It is expected that a similar volume of pulp logs will have been affected. At this stage, VicForests have indicated that salvage operations will comprise up to 40% of their logging operations in the next 12 months, reducing to 5-20% for the 12 months after that.

There will be an impact on the long term sustainable yield, which is as yet undetermined, but could potentially be very significant.

The fires have impacted on logging operations in native forests, with timber harvesting in the Tambo valley region of Gippsland shut down for a month.

It should also be noted that many of the bulldozers used in constructing and upgrading containment lines were supplied by forest harvesting contractors.

2) Tatong

This fire was started by lightning on Thursday 11 January 20 kilometres south east of Benalla and declared contained on Wednesday 24 January. It burnt a total of 33,000 ha.

According to the Country Fire Authority, the losses from this fire amounted to three houses, 41 rural structures (sheds etc), 214 kilometres of rural/crown fencing, 71 kilometres of internal fencing, 30 sheep, 67 cattle, 17 poultry, 21 other stock, 3,973 hay bales and 1,933 ha of pasture. 1,100 ha of pine plantation were also burnt.

The 2006/07 NSW Fires

1) Tumut

About 8,500 ha of Forests NSW plantation east of Tumut were burnt in an 11,500 ha fire in December 2006. The total area of Forests NSW plantations in the region is about 90,000 ha. Forests

NSW subsequently undertook salvage logging of the mature stands that were burnt with logs being sold to the Weyerhaeuser and Hyne sawmills and the Visy pulp and paper mill. Re-establishment of burnt plantation areas has started in winter 2007.

2. Pilliga Region

A number of fires have burnt in State forest and National Park near Narrabri in north west NSW in November and December 2006. The largest of these, known as the Pilliga 4 fire, burnt 97,000ha. Of that area about 56,000ha was National Park, 31,000 ha was State forest and 10,000 ha was other tenure, such as private and leasehold land. Several other large fires occurred at Goldmine Creek (28,000 ha) and Kerringle (23,000 ha).

The Pilliga has one of the largest koala populations in NSW; however the National Parks and Wildlife Service have indicated that the fires appear not to have burnt the best koala habitat. Forests NSW are still assessing the total impact on timber supplies, but it is estimated that approximately 70,000 m³ of standing cypress sawlog have been damaged in the fires. Salvage operations are underway, but it is likely that only about 25,000m³ will be recoverable in the next one or two months. After this period the timber is very prone to cracking and also attack by jewel beetle.

The 2003 Fires in south-eastern Australia

On 8 January 2003, lightning started a large number of fires in rugged forested country between Canberra and the mountains in north east Victoria. The fires burnt for about 60 days and in that time burnt over a million hectares in Victoria, over 700,000 ha in the Kosciuszko National Park and about 70 per cent of the ACT.

On 18 January 2003, under severe weather conditions, the fires to the west of Canberra moved very rapidly from the Brindabella ranges through grazing land and pine forest to the suburbs of Canberra. Four people were killed, over 400 houses and other private property destroyed and over 10,000 ha of then ACT Forests pine plantation burnt.

Inquiries since 2003

After the 2003 fire season, two inquiries at the national level were conducted:

1. The House of Representatives Select Committee into the recent Australian Bushfires: A Nation Charred: Report on the inquiry into bushfires (Nairn Report) – finalised report in October 2003, Australian Government response released in September 2005.
2. The COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management - reported in May 2004, and the Australian Government released its response in January 2005.

In December 2006, the ACT Coroner also finalised an investigation into the 2003 ACT Fires. The major findings relevant to forest fire management are the need for more consistent and better information and incident control systems; better education and training; more effective risk management approach; better strategic fire planning, maintenance of access for fire-fighters, and hazard reduction measures; and for research organisations in this area such as the Bushfire CRC to receive additional funding.

REFERENCES

Centre for International Economics (CIE) (2005) *Future directions for the Australian honeybee industry*, CIE, Canberra