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## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY

Submission in response to the House of Representatives Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Committee inquiry into the future development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry.

The honeybee is a powerhouse of the Australian economy worth \$1.7 billion in 1999-2000 data; this would be the cost if farmers were unable to adjust as would be the case of a sudden disease outbreak. (RIRDC Publication No.03/077, RIRDC Project No.CIE-15a).

An independent report from the Centre for International Economics in 2005 identified two main threats - an incursion of the exotic varroa mite and a reduction in the amount of native flora available to help maintain a diverse source of pollen and nectar for hive health.

It is paramount that Governments take a pro-active approach to Bio Security issues and increase quarantine checks because once varroa or other exotic diseases arrive it will be too late. Lessons should be learnt from the New Zealand experience. Unfortunately, varroa has reinforced the importance of the Beekeeping Industry in New Zealand.

Access to native flora is a constant challenge to the Industry with State Governments putting more and more restrictions on access to National and State Parks. 20% of Public Land bee sites have been burnt out in recent bush fires in Victoria. Recovery times for some areas could be up to 10 years before appreciable yields of nectar and pollen will be available again.

The increase in hive numbers required for almond pollination with the prediction of 160,000 hives by the year 2012 in North West Victoria will be unachievable if more access to forests is denied. We need considerable foresight by Governments to allow our Industry to expand. The recent enquiry 2006 into Rural Skills Training has confirmed this.

Testing of all imported honey should be carried out, the cost of which should be borne by the overseas producer or the importer, not the Australian Taxpayer, to ensure that the quality of the imported honey is of the same food safety standards as Australian produced honey. Australian consumers demand it. Twenty years of selling honey direct to the public confirms this

There are several Australian honeys that have undergone "A Preliminary Assessment of their Glycemic Index" RIRDC Publication No.05/027, RIRDC Project No.UNS-17A March 2005. In the recommendations it was suggested that further research in other pure floral honey low GI be undertaken. e.g. is any Yellow Box honey low GI?

This research should be a priority and used as a unique marketing tool for our quality Australian honey. Not only will it increase the consumption of honey in Australia but would also increase world demand for our superior product.

Beekeeping as a profession is physically hard work, it requires considerable knowledge of flora and the environment. The continued and increased access to native forests as well as an increase of quarantine surveillance are imperative for the survival of the honeybee Industry.

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