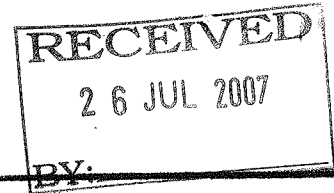




**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**



BY: .....

Submission No: .. 83 .....

Date Received: .. 26/7/07 .....

Secretary: .. [Signature] .....

Mr Alby Schultz MP  
Chair  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Schultz

I write to provide supplementary information to the Committee's Inquiry into the future development of the Australian honey bee industry.

On 5 July 2007, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Peter McGauran MP announced that the Advancing Agricultural Industries Programme would support two projects.

The first project will work to address the issue of coordination, collaboration and funding of research and development across the honeybee industry, pollination reliant industries and research and development providers.

The second project aims to provide a catalyst for better educating both new entrants and existing industry members in efficient methods of beekeeping, quality assurance, disease control and business management.

A summary of the projects is at **Attachment A**. Please contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Anderson  
General Manager  
Industry Leadership and Development Branch  
Rural Policy and Innovation

**18 JUL 2007**

## **Advancing Agricultural Industries Programme**

### ***Bee Pollination Alliance Project***

#### **Background**

The 2005 Taking Stock and Setting Directions project report, *Future directions for the Australian honeybee industry*, identified that there has previously been only limited communication or collaboration between the bee industry and pollination-reliant industries. This may have been in part because many pollination-reliant industries have not:

- understood or been able to measure the value of pollination services to the quality and volume of their crop; or
- realised their likely future dependence on these services should there be an incursion of the varroa mite.

There is limited understanding of the value of the bee industry to pollination-reliant industries and the potential impact should there be a varroa mite incursion. Pollination stakeholders came together for the first time at the Honeybee Industry Linkages Workshop, funded in part under the Industry Partnerships Programme, in April 2007 and undertook a rigorous self assessment of key threats and opportunities and developed actions to respond to them. The workshop identified the varroa mite incursion as a key threat to pollination industries.

The varroa mite is already in all Australia's neighbouring countries. If, or when, it does invade Australia it is expected that the varroa mite will impact feral European bees and cause damage to the managed bee industry. This means there will be costs to agriculture in terms of loss of output and quality of production.

The varroa mite has never been successfully eradicated from any country it has invaded.

#### **Project Description**

The project will consider a range of threats to the industry previously identified in the honey bee Taking Stock and Setting Directions process and develop a collaborative, strategic and whole of supply chain response to these threats, including the potential impact should varroa mite enter Australia.

A formal alliance body will be established to encourage and reinforce collaboration across the supply chain and industries. The project will include scoping and a business model for permanent funding of the Alliance.

The Alliance will prepare a business plan for the organisation, outlining the structure, legal obligations, ongoing funding and governance arrangements. The membership of the Alliance may include:

- the beekeeping and pollination service industry;
- horticulture, grains, pasture industries, and plant breeders;
- research and development corporations;
- government departments;
- research and development and training providers; and
- quarantine and biosecurity representatives.

Following the establishment of the alliance, a strategic plan will be developed for alliance members that includes:

- a comprehensive risk management strategy that considers access to floral resources and research and development priorities;
- a business development model for pollination services to better ensure bee industry viability and capacity to meet pollination demand in the future;
- an education and training strategy to address both basic level and business skills of industry participants; and
- a communications plan to enhance communication and business linkages between key stakeholders and increase public and political support for pollination industries.

Expected project outcomes are:

*Short Term:*

- Pollination-reliant industries understanding the value of pollination services to the quality and volume of their crop.
- Pollination-reliant industries understanding the impact on their businesses should there be a varroa mite incursion.

*Medium Term:*

- A culture of collaboration between pollination-reliant industries and the bee industry, resulting in a convergence of strategic goals.
- Coordinated research and development activities undertaken by the pollination-reliant industries and the bee industry.

*Long Term:*

- Self-reliant bee and pollination-reliant industries that are resilient and able to efficiently manage change.

**Australian Government Funding**

The Australian Government will contribute up to \$330,000 (GST inc) under the Industry Partnerships Programme. This programme has recently been enhanced and from 1 July 2007 is known as the Advancing Agricultural Industries Programme.

## **Advancing Agricultural Industries Programme**

### ***Learner Workbook Development Project***

#### **Background**

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council approached the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry seeking support to assist them implement actions identified through the 2005 Taking Stock and Setting Directions project. The project report, *Future directions for the Australian honeybee industry*, identifies education as one of six key strategic directions for the industry.

The honey bee industry identified a need to better educate both new entrants and existing industry members in efficient methods of beekeeping, quality assurance, disease control and business management. This education has the capacity to substantially reduce the risks of skills shortages, pests and diseases, and the continued decline in the access to public land. Increased professionalism amongst apiarists may also improve the recognition of pollination services amongst plant industries.

The report found that education in the Australian honey bee industry is currently provided by a combination of organisations, including Universities, TAFE colleges, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries and private providers. Universities provide the necessary skills for high-end research into the honey bee industry (for example genetics), while TAFE colleges offer generic courses on farm management and occupational health and safety, and short courses aimed at hobby beekeepers. The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries provides some general training in beekeeping along the same lines as TAFEs. However there are no nationally accepted courses that are specifically tailored to the skill requirements of beekeepers or potential entrants to the industry.

#### **Project Description**

The project will develop training material comprising of two integrated workbooks that address competencies for Certificates II and III in beekeeping under Vocational Education Training (VET) and Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

National competency standards for a Certificate II and III in beekeeping have been recently approved by the Agrifood Industry Skills Council. However, to date no Registered Training Organisations have invested in developing specific bee-keeping training material development required to deliver the certificate training course. This project overcomes this barrier with nationally uniform training materials upon which Registered Training Organisations can provide formal qualifications in beekeeping at the two certificate levels.

In addition, the project will implement a communication strategy which aims to highlight the integrity of the national competency standards and resulting qualifications. This aims to maximise training uptake.

#### **Others involved**

In discussions with the honey bee industry a Registered Training Organisation has indicated a willingness to perform the training and award qualifications if materials are developed. This project may act as a catalyst for other Registered Training Organisations to also undertake beekeeping training.

#### **Australian Government Funding**

The Australian Government will contribute \$91,000 (GST inc) to this project under the Industry Partnerships Programme. This programme has recently been enhanced and from 1 July 2007 is known as the Advancing Agricultural Industries Programme.