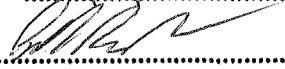


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SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AGRICULTURE,
FISHERIES AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE**

INQUIRING INTO

**THE FUTURE OF THE AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE
INDUSTRY**

SUBMISSION PRESENTED BY

TREVOR WEATHERHEAD

Further to my appearance at the public hearing at the above inquiry on Friday 10 August in Brisbane, I was asked to provide some additional information by the Chairman.

Apis mellifera at the Port of Brisbane

It has been recognised that the major threat to the beekeeping industry in Australia is the introduction of *Varroa destructor* and the most likely way is on our European honey bee *Apis mellifera*. There have been several instances at the Port of Brisbane where there have been swarms of European bees reported to the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI) and they have referred the enquirer onto a beekeeper to come and collect these bees. They assumed the bees had swarmed from a local hive or a feral hive in the mangroves.

I would submit that this is a high risk practice as these swarms could have come off a ship, from say New Zealand, and be carrying the Varroa mite. The action of the beekeeper helping out by collecting the swarm and taking it home would mean that the Varroa is spread immediately and this then reduces dramatically the chance of any eradication. In one instance, it was only the beekeeper ringing me that alerted me to the situation and I was able to put appropriate actions in place.

There was also another occasion where there was swarm which established itself under a container at the port. The QDPI were sampling adult bees from this colony for mites. I raised the point that by the time they found phoretic mites, the mites would be at very high levels and would have already spread to other hives in the area. After consulting with an expert from New Zealand, they then destroyed this hive.

This shows that there is a lack of recognition of the threat to our industry by these swarms which appear at ports. I would submit that any swarms, or feral hives, found in the vicinity of a port in Queensland should be treated as suspect and be immediately sampled and destroyed. The present practice of asking beekeepers to collect these is not a good Biosecurity practice.

The same should apply in other ports in Australia.

This brings to the fore the necessity for the bait hive program to be put in place. There was one proposed when I was in the position of Quarantine Chairman of the Australian Honey Bee industry Council but it seems to have fallen by the wayside.

Hivastan

On reflection after giving evidence at the public hearing, I think I may have said that Hivastan was a new chemical being used in the treatment of American foulbrood in the United States of America. I realise now that this is incorrect. Hivastan is now being used to treat varroa mites. I apologise for giving the incorrect information to the Committee.

Trevor Weatherhead
14 August, 2007