

# The Case for a new National Honeybee Quarantine and Research Facility.

**Recommendation: *The Commonwealth Government should provide \$6million for the construction of a new Honeybee Quarantine Facility with a PC3 containment laboratory for research on honeybee genomics and biotechnology, to replace the current Eastern Creek Quarantine Facility whose current lease expires in 2010. The new facility should be located at NSW DPI's Elizabeth McArthur Agricultural Institute, Camden. The Quarantine Facility should be constructed as a matter of urgency.***

## **Why a new Honeybee Quarantine Facility?**

The Eastern Creek Honeybee Quarantine Facility was commissioned in 1979 and has met the Industry's requirements for safe honeybee imports since that date. In 2001, the Honeybee Quarantine Facility, along with the remaining Quarantine Facilities at Eastern Creek, was sold to private enterprise in 2001. It was leased back by the Commonwealth from the new owners until 2010, with the option to extend the lease until 2015. Neither the Commonwealth nor the owners wish to extend the lease beyond 2010 and efforts are currently being made to privatise various elements of the Quarantine Facility.

It is accepted that there is no realistic prospect of privatising the Honeybee Quarantine Facility. The Minister for Primary Industries, Peter McGauran, has committed the Government to providing a replacement facility before Eastern Creek is decommissioned.


A new Quarantine Facility would reduce the risk of entry of bee diseases and pests. It would allow research in safe containment facilities for better biosecurity, disease and pest management, and genetic improvement. The Facility could act as a focal point for a national research and training programme.

## **Why locate the Honeybee Quarantine Facility at Elizabeth McArthur Agricultural Institute, Camden?**

NSW DPI manages the existing Eastern Creek Facility for AQIS and is prepared to provide land at Elizabeth McArthur Research Station for construction of a replacement quarantine facility (NSW DPI contact is: Dr Helen Scott Orr, Director, Health Science, Strategic Alliances and Evaluation. Contact details are provided below).

Locating the new facility at EMAI, Camden makes sense for a number of reasons:

- EMAI is close to Sydney airport
- NSW DPI has managed the existing Honeybee Quarantine Facility at Eastern Creek on behalf of AQIS and is prepared to continue in this role

Submission No:	92
Date Received:	1/10/2007
Secretary:	

- EMAI is central to other research providers concerned with honeybee/pollination research and training, i.e., University of Western Sydney, University of Sydney, ANU and CSIRO Divisions of Entomology, Plant Industry and Sustainable Ecosystems
- EMAI is the NSW Centre for Animal and Plant Biosecurity (see details in Appendix 2). This Biosecurity Centre would facilitate integration of honeybee R&D and training with national effort into the honeybee and pollination services industries

### **Linking *Pollination Australia* and the Honeybee Quarantine Facility**

Following the Honeybee and Pollination Linkages Workshop held in Canberra on 23 and 24 April 2007, Minister Peter McGauran provided \$300,000 towards the establishment of a national honeybee/pollination Industries Alliance, likely to be called *Pollination Australia*, and for the preparation of a Business Plan for the Alliance. Progress to date in establishing *Pollination Australia* and its business plan is outlined in Appendix 3.

The establishment of a Honeybee Quarantine Facility at EMAI is consistent with and would complement the creation of the envisaged new industry alliance, *Pollination Australia*. Its integration with EMAI and its proximity to other teaching and research institutions would strengthen the R&D and training elements in the Business Plan currently being developed under the broad direction of RIRDC and the Steering Committee (see Appendix 3)

## **Appendix I**

### **Contact details for Dr Helen Scott-Orr:**

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## **Appendix 2**

### **NSW Centre for Animal and Plant Biosecurity**

In March 2006 an MOU was signed by the NSW Minister for Primary Industries and the PVC Research, Sydney University, setting up a virtual centre for Animal and Plant Biosecurity.

The Centre links NSW DPI's EMAI with the University of Sydney's Veterinary Faculty (especially the Camden campus) and the Agricultural Faculty (especially the Plant Breeding Institute at Cobbitty).

The three facilities contain over 400 staff plus an array of under- and post-graduate students, as well as state-of-the-art laboratory, glasshouse, and animal house facilities.

The MOU provides for increased cooperative activity and mutual access to each others' facilities as well as joint planning for capital development and expensive equipment acquisition.

There are ongoing discussions with the Westmead Millennium Institute for to include human health R&D in the NSW Biosecurity Centre.

## Appendix 3



Australian Government  
Rural Industries Research and  
Development Corporation

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### 'Pollination Australia' – A Summary

Honeybee pollination of plants and crops can occur through paid pollination services and/or incidental pollination and feral honeybees. Honeybee pollination is essential for some crops, while for others it raises yield and quality. Honeybee pollination also reduces flowering time (hence reduced risks and reduced water and pesticide usage) and in some cases has had a beneficial effect on soil fertility. Through these impacts, honeybee pollination provides significant value to Australian horticulture and agriculture, with services being valued at \$1.7 billion per annum in 1999-2000 for the 35 most important honeybee dependent crops<sup>1</sup>.

In April 2007, the honeybee industry and other pollination stakeholders came together within a workshop to evaluate the opportunities and threats to the pollination industry and to set initial directions to build paid pollination services into a self sustaining industry. Individuals were from a broad industry base, including the honeybee industry, horticultural, pasture seeds, and grains industries, research and development service providers, state and federal government representatives, and university research centres.

In response to the outcomes derived from the pollination workshop, RIRDC received funding from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry's (DAFF) Advancing Australian Industries program in order to address the formation of, and produce a business plan for, a new pollination industry organisation/alliance representing the stakeholders of pollination in Australia. This project is known as "Pollination Australia".

The key objectives of the project are:

- development of a business plan that addresses:
  - risk management strategies for biosecurity and adaptation should an exotic pest and disease incursion not be containable;
  - research and development required to underpin these risk management strategies; and
  - education and training to ensure that the honeybee industry can deliver on the biosecurity strategies and adapt to manage an exotic pest and disease incursion, and provide the basis to grow a pollination industry; and
- development of an Industry Alliance organisational structure and administrative framework that will support the delivery of the strategies developed within the business plan.

<sup>1</sup> Gordon, J., and Davis, L., 2003, Valuing honeybee pollination, *Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC)*, Project No. CIE-15A, Pub No. 03/077.

The main outcomes from the project will be to:

- strengthen biosecurity arrangements within the pollination industry in order to reduce the risk of exotic pest and disease entry and enhance the preparedness for an emergency response;
- develop the technical knowledge and skills of the honeybee industry to adjust to the presence of an exotic pest or disease and ensure industry survival and capacity to respond to increased demand for pollination services; and
- grow the supply of pollination services and improve the quality and efficiencies of pollination services in anticipation of a sustained exotic pest and disease incursion and an expected increase in demand for pollination services regardless of an incursion.

The project is being directed by a pollination industry Steering Committee, which consists of representatives from the honeybee industry, pollination dependent industries, research and development corporations, and DAFF. The project is to be completed in June 2008.