

*NORTHERN TABLELANDS BRANCH*  
*NSW APIARISTS ASSOCIATION*

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SUBMISSION

Inquiry Into Future Development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry

The Northern Tablelands Branch of NSW Apiarists Association submits this response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on the following:-

- Current and Future Prospects
- Role in Agriculture
- Bio Security Issues
- Trade Issues
- Impact of Land Management and Bushfires
- Research, Development and Education

**CURRENT AND FUTURE PROSPECTS:-**

The clean green environment of Australia should attract premium prices for Australian Honey. However, Honey Marketing within Australia has not been able to achieve the prices required to sustain the Industry.

Research into the Medicinal and Therapeutic values of Australian Honeys is starting to obtain premium prices for some Australian Honey. This is a major contribution to society and more funds are needed to continue this research.

Commercial Queen Bee and Package Bee production is a growing sector within the Honey Bee Industry with approximately 60,000 queens and 45,000 packages exported this year, with a growth potential of 10 – 20% over the next few years.

Commercial Pollination Services are increasing - 60 – 70,000 hives are being used at present. However Almond Pollination alone is estimated to need 400.000 hives within the coming five years.

**Recommendations:**

\*Industry requires promotion.

## **ROLE IN AGRICULTURE**

The value of Honey Bee Industry products are in the range of :-

Honey:	\$60 – 65 million
Pollination:	\$2.5 – 3 billion
Queens:	\$1 – 1.2 million
Packages:	\$4.5 – 5 million

The value of pollination to the community has been estimated at \$2.7 – 3 billion.

Both pollination value to the community and to beekeepers could increase over the next few years, provided the Honey Bee Industry can have access to floral resources, financial resources and labour to grow to meet this demand.

### **Recommendations:-**

Industry requires appropriate recognition and assistance by Governments. Eg access to resources and research funding.

## **BIO SECURITY ISSUES**

Pests and diseases, both exotic and endemic could limit the Industry's ability to meet the expected demands of the Agricultural sector, export potential and the community's expectations for fruit and vegetables.

Exotic incursions such as mites (Varroa, Tropilaeaps, Tracheal), Apis Cerana, Nosema Cerana, Bumble Bee, Apis Dorsata (an Asian Bee) will impact the Honey Bee Industry and increase costs dramatically for dependent industries.

Importation of hive products from most countries now pose a risk to the Australian Honey Bee Industry. Bio Security must be effective and be ongoing to exclude known pests and diseases. Imported hive products (honey, pollen, propolis etc) must cease immediately. A replacement quarantine facility for Wallgrove is needed for the safe import of genetic stock, thus reducing the risk of illegal imports of Queen Bees which would pose a risk of pests and diseases entering Australia.

Agricultural chemicals can have serious effects on Honey Bees, and research needs to occur to identify and list their effects on honey bees.

### **Recommendations:-**

- \*Ban importation of all hive products unless irradiated.
- \*Continue to update National Sentinel Program.
- \*Have a readiness plan in place for Varroa with management strategies based on New Zealand and USA experience with Varroa hive management.
- \*Research into effects of Agricultural chemicals on the Honey Bee.
- \*Replace Wallgrove quarantine facility.

## **TRADE ISSUES**

The risk of imported honey and other hive products is too great for Government to allow. The importance of a viable Honey Bee Industry within Australia must be uppermost in Government minds during trade negotiations with other countries.

### **Recommendations:-**

- \*Labelling laws need addressing.
- \*Standards developed for domestic honey.
- \*Accreditation of Audit Standards.
- \*Ban imports of all hive products (honey, pollen, propolis etc.) unless irradiated.

## **IMPACT OF LAND MANAGEMENT AND BUSHFIRES**

Changes to land management are set to have some dramatic effects on the sustainability of the Honey Bee Industry. Major resources (State Forests) have undergone management change (NPWS) over the past few years. These forested areas are the Honey Bee Industry's rest and recuperation areas where bees can be placed out of Agricultural chemical danger. These areas contain the main resources for production of "organic honey" in which Australia could lead the World.

The Honey Bee Industry will shortly have developed an EMS type document included in a National Code of Practice which will ensure the Honey Bee Industry's compliance with the policies of Land Managers, and identify the environmental sustainability of the Honey Bee Industry.

Management for bush fires has changed along with overall management as vast areas of Forestry is changed to Conservation Areas. This has caused major loss of Honey Bee resources over the past few years and cannot continue. Forested land management policies and hence practices must change.

Due to the exclusion of stock and timber harvesting of these converted areas, fuel loads increase dramatically, and given the drier years Australia seems to be experiencing, massive bush fires are devastating millions of hectares each year of, primarily, honey bee resources. (Pilliga Scrub 150,000 hectares, Victoria over 1 million hectares) Country burnt like this will take 12 – 15 years to recover before flowering.

### **Recommendations:-**

- \*Have limited time managed grazing in all but the highest levels of conservation.
- \*Have cool winter time hazard reduction burns.
- \*Maintain all roads and strategic tracks in forested lands for fire access.
- \*Promote the Code of Practice (EMS).
- \*Allow Honey Bee access to Conserved areas.
- \*Have Honey Bee resources categorised as a National Resource.

## **RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION:-**

Because the Honey Bee Industry is a small industry both demographically and financially, yet contributes so much to society, funds for research, development and education will need to be augmented by groups other than the Honey Bee Industry (eg Horticulture, Agriculture and Governments). Research over time, proves to return its costs in benefits and research may find ways to eliminate some of our worst pests and diseases (eg Varroa).

Training should be extended to Government employees (DPI staff) to better service the Honey Bee Industry. State DPI budgets have reduced the number of dedicated Honey Bee Industry staff in recent years, disadvantaging the Honey Bee Industry.

Education is emerging as a must have, if the Honey Bee Industry is to continue into the future and young people must be trained to take on the role of Apiarists, Scientists and Researchers. Training schemes are being prepared, but they must get into the field and be supported by Government.

Education of the general public is perhaps as important as training young beekeepers. Both the community and Government need to be made aware of the value of the Honey Bee to society.

### **Recommendation:-**

- \*Skills training courses must be supported by Government.
- \*Promote the benefits of Honey Bees to the community.