



AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC

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AHBIC Chair Report 2020

2019-2020 has been yet another busy year for the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) and for the whole Honey Bee community in general. As I mentioned in last year's report, it is a very exciting time to be in Honey Bees. This past year has seen some excitement we would have rather avoided.

The Executive Committee since July 2019 has been:

Peter McDonald, Chair

Stephen Fewster, Deputy Chair

Leilani Leyland

Kevin MacGibbon (July 2018-Feb 2019)

Peter Barnes

Therese Kershaw

Trevor Weatherhead (Mar 2019-present)

Sarah Paradice, CEO (Jan 2019-Apr2020)

Helen Goodall, CEO (Apr 2020-present)

In brief, the main events this past year have been:

1. Ongoing drought conditions through much of the East Coast.
2. Bushfires damaging large swathes of prime beekeeping country.
3. A worldwide pandemic in COVID-19.
4. A new CEO.
5. Numerous exotic Biosecurity issues to manage.

As well as the issues outlined above, the AHBIC Executive has been very focussed on ensuring that the existing, continuing and on-going work that is currently in place continues to progress.

Some of this work is accomplished through partnering with our valued and Strategic partners.

AgriFutures - has been a consistent partner to our industry for many years. It manages all the Honey Levy money collected for the purposes of research and administers and directs it for our industry. In addition to this it also assists with any other issue the Honey Bee industry faces. An example is the bushfires event and recovery efforts. AgriFutures contacted AHBIC and in discussions we developed the idea of a workshop to examine the actions needed to assist our industry cope with and recover from the devastating bushfires.

Hive Aid - Around the same time, through discussions with Hive & Wellness, the idea of an aid program to directly assist beekeepers through the drought and bushfire impacts was established. Hive Aid was formed through this co-operation and Rural Aid was chosen as the professional aid provider. The program is endorsed by AHBIC because it is professionally run and satisfies an intense need for support for the

beekeeping community. This program will continue while there is a need to support those beekeepers who are in desperate need of help through drought and bushfire throughout Australia.

Plant Health Australia (PHA) – PHA has continued the valuable work in ensuring the programs for biosecurity run for the Honey Bee industry continue to operate effectively and evolve. We now have Bee Biosecurity Officers in every state that is was planned for (Vic, Tas, SA, WA, Qld & NSW) to enable the beekeepers within those states to benefit from the support of the BBO in improving the biosecurity standards of all beekeepers throughout Australia. A review of the NBBP is currently underway and aims to improve the system so that it can continue to operate effectively as our industry continues to evolve.

As well we have completed the incursion of *Varroa jacobsoni* into Townsville (2016) and continued the *V. jacobsoni* response, again in Townsville (2019). Recently in 2020 we have had yet another detection of *V. jacobsoni* in Townsville that is genetically separate from the previous 2 (2016 & 2019). This will also have to be managed through to conclusion.

These are the main items, though much other work continues through other partners such as the Cooperative Research Centre for Honey Bee Products (CRCHBP), B-Qual & State governments.

It is fantastic to see the growth in beekeeper numbers has also continued this past year, with total beekeepers registered this year going over 30,000 and those in the commercial side increasing to over 1,800. This shows the continued development of the industry as it continues to meet the demands of an increasing appetite for Australian Honey and a focus on the need for quality pollination services to meet the ever increasing requirement for quality food that Australia is famous for. This increase in numbers of beekeepers bodes well for the future, especially as the impact of the ongoing drought and bushfires impact severely on those most affected. Some of these beekeepers are seriously considering leaving as a result of the impacts and so new beekeepers are always needed.

This coming year will see a focus on changes to our levy system as AHBIC seeks to change the levies that are collected to continue and expand the critical programs for our future. We must continue to research, maintain our biosecurity standards and protections & monitoring honey standards as well as introducing more promotion for the food and services we provide. This will involve a long consultation process with industry groups and individuals that will occur over the next year with questions put to you in 2021 about the direction this will take.

Honey Bees continue to be exciting, I love this industry and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to lead you this past 2 years. Let's all look forward to 2020/21 being a year of plenty in terms of excitement about the future, increased honey production, increased sales to match, quality food pollinated and the premium prices our various products deserve. Enthusiasm, cooperation and working together as a coordinated team will allow this all to happen.

