

B-QUAL thanks the NSW Apiarists Association for the opportunity to present an update of our progress for the past year and a brief outline of our future plans.

As most will know B-QUAL is the industry owned Q A and food safety program owned by AHBIC, managed by an independent board of 5 Directors with the program and audits managed by AUS-QUAL one of Australia's leading providers of agribusiness auditing and certification.

The year to date has shown great interest from beekeepers across Australia in food safety with approximately 69 new enquiries, financial year to date, including 10 from NSW, a good many of those enquiries are already progressing to first audit stage.

The Board has decided to undertake a number of projects which will have the effect of promoting B-QUAL as the industry leading QA and food handling entity and be a major contributor to the industry in developing provenance and trust in our products by the public.

Some of these programs include:

Developing a digitisation version of the current audit and record keeping process which we hope will make record keeping and hive management easier for our members thus saving time and ultimately administration costs to their business. After site trials and some member feedback software development has now been commenced. It is expected the program will be completed by December 2020 and ready for field use by February 2021.

This process will ultimately lead to producers being able to show better traceability and provenance of their honey products and give their customers a greater sense of the quality and safety of their purchases.

At the Honey Assurance meeting held in Melbourne January this year it was decided that B-QUAL should be lead manager for the Characterisation of Australian Honeys, a joint program with CRCBP University of WA, and other industry and government stakeholders. Funding applications have been lodged for this program which would be ongoing over a number of years. The aim of the project will be to develop a strategy and library to characterise Australian honey products for biological identification, develop a batch numbering system that aligns to current quality assurance processes, track and trace and inform the industry of anti-counterfeiting packaging strategies and to assure customers of provenance. Australian honey products are presently trusted and this project will characterise honey to maintain this trust in a rapidly growing and diversifying export industry.

Other progress made during the 2019/2020 year has been the finalisation of applications to become a 3rd party accredited auditor for both NSW and SA Agricultural departments, which should make interstate hive movement for BQUAL members easier. Negotiations are now under way with Victoria; our plan is within time we will become a nationally recognised accredited auditor to all state departments.

Although we have embarked on these new programs, the normal day to day operations have continued to the benefit of our members including:

- the update and release of the revised Approved Suppliers program reference manual, which ensures our full compliance with the National Code of Practice.
- The ongoing standards review and any required actions,
- program statistics review and actions.

To increase biosecurity awareness and testing within our program all auditors were required during the year to complete the on line BOLT course.

For B-QUAL to be a significant industry voice and fund our future plans we have, for the first time, needed to source additional funding to be able to progress these programs and we sincerely thank Steritech, Hive & Wellness and CMV Group for their generous financial support which is guaranteed for the next 3 years.

For NSW Apiarists Association members we urge you to consider the benefits that B-QUAL membership can offer your enterprise and suggest that it may be of benefit to you to ring our office and have a chat and consider becoming a part of the B-QUAL family.

We thank you for the opportunity to present this update and wish all members a safe and successful year.

Wayne Fuller  
Chairman  
B-QUAL Australia.