

B-QUAL address to the:

## NSWAA 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

Wed, May 20, 2020 - Fri, May 22, 2020

West Tamworth League Club

B-Qual thanks the Chair and delegates to the 2020 Annual Conference of the NSW Apiarists Association for the opportunity to present an update of our progress for the past year and a quick look at our future ambitions.

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 of our products by the public.

Some of these programs include:

The company developing a digitisation package of the current audit and record keeping process which we hope will make record keeping and hive management records easier for our members to record thus saving time and ultimately administration costs to their business. Software development guidelines have been drawn up and software development is in place. This process will also ultimately lead to producers being able to show better provenance of their honey and be able to give their customers a greater sense of the quality and safety of their purchases.

At the Honey Assurance meeting held in Melbourne in January this year it was decided that B-QUAL should be the lead manager for the Characterisation of Australian Honeys, a joint program with (Collaborative Research Centre for Honey Bee Products) CRCHBP Univ 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 a 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 bee products are presently trusted and this project will characterise honey to maintain this trust in a rapidly growing and diversifying local and 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 3<sup>rd</sup> party 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 audit 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 to complete the on line BOLT course.

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

For those delegates at this conference 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 have a chat and consider joining B-QUAL.

We thank you for your time and wish the conference every success.

Wayne Fuller  
Chairman B-QUAL Australia Pty Ltd.