

28<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Sir

Please find below a submission on -

**The risks and opportunities  
associated with the use of the Bumblebee population in Tasmania  
for commercial pollination purposes.**

A] The existing distribution and population density of exotic bumblebees has not been fully studied and requires further research. Currently it is believed that the present population have descended from two queens that arrived in Tasmania in the early 1990's. There is a limited gene pool available.

B] Limited benefits may flow to Tasmanian glasshouse producers but negative benefits will occur for all other agricultural producers will be affected, when the inevitable event of escapees increases the impact and costs of controlling noxious weeds.

C] Environmental Impacts

i] Bumblebees will be in direct competition with honeybees, native bees, Honey-eaters and Swift Parrots, as well as causing “sleeper weeds” to become increasingly more invasive.

ii] Biodiversity may be impacted with reduced seed production by native plants and further impacted with increased seed production in exotic plants.

iii] There may be potential for the unintended spread of diseases and pests of honeybees

iv] If a precedent is established for Tasmanian Glasshouse production, mainland producers will expect to include the use of bumblebees in their establishments. Escapees on the mainland are inevitable.

D] Approval to use bumblebees in Tasmania will require an increased Biosecurity Regime for Victoria and New South Wales. Both states have declared Bumblebees as a 'Threatening Process'.

E] Currently Australia spends in the region of \$3.5 billion controlling weeds. Any commercial gain for Tasmanian Glasshouse Producers is likely to be totally subsumed by the inevitable increase in the weed control budget.

F] The current alternative native pollinator, the Blue Banded Bee, has had some research funds allocated, more work may be needed.

G] This issue has had many airings in past years and has always been refused. If this were before a Court of Law, and not a Senate Committee, the proponents would be termed Vexatious Litigants with the demand that clear new evidence was available, before any new hearing could be granted.

Permission to use or import Bumblebees in any jurisdiction in Australia should not be considered, never mind granted.

Yours sincerely

Robert J Bell