



# **AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC**

ABN: 63 939 614 424

## **SUBMISSION TO**

### **SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**Inquiry into the risks and opportunities associated with the use of the  
bumblebee population in Tasmania for commercial purposes**

Submission prepared on behalf of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council Inc.

## Introduction

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council Inc. (AHBIC) is the peak body for beekeeping in Australia. Its members are:-

Queensland Beekeepers Association Inc.  
New South Wales Apiarists Association Inc.  
Victorian Apiarists Association Inc.  
Tasmanian Beekeepers Association Inc.  
South Australian Apiarists Association Inc.  
Western Australian Farmers Federation Inc. – Beekeepers Section  
Honey Packers and Marketeers Association of Australia Inc.  
Australian Queen Bee Breeders Association Inc.  
National Council of Pollination Associations Inc.  
Associated Groups

### *(d) the implications for Australia's biosecurity regime of any approval to use bumblebees in Tasmania for commercial purposes;*

Whilst bumble bees in Tasmania do not currently carry any pests that will impact on the European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) which is managed commercially, as well as recreationally in Tasmania, the general opinion is that the bumble bees in Tasmania are very inbred due to the limited genetic diversity of the original stock that was introduced to Tasmania.

AHBIC is fearful that, if the use of bumble bees for pollination in Tasmania is permitted, then the pressure to import other stock to improve the genetic diversity of the current stock will be mounted. This is when there is a great biosecurity risk to the current honey bee industry in Tasmania and maybe Australia.

Australia does not currently have the varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*) present. This mite has caused major losses and costs for the beekeeping industry where it has been found in the rest of the world. There is evidence that whilst the varroa mite does not breed on the bumble bee it can be a vector for the varroa mite.

Tasmanian beekeepers currently have a market for package bees into Canada. Whilst this involves transshipping through Melbourne, there have been concerns raised about the possible introduction of *Braula coeca* to mainland Australia during transshipping. *Braula coeca* does not have the same devastating effect on honey bees as does the varroa mite. So it would be envisaged that there will be much disquiet about allowing the transshipping of package bees through Melbourne if the varroa mite was inadvertently introduced to Tasmania through the introduction of bumble bees from outside Tasmania. This would lead to the loss of this important source of revenue for beekeepers in Tasmania.

So whilst the approval for the use of bumble bees currently in Tasmania would seem to have no biosecurity risk for the beekeeping industry Australia wide, it is the consequent actions of wishing to improve the genetic diversity that poses a massive risk for our industry.

Executive Director  
Australian Honey Bee Industry Council Inc.  
3 March, 2016