

Government Response

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources

Inquiry Report:

***“More Than Honey: the future of the Australian
honey bee and pollination industries”***

Inquiry into the future development of the Australian honey bee industry “More Than Honey: the future of the Australian honey bee and pollination industries”

Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources

Government Response

The honey bee industry is a small but important part of the Australian economy and a contributor to the success of Australian agriculture. An Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics report, released by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) on 29 October 2008, noted that the estimated gross value of honey and beeswax production in 2007-08 was \$75 million and that there were 9 918 registered beekeepers in Australia during 2006-07.¹ As noted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources (the committee), taking into account all plant based industries and wool, meat and dairy production, it is estimated that the honey bee industry contributes directly to between \$4 billion and \$6 billion worth of agricultural production.²

Action has already been taken to implement some of the committee’s recommendations. The government convened a workshop on 29 August 2008 to consider how to give effect to several of the recommendations and to address key biosecurity risks impacting on pollination-dependent industries. Attendees included participants from the honey bee industry, pollination-dependent industries, research organisations and governments from around Australia. The projects and workplan of this group are incorporated in this response.

The committee’s biosecurity recommendations were referred by the Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, to the independent review of Australia’s quarantine and biosecurity arrangements (the Beale Review). The response to the biosecurity issues raised by the committee includes a range of policies and issues covered in the framework of the Beale Review’s recommendations to which the government has agreed in-principle. The government released the report of the Beale Review and its preliminary response on 18 December 2008.

The government also raised several recommendations at the Primary Industries Standing Committee meeting on 11 September 2008 to progress consideration of recommendations requiring a nationally co-ordinated response. These matters would best be considered in a single forum. This is likely to be the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council to allow environmental and agricultural issues to be concurrently managed.

On 4 November 2008, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Tony Burke MP, announced that, consistent with Recommendation 8 of the committee’s report, the government will provide \$300 000 over the next two years to

¹ Australian honeybee industry survey, 2006-07, RIRDC Pub. No. 08/170, October 2008.

² House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources, Parliament of Australia, *More than Honey: the future of the Australian honey bee and pollination industries* (2008) [1.1].

continue the National Sentinel Hive Program. The longer term scope of this program will be considered after completion, of a RIRDC and Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL)-funded project which is reviewing surveillance techniques for bee pests and pest bee species.

The government is continuing activities in response to the Varroa mite incursion in Papua New Guinea to analyse the impact, management and potential pathways to Australia and will undertake new work with New Zealand to learn from its experiences in responding to the pest. The government is looking to improve cooperation with Papua New Guinea to enhance preparedness to manage any Varroa mite incursion through the establishment of a biosecurity forum including representation from the Queensland Government. The forum would provide an opportunity to discuss Varroa and other bee biosecurity issues of mutual interest.

The government thanks the committee and the stakeholders who contributed to a significant and comprehensive report on the issues facing the Australian honey bee and pollination-dependent industries.

Recommendation 1 – Current and future prospects

The government supported the establishment of Pollination Australia and supports the existing mechanisms for funding and management contained in Pollination Australia's business plan. At this time, the government will not be providing resources beyond those already committed.

The government recognises the importance of a strong working relationship between the honey bee industry and those industries that rely on honey bee pollination. The government strongly supported the development of Pollination Australia by providing funds towards a Honey Bee Industry Linkages Workshop (April 2007) that was hosted by RIRDC, which led to its establishment.

In 2007 and 2008, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) provided \$313 200 for projects leading to the formation of an alliance between the honey bee and pollination-dependent industries and the development of a business plan for Pollination Australia. RIRDC contributed \$53 000 through its honey bee research and development program, as well as significant in-kind support to manage the project.

The government notes that Pollination Australia finalised its business plan in June 2008. According to the plan, the objective of Pollination Australia is to address the risks and promote the opportunities facing the pollination industry. Pollination Australia will be funded and managed by its member organisations in the honey bee industry and the horticultural and plant-based industries that are most dependent on honey bee pollination.

Recommendations 2, 3, 24 and 25: Research and training funding

The government notes Recommendation 24 but does not support the establishment of a new national centre for research, training and extension. The government will continue to work with Pollination Australia as the preferred coordinator to organise research and training. Instead of altering arrangements for research funding, the government supports maintaining current research funding arrangements, including the existing mechanisms available to industry to pursue an increased research funding base (Recommendation 25). The government encourages Pollination Australia to facilitate industry access to existing resources for research and training in paid pollination services (Recommendation 2) and alternative pollinators (Recommendation 3).

As the committee noted in its report, the process for establishing Pollination Australia through the Honey Bee Industry Linkages Workshop (April 2007) considered the suitability of a range of structures for ongoing research and training needs. Structures including a Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), a new Research and Development Corporation or a joint venture arrangement were assessed and rejected in favour of the current industry alliance formation of Pollination Australia. The government supports the use of Pollination Australia as the appropriate vehicle for organising research and training for the needs of the honey bee and pollination industries in preference to a new national centre for research.

Through the rural research and development corporation funding model, the government matches industry expenditure on research and development on a dollar for dollar basis up to a limit of 0.5 per cent of the gross value of production. The government notes that RIRDC's Honeybee Research and Development Program had a budget of \$647 000 for 2008-09 (including government matching contributions) for research related to bee keeping other than studies related to pollination (see below). The government also notes that RIRDC and HAL have proposed the establishment of a joint pollination research program, to be managed by RIRDC. A total of \$357 000 was committed, comprising \$220 000 from HAL and \$137 000 from the RIRDC Honeybee Research and Development Program, to the joint pollination research program for the 2008-09 financial year (including government matching contributions). Under this proposed program, paid pollination services and alternative pollinators have been identified as priorities for future investment. A Pollination Five Year R&D Investment Plan is currently being finalised and will be used to seek further investment partners³.

The government supports this model as a practical means of increasing industry and government investment in pollination research and development. Industry can increase its access to government funding through voluntary contributions or a statutory levy. As noted in the committee's report, the issue of placing a levy on pollination services was previously raised with the government in 2000. The Australian Government Solicitor argued against the proposal on the grounds that a pollination service does not fall within the definition of an animal or plant product under Schedule 27 of the *Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 (Cth)* and Schedule 14 of the *Primary Industries (Customs) Charges Act 1999 (Cth)*. The same advice still applies today. Legislative amendment would be required and the industry would also need to establish a case in line with the

³ RIRDC Pollination Five Year R&D Plan (RIRDC Forthcoming)

government's levy principles and guidelines, which includes that the levy has the majority support of all existing and potential levy payers. Should Pollination Australia wish to pursue a levy, the government would consider such a proposal, including necessary legislation.

Other options that Pollination Australia could explore for funding of research activities include:

- collaboration with existing CRCs (including the Bushfire CRC and the CRC for National Plant Biosecurity), where the management and boards of these CRCs agree that such collaboration is consistent with their strategies and proposed outcomes; and
- collaboration with universities to access funding programs administered by the Australian Research Council (ARC). The ARC is the primary agency responsible for administering Australian Government competitive funding for research in universities. Under the National Competitive Grants program, researchers are funded to build the scope and scale of their work and collaborative partnerships, including with industry. Funding is allocated competitively on the basis of research excellence determined by peer review. In 2008-09, it administered a budget of \$595.8 million program, with funding allocated according to a competitive merit based process.

The government also notes the following support that could facilitate improved training for Pollination Australia's member organisations:

- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Programs – through the Productivity Places Program (PPP), additional vocational education and training places are available over five years from April 2008, including Certificates II, III and IV in Agriculture, which are currently on the priority list for the PPP and provide relevant training for those seeking employment in the honey bee industry;
- the Tools For Your Trade voucher initiative - beekeepers undertaking Certificates II-IV under Australian Apprenticeship arrangements who commenced or recommenced on or before 12 May 2009, may be eligible for a tool kit voucher (valued up to \$800). Following the 2009-10 Federal Budget announcement, the Tools For Your Trade voucher initiative is transitioning to the new Tools For Your Trade payment initiative, commencing 1 January 2010;
- the new Tools For Your Trade payment initiative combines and extends three existing separate support initiatives (the Tools For Your Trade voucher initiative, Apprenticeship Wage Top-Up and the Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarship) into one new payment totalling \$3800 under the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive Program. The Tools For Your Trade payment initiative will be paid to apprentices and trainees in five tax exempt cash payments over the life of their Australian Apprenticeship, to help meet the costs of tools, books, protective clothing and fees. Beekeepers undertaking Certificates II-IV under Australian Apprenticeships arrangements who commenced or recommenced on or after 13 May 2009 may be eligible for the Tools For Your Trade payment initiative; and
- DAFF funding – in 2006-07 and 2007-08, the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council was provided with a total of \$84 281 to develop beekeeping-specific training materials to support national competency standards for beekeeping.

Recommendations 4 and 9: Control of chemical use on bees

The government agrees with the recommendation to improve labelling of chemicals to reduce their impact on bees (Recommendation 4) but does not consider that a fast track mechanism for chemical registration is required as existing processes are in train through AusVetPlan to ensure that chemicals necessary to control a Varroa incursion are available should they be required (Recommendation 9).

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is progressing work to strengthen the existing label statement regarding agricultural chemicals and their impact on bees. This will include further directions to users which would describe steps to minimise the impact of pesticides on bees and to allow beekeepers to manage their bees if placed near crops that are likely to be sprayed with a chemical product. The APVMA is consulting with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), which assesses the effect of chemical products on non-target organisms, such as bees.

In addition to the standard label statements, further advice from DEWHA, beekeepers or other relevant stakeholders may be needed on a case by case basis to determine and develop management advice for specific hazards, such as the toxicity to bee larvae and/or claimed effects on pollinating ability and colony health at low doses, either at the time of registration of a new product or review of an existing product. Such advice from DEWHA would result in amendments to label directions approved by the APVMA. Advice from DEWHA would be considered for amendments to the Ag Labelling Code published by the APVMA. All amendments to the Labelling Code are made in consultation with states and territories.

The APVMA is responsible for the registration of pesticides prior to sale and their regulation up to and including the point of retail sale. Before a product can be registered, the APVMA requires that pesticide manufacturers submit scientific data on any potential adverse effects to beneficial insects (including honey bees) of the proposed use of pesticides. Each chemical product submitted to the APVMA for registration undergoes rigorous scientific assessment before it can be approved. The APVMA also considers advice from DEWHA on such matters. Any risks identified through an assessment of data may then be mitigated by appropriate label instructions. In evaluating products the APVMA takes full account of the nature of the product, the scientific quality of the data and comments from consultation with manufacturers, Commonwealth advisory agencies, state and territory departments and other stakeholders, including the public.

The government has existing permits (approved through APVMA) to facilitate chemical responses to a Varroa incursion through the AusVetPlan and will continue to review and update these as necessary. Given the availability of existing permits for chemicals for a Varroa incursion, a fast-track mechanism for the registration of pesticides and other chemicals is not required. Animal Health Australia, as the custodian of the AusVetPlan, works closely with the Australian Government, states and territories and industry to determine priorities and continuously update the manuals to ensure their accuracy. Under the AusVetPlan – Disease Strategy Manual for Bee Diseases and Pests (AVP-Manual), the key components of the agreed response to a Varroa incursion include:

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- issuing minor use permits for chemicals in the surveillance of all managed apiaries within a 25 kilometre radius of the infected premise;
 - use of registered chemicals for the destruction of feral bee nests; and
 - destruction of infected commercial hives by burning.

DAFF will continue to work with industry and state and territory governments to identify the most appropriate chemicals for use in control of bee pests and to provide advice on the processes for emergency approval or registration of these chemicals.

Recommendations 5-7: Resource security

The government agrees to progress work with state and territory governments regarding beekeeper access to public lands (Recommendation 5) and bee friendly fire management practices (Recommendation 7). The government notes Recommendation 6 but does not agree to provide specific incentives for melliferous flora. However, it encourages Pollination Australia to explore options to increase plantings and conservation of optimal bee habitat under existing funding programs (Recommendation 6).

The committee was of the view “that the ‘precautionary principle’ should be reversed in the case of bees...”⁴ The government does not agree with this statement. The government will progress these recommendations in a manner which is consistent with its responsibilities under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) (Cth)* and the Convention on Biological Diversity to apply a precautionary approach to environmentally sustainable development (Recommendation 5).

The government agrees to progress access arrangements (including guidelines for access) to public lands (Recommendation 5) and the establishment of honey bee friendly fire management practices (Recommendation 7) with the states and territories as these matters fall primarily within their responsibilities.

The government is supportive of activities that have multiple environmental benefits and encourages Pollination Australia to explore its options for increased plantings and conservation of melliferous flora under appropriate government programs and private sector opportunities (Recommendation 6).

⁴ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources, Parliament of Australia, *More than Honey: the future of the Australian honey bee and pollination industries* (2008) [3.75].

Recommendations 8, 10-16: Biosecurity

The government will consider the merits of Recommendations 8 and 10-16 to improve arrangements for bees across the biosecurity continuum in the context of its further consideration of the recommendations of the Beale Review, noting that at this time it does not support a funding increase of \$50 million per year (Recommendation 16). The government does not agree with Recommendation 12 but agrees to progress Recommendation 14 with the states and territories.

The committee's recommendations cover the biosecurity continuum: from pre-border import risk analysis (Recommendation 12), to border detection of quarantine risks (Recommendation 11) and post-border outbreak control and mitigation strategies (Recommendations 8, 10, 13, 14 and 15). In addition, the committee has recommended a significant increase in funding to support this work (Recommendation 16).

The government is committed to ensuring Australia's biosecurity and quarantine arrangements are robust and science-based. The Beale Review has provided a well considered and comprehensive framework within which these arrangements can be delivered. The government has released its preliminary response to the Beale Review's recommendations and is now working towards implementing the proposed reforms which will depend on a number of considerations, including the outcome of negotiations with the states and territories, budget considerations, development of biosecurity legislation and ongoing discussions with stakeholders during 2009 and into 2010.

Pre-border activities

The Beale Review has recommended a significant increase in pre-border activities to improve the early detection and treatment of biosecurity risks, which will be discussed with state and territory governments. Pending the outcome of these discussions, Biosecurity Australia will continue to conduct Import Risk Analyses (IRA) in accordance with the *IRA Handbook 2007*, which ensures IRAs are conducted in an open and transparent manner taking account of the priorities assigned by the Import Market Access Advisory Group (IMAAG).

The committee recommended that a drone bee semen IRA be progressed before the end of 2008 (Recommendation 12). The comprehensive process required would not permit the completion of an IRA for drone semen by this time. The government notes, however, that honey bee semen from New Zealand is currently Priority A on the IMAAG import proposal priority list (available at <http://www.daff.gov.au/biosecuritycoordination>). Accordingly, further consideration of this matter will take into account work already undertaken by Biosecurity Australia to date on the generic honey bee semen IRA but may focus on imports of bee semen from New Zealand due to their favourable bee health status.

The government is continuing activities to enhance preparedness for a possible Varroa mite incursion and is supporting activities to assist the Papua New Guinean authorities respond to an incursion of a new subspecies of Varroa mite. The government is looking to improve cooperation with Papua New Guinea to enhance preparedness to manage any

Varroa mite incursion through the establishment of a biosecurity forum including representation from the Queensland Government.

Border

The government is committed to the ongoing provision of high security quarantine facilities for honey bees at the border. The current specialist bee quarantine facility will continue to be available while the Eastern Creek quarantine station operates. The needs of the honey bee and pollination industries for a new facility (Recommendation 11) will be considered as part of the government's further consideration of Beale Review recommendations on quarantine facilities.

Post-border

The Beale Review has recommended enhancements to Australia's pest and disease monitoring and surveillance network, based on a national set of priorities, a national research program and improved diagnostic capacity. The review also recommended closer co-operation with states, territories and industry to improve emergency response arrangements.

These enhancements apply across the biosecurity continuum, but are particularly relevant in the post-border context for bees. On 4 November 2008, the Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, announced that the government will support the National Sentinel Hive Program from July 2009 to June 2011 by committing \$300 000 over the next two years. The longer term scope of this program will be considered after completion, of a RIRDC and HAL-funded project reviewing surveillance techniques for bee pests and pest bee species. (Recommendation 8).

Additional work will be progressed with states and territories and industry to consider opportunities to improve the nation's incursion response capacity (Recommendation 10), establish a national endemic bee pest and diseases control program (Recommendation 13) and establish a national system of registration for beekeepers, bee hives and apiary sites (Recommendation 15). This work will build on the existing work program that DAFF is facilitating with the honey bee industry, pollination-dependent industries, research organisations and governments from around Australia to enhance early detection and emergency response and to develop viable business continuity options for honey producers and pollination-service providers, and the industries they support.

The government notes that biosecurity zones for Western Australia, Kangaroo Island, Tasmania and the Northern Territory are in place (Recommendation 14).

Funding

The government notes Recommendation 16 but does not support an increase in funding of \$50 million per year at this time. The government will further consider the funding needs of the bee and pollination-dependent industries in the context of its consideration of the Beale Review recommendations. The Beale Review recommends a funding analysis framework for the deployment of biosecurity resources based on the concepts of shared responsibility and risk-return. Shared responsibility involves commitment of resources

from industry and governments. Risk-return is the concept of allocating resources to the best risk management strategies across the biosecurity continuum.

Recommendations 17-23: Economic and trade issues

The government does not agree to Recommendations 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21. The government encourages industry to consider using existing mechanisms to address labour shortages (Recommendation 19) and improvements to product and labelling standards (Recommendations 20 and 21) in preference to the committee's approach and notes work already undertaken by the government. The government agrees in-principle with the need for international standards and the removal of tariffs for honey bee products (Recommendation 22) and efforts to reduce export costs where possible (Recommendation 23).

Referrals to Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and Productivity Commission

The government does not support the use of formal price monitoring under Part VIIA of the *Trade Practices Act 1974 (Cth)* unless a market displays characteristics that show competitive pressures are not sufficient to achieve efficient prices and protect consumers. As the committee did not conclude that the honey bee industry displayed such characteristics, the government will not be referring this matter to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (Recommendation 17).

The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government's principal review and advisory body on microeconomic policy and regulation. While the Productivity Commission may consider the effect of the regulatory environment on the efficiency of industries, it does not generally investigate the long term viability of industries. The government will not be referring this matter to the Productivity Commission (Recommendation 18).

Existing mechanisms for industry to explore

Given the relatively short time required to acquire the competencies for employment in the less-skilled occupations for which workers are sought by the honey bee and pollination sectors, it is the government's view that vacancies in these occupations could be filled through domestic recruitment and training and not migration arrangements.

The government further notes that there are a range of existing programs which support the recruitment of foreign labour. As the committee noted, visas are available for the industry, as "apiarist" is a recognised occupation for the Subclass 457 – Temporary Business (Long Stay) program.

In terms of the more flexible arrangements recommended by the committee, the government notes that individual employers within the honey bee and pollination industries are currently able to employ Working Holiday and Work and Holiday visa holders for up to six months to undertake skilled and unskilled work. Working Holiday visa holders in regional Australia who undertake three months of specified work, which includes cultivation and immediate processing of plant and animal products, may also be

eligible for a second visa. This initiative helps regional employers and provides a direct incentive for first-time Working Holiday visa holders to concentrate their work activities with primary producers.

In August 2008, the government announced a three-year Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme in the horticulture industry. The government is conducting the pilot to examine whether a seasonal worker program could contribute to foreign aid objectives and also assist Australian employers who demonstrate an inability to source labour. As this is a pilot, it is intentionally limited in scope to make it manageable and to give it the best chance for success. The pilot will be reviewed eighteen months after commencement and future directions will be determined by the government at that time. The government will continue the practice of reviewing its temporary and permanent migration arrangements to ensure they represent a balance between Australia's social, economic and environmental needs.

The government considers that changes to product and labelling standards are a matter for industry to pursue through established processes. For example, the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the code) currently includes:

- Standard 2.8.2 – Honey which sets certain compositional requirements;
- Standard 1.4.2 – Maximum Residue Limits which list the maximum permissible limits for agricultural and veterinary chemical residues for all foods including honey and other bee products; and
- Standard 1.2.11 – Country of Origin Requirements setting out labelling requirement for packaged foods including packaged honey and honey bee products.

Assessing compliance against these standards is the responsibility of a number of government agencies, including state and territory authorities and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS).

If the industry requires specific additional food regulatory measures in the code (for example, for equivalence to those in force in the European Union or more specific requirements with regard to the country of origin of individual honeys in a final mixed product), it can make an application to Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) seeking an amendment of the code to include these requirements. Information on how to amend the code can be found on the FSANZ website (www.foodstandards.gov.au).

The government also notes that legislative requirements under the *Trade Practices Act 1974 (Cth)*, and the fair trading and food acts in each state and territory, prohibit a food business from engaging in conduct that is misleading or deceptive or likely to mislead or deceive in relation to the advertising, packaging or labelling of food, to falsely describe food, or to provide food not of the nature or substance or quality demanded by the purchaser.

In addition to the established processes under the code, the government has committed to simplify and strengthen food labelling laws including a new 'Grown in Australia' label, consideration of amendments to the code to clarify country of origin labelling

requirements, and strengthening compliance.⁵ In 2007, a voluntary ‘Australian Grown’ labelling initiative, administered by Australian Made Campaign Limited, was developed to help Australian farmers and food processors to better promote the Australian origin of their products and better inform consumer choice. Under this initiative, a food may be labelled ‘Australian Grown’ if each significant ingredient of the food is grown in Australia and all, or virtually all, processes involved in the production or manufacture of the food have occurred in Australia. DAFF is currently monitoring industry uptake and consumer receptiveness to the voluntary “Australian Grown” initiative and is engaging with the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission to identify options for strengthening country of origin rules in the *Trade Practices Act 1974 (Cth)*.

Improvements to trading conditions

The international standard for testing and labelling honey bee products is the Codex Standard for Honey (CODEX STAN 12-1981). The government is not aware of any gaps in the existing Codex international standards in respect of testing and labelling provisions. However, the government will work with the honey bee industry, through existing consultation processes established by the Codex Australia Contact Point located within DAFF, to identify and address any gaps should they arise.

The government is also committed to pursuing the reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers that restrict exports of Australian honey and honey bee products. Successful conclusion of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round of trade negotiations remains a priority for the government.

The government is also pursuing reductions in non-tariff barriers including improvements to quota administration through WTO negotiations and increased transparency through bilateral consultations.

In addition to WTO negotiations, the government continues to pursue free-trade agreements (FTAs) which offer real commercial gains for Australian exporters. Australia’s existing FTAs with Chile, New Zealand, Singapore and the United States of America eliminated tariffs on Australian honey exports to these countries. Australia’s FTA with Thailand progressively reduces tariffs on Australian honey exports to zero by 2015. The agreement establishing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – Australian – New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) was signed in February 2009, and is expected to enter into force in the second half of 2009. Tariffs on Australian honey exports under AANZFTA will be eliminated either at entry into force or progressively reduced to 0%, with the exception of Indonesia, where the tariff on honey will be phased to 4% by 2015. The government is pursuing tariff reductions in ongoing FTA negotiations with China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Fees charged by AQIS make up the government component of costs for bee export certification. An additional cost component comes from the charges imposed by the state government agricultural agencies to recover the cost of site visits to examine the health status of bee colonies. The government agrees to progress Recommendation 23 with states and territories after the honey bee industry has consulted with states and territories

⁵ Labor’s Plan for Primary Industries (2007), pp 19-20.

on alternative inspection arrangements to be used to confirm the health status of bee colonies. Changes to inspection arrangements will also require consultation by the government with trading partners.

Inquiry into the future development of the Australian honey bee industry - Recommendations

- 1: The Australian Government provide the necessary leadership, funding and organisational resources to establish and run Pollination Australia.
- 2: The Australian Government fund research and training in the provision of paid pollination services as part of its contribution to Pollination Australia.
- 3: The Australian Government fund research into alternative pollinators as part of its contribution to Pollination Australia.
- 4: The Australian Government alter labelling requirements for agricultural chemicals to reflect their impact on honey bees and other pollinating insects.
- 5: The Australian Government, in conjunction with state and territory governments, establish guidelines for beekeeper access to public lands and leasehold lands, including national parks, with a view to securing the floral resources of the Australian honey bee industry and pollination-dependent industries.
- 6: The Australian Government provide incentives for the planting and conservation of melliferous flora under Commonwealth funded revegetation projects and carbon credit schemes.
- 7: The Australian Government fund research into the impact of fire management on the Australian honey bee industry with a view to establishing honey bee industry friendly fire management practices.
- 8: The Australian Government maintain and enhance the National Sentinel Hive Program with a view to ensuring that:
 - all major ports are covered by sentinel and bait hives;
 - all beekeepers are brought under the program, with priority given to those operating in the vicinity of port facilities;
 - arrangements are made for an effective program of pre-border security; and
 - government provides funding adequate to achieving the above objectives.
- 9: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry request that the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority fast track the pre-registration of pesticides and other chemicals necessary to combat a Varroa incursion.
- 10: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government improve the nation's incursion response capacity by providing for:
 - Better education of those charged with border protection;
 - Improved diagnostic capacity for pests and diseases;
 - The establishment of national diagnostic protocols;
 - The establishment of a national integrated pest and disease management protocol; and
 - The establishment of a comprehensive biosecurity research program for the honey bee and pollination-dependent industries.

11: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry establish a new honey bee quarantine facility as a matter of urgency, this facility to be commissioned prior to the closure of the current facility at Eastern Creek, and that:

- This facility is integrated into a national honey bee and pollination research centre;
- This facility have a containment laboratory for research on honeybee genomics and biotechnology;
- The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry enter into immediate negotiations with his New South Wales counterpart to establish the new honey bee quarantine facility at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, Camden, or some other suitable location.

12: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry direct Biosecurity Australia to complete the import risk analysis for drone semen by the end of 2008.

13: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in conjunction with state and territory governments, establish and fund a national endemic bee pest and diseases control program.

14: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in conjunction with state and territory governments, establish bee biosecurity regions based on natural boundaries, being:

- Eastern Australia, including New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia;
- Tasmania;
- Western Australia;
- Northern Territory; and
- Kangaroo Island.

15: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in conjunction with state and territory governments, establish a national system of registration for beekeepers, bee hives and apiary sites.

16: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commit \$50 million per annum in pursuit of biosecurity measures and research in support of the Australian honey bee industry and pollination-dependent industries.

17: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government request the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to investigate pricing practices for honey within the honey bee industry and the retail sector.

18: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government request the Productivity Commission investigate the long term viability of the Australian honey bee industry in respect of industry organisation, marketing structures and the financial viability of producers and packers.

19: The Committee recommends that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship look at the skilled migration program with a view to further refining opportunities for the honey bee industry and the emerging pollination industry.

20: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop product standards for honey and other bee products with regard to food standards and chemical contamination in line with those in force in the European Union, and that all imported honey products are tested against this standard.

21: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop labelling standards to more accurately reflect the place of origin and composition of honey and honey bee products.

22: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government pursue the development of a uniform international standard for the testing and labelling of honey bee products and the removal of all tariffs on honey bee products.

23: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with industry, reduce inspection charges, if possible, for queen and packaged bees to make the export of this product more cost effective to producers.

24: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a national centre for honey bee and pollination industry research, training and extension, funded as per Recommendation 16.

25: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government alter research funding arrangements to allow for:

- voluntary contributions to research funding to be matched by government funding; and
- a levy on pollination services to be allowed under law.

This government response is available at:
<http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/animal>