

# AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC



**ABN:** 63 939 614 424  
**Address:** PO Box 42 Jamison Centre Macquarie ACT 2614  
**Phone:** 0402 467 780  
**Email:** [ahbic@honeybee.org.au](mailto:ahbic@honeybee.org.au)  
**Web Site:** [www.honeybee.org.au](http://www.honeybee.org.au)

## MINUTES – AHBIC MEMBERS MEETING

**Date:** 26 October 2020  
**Time:** 11am - 12pm AEDT  
**Location:** Zoom Meeting

### 1. CHAIR – OPEN, ATTENDEES, APOLOGIES

The Chair, Trevor Weatherhead opened the meeting, welcomed all and confirmed attendees.

#### Attendees:

Trevor Weatherhead - AHBIC Chair  
Therese Kershaw - AHBIC  
Leilani Leyland - AHBIC  
Stephen Fewster - AHBIC  
Helen Goodall - AHBIC  
Phil McPherson - Victorian Apirists Association (VAA)  
Brad Jensen - Queensland Beekeeper Association (QBA)  
Jeff Ross - QBA  
Jo Martin - QBA  
Brendon Fewster - Bee Industry Council of Western Australia (BIWCA)  
Lindsay Bourke - Tasmanian Beekeepers Association (TBA)  
Stephen Targett - NSW Apirists Association (NSWAA)  
Sheila Stokes - Amateur Beekeepers Association of NSW (ABA NSW)  
Danny Le Feuvre - South Australian Apirists Association (SAAA)  
Ben McKee - Honey Packers and Marketers Association of Australia (HPMAA)  
Kevin Webb - HPMAA  
Debbie Porter - National Council of Pollination Associations (NCPA)  
Chris Kassebaum – Australian Queen Bee Breeders Association (AQBBA)

The Chair advised as per the motion of the 2020 AGM ‘*That BIWCA be admitted as an Industry member of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council once a resignation of WAFF is received and accepted*’ that AHBIC have just received formal notification of the resignation of WAFF.

### 2. GENERAL BUSINESS

#### 2.1 Determination of Bee Biosecurity Officers (BBO) payments for 2021

Discussion was held around levies in general and the levies review document that was provided at the AHBIC AGM in 2020. This document was prepared by Michael Clarke in May 2019, ‘*Review of the Honey Bee Industry Levies and Fees*’ and can be found at <https://www.agrifutures.com.au/product/review-of-the-honey-bee-industry-levies-and-fees/>

### *Honey levy*

There was general discussion around the lack of awareness of the obligation to pay honey levies and further education was required. It was noted that members have access through the AHBIC dropbox of honey levy payers in their state. Information on identified people who should be paying levies and are not can be provided to the Department through AHBIC.

ABA NSW made comment that the awareness was not there particularly as they represent the amateur beekeepers and the Association is a new member of AHBIC. They would like to promote this further.

It was noted that the honey levies add up to a total of 4.6 cents per kg of honey sold by the producer. It is payable on all honey sold but the payment is only triggered when over 1,500 kgs per year is sold. The AHBIC website includes information on paying the levies. AHBIC will include information in the newsletter for further circulation by AHBIC members. State departments are to be approached to include information on the obligation to pay the honey levy when they are sending registration information.

It was questioned whether the process to pay levies can be simplified and could AHBIC collect the levies. The Chair advised AHBIC is not able to collect levies, it is a requirement for statutory levies to be collected by a statutory authority such as Department of Agriculture. AHBIC worked a few years ago to have levy payments changed to included electronic payment for easier payment.

SAAA questioned the balances of the Emergency Plant Pest Response (EPPR) fund. The closing balances are as follows: 2018/19 - \$673,383.92, 2019/20 - \$888,098.02. It was noted that the increase in the closing balance was due to a decrease in expenditure in 2019/20, while the income closing balances has decreased due to reduced income from levies in 2018/19.

### *Hive levy*

BIWCA questioned a hive levy. The Chair advised that this had been investigated previously and the cost of the collection through the Department of Agriculture was a barrier. A proposal that the levy could have been collected when beekeepers paid their State registration was not supported by some States. A report was prepared and can be found at <https://www.agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/publications/10-143.pdf>

### *Pollination levy*

AHBIC's proposal to the Department to impose a pollination levy has not been accepted, as a levy cannot be placed on a service. The Department are reviewing the current Levies Legislation. In addition, AgriFutures are looking further at some information that AHBIC can present to the Department regarding a pollination levy, i.e. there is a thoroughbred horses levy on a stallion service.

### *Marketing levy*

AHBIC have written to AgriFutures requesting consideration by the AgriFutures Board to administer a marketing levy, should a marketing levy be progressed. There is a requirement for levies to be managed by a statutory authority. AHBIC is waiting on a response before progressing further.

It was noted that should a marketing level be implemented, imported honey would need to attract the levy. The Chair advised that previous advice was that if promotion was generic for all honey, then imports could attract a marketing levy. However, if promotion was for Australian honey only, then imported honey would not attract the levy. This will be investigated further and included in the information, should a marketing levy be progressed further.

### *Bee Biosecurity Officers (BBO) payments for 2021*

QBA expressed concern around the current funding arrangement which will not see adequate funds to continue a BBO in Queensland, with the agreement ending June 2021. The Chair noted that negotiation is required between the State Advisory Group, the State Department and Plant Health Australia. The Chair noted that AHBIC had previously offered support with the QLD funding arrangement however this support was not accepted. The paper provided at the AGM provides information on how the BBO's are funded. *Attachment one - AGM 2020 Statutory Levy Funds.*

SAAA questioned whether unused SA BBO funds due to the BBO position being vacant will be credited to SA. The Chair confirmed that this would be the case.

TBA made the recommendation that the shortfall of \$42,800 to pay for the BBO's be taken from the EPPR fund itself. This keeps all the states at their previous levels and provides the increase to NSW. It was agreed. AHBIC to amend figures and take back to PHA. *Please see amended table at Attachment two.* Further discussion may be required at the next members meeting

SAAA asked for an update on the bushfire recovery plan and the request for the Government to cover the shortfall in levies. The Chair advised that AHBIC have met with the Minister and have a meeting with the Departmental staff, including the Assistant Secretary this week for further negotiation.

#### **ACTION:**

AHBIC to include further information on honey levy payment requirements in the newsletter. AHBIC members to circulate information further.

Approach the State Departments to include educational information on levy payment requirements in the registration information.

AHBIC to amend funding table with the recommendation for the shortfall to be paid from the EPPR fund.

## **2.2 Update on AGM Motions**

The following motions were raised:

### **7. AHBIC to push for testing of NZ honey being imported to AUS**

TBA requested more be tested than sucrose when testing New Zealand (NZ) honey. The Chair advised that the testing being undertaken will identify more than sucrose.

QBA questioned why there is a push for testing of NZ honey only. TBA advised that currently NZ honey is exempt from the 5% random testing of honey coming into Australia.

QBA requested information of what is tested. AHBIC will provide a link in the newsletter to the National Residue Survey which advises of what we test for in Australia. The link can be found here. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/food/nrs/nrs-results-publications/animal-product-monitoring-2018-19#egg-and-honey-datasets>

AHBIC will also contact the Department on what they test for in imported honey.

**ACTION:**

AHBIC will provide a link in the newsletter to the National Residue Survey. AHBIC will also contact the Department on what they test for in imported honey.

5. *Review testing of beeswax being imported into Australia – AGM 2019*  
*Review the testing of beeswax and pollen being imported into Australia – AGM 2020*

It was noted that Beeswax is being used as a food. AHBIC will continue to lobby with Government that it has uses as a food. AHBIC is currently undertaking testing of beeswax samples as provided to AHBIC to gain further evidence.

8. *AHBIC to review and improve standard for Australian honey*

NSWAA questioned that the CRC/B-QUAL was not improving the standard, rather is only improving the traceability. The Chair asked for other suggestions on how to improve the standard of honey. QBA commented that there could be an introduction of minimum standards for extraction or making B-QUAL compulsory. The Chair noted that Government see honey as a low risk and as such they have not implemented food safety regulations.

The promotion of B-QUAL needs to continue. The Chair advised that B-QUAL have been in negotiation with NSW and SA departments, for beekeepers in those states who are audited under B-QUAL will then be deemed to be adhering to the requirements under the code of practice.

4. *That the VAA recommend to both Agriculture Victoria and to AHBIC that emphasis be taken from Sugar Shake and replaced with Alcohol Wash for future VARROA Detection.*

NSWAA questioned whether the alcohol is required to be registered. AHBIC to ask the question whether the alcohol needs to be registered.

**ACTION:**

AHBIC to follow up on whether the alcohol needs to be registered.

QBA raised that from their perspective any support/assistance provided in the drought and bushfire recovery, that the criteria should be for beekeepers that are paying the honey levy and meeting their biosecurity requirements. There were no objections with AHBIC promoting this as a criterion.

**ACTION:**

AHBIC to promote the criteria that any support/assistance in drought or bushfire recovery be for those beekeepers paying the honey levy independently or through a honey packer.

**2.3 Update from CroLife on BeeConnected app**

The update was noted.

**3. OTHER BUSINESS**

NSWAA advised that they have been successful in their \$1.9m grant for the Bushfire Industry Recovery Package.

QBA advised of their success in obtaining letters in writing from both the Labor and the National Liberal party agreeing to a 20-year extension to allow beekeeping on national parks until 31 December 2044. Due to the pending election, this should be implemented in the new year.

#### 4. NEXT MEETING

To be advised

#### 5. CLOSE

Meeting closed at 12.10pm.