

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

On behalf of industry, I would like to thank all members for their support over the past year. This has definitely been one of the most difficult years, with low honey prices and the price of fuel continuously rising. How long can beekeepers sustain these conditions? I would also like to thank all the financial contributors for their ongoing support. It is important that these contributions are maintained so we can continue to represent the industry on the many issues now before us.

Industry Partnership Programme

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council was successful in gaining funding to develop a strategic plan. In September 2005 the plan, "Future directions for the Australian Honeybee Industry" was released. At the last Executive meeting the key recommendations were looked at and have now been prioritized. Stage 2 of this programme gave us the opportunity to develop one of the recommendations from the strategic plan being to address the ongoing issue of resource access and training. The application is for funds to develop a national code of conduct for access to apiary sites on public lands and environmental management. This may be the first step in developing an Environmental Management System for the bee industry. Also included in the application is for funds to start the first steps in developing education materials for industry training.

Meeting with the Minister

On the 8th of February Stephen Ware and I met with the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Mr Peter McGauran. At that meeting discussions took place on many issues.

The important issues covered were:

- Advice on how to fund the development of our educational training materials
- Industry Partnership application
- Sponsorship for Apimondia 2007
- Export Control Act

The meeting was very productive. The Minister's influence on some of these issues will come to fruition in the near future with AHBIC.

Professional Advice on Marketing

AHBIC is receiving advice on how we can best market our industry. At the moment each state has some very good existing publications used for promotion.

The Executive has asked for recommendations on:

- The most cost effective manner for industry to promote its products and services to the public.
- How existing marketing material can be best used by industry
- The production of a marketing plan for consideration by industry.

Animal Health Australia

The Sentinel hive programme was reviewed last year. AHBIC has asked Animal Health Australia to coordinate this, but at this stage the government can not agree on who is responsible for it; AQIS or Biosecurity Australia. AHBIC has also requested some funds for surveillance training

Australian Queen Breeding Group

AHBIC has now formed the Australian Queen Bee Breeding Group Inc. In conjunction with the University of Sydney and participant beekeepers, industry is establishing a closed population breeding programme comprising of 20 Black lines and 20 Italian lines. The committee has also agreed to import 2-3 lines of stock from overseas.

Inquiry into Rural Skills Training and Research

Industry made a written report together with a personal presentation to the Inquiry into Rural Skills Training and Research. This inquiry has gained considerable publicity particularly in respect of issues raised by the apiary industry. At the time of writing, the final report has not been completed but industry is hopeful that, following a sympathetic hearing, the final recommendations will provide some much needed assistance to research and educational training.

Finally I would like to thank the Executive for their support throughout the year. I would also like to thank all the committees of AHBIC for their continuous work during the year. Special thanks must also go to our Executive Director Stephen Ware and Laurel Pickering in the office. Their dedication and commitment to AHBIC is a credit to our industry.

Stephen Fewster – Chairman