



**AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY
COUNCIL**

**BUSINESS PLAN
2012- 2017**

OUR MISSION

To ensure the long term security and prosperity of the Australian Honey Bee Industry in Australia

OUR ASPIRATION

Advancing Australia in Agriculture

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following Business Plan is being prepared by the Executive Director of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) in cooperation with the AHBIC Executive and is submitted for approval by the Council.

The current plan attempts to incorporate the Industry's previous strategic plans, namely:

- December 1995 Strategic plan
- December 1997 Vision for the Australian Honey Industry implemented
- The Australian Agricultural Industry Strategic Plan 1992-1997
- AHBIC Business Plan 1998
- AHBIC Business Plan 2001-2005
- AHBIC Business Plan 2008-2012

In addition to the other reviews and business plans Industry notes that an Industry committee undertook a review of the AHBIC Constitution resulting in a number of changes which were implemented in 2010/2011.

The resulting documents seek to provide a blueprint for the next five years outlining the organisation immediate goals and long term objectives.

Each year the document will be reviewed to measure the organisation's performance and ensure the Industry goals are being met.

2.0 BUSINESS PROFILE

2.1 *Business Overview*

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council was incorporated in Western Australia in April 1998. The company is located at offices situated in Sydney.

AHBIC has achieved an excellent reputation as an Industry Association for the Honey Bee Industry in Australia.

The Business Plan has developed to enable AHBIC to clearly see what business it is in and where it is headed.

Since the last business review AHBIC has undertaken significant structural adjustments culminating in the reduction of the Company's workforce from two full time employees to a part time Secretariat operating on a budget of one third its previous expenditure base. Funding has also been progressively moved from total dependence on the packing sector to direct contributions from producers including a contribution for biosecurity from the Animal Health Australian Honeybee Contingency Fund.

It is therefore important that the Business Plan and the outcomes reflect financial resources available to the Industry Peak Body and also that it continues to service the Apiary Industry with reduced resources.

AHBIC is the Peak Industry Body for the Apiculture Industry comprising of the following member organisations:

New South Wales Apiarists' Association
Queensland Beekeepers' Association
South Australian Apiarists' Association
Tasmanian Beekeepers' Association
Victorian Apiarists' Association
Western Australian Farmers Federation - Beekeepers Section
Honey Packers' and Marketers' Association of Australia
National Council of Pollination Associations
Australian Queen Bee Breeders' Association

The objectives of AHBIC are very broad but essentially aimed at fostering, promoting, enhancing and protecting the interests of members of the Australian Honey Bee Industry. The formation of AHBIC provided the vehicle for Industry to speak with one voice on major Industry issues. This has allowed Industry to make one submission rather than numerous of submission on a wide range of issues and facilitating communication of the Industry's view point at a Federal level.

3.0 ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Strategic Goal

To continue to ensure the Apiary Industry in Australia is represented.

The role of AHBIC includes:

- Liaison with Government
- Ideas from Industry to Government
- Industry Watchdog
- Implementation of those ideas
- Communication to Stakeholders
- Monitoring Industry Development and Highlighting Issues
- A representative

The organisational outputs must be measured in terms of:

- improved communication with members
- implementation of resolutions passed by the Executive and Council
- timely and satisfactory responses to industry concerns by government and third parties where decisions and actions intersect.

A number of subject areas are of major importance to Industry, namely:

- Quarantine and Trade
- Education
- Resources

3.2 Outcome

The funding of operations will continue to be primarily by way of voluntary contributions.

3.3 Target Strategies

Program direction will be achieved through the:

- Board of AHBIC providing strategic direction
- AHBIC Council where all members are represented
- Use of AHBIC Committees to provide assistance in maintaining action on specific components of the AHBIC program
- Preparation of an annual report by the AHBIC Secretariat to be submitted to the members at each Annual General Meeting.

Day to day management is the responsibility of the Executive Director who has specific responsibility for:

- ensuring the key performance indicators of the business plan are delivered within the agreed time lines and budget;
- regularly informing the Executive Committee of progress being made;
- liaison with relevant members to ensure that they are kept informed of current activities;
- the conduct of monitoring and where appropriate audits, to ensure the agreed outcomes are delivered within budget and in a timely and effective manner
- development and maintenance of appropriate contract arrangements between AHBIC and outside contractors to the program

Operational activities will be developed in conjunction with the AHBIC Executive and other organisations where appropriate.

4.0 SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Australia is one of the few countries with a healthy bee population
- Horticultural industry depends on pollination services, creating strong demand for these services
- There are good profits to be made in the industry
- Pollination services provide a valuable service to agriculture beyond the value of the paid service
- Pollination fits in with management of an apiary business
- Industry is highly mobile so can service clients in many different areas
- Industry has a large range of expertise in all areas of beekeeping
- Good competition throughout the industry
- Most professional horticulturalists do recognise the value of pollination services
- Good quality assurance program (B-QUAL)
- Australia has diverse flora
- Recognised as a quality producer of honey

Weaknesses

- Perceived inability within the industry to influence the government on natural resource issues
- Disease and hive pests can be transferred across large distances due to the high mobility
- Undercutting in pollination is taking place by beekeepers who do not fully cost their service and value of expertise
- Farmers are not able to readily recognise the quality and value of an experienced pollinator before purchasing the services
- Pollinators do not have a say on the types of chemicals used by horticulturalists
- Ongoing risk to hive strength from pesticide spray
- Lack of understanding by pollinators in stocking rates and colony size and strength for specific crops
- Inability to pass on knowledge to young people as accumulated human capital not written down
- Biosecurity system still needs strengthening to protect industry from introduced diseases and pests
- Industry fragmented
- Long term funding
- No targeted marketing
- The need to ensure hive bee exports to USA following their suspension.
- *Apis cerana* has been declared endemic in Australia

Opportunities

- Improved queen bee breeding program using imported genetic material
- Develop an industry-driven national strategy to gain increased access to native forests
- Achieve better cooperation in the industry
- Greater cooperation and communication between pollinators and horticulturalists
- Increase fees for pollination services
- Opportunities to import superior genetic resistant material
- Continue to research from good base to improve productivity
- Promotion of non-chemical disease control methods could improve industry image
- Coordinated marketing
- Containment programme for *Apis cerana* may speed up control efforts including baiting with Fripinol
- Recovery of market access to USA and other countries through further research.

Threats

- There is a high risk from other honey producers bringing pests and diseases into Australia
- There is a lack of understanding within government on the pest and disease risk associated with bees
- Lower profitability as a result of increased supermarket buying power
- Imported honey being substituted for domestically produced honey and/also used to drive down prices
- High risk of Varroa mite entering Australia

5.0 BIOSECURITY

5.1 *Strategic Goal*

- Goal is to keep Australia free of exotic pests and minimise endemic pests
- All hive product imports to meet Australian Standards
- Increase funding from beekeepers to fund acceptable biosecurity arrangements
- Ensure all states have uniform policies

5.2 *Outcome*

The key elements of national biosecurity framework are:

- *Robust, sustainable government-industry partnerships ('shared responsibility')*
AHBIC was originally under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA). With the advent of the beekeeping industry moving to Plant Health Australia, our industry will now be covered by the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD). Any diseases or pests covered under EPPRD will be covered by an agreed cost sharing agreement. This agreement will need to be negotiated by industry.
- *Strategic planning and policy development*
With the move from EADRA to EPPRD, there is still policy to be developed on the agreement for the shared costing of any eradication program. This is needed to be done with a degree of urgency. With the advent of interceptions of unwanted bees from the Asian region at our ports, there needs to be a plan developed with Government to ensure that the maximum effort is being put into checking vessels leaving ports to ensure that they do not carry these unwanted bees which may carry pests and diseases i.e. pre border management.
- *Regulation and compliance*
 - International treaty obligations and trade agreements
 - Government veterinary services: a 'competent authority' to support international trade
 - Interstate movement regulations
 - New Commonwealth biosecurity legislation – under
- *Surveillance and monitoring*
Effective surveillance and monitoring in 'peacetime' and during disease incidents is critical; the early detection of animal disease incursions is especially important. The role of states/territories and industry is critical; clarification of funding arrangements is required. Pollination Australia continues to work with researchers and industry to improve detection methodology.
- *Research, development and extension (RD&E)*
Under its National RD & E Framework, PISC has addressed the issue of national coordination and rationalisation of roles, responsibilities and resources according to regional priorities, creating opportunities and efficiencies across jurisdictional boundaries. This could provide a useful model for a national biosecurity framework.

Identified work can also be considered by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) through the Honey Bee Research and Development Committee (HBRDC) for funding. The extension side of this would be crucial to educate beekeepers on the risks that are posed to them by an unwanted incursion.

With the Transition to Management (T2M) plan that has been agreed to by the Federal Government and the Queensland Government, there are areas that will be identified that need research funding. This will be done through the money that the industry, through AHBIC and the Federal Council of Australian Apiarists' Associations (FCAAA), is putting up. The longer term aim of this research is to further enhance the industry's ability to not only continue *Apis cerana* but to respond to future incursions.

- *Diagnostic capability*

The diagnostic services provided by government, university and private laboratories are an essential underpinning component of the national investigative, surveillance and reporting capability. Diagnostic capability is inextricably linked to research activity, and must be continually replenished and complemented by vigorous research program.

AHBIC supports schemes that educate those in the various States on disease and pest identification.

- *Intelligence and information management*

The timely availability of accurate and useful information is of crucial importance in both 'peacetime' and in responding to outbreaks of pests and diseases. The effective use of modern communications technology is an essential component of a national biosecurity framework.

- *Identification and traceability of animals/product*

In the event of an incursion, the early detection and rapid tracing (forwards and backwards) from the index case are of critical importance. The ability to rapidly and accurately trace animal movements is also important for food safety, food security, the control of endemic diseases and market access. As part of the development of B-Qual a biosecurity plan has always been part and parcel of the programme.

- *Emergency preparedness and response*

While the emergency preparedness and response arrangements for animals and plants are relatively well developed and understood, in comparison with other sectors, there is concern that Australia would struggle to mount an effective response to a major outbreak such as Varroa. To this end, AHBIC is working with various funding bodies to identify research that will help beekeepers, firstly with eradication but if that fails, learning to live with the pest.

- *Communications and engagement (consultation)*

Through their long established formal and informal consultation arrangements at various levels, the Commonwealth and state/territory governments are able to

communicate effectively. In general, most industries have difficulty in maintaining effective communications. Both AHA and PHA have well-established consultative mechanisms that have partly addressed this issue for the livestock and plant sectors.

- *Education and training*

For most agricultural, aquatic and environmental industries, there appears to be a deficiency in the amount and quality of biosecurity education and training, at all levels. The uptake of available training could also be improved.

- *Governance and structural arrangements*

A revitalised national biosecurity system may require a new, innovative business model that draws upon experience in other sectors and overseas. One option is that post-border activities that are in the national interest could be funded and managed under a partnership between the Commonwealth, states/territories and industries.

5.3 *Target Strategies*

Quarantine and incursion management remain important issues to safeguard the Australian honey bee industry. The issue of disease control is the responsibility of States; however, since AHBIC joined Animal Health Australia (AHA), industry and government are increasingly working towards a national coordinated approach:

- Maintenance of Australia's disease free status
- Ensure industry can respond adequately to incursions
- Maintain industry Ausvet Plan and quarantine protocols
- Monitoring ongoing activities of OIE (World Animal Health Organisation)
- Maintenance of port surveillance program
- Continued membership of Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia
- Ausvet Plan
- Codex Alimentations
- Training and maintenance of industry readiness teams

6.0 **RESOURCE ACCESS**

6.1 *Strategic Goal*

Develop guidelines for continued access in forests and parks in Australia for beekeepers.

6.2 *Outcome*

Beekeepers access to parks and forest that are currently unavailable. No restrictions on beekeepers to access parks and forest

6.3 *Target Strategies*

To help states to regain access in forests systems by assisting in communications with State Governments on behalf of relevant states:

- Ongoing consultation with state and federal ministers responsible for public land access
- Industry to maintain a database of publications supportive of the apiary industry and the environment

7.0 RESIDUE CONTAMINATION

7.1 Strategic Goal

- Keep NRS Funding
- Eliminate residues from hive products
- Registering of chemicals and training in use of same
- Encourage QA programs
- To continue to maintain, uphold and preserve the reputation and marketability of Australian honey as a residue free quality product in domestic and international markets. To minimise the use of chemical therapeutic treatments of honey bees in Australia where possible

7.2 Outcome

A residue free Australian honey product with a continued competitive advantage due to the reputation and quality of Australian honey as a 'clean & green' product. The continuance of market access to key international markets.

7.3 Target Strategies

- Delegation of responsibility to a Technical Committee to monitor the residue status of Australian honey and related industry issues that require preventative management
- Conduct of independent National Residue Survey
- Support of appropriate industry research and development

8.0 MARKET ACCESS

8.1 Strategic Goal – Maintenance of existing markets for apiary products

- Help for new people exporting apiary products
- Re-opening of live bee markets to USA, Korea
- Honey to be included in proposed free trade agreements with South Korea and China.
- Removal of impediments to Queen bee exports

8.2 Outcome

Industry seeks to maintain existing trading arrangements with major export markets. At the same time there is a need to ensure Australian apiary products are not discriminated against in world markets.

8.3 Target Strategies

Industry is seeking to undertake a risk assessment of the live bee trade to the USA as part of the containment strategy for ASIAN Bee's. Additionally industry continues to work with the Federal Government to ensure any new or existing trade arrangements allowed access to Australian apiary products.

9.0 PROMOTION OF AUSTRALIAN HONEY

9.1 Strategic Goal

For the Australian Honey Bee Industry to remain viable, it is the interest of the whole industry to promote increased consumption of honey and in particular Australian honey at the expense of imported and artificial honey.

9.2 Outcome

To have each section of the honey industry, organize promotional activities in their local area on the first full week of June each year.

9.3 Target Strategies

- Create press releases and liaising with paper media (rural, provincial, metro, community and consumer), encouraging them to write bee related stories and beekeeper/honey supplier profiles
- Have Beekeepers and packers contact local radio and television stations suggesting they might run stories relating to our industry during BEE WEEK
- Develop a schools resource kit, which includes a Bee Week backgrounder, Bee Facts sheet, Word Puzzle, Colouring-in comp etc. (prizes donated by sectors of the industry)
- Liaising with schools to organise beekeeper visits
- Creating and printing a Bee Week poster
- Developing a colouring-in comp and pitching it to local provincial/community and internet-based media
- Organising bee product giveaways through local media
- Drafting five media releases on bee related issues (i.e. shortage of beekeepers in the industry, value of pollination, effects of Varroa, Asian bee etc.) and distributing them each day throughout the week
- Contacting libraries nationwide and provide them with Bee Week collateral material

10.0 EDUCATION

10.1 Strategic Goal

- Educate and inform Federal Ministers of the national importance of beekeeping and pollination
- Expand industry resources on technical information for the honey industry and improve the overall delivery and content of knowledge to beekeepers

10.2 Outcome

- Source funding to support workshops and education sessions to cover the strategic goal
- Organise workshops at Beekeepers state conferences and field days to determine the knowledge gaps of beekeepers
- Organise training sessions, in the form of short workshops at Beekeepers state conferences and field days to cover knowledge deficiencies
- Expand industry resources on technical information for the honey industry via online fact sheets or promotional materials which may be made available at state field days
- Liaise with RTOs to improve the accessibility of Traineeships in beekeeping to employees in the honey and beekeeping industry

10.3 Target Strategies

- Organise training sessions together with member organisations, in the form of short workshops at Beekeepers state conferences and field days to cover knowledge deficiencies in:
 - Composition of Honey
 - Functional properties of honey and how to use honey as an ingredient in food manufacturing
 - Health related aspects of honey, GI, prebiotics and energy
 - Who to contact and how to detect for adulteration, residues and contamination of honey
 - State food safety and quality requirements
 - Where to access training for specific industry needs
 - Honey bee colony health maintenance
 - Biosecurity
 - Traineeships
- Expand industry resources on technical information for the honey industry. This can be provided as either online fact sheets or promotional materials, for example at state field days. Technical information fact sheets to cover:

11.0 COMMUNICATION

11.1 Strategic Goal

- *Continue with the outflow of good information*
- *Continue with monthly newsletters*
- *Continue to educate the community*

11.2 Outcome

To ensure the public and decision makers continue to be aware of the importance of the apiary industry not only as producer of high quality apiary products but a major contributor to ensuring the pollination of food and pasture crops.

11.3 Target Strategies

A continued flow of press releases and articles from Pollination Research & Development Committee and RIRDIC on industry's importance.

Targeted information to politicians and decision makers on the importance of industry to pollination.

12.0 HONEY BEE RESEARCH

The Australian honeybee industry pays to the Australian Government a statutory levy on honey and queen bees sold. The research and development component of these levies are provided to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) for expenditure within the Honeybee Program. The Australian Government matches expenditure from the Honeybee Program, up to 0.5% of the gross value of production of the honeybee industry.

The Honeybee Program invests in research, development and extension activities consistent with a five-year investment plan. The strategic goal, outcome and target strategies below are from the draft investment plan scheduled to cover the period 2012/13-2016/17, that RIRDC is developing in consultation with AHBIC.

12.1 Strategic Goal

The strategic goal (referred to as the mission) of the RIRDC Honeybee Program is to manage investment in research, development and extension that will:

- Assist the industry ensure the health of managed European honeybees
- Assist the industry manage European honeybees using sustainable methods to be more productive and increase beekeepers profitability

12.2 Outcome

The outcome (referred to as the vision) of the RIRDC Honeybee Program is for a productive, sustainable and more profitable Australian beekeeping industry.

12.3 Target Strategies

The following target strategies (referred to as the objectives) of the RIRDC Honeybee Program will drive investment in 2012-2017 (indicate target investment levels as a proportion of total investment are shown):

- Reduce the incidence and impact of pests and diseases on honeybees (45%);
- Increase the productivity and profitability of beekeepers (20%);
- Increase understanding of the role of flora in honeybee management (20%);
- Promote extension, communication and capacity building (15%).

In partnership with a number of horticultural industries within Horticulture Australia Ltd, RIRDC established the Pollination Program. RIRDC's funding contribution to the Pollination Program has been \$100,000 per year, allocated from the Honeybee Program. Funding from Horticulture Australia Ltd has been significantly greater.

The following target strategies (referred to as the objectives) of the Pollination Program drive investment in 2009-2014 (indicate target investment levels as a proportion of total investment are shown):

- Incursion risk minimisation – for early detection of a threat to pollination service supply; (10%)
- Improving the effectiveness and economic return from pollination – living with Varroa; (20%)
- Resource access – landscape and nutrient management for effective pollination; (10%)
- Pest and disease management – to ensure the ongoing supply of pollination services; (45%)
- Reducing crop dependence on honeybees – native pollinators and self-pollinating crops; (5%)

- Communication – including pollination education, extension and capacity building. (10%)

13.0 NATIONAL RESIDUE SURVEY

The National Residue Survey (NRS) residue monitoring program for honey is designed to support the market access to export markets. The program provides evidence of good practice in the use of pesticides and veterinary medicines within the honey industry and by the Australian agricultural industry in general.

The monitoring plan estimates the occurrence of residues in honey using randomised sampling. The likelihood of residues from pesticides and veterinary medicines or contaminants (e.g. metals, persistent organic chemicals) guides the choice of chemicals that are monitored. These chemicals include those that may be used specifically in honey production and those used more widely in agricultural and veterinary practice. Some chemicals monitored are not registered for use—and are not likely to be used—in Australian production systems.

Honey samples are taken by authorised officers from state and territory government authorities at appropriate stages of the production chain. The samples are sent directly to a central receive and dispatch facility within NRS.

Honey samples are tested for organochlorines, organophosphates and synthetic pyrethroids, as well as for antibiotics, metals, paradichlorobenzene and chloramphenicol.

13.1 Strategic Goal

Ensuring that the NRS residue monitoring program for honey fulfils the requirements of:

- the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) for export certification and therefore market access
- trading partners
- any other residue monitoring needs of the honey industry.

13.2 Outcome

The NRS residue monitoring program for honey continues to achieve the goals outlined above

13.3 Target Strategies

Continue to maintain a residue monitoring program for honey that meets the standards of best international practice.

14.0 B-QUAL AUSTRALIA PTY LIMITED

14.1 Strategic Goal

B-Qual Australia Pty Limited is a company incorporated to manage the Quality Assurance Program. The purpose of the project is to accredit and have adopted a quality assurance program for greater than 90% of the production of the Australian honeybee industry. The project will develop accreditation and train industry participants in QA standards, organic standards and biosecurity as well as providing on ongoing third party audit system.

It is well recognised in the honey industry that quality standards in relation to food safety are demanded by customers, wholesalers and governments. Also, it is necessary to comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) Food Safety Standard, which requires food businesses to develop a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) based food safety program.

14.2 Outcomes

This project will include the production and delivery of:

- Industry Food Safety Plan
- 'Honey Quality Standard' booklet
- QA templates to assist beekeepers with the writing of a quality manual
- Training material for industry facilitators
- Auditor training manual
- National 'Auditor Training Workshops'
- Templates including criteria for the production of organic honey.
- Development of an industry biosecurity plan

The project involves a three year program with the ultimate aim of ensuring that in excess of 90% of all honey produced in Australia is quality assured for both domestic and export customers. The specific requirements of the European Union (EU) for the export of honey and honey products (including organics) will be met. The requirements of ANZFA Food Safety Standard will also be developed. The adoption of these standards will enable continued market access both in Australia and overseas. The project will produce for industry to adopt, an auditable biosecurity plan.

It is also proposed that the adoption of a national quality standard will form the basis of an ongoing program to ensure industry best practice and ongoing industry training.

14.3 Target Strategies

The development of an organic standard provides a new niche market for honey and honey products. The prices of products of organic farming are generally higher than alternative products as many people are willing to pay a premium because of environmental protection.

Product standards include all facets of production and services of the industry including honey, queen bees, pollination and honey packing. The resulting system provides a self-policing means of ensuring standards are both kept at industry best practice and meet the domestic and international market demands.

Work on an Industry EMS through DERM in Queensland will result in measured and potential marketing advantages to Industry

Further work on Pollination services will also add further value to the B-QUAL Accreditation System.

15.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

The operational companies of AHBIC, Australian Queen bee breeders and B-Qual Australia have had their risks assessed by the application of a risk management matrix. Plans to address the risks identified have been developed.

Areas where risk has been assessed as being large enough to warrant specific attention have been separated into individual company identities. Thus Australian Queen bee breeders and B-Qual Australia have been developed as separate identities in their own right.

It is noted that the company is currently dependent upon voluntary contributions from industry, a situation which will need to continue for some time. The organisation, as part of its long term goals, is working to achieve self-sufficiency. Clearly, however, in the short to medium term, the greatest risk to the organisation is ensuring financial viability by maintaining the support of industry contributors to this end.

16.0 CONCLUSION

This represents an ambitious five year plan for industry. It identifies the major issues facing the Australian honey bee industry and challenges industry to develop the responses required to address them.

The implementation of AHBIC's five year plan should ensure enhanced efficiency and increase the profitability of industry. The plan's implementation should lead to the following outcomes.

- improved corporate governance
- enhanced relationships with member bodies
- improved communication with industry members, government departments and other agencies
- improved targeting of promotional effort
- maintenance of a low cost self funded industry association

APPENDIX 1

AHBIC CONSTITUTION