

19 September 2024

Re: Emergency Plant Pest Response Fund and Re-paying The Commonwealth for the 2022 Varroa Response.

To the Australian Honey Bee Industry Levy Payers,

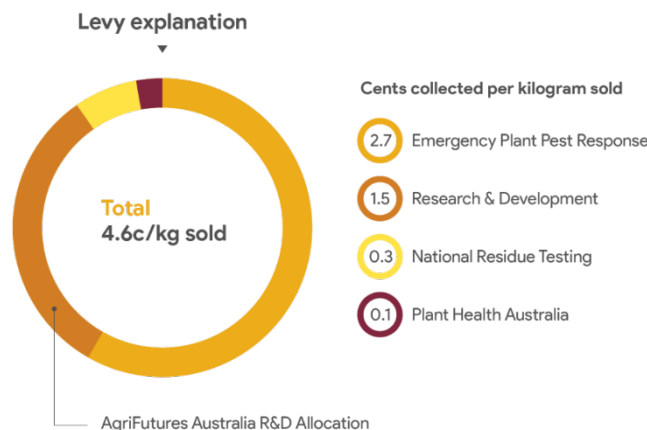
The Australian Honey Bee industry through AHBIC, is a signatory to the [Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed](#), a legally binding contract between our industry, pollination dependent industries and governments across Australia. This deed prescribes our responsibilities in cost sharing biosecurity responses where our industry is deemed an affected party. This cost shared responsibility is paid for through the Emergency Plant Pest Response (EPPR) fund collected on all domestically produced honey sold by beekeepers that sell more than 1,500kg per annum.

The Emergency Plant Pest Response (EPPR) Fund

Our industry established the honey levy in the 1960’s and it has been regularly amended through industry consultation over time. Currently the levy is set at 4.6 cents/kg and is a statutory commonwealth levy that beekeepers must pay if they sell more than 1,500 kg per annum.

This levy contributes to programs including R&D, national residue testing and biosecurity that benefit all beekeepers. If you are not paying the levy and should be, please go to the [DAFF honey levy](#) website to contribute.

Honey Bee & Pollination



The EPPR component of the levy (2.7 cents/kg) is held in the EPPR fund, managed by Plant Health Australia (PHA) and overseen by AHBIC. The EPPR fund is utilised to fund both the [National Bee Pest Surveillance Program](#) (NBPS) and the [National Bee Biosecurity Program](#) (NBBP). The EPPR fund is also utilised when the repayment of any cost shared national biosecurity response is required. For example, the previous Asian Honey Bee biosecurity responses in Cairns and Townsville.

In these past examples the EPPR fund has had a sufficient balance to be able to pay our cost shared responsibilities without requiring any increase to the levy. However, repaying the 2022 National Varroa Biosecurity Response and Transition to Management will require a levy increase.

2022 National Varroa Destructor Biosecurity Response

The honey bee industry proportion of the 2022 National Varroa Response has an upper limit set at \$1.1 million for our share. In February 2024 the AHBIC member bodies agreed to increase the EPPR levy by 1 cent per kilogram to repay the industry's share of the 2022 response debt over the next 6-7 years (timeframe dependant on annual national honey sales). This is based on the long-term average production of 20,000 tonnes of levied honey nationally. The AHBIC member bodies also agreed that this levy should be removed once the full amount of the agreed \$1.1million debt is repaid.

AHBIC has communicated the proposed levy increase over the last 6 months through state conferences and various AHBIC communications, including member bodies meetings where feedback was collected and noted. This letter is to inform the honey bee industry of AHBIC's intention to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, to request that our EPPR levy on honey be increased by 1cent per kilogram from 2.7c/kg to 3.7c/kg.

The process for increasing the EPPR levy

There is a prescribed process for enacting a EPPR levy increase which can be found on the DAFF website ([Levy Guidelines](#)). The levy guidelines require AHBIC to notify industry of proposed changes, write to the responsible Minister requesting the amendments, who will then allow a 30-day objection period.

Following the objection period the Minister will decide whether to allow the EPPR increase, and industry will be notified.



Reviewing and Redesigning the Honey Levy

The AHBIC member bodies have also requested that AHBIC review the current honey levy structure to ensure it is fit for purpose. AHBIC has established a levies subcommittee to review and provide considered recommendations to the AHBIC board of any identified potential amendments.

The AHBIC levy subcommittee will specifically undertake work to;

- Review the overall funds collected, future costs and forecast revenue to ensure the current and future programs are sustainable.
- Identify levy “leakage” and provide recommendations on ways to minimise “leakage”.
- Investigate the producer 1,500kg threshold – identify if this needs to be amended to capture a greater proportion of the honey produced across industry. The review will consider the cost of levy collection and how that impacts the threshold.
- Other Levies – determine if other levies, such as a pollination levy and/or others, could be implemented to increase fairness across the industry and how will it be collected.
- Marketing levy – review the viability of a marketing levy for our industry
- Review the re-instating of the Queen Bee levy

Initiation of the 1 cent EPPR levy increase

The member body representatives and the AHBIC board have decided to initially proceed with the EPPR levy increase whilst empowering the subcommittee to methodically review the current levies. This will allow enough time for the subcommittee to provide considered recommendations to the AHBIC board for consideration.

If you, as a levy payer, require any further information, clarification or have any questions please reach out to AHBIC via email; ahbic@honeybee.org.au

Yours sincerely,



Danny Le Feuvre
Chief Executive Officer

