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Stakeholder Category: Industry

Comments: This submission will address item 7 of the scope statement and will be confined to discussing questions 22-24 as they relate to the Australian Honeybee Industry.

Q22: The national biosecurity system has quantitatively not been effective in preventing incursions of Asian Honeybee into North Queensland. The measure of failure is the continued post-border discovery of this pest despite the existence of the current barriers. The latest incident occurred as recently as a few days ago (circa 30th June 2016) It appears that the nest had been present for at least two years. This raises the question of why it took so long to be discovered if the existing Port surveillance is regarded as being effective?

Q23: The above observation does indeed relate to the question of who are the key data and knowledge holders in the surveillance matrix. Whilst it is recognised that a rudimentary port surveillance network has been in place I believe that it is largely ineffective because the expert knowledge needed to observe and identify feral bee nests is not something acquired easily but is acquired through many years of living with bees. In Western Australia the port surveillance has historically relied on one Departmental officer periodically visiting managed beehives strategically placed adjacent to the Port of Fremantle in the hope (or non-hope) that any pathogen introduced via an exotic incursion will infest the resident population in due course. Clearly this observational continuum needs to be moved backwards in time so that the initial infestation is identified in the shortest possible time after arrival, or better still prior to arrival.

There has been a distinct reluctance by the Department to forgo its role in this surveillance even though it has practically become little more than a 'desk audit' in recent years due to funding cuts, staff indifference and lately redundancies and retirements. The Amateur Beekeeping sector has offered to usurp the surveillance role but this is meeting resistance through territorial demarcation barriers from the existing regime. In addition there is the issue of access to controlled areas around the port and storage facilities due to the (presumed) terrorist threat.

Q24: Pre- border analysis. The usage of existing data sets is not being effectively utilised. For instance the movement of vessels from hotspots into Australian Ports could be monitored and singled out for closer scrutiny by trained and competent observers authorised to carry out detailed surveillance activities. There is clearly a case for discovering why repeated instances of Asian bees are entering North Queensland ports. Bee Industry people could identify originating ports as low or high risk. Another aspect to be factored into the observational continuum is the ownership of the responsibility. If we look at the mode of dispersal of the Asian bee swarm, it tends to inhabit no-mans-land, i.e. underside of a

seatainer, mast of a vessel, hollow leg of a structure etc. So if it is not bothering anyone it tends to be ignored. Dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers could address many of these concerns to achieve the desired outcomes.

Is this submission confidential? No

Do you agree to be contacted about your submission: Yes