



AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC

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Unification key to honey bee industry longevity

Results from an industry wide study have revealed an overwhelmingly positive sentiment towards the role of bees in Australian agriculture and will be used to shape a communication plan focused on industry unification.

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) is pleased to announce the findings from an extensive industry stakeholder mapping exercise have informed the development of a dedicated industry wide communication plan, offering a pathway to unify the Australian honey bee industry.

The project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment through a grant to promote the importance of bees. The \$1.5 million grant was awarded to AgriFutures Australia in November 2019 to promote the crucial role the honey bee plays in food production.

Undertaken by strategic research agency Pollinate, development of the communication plan involved a series of interviews with AHBIC members and industry representatives, desktop research, a public survey and AHBIC workshop to fine tune the plan.

Of particular interest are the results from a public survey of almost 1,000 Australians which revealed an overwhelmingly positive sentiment towards the role of bees in Australian agriculture, yet it found understanding of industry and the value of honey bees to the agricultural sector was limited.

AHBIC Chair, Trevor Weatherhead said the findings did not come as a surprise, rather it reinforced the industry's challenge when it comes to collaboration.

"The first job outlined in the communication plan is to unify the industry. The research clearly showed the scattered nature of the various players, from big commercial businesses and hobbyists, to various government agencies and state and federal peak bodies," said Mr Weatherhead.

"We have a job to rally the industry around a shared vision which in turn can help shift public awareness from 'bees' to the important role the honey bee industry plays in food production."

The plan aims to ensure alignment within the industry, creating a common vision and structuring activities around unity, professionalisation and premium offerings. It is

hoped this will lead to a greater ability to influence public perception and advocate industry issues, and in turn increase the value, and awareness of, the entire industry. AgriFutures Australia will be working closely with AHBIC and state associations to develop resources and raise awareness among professional beekeepers, recreational beekeepers and the public about what they can do to ensure bee health and longevity.

The focus will now turn to implementation of the communication plan, identifying priority activities and resources to bring the plan to fruition. Key components of the plan will involve industry and public facing campaigns to actively highlight the presence and importance of the honey bee industry.

“This is a particularly important project for industry in the context of the ongoing drought and summer bushfires, raising awareness of the crucial role of bees will be vital in this recovery and help future proof the industry for years to come,” said Mr Weatherhead.

Key points

- AgriFutures Australia is working closely with AHBIC to promote the importance of bees as part of an Australian Government \$1.5 million grant.
- A communication plan has been developed offering a pathway focused on Australian honey bee industry unity, professionalisation and premium offerings.
- Industry unification has been identified as the first step of the communication plan.
- An industry and public facing campaign will be implemented to shift awareness from ‘bees’ to ‘an important honey bee industry’.

