

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008

Mr Roger Beale AO  
Quarantine and Biosecurity Review  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry  
GPO Box 858  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Beale,

## Protecting Australia's "First Line of Defence"

The contribution of pollination to Australia's agriculture and horticultural industries is estimated at \$1.7 billion annually, with pollination acting as a crucial input to many industries, including the rapidly emerging almond industry.

Due to this widespread reliance on honeybees for pollination, an incursion into Australia of a serious pest or disease affecting honeybees, such as *Varroa destructor*, will have a devastating impact with an estimated total economic impact of \$3.7 billion.

Such an incursion will necessitate long term quarantine response measures and consequent management costs, in addition to significantly increasing the difficulty and cost of bee hive management.

Australia is one of the last countries in the world yet to be affected by the *Varroa destructor*:

Recent experiences in the US and New Zealand have shown that once *Varroa* enters Australia, it is most likely that eradication and/or containment measures will have limited effect beyond slowing the spread of the pest due to ecology of the parasite and the social behaviour of bees.

Effective at-the-border surveillance measures are of critical importance to the honeybee industry, the broader agricultural and horticultural industries, and thereby the public in general.

Since 2000, the Federal Government has operated the National Sentinel Hive program at various airports and seaports across Australia, with responsibility transferring from AQIS to the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer.

However, DAFF has advised that it will discontinue support for this program.



**ALMOND  
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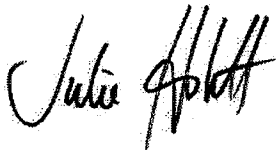
A *Varroa destructor* incursion into Australia will have a devastating direct impact across a broad range of industries including the honeybee industry, many horticultural and agricultural industries, in addition to significant indirect impacts across the community at large.

Government support is urgently requested for continued operation and funding support for this National surveillance program that essentially acts as Australia's "first line of defence".

Annual operation of the National Sentinel Hive Program is estimated at \$150,000 per annum. Given the complex and broad reaching consequences of a potential incursion affecting honeybees, such as *Varroa destructor*, there is strong argument for Government funding in order to ensure effective and efficient operation of this surveillance program, thereby protecting the viability of many Australian industries.

The Almond Board of Australia strongly supports the request by Pollination Australia for urgent action to address this critical issue.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Haslett  
CEO

*The Almond Board of Australia (ABA) is a non profit, membership based organisation representing the interests of Australian almond growers, processors and marketers.*

*As the Australian almond industry's peak industry body, the ABA facilitates further growth of the industry, seeks to maximise its profitability and ensure its sustainability, by providing a platform for industry members to collectively respond to industry-wide issues, invest in research and marketing, share knowledge and interact with government and other stakeholders.*

*The Australian Almond Industry currently produces 27,000 tonnes of almonds on an annual basis, with a related farm gate value of \$180 million dollars. Production is expected to triple by 2015 as new plantings reach full maturity, with a related value of \$500 million dollars.*

*Key almond growing areas are located in Sunraysia (Victoria), the Riverland and Adelaide (South Australia) and the Riverina region (New South Wales).*

*For more information visit [www.australianalmonds.com.au](http://www.australianalmonds.com.au) or email: [admin@australianalmonds.com.au](mailto:admin@australianalmonds.com.au)*

