

APICULTURAL INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE UPDATE AND SUMMARY OF PROJECTS 2021-2023

Issued August 2023

OVERVIEW

Victoria's Honeybee Compensation and Industry Development Fund (HBCIDF) is established under the *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994* (the Act) and is funded by registration fees for Victorian beekeepers as follows:

- Beekeepers with up to five hives
 - No charge, if registration is completed online
 - \$30 if registering and paying via a paper application form
- Beekeepers with more than five hives
 - \$30 to register 6 – 50 hives
 - 0.60 cents per hive to register 51 or more hives

Money in the Fund may be invested in any manner in which money may be invested under the *Trustee Act 1958* or any other manner that the appropriate Minister approves.

In accordance with the Act, the Minister for Agriculture may make payments from the HBCIDF to fund programs and projects for the improvement and development of the apicultural industry in Victoria.

The Minister for Agriculture must not make a payment from the fund unless the Minister has considered any relevant recommendations from the Apicultural Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC).

MEMBERSHIP

The Minister for Agriculture appoints the Chair and members of the AIAC under the *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994*.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

The current membership was appointed on the nomination of the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), the Victorian Apiarists Association Inc. (VAA) and the former Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR):

- Ms Gail Rochelmeyer (Chair) – previously nominated by the VFF
- Mr Robert Arnts – member – previously nominated by the VAA
- Dr Lisa Cowan – member – Department nominee
- Mr Mark Higgins – member – Department nominee
- Mr Robert McDonald – member – previously nominated by the VAA
- Mr Ashley Smith – member – previously nominated by the VAA

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

There have been no changes to the current membership of the AIAC since the last report.

The current membership (including the chair) was appointed in 2020 for a three-year period expiring 27 October 2023.

SELECTION PROCESS CHANGES

From October 2022, changes were made to the *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994*, to allow for a maximum of 9 members appointed by the Minister for Agriculture based on skills and experience.

All future appointments will be appointed by the Minister for Agriculture after considering recommendations from the Secretary and having regard to each appointee's experience in one or more of the following areas:

- a) the apicultural and allied industries
- b) biosecurity or market access
- c) quality assurance and food safety
- d) finance, legal practice, or business management
- e) agricultural, animal or veterinary science
- f) public policy
- g) any other area the Minister considers relevant to the functions of the Committee

An Expression of Interest process for AIAC membership is currently in progress.

All future appointments will align with changes to the *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994* and appointments will be made by the Minister for Agriculture after considering recommendations from the Secretary and having regard to each appointee's skills and experience.

FUNDING ROUNDS

Since the last report of 15 June 2021, the HBCIDF has been a part of the following Livestock Biosecurity Funds Grant Program round.

2022 LBF FUNDING ROUND

The 2022 Livestock Biosecurity Funds Grant Program was open from 27 October to 23 December 2022.

The AIAC assessed two applications and recommended both projects to the Minister for approval:

- VAA 2023 conference speaker on Varroa (Victorian Apiarists' Association)
- Co-funding to support continued delivery of the National Bee Biosecurity Program in Victoria (Biosecurity and Agriculture Services, DEECA)

The Minister approved these projects on 2 June 2023.

Note: the Co-funding to support continued delivery of the National Bee Biosecurity Program in Victoria project was withdrawn by Biosecurity and Agriculture Services effective 9 June 2023, citing resource constraints.

MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT CHANGES

As of 1 January 2023, Agriculture Victoria transitioned from the previous Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

Project recipients listed in this report reflect the current department which may be different from the department at the time of application.

SUMMARY OF HBCIDF PROJECTS

ACTIVE

Project (Recipient)	Expected completion	HBCIDF contribution	Achievements to date
<p>Co-funding of the National Bee Biosecurity Program in Victoria (Plant Health Australia)</p> <p>To support and supplement income supplied through the national honey levy for the employment of a Bee Biosecurity Officer within Victoria for 20 months as part of the National Bee Biosecurity Program.</p> <p>The National Bee Biosecurity Program (NBBP) and the appointed Bee Biosecurity Officers (BBO) play a crucial role in supporting industry and beekeepers regarding hive management and being aware of their biosecurity activities and responsibilities</p>	Sept 2023	\$58,340	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NBBP aims to improve the management of established pests and increase the preparedness and surveillance for exotic pest threats. Underpinning the NBBP is the Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice (the Code), which provides a framework for Australian beekeepers to engage in best-practice biosecurity. <p>Since 2021, the Victorian BBO has delivered presentations to over 1,100 beekeepers providing education and awareness on the Code, biosecurity best practice and pests and diseases, and further supported 224 beekeepers specifically regarding endemic diseases such as American foulbrood.</p> <p>The Victorian BBO has also supported over 155 beekeepers joining the State Quarantine Response Team (SQRT) and increased the numbers of the beekeepers who surround port areas become a Pest Warrior for the early detection of exotic pests.</p>
<p>Assist restoration of degraded ironbark forests (Victorian Apiarists Association)</p> <p>Process to help ensure development and retention of mature trees beneficial to the honey bee industry and timber harvesters alike.</p>	On hold	\$15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project is currently on hold pending a project scope variation

FINALISED

Project (recipient)	Project Timeline	HBCIDF Contribution	Outcomes
<p>Commercial and recreational beekeepers conference (Victorian Apiarists' Association)</p> <p>Engage keynote speakers to assist in educating Victorian beekeepers on a variety of topics.</p>	2022	\$1,265	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face conference successfully held in May 2022 (after COVID cancellations). Conference provided a networking opportunity for beekeepers with other beekeepers and directly with other industry representatives. Participants were able to hear first hand from researchers on current projects involving queen breeding, forestry, pollination improvements and technological advances in beekeeping.
<p>Smart Sentinel Beehives Program (Hivekeepers Pty Ltd)</p> <p>Development of sentinel hive technology (including industry liaison).</p>	2021	\$40,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early detection allows biosecurity and related industries to take prompt action against new and emerging threats and prepare the industry more broadly for pest and disease incursions. The project involved a Victorian biosecurity officer piloting prototype smart sentinel hives (installation sites included, Western Port, Harcourt and New Zealand). The evaluation of the pilot has guided design enhancements to improve the technology and enhance benefits to the beekeeping, pollination and biosecurity industries.
<p>Honeybee Flexible Learning Conference (Victorian Recreational Beekeepers Association Inc.)</p> <p>To improve recreational beekeeper biosecurity competency through the provision of education, awareness and skill development by addressing the current financial barrier to Victorian recreational beekeepers accessing high quality and flexibly delivered biosecurity training</p>	2021	\$3,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200 participants in attendance (in person) at the May 2021 conference held in Geelong. Keynote and sessional speakers provided research findings, best practice protocols and practical demonstrations. Biosecurity innovation was showcased including the use of American Foul Brood Breathalyser, developed by Dr Jessica Moran.
<p>Smart Surveillance for bee diseases (Agriculture Victoria)</p>	2021	\$49,307	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed the feasibility of a multiplexed LAMP assay for

Project (recipient)	Project Timeline	HBCIDF Contribution	Outcomes
<p>Research, DEECA)</p> <p>Agriculture Victoria Research developed individual POC tools for in-field detection of Varroa Mite and Deformed Wing Virus . This project assessed the feasibility of multiplexing these assays in a single test for efficient surveillance. An in-field test for detection of American Foulbrood was also evaluated.</p>			<p>simultaneous detection of DWV and varroa mite for in-field biosecurity surveillance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted and validated American Foulbrood LAMP protocols to support the biosecurity and hive health of the Victorian bee industry. • Provided training to AgVic biosecurity officers, apiary officers and to Victorian beekeepers.