

# AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY COUNCIL INC

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## ***APIS CERANA AND VARROA JACOBSONI IN TOWNSVILLE – NO. 5***

I provide this update not because there are any new developments in Townsville but I have had two (2) phone calls today asking questions from information that seems to be circulating that is not correct. I thought I needed to correct that misinformation.

Firstly I appreciate the fact that these two (2) people have phoned me to clarify what they have heard. I have been able to correct the situation for them.

The story that seems to be circulating is that the *Varroa jacobsoni* in Townsville is the one that is on *Apis mellifera* in Papua New Guinea. **This is not the case.**

The *V. jacobsoni* in Townsville is the one from the Asian bee, *Apis cerana*. Expert advice received is that this mite will not reproduce on *A. mellifera* in the short term in Australia. From the experience in Papua New Guinea there are grounds to believe that if the *A. cerana* in Townsville was not eradicated and the *V. jacobsoni* bred on the *A. cerana* for an extended period in Australia then continued exposure to our *A. mellifera* population could result in a *V. jacobsoni* mite switching over to *A. mellifera*.

The above reasons make it imperative that any Asian bees in Townsville are found and destroyed and that is why the current response has been undertaken. The response is to *V. jacobsoni* as this is the Emergency Plant Pest but the only way to find *V. jacobsoni* is to find Asian bees.

Information that has been published says that when the *V. jacobsoni* switches over to *A. mellifera*, as has been the case in Papua New Guinea, that *V. jacobsoni* will not be able to reproduce on the Asian bee. So the only way that strain of *V. jacobsoni* could arrive in Australia is on *A. mellifera* and not *A. cerana*.

It is most likely that the Asian bees in Townsville have come from Papua New Guinea but again I reiterate that the *V. jacobsoni* that has been found on the Asian bees in Townsville is not the strain that has switched over to *A. mellifera* in Papua New Guinea..

If you hear something that is different to what has been put out, please feel free to contact me at any time to clarify the situation. It is crucial that any misinformation is quickly corrected before it does any damage. Things like social media have their pluses but they also have their minuses if information is posted that is not correct.

Trevor Weatherhead  
Executive Director  
4 August, 2016