



Media Release

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AUSTRALIAN FRESH PRODUCE ALLIANCE WELCOMES FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO ALLOW BUMBLEBEE POLLINATION TRIAL

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) welcomes the Federal Government's commitment to amend the EPBC Act in the next parliament to allow a State or Territory to approve the trial and use of bumblebees for the pollination of protected horticultural crops.

More than two years ago a Senate Committee examined whether feral bumblebees in Tasmania should be allowed to be used in a protected horticultural crop pollination trial. The Committee, which is made up of Labor, Liberal and Greens Senators unanimously recommended the EPBC Act be amended to allow for a trial.

"The significance of Tasmania to such a trial is that bumblebees are endemic to Tasmania and have been present for at least the past 25 years. It therefore makes sense to conduct a trial there in a controlled setting," said Michael Rogers, AFPA CEO

Bumblebees are used as crop pollinators around the world and are particularly effective in glasshouse protected cropping environments. Their buzz or sonic pollination technique is ideal for pollinating crops such as tomatoes, strawberries, blackberries and capsicums.

"Given the issues agriculture currently faces with respect to pollination and the depletion of pollination sources, a bumblebee trial will greatly assist in the industry's efforts to address the pressing issue of access to reliable and efficient pollinators," said Mr Rogers.

International experience also demonstrates that the use of bumblebees increases the potential for greater yield and fruit quality. Their use in Europe is promoted as being important to the growing and supply of 'clean and green' fresh produce.

"Whoever wins the federal election, the AFPA looks forward to the necessary amendment being made to the EPBC Act in a timely manner in order to allow for the commencement of what will be a vitally important pollination trial with respect to the future growth opportunities for fresh produce production in Tasmania," said Mr Rogers.

End.

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About the AFPA - The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) is made up of Australia's key fresh produce growers and suppliers. The members include Costa Group, Perfection Fresh, Montague, One Harvest, Pinata Farms, Fresh Select, Mitolo Group, Mackay's Banana Marketing, Driscoll's, 2PH Farms, LaManna Premier Group, Rugby Farming, Freshmax and Fresh Produce Group. These businesses represent half the industry turnover of the Australian fresh produce (fruit and vegetables) sector - \$4.5 billion of the \$9.1 billion total; 1,000 plus growers through commercial arrangements and more than 15,000 direct employees through peak harvest, and up to 25,000 in the grower network.