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4 June 2026

The Hon Dr Nicola Centofanti MLC
Member of the Legislative Council
Parliament House
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Dr Centofanti

Determination under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*

I refer to your application made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* which was received by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) on 5 May 2026, seeking access to the following:

“A copy of all minutes from the South Australian Varroa Industry Advisory Committee meetings from 1st November 2025 to current.”

Timeframe: 1/11/2025 to 4/05/2026

Accordingly, the following determination has been finalised.

I have located two documents that are captured within the scope of your request.

Determination 1

I have determined that access to the following document is **granted in part**:

Doc No.	Description of document	No. of Pages
1	SA Varroa Industry Advisory Committee Minutes – Meeting 23 – 18/12/2025	4

The information removed from the above document is pursuant to Clause 6(1) of Schedule 1 of the Freedom of Information Act which states:

“6 - Documents affecting personal affairs

(1) A document is an exempt document if it contains matter the disclosure of which would involve the unreasonable disclosure of information concerning the personal affairs of any person (living or dead).”

The information removed consists of the names of members of an Advisory Committee and other individuals.

Consent has not been provided to disclose the names of the individuals and, accordingly, there would be an expectation that their personal information would not be released in this way.

Accordingly, it is considered that disclosure of this information would be an unreasonable intrusion into the privacy rights of the individuals concerned.

Determination 2

I have determined that access to the following document is **refused**:

Doc No.	Description of document	No. of Pages
2	SA Varroa Industry Advisory Committee Minutes – Meeting 24 – 18/2/2026 – Not yet endorsed	5

Access to the above document is refused pursuant to Clause 9(1) of Schedule 1 of the Freedom of Information Act which states:

“9—Internal working documents

(1) A document is an exempt document if it contains matter—

(a) that relates to -

(i) any opinion, advice or recommendation that has been obtained, prepared or recorded; or

(ii) any consultation or deliberation that has taken place, in the course of, or for the purpose of, the decision-making functions of the Government, a Minister or an agency; and

(b) the disclosure of which would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.”

The document consists of draft minutes of a meeting which have not yet been endorsed.

In addressing the public interest test for the Clause 9(1) exemption, I have balanced the following factors:

In favour of the public interest:

- Meeting the objects of the Freedom of Information Act favouring access to documents.
- Ensuring optimal use of public resources.
- High level of interest in the accountability of public office holders.
- The importance of transparency and openness and the interest that the public has in the decision-making processes of Government.
- Community concern with respect to the detections of varroa mite.

Contrary to the public interest:

- The document has not yet been endorsed as a true record of a meeting.

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- The recent age of the document was considered and the continuing relevance of the matters.
- Protection of the deliberative processes of Government prior to the ratification of documents.
- Release of this information would discourage the flow of open communication between committee members during deliberative processes.
- Preserving the integrity of information-gathering processes leading up to the finalisation of decisions.
- Disclosing this information may compromise the manner in which information is gathered in the future for the decision-making processes of Government to the detriment of the betterment for South Australia.

Having considered the various factors weighing for and against disclosure, I have determined that disclosure of this document would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.

If you are dissatisfied with this determination, you are entitled to exercise your right of review and appeal as outlined in the attached documentation [Making a Freedom of Information Application | State Records of South Australia \(archives.sa.gov.au\)](#), by completing the "FOI Application Form for Internal Review of a Determination" and returning the completed form to:

Freedom of Information Principal Officer
Department of Primary Industries and Regions
GPO Box 1671
ADELAIDE SA 5001

or via email PIRSA.FOI@sa.gov.au

In accordance with the requirements of Premier and Cabinet Circular PC045, details of your application, and the documents to which you are given access, will be published in PIRSA's disclosure log. A copy of PC045 can be found at http://dpc.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/20818/PC045-Disclosure-Log-Policy.pdf

If you disagree with publication, please advise the undersigned in writing within fourteen calendar days from the date of this determination.

Should you require further information or clarification with respect to this matter, please contact Ms Lisa Farley, Senior Freedom of Information Advisor on 8429 0422 or email PIRSA.FOI@sa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Michelle Griffiths
Accredited Freedom of Information Officer
DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS

SA Varroa Industry Advisory Committee Minutes

Meeting 23

Thursday 18 December 2025 10.47am

Teams; 11WM 21.16

Attendees

Clause 6(1)	Chair
Clause 6(1)	South Australian Apiarist's Association
Clause 6(1)	South Australian Apiarist's Association
Clause 6(1)	Beekeepers Society of South Australia
Clause 6(1)	Beekeepers Society of South Australia
Clause 6(1)	PIRSA representative
Clause 6(1)	PIRSA representative
Clause 6(1)	Australian Honey Bee Industry Council
Clause 6(1)	Pollination Industry Representative
Clause 6(1)	PIRSA
Clause 6(1)	Pollination Industry Representative
Clause 6(1)	Minute taker

Apologies

Clause 6(1)	Australian Honey Bee Industry Council
Clause 6(1)	Pollination Industry Representative
Clause 6(1)	Commercial Industry Representative

1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

This is the last meeting for the year with the main agenda item to receive an update on the detections of varroa in hives.

Considering the detections made so far and the implications to next phase of management of varroa it is proposed that the next meeting be held in late January and possibly a face-to-face meeting and for a longer time.

2. Minutes of the Meeting 22

Endorsed

3. Action items – as per Action List.

As per the action register

4. Feedback from Various Industry Associations

SAAA – motion from the last meeting –

In light of high mite counts in recent detections with South Australia, that the SAAA support the movement of queens and queen cells into SA under the following conditions being met from queen breeders :

- - remove restriction of being more than 25kms from a known varroa detection
- - remove the requirement to provide documentation to prove varroa-free status
- - provide a signed declaration that they have a zero-mite count in an alcohol wash test in the queen breeding hive within the last three weeks"

Motion was moved by Clause 6(1) and Seconded by Clause 6(1) .

As the motion was addressed to PIRSA, Chair suggested putting it on the January agenda for consideration. However the Committee advised that this matter needs to be considered sooner. Clause 6(1) supported the proposal as having zero detection in an alcohol wash and bees are checked on arrival in SA should be sufficient for entry. Clause 6(1) would support the motion as this would reduce the chances of illegal entry of queens. Makes sense to do now to build up colonies.

Chair request clarification on the criteria

- Remove the restriction of being more than 25km from a known varroa detection.
- Remove the requirement to provide documentation to prove varroa free status.
- To provide a signed declaration that they have 0 count in an alcohol wash test in the queen breeding hive within the last three weeks

Clause 6(1) supported the motion.

PIRSA sought clarity about specific details of the proposal:.

- Remove 25km, this would also include NSW
- Remove the requirement to not have had Varroa in the last 12 months
- Alcohol wash do we go to a rate of what the transitional management plan and national practice, which is 10%?
- Health Certificate from State certifying they were varroa and AFB free.
- When they have all that info, they can punch it in online and a permit will be considered.

Clause 6(1): - may need to think through the 10% testing requirement because the process of accumulating queens is they are typically caught from multiple hives. Sometimes they are in a queen bag. So should consider the level of sampling of queens.

When will this be endemic? But the term that would be used is established and its subjective, which means there's no hard and fast rule that you met this criterion. When you speak to the VDO and others who are experts in this space, we're in the build up phrase. Numbers are still low, but they are widespread, so we can say it's here and we can say confidently we are not getting rid of it. Endemic is widespread in massive numbers. And we are not seeing that at present. But the current queen bee imports requirements in place is just not working. We have already had some discussions regarding pushing the time from 7 days to 14 or 21 days, can't see that would cause any huge problems with 21 days. But there shouldn't be any problems having this all up and running early January.

Clause 6(1) – from AHBIC -the national T2M program finishes on the 6th Feb, so funding will cease so no more cost sharing for VDO's with all states. From January there will be the ability for association to download and get access to all of the information that's been generated through the program over the last two years. All the fact sheets, the webinars, the training materials. PIRSA noted this comment.

5. VARROA UPDATE

- 13 confirmed apiaries with varroa
- Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula, & Limestone coast.
- 7 individual beekeepers
- Majority of those are low levels, one site with heavy infestation
- All sites are linked in some association.
- We are continuing with the investigations about the source of the varroa.
- SA surveillance map, we have had a definite increase in the number of results, predominantly negative, being included in the map. This is helping to build that picture of where Varroa is absent as well.
- The VDO's and PIRSA staff have worked in junction to deliver community updates both face to face and online. F2F at Gumeracha and another. There is a schedule of additional f2f and online going out in the Bio notice today. We initially put a Bio notice out every time a new detection occurred, but to stop overwhelming everyone's inbox we have dropped it to once a week highlighting any new detections and updates on current detections
- Clause 6(1) and Clause 6(1) will both be working over the break so will be available.
- Email will continue to be monitored.
- SARDI are up to date with sampling.

Question - concern about the use of oxalic acid treatments, noting that permits are already in place in NSW, Victoria, and Queensland, and questioning whether similar arrangements will be introduced in South Australia. It was highlighted that many individuals are attempting to make their own oxalic acid or purchasing it from hardware stores, which poses significant safety risks since cheaper industrial-grade products may contain heavy metals and are not suitable for beekeeping. The discussion emphasized that without proper regulation and training, there is a danger of misuse, as beekeepers may not be aware of contamination risks

or correct application methods. Participants suggested that guidance from the APVMA and proactive measures in South Australia would be important to ensure safe use and to educate people on appropriate handling, given the growing interest in oxalic acid compared to other chemical options.

Answer - Oxalic acid products are already available under full registration or emergency permits, with a recent emergency use permit approved for South Australia to be communicated via biosecurity notice. PIRSA emphasised that only registered products should be used, with responsible application through rotation, adherence to label directions, and best practice management tailored to each operation, noting that oxalic acid may not always be the most suitable option. Concerns were raised about misuse, particularly individuals sourcing industrial-grade oxalic acid intended for concrete cleaning, which can contain heavy metals, and PIRSA made clear this is not condoned. Experience from New South Wales showed that reliance on oxalic acid alone was ineffective, often harming queens and failing to provide adequate protection, leading beekeepers to combine it with synthetics. While recreational beekeepers may persist due to time for intensive monitoring, commercial operators are moving away from sole use. The discussion highlighted the importance of sourcing pure oxalic acid from reputable suppliers and using available resources, such as instructional materials on the varroa.org website, to ensure safe and effective application.

6. Other business

Business Continuity – agreed to put on the agenda in January

Suggest that the January meeting be late in the month and maybe a ½ day situation face to face, to discuss the last 12 months, what are the regulatory requirements now. Maybe put together an Agenda and invite those that need to be in attendance

Meeting closed

Meeting closed at 12.32pm