

Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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Mr Craig Garland MP
Member for Braddon

27 August 2026

Email: HAProcedure@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Garland

In Parliament on 13 August 2026, you asked the following question on behalf of your constituent:

My question is from Wayne from Somerset. The Varroa Mite Action Plan says Tasmania's preventative activities must evolve as the threat increases. That threat has increased with varroa established in Victoria and around Geelong, the departure point for the Spirit of Tasmania. The department warns that establishment here could devastate wild honeybee colonies, increase the cost and complexity of beekeeping, threaten organic honey production and reduce the pollination services Tasmanian agriculture relies upon. My Tasmanian beekeeper colleagues are asking why our strongest defence is not being placed at the point of departure before this pest crosses Bass Strait. Minister, how are you working with Victorian authorities and TT-Line to establish dedicated varroa surveillance and interception measures at the Geelong terminal before Spirit of Tasmania sails?

Firstly, thank you for the question on behalf of your constituent. Tasmania remains free of varroa mite, and we are continuing to strengthen our measures to keep it that way.

I recognise the particular concern that the recent reports of varroa in the Geelong area raise for Tasmanian beekeepers, given Geelong is an important departure point for travel and trade into Tasmania. Our approach is focused on preventing the pest from reaching Tasmania and ensuring we have early detection measures in place.

Biosecurity Tasmania is working with stakeholders to ensure our border activities are robust and support early detection. This includes:

- Increased surveillance of interstate shipping pathways and inspection of high-risk pathways (vehicles, caravans, machinery and freight) at ports such as Devonport;
- Trained detector dogs and x-ray screening at airports, postal and freight centres to detect bee products and queen bees;
- Regular training of contractors screening outgoing travellers in Geelong; and
- Delivering port surveillance activities at Tasmania's four key ports plus King and Flinders Islands.

I am also advised that Biosecurity Tasmania worked with commercial airlines and Spirit of Tasmania vessels to update messaging regarding bee products being prohibited entry into Tasmania;

Importantly, Tasmania also has port surveillance, including sentinel and guard hives, to provide early warning of any incursion. These measures are in place at our key Tasmanian ports, including Devonport.

Strict import restrictions on bees, hive products and equipment are also in place under a General Biosecurity Direction under the *Biosecurity Act 2019*. Further, a draft Import Risk Analysis is currently open for public consultation until 16 September, and I would encourage Wayne and other Tasmanian beekeepers to review the analysis and provide their feedback to help inform the measures we put in place to manage the risk of varroa entering Tasmania. The link to the consultation page is: <https://nre.tas.gov.au/biosecurity-tasmania/plant-biosecurity/biosecurity-tasmania-import-risk-analysis-assessment-processes/varroa-mite-import-risk-analysis-consultation>

We will continue to monitor the situation on the mainland closely and adjust our preparedness and surveillance activities as the risk evolves.

Thank you again for raising this matter on behalf of your constituents.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Pearce', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Hon Gavin Pearce MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water