



May 2025 Newsletter



Thanks to Don Muir and other news and updates

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Welcome

Welcome to our latest newsletter, dedicated to the vital art and science of beekeeping and effective hive management, as the season gently transitions. This edition is particularly special as we extend our deepest gratitude to Don Muir, a steadfast and long-term board member of BQUAL, who has recently embarked on a well-deserved retirement. We'll be celebrating Don's significant contributions and reflecting on his insightful journey within the beekeeping community.

Inside, we also delve into crucial aspects of our craft. For those seeking a more ethical and environmentally conscious approach, our feature article, "**Sustainable Beekeeping Practices: A Guide for Ethical Apiculture,**" offers practical strategies for fostering thriving colonies in harmony with nature. We also confront a critical issue facing our ecosystem in "**The Declining Bee Population in Australia,**" exploring the factors at play and what we can collectively do.

In our **Industry News** section, we unpack the potential impact of the latest US tariffs on Australian honey exports, providing an analysis of what this may mean for our market. Furthermore, we tackle the persistent challenge of Varroa mite with a focus on **organic and effective combat strategies**, offering practical tips for maintaining healthy hives without harsh chemicals. Alongside these in-depth pieces, you'll find other essential news and updates to keep you informed and connected within the Australian beekeeping community.

So, settle in and enjoy this edition, dedicated to the health of our hives and the individuals who tirelessly support our industry.

Happy beekeeping

Paul
BQUAL Australia

Celebrating Don Muir's Dedication to BQUAL



As we delve into the fascinating journey and insights of a long-standing figure within the BQUAL community, it's paramount to begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to Don for his unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions over the years.

Don's dedication has been instrumental in shaping BQUAL into the respected organization it is today, and his perspectives, drawn from a rich tapestry of experience, offer profound lessons for us all.

In this special blog post, we're privileged to share a candid Q&A session with Don, exploring his background in beekeeping, his initial involvement with BQUAL, the pivotal roles he held, and the significant challenges and triumphs he witnessed.

From his early days tending hives amidst plum and apple blossoms to his leadership in groundbreaking projects like the Australian Honey Library database and the innovative hive records app, Don's journey is a testament to passion and foresight.

Join us as we explore Don's reflections on the importance of quality assurance, the evolution of BQUAL, and the ongoing challenges facing the Australian beekeeping industry, particularly the ever-present threat of Varroa.

His wisdom and dedication shine through as he shares his proudest achievements, acknowledges the steadfast BQUAL members, and offers invaluable advice for the future.

This is a unique opportunity to gain insight from a true advocate for quality and progress within our beekeeping community.

Thank you, Don, for your remarkable service.

I had the great privilege of talking with Don about his career, experiences and time with BQUAL, here's a record of our conversation, so now, let's hear from Don himself...

Q - What is your background in relation to beekeeping?

Moving into a new property returning to Melbourne after many years away. I had a number of plum and apple trees to pollinate and had harboured some thoughts for some time about getting involved in beekeeping. I started beekeeping on a small scale in 2007, with 2 hives and built to 21 over next 3 or 4 years. I was happy to keep to this figure as I still had some business commitments and limited in time.

Q - How did you first find out about BQUAL, and when was this?

As a committee member and then President of a large bee club in Melbourne I was aware of BQUAL and the work it did.

Q - How did you first start getting involved with BQUAL, and when?

While arranging a Melbourne bee club field trip to Tasmania I had a number of phone calls with Lindsay Bourke a large commercial beekeeper in Tasmania and also on a number of industry committees, who was at that time Chairman of AHBIC and on the BQUAL board. We got on well on the phone so when we got to Tasmania we found we had a good rapport and spent some time together over the 3 day trip. During that time Lindsay spoke about BQUAL and perhaps then laid the seed in my mind I could do something for the industry on a higher level than just my club. About 2 months or so later I got a call from Lindsay saying a board position was available and would I like to apply. It turned out that BQUAL had two applications so we attended the next board meeting with resumes and both of the new applications were accepted. As fate would have it the other application was from Paul Costa who he and I have worked closely with ever since joining the board in 2015.

Q - What official roles did you hold at BQUAL?

Board member and along with Paul we were both appointed Co Managing Directors in I think it was 2021. I also took on a couple of special projects with the opportunity to work closely with Sharon and Liz from the UWA in establishing standards, and operating procedures for management of the honey library and testing for the project; as well as the development and introduction of the hive management app. Those couple of years I enjoyed so much and learnt so much from Sharon and Liz, and now they are on the BQUAL board is such a great benefit, not only to BQUAL but the industry generally.

Q - What do you think your major challenge was during your time working with BQUAL?

From the first board meeting it was evident to me and Paul, that we needed to suggest corporate changes to place BQUAL in a more stable financial setting and incorporate a business plan to ensure long term planning to increase membership, income and improve operating procedures.

I am pleased to say that BQUAL is now financially stable and in a position now to put back into the industry by supporting through sponsorships various state and industry groups.

Making industry aware of the importance of QA and food handling and particularly record keeping. Also to educate members that BQUAL is amongst the cheapest industry audit fees in Australia.

Q - What do you think your major contribution was?

Most of what was completed during my time was a team effort but I am particularly proud that we were able to receive a Federal Government grant to establish regimes for testing and recording results to establish a honey Library data base of Australian Honey which has become a major industry asset. But with a great team and the introduction to people like Professor Sharon Purchase and Dr Liz Barbour whom I am proud to say are now BQUAL directors we were able to with Sharon develop our hive records app. And we are now involved in a project with Liz developing speech to text record keeping. This should be a great asset to the industry, not being rude but beekeepers are great at talking pretty ordinary at writing up records, so being able to

just talk to keep your records will be a winner. Another achievement --that still needs work in increasing members is B-TRACE the on line audit system for smaller enterprises up to 350 hives. This will have the ability to promote better record keeping, and biosecurity into the small and recreational industry, a fast growing and large market with nearly 40,000 registered beekeepers in Australia.

Q - Do you have any stories or anecdotes you'd like to share?

Not so much stories or anecdotes as you know member privacy is the mainstay of BQUAL. But It would appropriate to mention and acknowledge those many members of BQUAL who have been in the program for many years some from the very beginning, they really are the backbone of the organisation.

Q - What challenges do you think remain for BQUAL moving forward?

The biggest threat facing the industry is Varroa so BQUAL must keep promoting record keeping and maintain and updating standards of hive management for cost effective hive management. So it is now more important than ever that BQUAL work to encourage beekeepers joining the programs and working with all stakeholders to manage varroa as best we can. It is going to be hard for a few years so we must work with members and understand their concerns and develop programs around our findings that will assist members not give them more paperwork.

Q – What advice (if any) would you give to BQUAL moving forward?

Simply, as in all businesses, do not forget to talk to members and be aware of their needs and requirements, listen to them and supply their needs, we work for our members.

Q - What comes next for you?

Old age and as I have had to divest myself of my last hives hopefully easy retirement. But you never know I may get the occasional phone call from BQUAL and ask me to do some specific project.

Through Don's thoughtful responses, we gain a deeper appreciation for the dedication and hard work that has underpinned BQUAL's success and its positive impact on the Australian beekeeping landscape.

His insights into the challenges faced, the triumphs celebrated, and the crucial importance of community engagement offer valuable guidance as we move forward. Don's unwavering commitment to quality and his forward-thinking approach have left an indelible mark on BQUAL and the wider industry.

As Don embarks on a well-deserved retirement, we extend our sincerest wishes for a peaceful and fulfilling new chapter. His contributions will long be remembered, and the seeds of progress he helped sow will continue to blossom within BQUAL for years to come.

Thank you once again, Don, for your exceptional service and enduring legacy.

Sustainable Beekeeping Practices: A Guide for Ethical Apiculture

Why Sustainable Beekeeping Matters More Than Ever



As the importance of bees becomes more widely understood, the way we manage them is evolving. Sustainable beekeeping is about more than just harvesting honey—it's about protecting pollinators, supporting biodiversity, and maintaining healthy colonies for the long term. Whether you're a hobbyist or a commercial apiarist, adopting ethical practices helps ensure your bees thrive while benefiting the environment around them.

Understanding Sustainable Beekeeping

Sustainable beekeeping aims to minimise environmental impact while promoting the natural health of bee colonies. It recognises the interconnectedness of bees, plants, and ecosystems, and focuses on beekeeping methods that are not only productive but also respectful of the bees' natural behaviours and life cycles.

Tips for sustainable beekeeping

Here are our tips for keeping your bees and the environment happy and healthy

Prioritising Bee Health Over Production

In ethical apiculture, colony health takes precedence over honey yield. This means avoiding overharvesting and ensuring bees have sufficient honey stores for winter. Natural treatments for pests and diseases are preferred, and chemical use is minimised or eliminated to preserve the integrity of the hive and surrounding environment.

Providing Ample Forage and Natural Habitat

One of the most impactful things beekeepers can do is ensure their bees have access to diverse, pesticide-free forage. Planting native flowering plants, trees, and herbs nearby can support pollinator nutrition year-round. Sustainable beekeepers also avoid placing too many hives in a single area, which can lead to overcompetition for local nectar and pollen resources.

Practising Responsible Hive Management

Sustainable beekeeping involves gentle hive inspections, appropriate spacing between colonies, and careful monitoring of hive conditions. Ethical beekeepers aim to reduce stress on bees, limit unnecessary disturbance, and allow bees to exhibit natural behaviours such as swarming and comb building whenever possible.

Breeding for Resilience, Not Just Productivity

Instead of prioritising traits like honey output or docility alone, sustainable beekeepers support genetic diversity and breed bees that are locally adapted, disease-resistant, and resilient to environmental changes. This enhances the long-term viability of both managed and wild bee populations.

Beekeeping with a Purpose

Sustainable beekeeping is about more than just good hive management—it's about being a steward of the environment and protecting one of nature's most vital species. By choosing ethical, bee-friendly practices, beekeepers can contribute to a healthier planet while still enjoying the many rewards of apiculture.

In the face of climate change, biodiversity loss, and increasing pressure on pollinators, every ethical choice we make as beekeepers matters.

The Declining Bee Population in Australia

A Call to Action for Beekeepers



Beekeepers across Australia are facing increasing challenges as the country's bee population declines. These vital pollinators play an essential role in agriculture, ecosystems, and honey production, yet habitat loss, pesticides, climate change, and emerging threats like Varroa mites are putting immense pressure on their survival. Without urgent action, beekeeping as an industry and hobby could face significant disruptions, affecting food security and biodiversity.

The Growing Challenges Facing Bees

Habitat Loss is Reducing Forage Availability

A major challenge for beekeepers is ensuring their colonies have access to sufficient and diverse forage. Urban expansion, deforestation, and intensive agriculture are rapidly reducing the number of flowering plants that provide nectar and pollen. Large monoculture farms limit food variety for bees, forcing colonies to travel greater distances to find adequate nutrition.

Pesticides Are Weakening Colonies

Exposure to pesticides, particularly neonicotinoids, has been linked to colony decline. These chemicals affect bees' nervous systems, impairing their ability to navigate, forage, and reproduce. Even low-level exposure can weaken colonies over time, making them more susceptible to disease and environmental stress.

Climate Change is Disrupting Beekeeping Practices

Erratic weather patterns, including prolonged droughts, extreme heat, and severe bushfires, are affecting nectar flows and placing additional strain on colonies. With changing seasonal cycles, beekeepers must adapt their management strategies to support hive health through unpredictable conditions. The loss of native flora due to extreme weather events further limits forage availability, creating long-term challenges for bee populations.

The Threat of Varroa Mites is Increasing

Australia has long been one of the few regions free of Varroa mites, but recent detections highlight the risk of these devastating parasites establishing themselves. If not controlled,

Varroa mites could cause significant colony losses, similar to those seen in other parts of the world. Monitoring and biosecurity efforts are now more critical than ever.

What Can Beekeepers Do?

Support Pollinator-Friendly Forage

Beekeepers can help mitigate habitat loss by planting diverse, nectar-rich flowers, trees, and shrubs. Encouraging landowners and farmers to cultivate pollinator-friendly landscapes also contributes to healthier bee populations.

Advocate for Responsible Pesticide Use

Raising awareness about the harmful effects of pesticides and supporting organic and regenerative farming practices can help create safer environments for bees. Engaging with policymakers and agricultural industries to promote pollinator-friendly regulations is also essential.

Adapt to Climate Challenges

With shifting weather patterns, beekeepers need to monitor hive conditions more closely, provide additional water sources, and adjust feeding practices to compensate for changes in nectar availability. Implementing heat protection strategies, such as providing shade for hives, can also help reduce colony stress.

Strengthen Biosecurity Measures

With the increasing threat of Varroa mites, beekeepers must stay informed about biosecurity protocols, participate in monitoring programs, and be prepared to implement mite management strategies if necessary. Preventing the spread of pests and diseases is crucial to protecting Australia's bee populations.

The Future of Beekeeping Depends on Action

The decline of Australia's bee population is a pressing concern that requires immediate attention from beekeepers, farmers, and policymakers. By taking proactive steps to protect bees and their habitats, the industry can help secure a future where pollinators continue to thrive. Collaboration, education, and sustainable practices will be key to ensuring that beekeeping remains a viable and essential part of Australian agriculture and biodiversity.

Our commitment to our members

At Bqual, we understand the trust you place in us, and we want to assure you that safeguarding your confidential data is our absolute priority. Board Directors do not have open access – the truth is, only our Managing Director holds the key to any sensitive information, ensuring a tightly controlled and secure environment for your peace of mind.

Our Bqual Board isn't just made up of beekeepers; it's enriched by professionals from other industries, bringing fresh ideas and proven skills that can truly benefit our community. We value your unique insights, and our structure is designed to support your growth without the worry of internal competition or information being used for unintended gain. For the past seven years, a testament to our commitment, there has never been a breach of your trust.

We know cost is a consideration, and that's why Bqual stands as the most affordable quality assurance program available. We're constantly evolving, introducing digital audits to save you precious time and money.

Quality assurance isn't just a tick-box; it's your powerful statement to buyers and consumers about your dedication to producing safe, high-quality honey – a commitment that builds lasting trust and strengthens your business in the long run.

News – Industry related news and updates

Rethinking Varroa: Towards Sustainable Solutions



The current consensus in beekeeping is shifting away from synthetic miticides for Varroa control. Their diminishing effectiveness and increasing deregulation signal a need for wiser approaches. Experts highlight that these chemicals offer only short-term relief to a persistent problem.

The challenge is twofold: no miticide eliminates all mites, and ultimately, breeding for mite-resistant bees offers the most sustainable solution, as advocated by experienced beekeepers.

So, what's the way forward? Nature provides answers. We can emulate the natural defenses of wild honey bees by promoting swarming, inducing brood breaks, and regularly removing drone brood. Proven natural miticides like organic acids and essential oils also offer effective alternatives.

To learn more about the science and practical application of these sustainable Varroa control methods there is a great blog about this on the Canberra Region Beekeepers website.

- Credit Canberra Region Beekeepers

Read the full article here:

www.actbeekeepers.asn.au/bee-buzz-box-april-2025-swipe-the-mite-part-v-a-great-treat

Australian growers expect to benefit from US tariffs as Trump's trade war angers markets

New trade opportunities are emerging for some Australian agricultural industries, following US President Donald Trump's wide-ranging tariff announcement on Thursday.

Australian exports to the US will be subject to a 10 per cent tariff, as part of the Trump administration's sweeping changes to US trade policy.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese vowed to use "dispute resolution" powers if necessary, while Opposition Leader Peter Dutton suggested he would be willing to use defence and security as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Australian products have avoided the much higher "reciprocal tariffs" applied to the US's major trading partners.

As a result, some Australian agricultural markets are celebrating an unexpected silver lining from the Trump tariff announcements.

- Credit ABC News

Read the full article here:

www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-05/trumps-tariff-may-benefit-australian-growers/105136862

Minimising RISK with Fair Work and WorkSafe Claims against your Business

Every business in the country reports to at least 3 regulatory authorities:

- The ATO.
- Fair Work and
- WorkSafe.

The ATO is the easy one. The Accountant puts it in place and we follow the bouncing ball.

Fairwork and WorkSafe are the hard ones. With contains changes, the requirement for Policy, Process and Proof, it represents SUBSTANTIAL RISK for Business Owners.

If you would not dream of having an Accountant when these two regulatory authorities are the hard one, it is important to GET SUPPORT!!

Getting support

Considering the ever-changing HR and OH&S landscapes, it is important for Business Owners and Operators to stay ahead of the curve and understand the impact of legislative changes upon their business. It is also a statutory obligation for all businesses to have a compliant OH&S system.

It is our intention to both proactively and strategically protect the business owners and operators regarding HR and OH&S. It is important for us to assist our members in having the relevant Policy, Process and Proof to facilitate this.

That is why we work with you 24/7/365. It is also our intention that these systems assist with enhancing the return on investment from your labour fixed costs, which I personally feel more than covers the cost for this compliance.

We are here to take work off your table and provide you with the peace of mind and confidence that you are supported and protected as both a business and an individual.

We provide peace-of-mind and confidence.

Peninsula is “NOT” a Government organisation. We are a proudly independent company helping Business Owners proactively and strategically protect their businesses regarding HR and OH&S.

Let us take the load.

Peninsula will work with you to navigate and manage confusing workplace requirements. We are here to support YOU.

How does it work?

By advising, assisting and supplying robust Policy, Process and Proof, (record keeping systems).

We take a huge administrative component from your business. By customising and providing employment documentation including contracts, employee handbooks, employee letters and correspondence, performance management and disciplinary materials and a variety of other bespoke materials.

By providing 24/7 advice and support in relation to FairWork and Work Safe legislation, compliance, managing employment relations matters and holding difficult conversations. In fact, anything to do with Employment Relations and Work Health and Safety.

Providing access to our Award-Winning Legal Partner for legal representation.

Safeguarding our clients against the financial costs of workplace claims. This is subject to the terms and conditions of the attached PDS.

PLUS our BrightSafe and BrightHR Software Solutions, which can help you get on top of Work Health and Safety compliance, rostering, leave management, expense management and document management.

Additional resources for review

Please take a moment to view this short video clip.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0hx9Qp4z6M>

Please also click on the following link for Trustpilot reviews. We have an excellent 4.8 stars out of five across over 1800 reviews.

<https://au.trustpilot.com/review/employsure.com.au>

Get in touch for details and to sign up

Office: Phone: 07 4994 9820

B-QUAL email: admin@bqual.com.au

B-TRACE email: admin@btrace.com.au

Join B-TRACE QA and Food Safety Program:

“Accurate record keeping is the backbone of a successful food safety program.”



Food safety is crucial for maintaining health standards and ensuring that food doesn't cause harm to consumers. One vital aspect that everyone involved in food production, from farmers, food manufacturers, and beekeepers must focus on is strict record keeping. Joining the B-TRACE QA and Food Safety Program is one way to help achieve this goal and enhance food safety practices by using the B-TRACE hive management app.

The B-TRACE program encourages small medium enterprise beekeeping operators to put reliable, systematic practices in place to ensure that all aspects of food safety are handled correctly.

What is B-TRACE?

B-TRACE could stand for "Building Traceability Assurance for Compliance and Excellence." The program is designed to equip beekeepers with the tools and knowledge they need to ensure food safety from apiary to consumer.

The primary aim of B-TRACE is to enable operators to track and monitor every aspect of honey production. This includes gathering, processing, packaging, and distribution. Keeping accurate records allows businesses to pinpoint any problematic areas before they lead to significant issues.

Why Join B-TRACE?

There are several reasons why being a part of the B-TRACE QA and Food Safety Program is beneficial:

1. Enhanced Safety Standards:

By joining B-TRACE, you align your practices with industry standards that emphasize food safety and quality.

2. Improved Traceability:

With the use of the B-TRACE hive management app you can easily trace products. This is critical in the event of a food recall.

3. Better Consumer Confidence:

When customers know that a company is dedicated to safety, they are more likely to trust its products.

4. Regulatory Compliance:

Participating in B-TRACE helps ensure that your organization meets all industry standards and requirements for food safety and record keeping.

Statistics show that businesses with strong record keeping are less likely to experience safety violations. Keeping accurate records allows companies to identify trends and improve their safety protocols effectively. As part of B-TRACE, you will have access to templates and software designed to simplify this process.

Benefits of Effective Record Keeping

1. Liability Protection:

In case of illness reports or food recalls, having excellent records can protect your business legally.

2. Operational Efficiency:

When everything is documented, it becomes easier and quicker to find crucial information, thereby allowing for better decision-making.

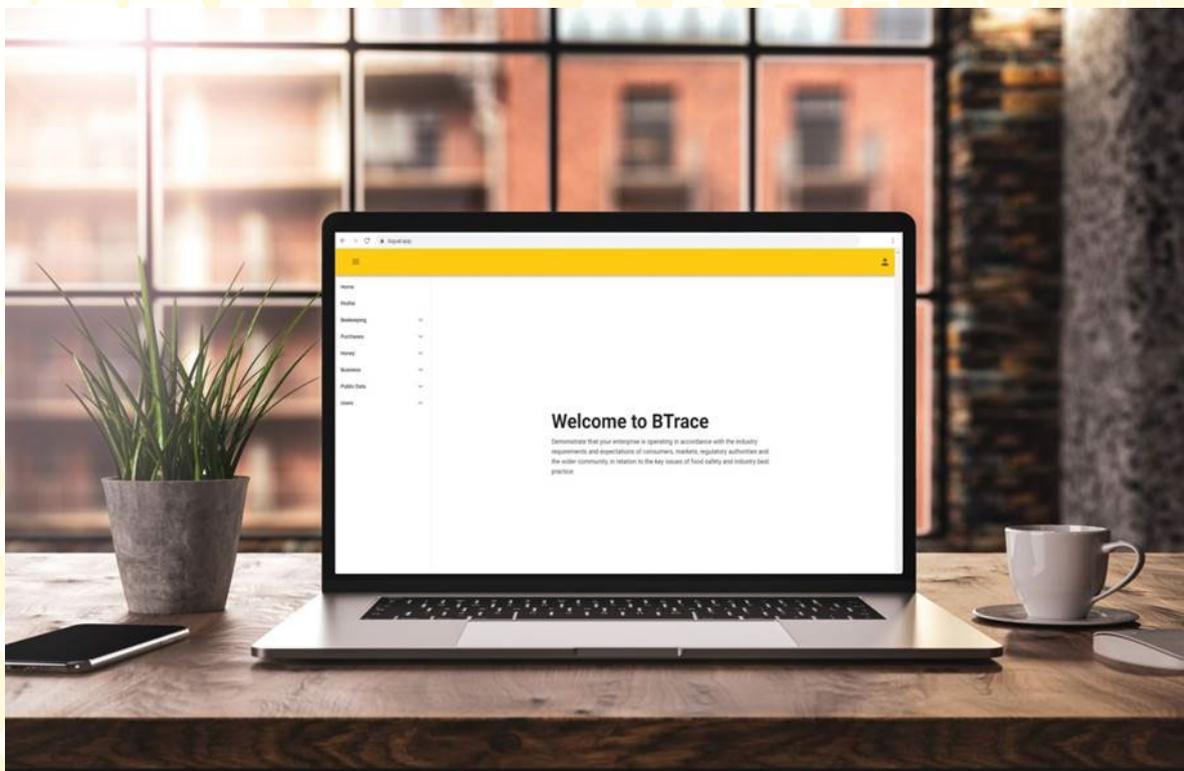
3. Employee Training:

Records provide a history of incidents and safety measures. They are valuable tools for training employees on food safety practices.

4. Quality Control:

Systematic record keeping can help identify areas for quality improvement.

Make the move now contact BTRACE via www.btrace.com.au or phone 07 4994 9820



Notices

B-TRACE Audits.

If you have not yet submitted your online audit for the current year, please do so to keep your accreditation up to date.

The online audit form is available in the members section of the B-TRACE web site or alternatively contact admin@btrace.com.au and we will email one to you.

Once completed email back to the office.

Allow 5-7 days for audit review and issue of the accreditation certificate.

Members section of websites.

To access the member section of the B-QUAL and B-TRACE websites you need to create an account.

To do this email the office requesting an account for either web site.

Once the account is set you will receive an email requesting to log in and change the initial password. Remember that you must have a separate account for the members section, your app or other passwords will not work.

B-QUAL and/or B-TRACE logos.

Pre-printed logo labels are available from the office.

B-TRACE 30mm lid labels full colour \$26.50/1000 (plus GST and postage)

B-QUAL 12mm jar labels full colour \$ 22.50/1000. (plus GST and postage)

If you are printing your own labels high Res artwork is available free of charge.



B-QUAL Self Assessments.

If you have purchased your Approved Supplier Manual but not yet submitted the self-assessments, you cannot proceed with further certification until self-assessments are submitted.

The assessments are in the first section of the manual. Complete both assessments and send to admin@bqual.com.au for review and certificate issue.

If you have any queries about assessments, contact admin@bqual.com.au for further assistance.

Our Sponsors:

We acknowledge and thank Steritech and the CMV Group for their valuable ongoing support of B-QUAL and B-TRACE which assists us to continue to participate in research and industry development works which we see as important to our industry.



CMV
TRUCK CENTRE



CMVFARMS



STERITECH
Protecting what matters

Please support those who support us.

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