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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam;

RE: Science Underpinning the Inability to Eradicate the Asian Honeybee

With 35 of our 37 years in the beekeeping industry dedicated to developing the best commercial enterprise possible within various constraints ranging from poor honey prices to bushfires, floods and droughts, we feel a need to inform the Standing Committee on RF&T of our position with regard to the Asian bee threat.

We currently run 1200 hives of bees plus 300 nucleus replacements hives.

- Breed replacement queen bees.
- Employ 2 fulltime staff & 1 casual staff.
- Supply pollination services to almond, apple, stone fruit, berry growers plus assistance to new and emerging industries.
- Supply direct honey sales to the public through farmers markets.
- Supply honey to major honey packers.
- Supply packaged bees for export.

To remain viable, it has always been our practice to stay well informed of developments, issues, threats & possibilities in the Beekeeping and Horticultural Industry. To that end we are involved with/members of:

- Victorian Apiarists Association, including Executive positions
- North East Apiarists Association, including Executive
- Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Apiculture (Victoria)
- Victorian Varroa Response Team
- Victorian Farmers Federation

We regularly attend State Beekeeping Associations Conference, meetings, information sessions, field days, tours, listen to visiting experts from various fields on various subjects.

We read research materials, search the internet for information, consult with experts, including DPI officers regularly and read various beekeeping journals & books from around Australia & USA.

Whenever we are faced with a new threat we aim to be well informed, prepared and armed with a plan of action. Eg. We obtained passports to study varroa first hand in New Zealand in preparation for its arrival here in Australia.

We have had to accept financial losses, evolve, adapt and move on from some potentially crippling events. We have always found a way to overcome adversity.

We can see no way to manage the Asian Bee threat, or to overcome its impact.

It is our assessment of the Asian Bee situation, that if the Asian Bee is not eradicated, Victoria's Beekeeping Industry will fail within 10 years.

We cannot ethically allow our young beekeeper sons and their families to pour their youth, energy and capital into our business and a doomed industry: far better that they move into a new field now.

All the advice, research and reading we have done points to the demise of our beekeeping industry if this threat is not eradicated. We will no longer be viable with the reduced income from lack of honey production, reduced bee numbers for paid pollination services and "black ban" on Australia for live bee exports.

A threat of this magnitude at this critical stage of our career leads us to believe we will have to bow out of the industry and with this Australia's beekeeping and horticultural industry loses 1500 beehives and 2 generations of beekeepers.

Many beekeeping businesses are family concerns and you will see this same result from many of our colleagues who are nearing retirement and are approaching the subject of succession extremely tentatively.

Yours faithfully

Rodney & Jennifer Whitehead
Walkabout Apiaries