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MEDIA RELEASE

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources

Roundtable on the biosecurity of the Australian honey bee industry

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Report released on the biosecurity of Australian honey bees

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources today released its report *Safe Keeping: inquiry into the biosecurity of Australian honey bees*. The report makes six recommendations to the Australian Government aimed at improving early threat detection and response strategies.

Australian honey bees provide critical environmental and economic benefits to the agricultural industry, estimated to be worth \$4 billion per annum, through their pollination services. However, the honey bee industry is facing increasing threats from invasive pests and diseases arriving into Australia, including the Asian honey bee and the Varroa mite.

The Committee found that while Australian biosecurity controls have so far been successful, there is an ongoing risk and more needs to be done concerning the identification and capture of bees when they first arrive at Australian ports.

Committee Chair, Mr Rick Wilson MP, said 'Australia is currently the only country free of the *Varroa destructor* mite. It is essential that detection and response capabilities be increased to prevent a potentially devastating economic impact.'

The Committee recommends:

- strengthening the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program
- investigating the use of technology to enable greater public involvement in detection programs
- analysing pest bee risk ratings at Australian ports, including airports
- commencing an analysis of bee smuggling into Australia
- undertaking research and development into selective breeding of honey bees.

The report (plus further information relating to the inquiry, including the terms of reference and submissions) may be obtained from the Committee's website at: www.aph.gov.au/agriculture.

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For background:

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