

Sterling Kershaw & Co
Apiarist

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport
P o Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Sirs

My wife Barbara and I, Sterling Kershaw, are commercial apiarists for over fifty years.

Our family business has been operating our European Honey Bees (Apiaries) in Australia for five generations. Our staff of 7 is all family members, sharing the workload through out the year performing duties required within our Apiary Business.

We are proud to say that two sons and their families have decided to work along side us within the beekeeping industry. It isn't an easy industry to decide to work within. Our sons are fortunate to have the guidance from us and the memories from their grandfather as he was a devoted beekeeper, as well.

Over many years we have slowly built up our business to 1600 hives. With this we had changes to accommodate for our families. With many weeks away from our families we changed our honey business from a mobile operation. We constructed a factory near our residence to ensure flexibility for our extraction of honey. We transport our beehives on pallets approx 400kms radius of our home base with our three boggie wheel trucks and bobcats for maneuvering. We have invested over many years hundreds of thousands dollars into our business to be successful.

Each year our pollination and honey production varies, depending on weather and pests.

Our season commences normally in July. We transport 1000 beehives to the Riverina area, to pollinate 1200 acres of almonds. We are in that location for 4 weeks.

Mid August we transport our beehives to Canola and Lucerne crops to pollinate. We provide a service for up to 14 different farmers crops a year. Without bees to pollinate the crops there would be very limited income for the farmer and their families. Farmers employ seasonally workers throughout the year. The food cycle chain just continues to grow.

From mid September we transport our bees from different locations within the state depending what flora is flowering. Our bees collect honey and pollen from many different Eucalyptus and ground covers. Yellow Box, Red Gum, Iron Bark, Stringy Bark, Spotted Gum, Salvation, Jane Blue Weed to name just a few. On an average year, we produce 200 tonnes of honey. Keeping our bees well maintained for the following year's pollination services is important

We also produce tonnes of bee's wax a year and it is sold to church groups, candle makers and larger groups for some of the items listed next. Bees Wax is used for many resources. Candles and ornaments, Lip balms, cosmetics and medicinal creams, foundation for new honeycomb hives, slippage preventive for belts in vacuum cleaners/ sewing machines etc, waterproofing skis/ toboggans/ bow strings, furniture polishes, soap making, crayons, Lip sticks, floor polishes and many more. We keep a small portion of the bees wax to be sent to a company that makes it into foundation for our new honeycomb hives.

Until now we have been proud that our sons are working in the bee industry but now with the incursion of the Asian Bee (Apis Cerana) this concerns us, greatly. The outcome with our industry is at great risk.

Potentially the Asian Bee will eliminate the European Honey bee and Australia's food sources that they pollinate, if it is not eradicated promptly. 45 fruits and plus all the seeds for our vegetables besides the crops it pollinates, will be gone. Our unique varieties only found in Australia will also be lost.

The evidence in Cairns strongly indicates that the Asian bee is a highly invasive insect and has the potential to inhabit most of Australia. The density of Asian bee colonies is said to be three times greater than European Honey Bee colonies. Asian bee colonies tendency to swarm several times a year and their fondness for human habitation areas create significant public nuisance costs in the form of swarm removal and increased levels of stinging events.

The Asian Bee has an extremely high tendency to swarm and the average honey harvest is extremely poor. Honey crops from Asian Bee colonies are frequently reported to a range from a few kilograms to 10kg. In comparison to European honey bees the average crop per hive we would produce would be approx 125kg per hive is achieved.

The Asian Bee is the Cane Toad of the insect world. That will spread across the entire Australia continent and cannot be managed.

The Asian Bee will definitely put a financial burden on our beekeeping operations. This will also place stress on our physiologists, doctors, hospitals and support teams. These services will be required for us to emotionally cope with this major disaster.

We are apiarist; this is our unique profession it has taken us generations to learn. Emotionally this is heart breaking to see the Australian Government hesitating to support funding for the Eradication of Asian Bee.

The eradication program, which would cost \$5 million, should be reinstated to protect our honey industry, worth between 50 million and \$80 million a year. Our agricultural crops in Australia are worth \$4 billion pollinated by honey bees.

European Honey Bees are the grass roots of Australia.

Asian Bee is a silent disaster just waiting to destroy our agriculture industries, annihilate jobs, obliterate families.

**.....No European Honey Bees No Seed No European Honey Bees No Honey.....
.....No European Honey Bees No Food.....**

Many thanks for your consideration, support and understanding of our industry.

Kind Regards



Sterling A Kershaw
Partner
Sterling Kershaw and Co

Barbara C Kershaw
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