



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Inquiry into the future development of the
Australian Honey Bee Industry

Chair: Alby Schultz MP
Deputy Chair: Dick Adams MP

New Inquiry

Bees: Australia's unpaid workers

The House of Representatives Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee will conduct an inquiry into the **future development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry**.

The honey bee industry is a small but vital part of agriculture in Australia. Committee chair Alby Schultz said that "While the honey bee industry directly contributes only some \$60 million dollars to the Australian economy annually, **the pollination services provided by honey bees are worth billions of dollars per annum to the agriculture and horticulture sectors.**" Without those pollination services, Mr Schultz observed, "billions of dollars worth of production and thousands of jobs would be put at risk".

Despite its importance, the industry remains vulnerable to disease threats, loss of access to resources, and trade competition from low-wage countries. On the other hand, there is great potential for the expansion of the industry through bee exports, paid pollination services and the development of medicinal honey products.

Mr Schultz noted that the Committee, through its recent report ***Skills: Rural Australia's Need***, had already addressed issues of significance to the industry, such as the need for a CRC-style research centre for beekeeping and pollination, and the maintenance of a permanent bee quarantine facility.

"The new inquiry would allow the Committee to examine other issues affecting the Honey Bee Industry, and give voice to a range of industry concerns," Mr Schultz said.

This inquiry will examine the honey bee industry in terms of:

- Its current and future prospects.
- Its role in agriculture and forestry.
- Biosecurity issues.
- Trade issues.
- The impact of land management and bushfires.
- The research and development needs of the industry.
- Existing industry and Government work that has been undertaken for the honey bee industry.

The committee is seeking written submissions by **Friday 25 May 2007**. Submissions can be e-mailed to Aff.reps@aph.gov.au or sent to:

The Secretary - Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

For media comment: please contact the committee chair, Alby Schultz MP, on (02) 6277 4386 or email Alby.Schultz.MP@aph.gov.au.

For background information, including the terms of reference, contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4500 or at Aff.reps@aph.gov.au or visit the inquiry website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/