



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 1 August 2007

Chair: Alby Schultz MP
Deputy Chair: Dick Adams MP

\$50 million for bee research?

The research needs of the honey bee industry is shaping as one of the major issues affecting the industry's future. Its research profile reflects its small size, not its contribution to the economy. Honey bees provide pollination services worth billions of dollars per annum to agriculture and horticulture, yet research funding for the industry is less than \$1 million per annum.

With the imminent threats posed by pests and diseases, such as *Varroa destructor*, and the loss of access to floral resources through exclusion from public lands, the industry needs a huge boost to research funding. The CSIRO has estimated that up to \$50 million per annum could be justified on research and biosecurity measures for the exclusion of *Varroa* alone.

At its next public hearing, the House of Representatives agriculture committee will hear from representatives of the **Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC, Submission 54)** about the current and future research needs of the honey bee industry. RIRDC is the R&D manager for the Australian Honeybee R&D program.

RIRDC was the convener of the Honeybee Industry Linkages Workshop held in April 2007, bringing together representatives of government and industry. The committee is anxious to hear about the outcomes of the workshop, and further developments on the formation of a pollination industry alliance.

The committee will also hear from **Mr Trevor Monson** (Submission 6), the largest provider of pollination services in Australia, and a member of the RIRDC Honeybee R&D Advisory Committee.

The public hearing will be held on **8 August 2007**, in Committee Room **2R1**, Parliament House, Canberra. There will be a live audiovisual webcast of the hearing.

Committee chair, Alby Schultz stated that, "It is clear that unless governments and those industries depending on honey bees for pollination get behind the research effort, the honey bee industry will be devastated by some future biosecurity threat, such as *Varroa*, with terrible consequences for the entire nation. The honey bee industry cannot be left to struggle on its own."

Mr Schultz also welcomed the announcement by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of \$300,000 in funding for the formation of an alliance between the apiary industry and agriculture.

PUBLIC HEARING—Honey Bee Inquiry—Canberra, Wednesday 8 August 2007

WHERE: Committee Room 2R1, Parliament House, Canberra
WHEN: Wednesday 8 August 2007, 5pm–7pm
WEBCAST: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

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/