

# “Hunidue Apiaries”

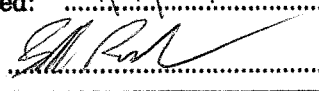
Honey Producers, Agricultural and Horticultural Crops Pollination.  
Established 1916. North-East Victoria.

ABN. 36 872 159 970.

*Frank, & Elwyne Papworth.*

June 30<sup>th</sup> 2007.

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

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COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY – THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
AUSTRALIAN HONEYBEE INDUSTRY.

## SUBMISSION.

The following submission is in response to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the future development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry on behalf of the Papworth family, including our son Myles, third generation in the Apiculture Industry, established in North-East Victoria in 1916..

The Papworth family thank the Standing Committee for this opportunity to take part in this little known and under valued Primary Industry in which the wider community does not realize the importance the industry has in their everyday life, commencing with the food they rely on for their health, and value added income/life style

Our family business is carried out through out Victoria, the Riverina and Central Western New South Wales and South-East South Australia.

We run around 1500 hives of bees, we have purpose built stainless steel , Quality Assured honey extracting equipment in two Food Standard honey rooms, one at Strathallan, and a second at our Hillston NSW. property.

We have an investment in the Apiary industry of near to \$1ml, [including equipment, trucks, hives, forklifts, other bee related goods], not including the ongoing costs attributed to licenses for public land bee sites for apiary use, or repayment for the use of private lands used for honey production and ongoing production costs.

In recent years, because of the poor farm gate returns, the constant need to increase hive numbers to maintain a reasonable business cash flow, we have successfully diversified into the Pollination sector., while continuing the production of honey.

## **Honey Marketing and Promotion of Australian Produced Honeys.**

Honey marketing within Australia has not been able to achieve the prices required to sustain the Industry at the "Farm Gate".

There are some thousands of people registered with the various States Departments of Agriculture as Apiarists', these people can be divided into several groups, 1 to 50 plus hives, [enough hives for the home back yard or to transport in utility vehicles and or trailer's, And locating hives on private and or public lands areas to produce some honey during the season], = 0-50 plus to 300 plus hives, can be classed as semi professional, also using the similar locations to produce honey, and 300 to 1000 plus hives are generally classed as commercial producers.

How-ever to be a competent honey producer with a viable income from honey production alone, you do require 500 plus hives, hold a large portfolio of bee sites on both public and private lands, an extremely good knowledge of flora, where specific flora grows, how that flora will effect hive strength, when it last flowered and in fact what time of the season that targeted flora will flower and for how long it will produce nectar.

The rule of thumb [CHA], is on average, for each 100 hives, 30 x 300kg drums of honey should be produced each season. Prices per kilogram offered to producers is less than the cost to produce a kilogram of honey, [\$2.90-\$3.10 per kg according to the size of the producers business and the distances traveled from the Honey Extracting Shed /main location]. It is recognized within industry that 20% of registered Apiarists' produce 80% of the Nations honey. There is significant 'un-accounted for' honey production at the 300 and less hives section, much being disposed of in "paddy markets", home and road side sales and very smaller Packers. It should be recorded that in most all full time honey producer businesses, wages aren't drawn by the business operators, income is used for running expenses, eg; employee wages, fuels/oils, power, supplementary bee foods,[soy flour, liquid sugar], hive body replacement, vehicle repairs/maintenance, registrations etc, and other numerous business related expenses. The packing sector will argue that returns to producers is marginally above CPI., I will argue that beekeepers are not 38 hour a week wage earners, but are 24/7 hour workers, with massive out lay's to maintain a migratory honey producing, pollination service business, CPI has no bearing on primary production throught with unexpected unknowns and unpredictable environmental conditions. There is a cultural intellect within the Packing sector unable to see the long term needs to progress the apiary industry into a progressive and stable future.

Levy's payable on honey starts at 600kgs., far to much revenue is being lost, in levy money's for industry management, placing greater burden on the full time producer. With disposal of their product in competition with that of the full time Producer supplied Packer presented honey for the super market shelf, under cutting of sale price by the small Packer/seller is also under mining farm gate returns to the full time commercial operator. Major Packers will say that the major super markets are holding down prices by the way they pit packers against each other, and, of course there is the possible threat that cheaper honey's can be imported into the country and packed for the super markets to further destabilize the beekeeping industry.

Larger producers transport hives interstate targeting flora's, traveling hundreds of kilometers to produce honey, accessing public lands where possible, for honey production and provide pollination services which varies state by state. The use of the precautionary principal by public land managers to deny access is restrictive to the future expansion and development of industry, and is destabilizing industry by not allowing increased numbers of bee sites to be allocated to keep pace with the expanding apiary numbers required now for honey production and future needs for the growing various pollination requirements.

Aprox 80% of honey produced is exported, the remainder being domestic and manufacturing sales.

As Quota/Share Holder Suppliers to Capilano Honey Limited [CHL], greatly affected by the low farm gate returns, in some instances, increases in farm gate prices by the Packing sector are for honeys not able to be produced in that season [not going to flower as is with the most recent price proposals], or advantage may only be able to be taken by not all states producers because that colour grade/type of honey won't be produced in all states, particularly where higher prices are offered for specific named types of honey is shown.

### **Recommendations.**

*\* Instigate an urgent inquiry into Farm Gate returns by the ACCC and or the Fair Pay Commission to identify a fair and just return to the primary producer.*

*\* labeling honey as 'Australian Produced Honey', [present labeling system not adequate or acceptable for the Apicultural Industry producers.]*

*\* Increased "Farm gate" returns to the producer, better promotion of Australian produced honey in the domestic sales arena,*

*\* Every registered beekeeper and Parker of honey for sale to the Public must be registered, pack honey under regulation, approved QA conditions and pay levy's on all packed honey's for sale.*

*\* States Public Land managers recognize the importance of the managed honey bee industry to Agriculture and Horticulture, and allow historic full/open access to the public estate with out restriction,*

*\* States rescind the sections of their Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act which cites Apis Mellifera [feral honey bees, ] as an Endangering Species, [ being used by some land managers to reject access].*

*\* Reduce the amount of 600 Kilograms of honey produced/sold to 50 Kilograms before levy's are required to be paid [50kgs is enough for personal use].*

*\* Re-introduce the statutory marketing levy for the promotion of Australian Honey, agreed to by the FCAAA at the 2006 Annual Conference,*

*\* Cease the use of the precautionary principal to restrict/deny access to public land.*

*\* Instigate research in conjunction with the apiary industry with partner ownership of out comes, to determine, if any , what real effect the use by apiculture has had or is having, if any on the public estate.*

*\* governments decide, do they want Australian grown food ?, which is contributing to the nations health, employment and industrial development, if yes, to achieve that, openly recognize the Apicultural industry's national value and declare continued and increased access to all closed public lands, if no, enjoy all things associated with the food chain from imported, questionable produced foods.*

### **Horticultural and Agricultural Pollination.**

\* Commercial pollination is emerging as an integral part of the bee keeping industry with approximately 100,000 hives being used, with an estimated further aprox 400,000 hives being needed to accommodate the Almond industry alone over the next

few years [no bees no Almonds], other pollination includes, [fruits], peaches, pears, plums, nashi fruit, cherry's apples berries and other nuts. Included in pollination is seed Lucerne, clover, sun flowers, canola, corn, buck wheat, saf-flower etc, then comes the seeds for vegetables and domestic flowers.

Pollination is mostly carried out by the commercial honey producer, who with the need to diversify because of low farm gate returns and taking advantage of the increased plantings by the Almond industry, require continued access to the public estate to prepare hives for the targeted pollination contract and revitalize hives after pollination with the nutrition required to replenish hives strength, [breed up the worker bees], to enable hives to remain viable honey producers, and pollinators.

Of major concern is the on going usage, in farming practices, of Herbicides, Insecticides and Chemical sprays, prior to, and or during hive location while pollinating a targeted crop. The with-holding period and toxicity to managed honey bees is an ongoing issue, recently, industry in Australia and in other country's are experiencing "Disappearing Bee Disease", it is now emerging that some chemicals previously used are likely to be drawn up out of the ground by the plant, generated into the nectar and or the pollen. When the bee collects either, she takes it back to the hive to feed, and or store for the colony, observations in recent years by beekeepers and ourselves, in particular while bees are on location on canola, hive strength is diminishing, queen bees start to show an irregular laying pattern or fail to retain hive strength. Our bees are shifted out of reach of canola to another floral source [if available], and in some instances require to be given a new queen, the hive will not perform well enough to produce honey for aprox a month or more when this event becomes evident. This event occurs early in the spring, some eucalypts are commencing flowering, mostly inaccessible because of the quantity of public lands locked up from so called "commercial use"

**Recommendation,**

*\* All Chemical companies should be required to include extension research, before release of any new product, and to include " in use" products on growing plants, to determine if nectar and or pollen is being effected by residue of in ground or surface residual chemicals, weather applied by water delivery, aerial or conventional spray methods.*

*\* Better labeling of all types of chemical containers, to include a tested, proven statement if it is or is not harmful to bees, what the with-holding period, [ if appropriate] is before bee visitation can be under taken for pollination services*

*\* Education of Agronomists, Agricultural and Horticultural advisors to the grower sectors of the benefit and value adding by the informed use of chemicals to protect bees, managed or feral, educate Agronomists to recognize the use of bees.*

**Role in Agriculture:**

The value of Honey Bee production is in the range of

Honey: \$35.40 million

Pollination Services: \$2.53 million

Queens: \$1.12 million

Package bees: \$4.55 million

The value of the Apicultural Industry to the wider community has been estimated at \$2.73 billion. [DAFF/CIE report 2005].

The value to the wider community will only increase provided beekeepers are guaranteed access to presently locked-up public land resources, to enable their growth to meet this emerging demands within Agriculture and Horticulture.

**Recommendations:**

*\* Industry requires appropriate recognition and assistance by Governments. [ access to resources and increased research funding].*

**Bio Security Issues:**

Pests and diseases, both exotic and endemic could limit the industry's ability to meet the expected demands of the Agricultural sector, export potential and the community's expectations for healthy chemical free fruit and vegetables, places Australian grown products in jeopardy.

Exotic incursions such as Varroa, Tropilaeaps, and Tracheal Mites, Apis Cerana bees, (Nosema Cerana), Bumble Bee, Apis Dorsata, (an Asian Bee), will impact on the beekeeping industry, and increase costs dramatically.

Endemic pests and diseases cause industry production and financial losses and in some cases can affect the Agricultural sector. American Foul Brood (AFB) is a reportable disease to the Departments of Agriculture, endemic in most states, has known high financial costs in hive management, [irradiation] and or replacement through hive material destruction, [burning in prepared ground pits].

Victoria has an excellent AFB Smart program in action with the intention to seriously reduce the incidence of AFB within industry as soon as possible

Importation of Apples now poses a major risk to the Australian honey bee industry. Bio-security's own admission is that, it can't be guaranteed that Fire Blight will not be introduced from New Zealand with the importation of Apples, because when the apples are put through the cleaning bath to kill the Fire Blight pathogen, an air bubble forms at the calyx of the apple, therefore no treatment is implemented in that area.

Bio-Security has advised that in the event of an incursion of Fire Blight, a buffer zones would be created out and around the last known outbreak, all affected trees and all hives of bees and known feral hives in that area, [hives on pollination], will be destroyed with no compensation granted, the consequences of hive destruction under this scenario is devastating to the industry members considering undertaking pollination in the soft fruit industry in the future, it should also be taken into account the possibility of an Apiary business resident in a restricted area, travel within and out of that area would be prohibited, no compensation is to be afforded the disadvantaged beekeepers in that scenario.

Bio security must be effective and be ongoing to exclude known pests and diseases which will affect, in this instance, the Apple and Pear growers as well as the Apiary sector on pollination. .

Agricultural chemicals can have serious effects on honeybees, and research needs to occur to identify and list their effects on honeybee populations. (Neonicotinoids and micro-encapsulated sprays.)

### **Recommendations:**

- \* Continue to update, increase and monitor the National Sentinel Hive Program.*
- \* Have a readiness plan in place for Varroa Mite, with management strategies based on the New Zealand incursion findings, investigate and improve on the measures used in NZ.*
- \* Extension research required into the effect chemicals have on live plants intake/ transfer to nectar and or pollen from soils previously used where chemicals are known to be used including pollen absorption Honey Bees.*
- \* Investigate and instigate with industry assistance, a readiness plan for the means for hives, where the destruction of hives is mandatory, to have the ability to be transported out of the infected area and or be compensated for loss of hives and production potential.*
- \* Finance and expand industry personal qualifications in the four categories of EAD's, Industry Liaison Officer Training, in the event of emergency animal diseases incursions.*
- \* Instigate a National AFB. eradication program modeled on the Victorian program where every beekeeper is compelled to comply with the supply of honey samples by the DPI, during the production season, for AFB testing*

**Trade Issues:**

The risk of imported honey and other hive products is too great for Government to allow. 2004 saw imported honey blended with Australian honey, sold in Super Markets, with-drawn from the shelf, a massive media attach on honey in genera over a period of several weeks, resulting in a massive decrease in sales and a devastating loss in Farm Gate revenue to the producer, at a time when industry appeared to be going to look to an improved future within the beekeeping industry, prices on average reached \$3.10 per kg, to up to \$4 plus for specific lines at a specific colour grade,[phund reading], returns plummeted down to the mid \$2 region..

Beekeepers reeling from the onset of dearth production conditions, and faced with financial constraints to progress their business within industry, some being forced to seek out side employment to maintain cash flow. With the next two dearth seasons added some new young entrants into industry, were forced to leave.

For this industry to forge a steady path into the future, there is an urgent need for young entrants, to replace the fast ageing, present membership. With no guarantee of secure income and realistic honey prices, there is no incentive for entry into the beekeeping industry in the future.

**Recommendations:**

- \* *re-introduce benchmarking for all “ phund” grades and or types of honey,*
- \* *Labelling laws need addressed, eg, “Australian Produced” .*
- \* *Standards developed for all sized domestic honey packing businesses, from the largest to the smallest .*
- \* *Introduce standards for Australian produced honey, which imported goods would have to comply with, the re- introduction of the Minimum Residue Level [MRL] which now is set at “0” would assist in an assured quality product.*
- > *At the 2005 Federal Council of Australian Apiarists` Associations, [FCAAA], Annual Conference , [ peak producer sector represented at the AHBIC], it was agreed that industry should take steps to re- implement an MRL for all honey’s*

**Impact of Land Management / Bush Fires:**

Changes to land management are set to have some dramatic effects on the sustainability of the honey bee industry. Major resources (Public lands both Parks and Forests) have undergone management change over the past years. Some of the policies relating to honey bee access (especially in Queensland), which has a sunset clause of 2024 to exclude managed hives, will greatly add to the reducing resource base.

These forested areas are the beekeeping industry’s rest and recuperation areas where bees can be placed out of Agricultural chemical danger and are the nursery for hive build-up. These areas also contain the main resources for production for Australia’s

best known and prized honey's, of which Australia leads the World, in the Clean/Green arena.

The tenure of bee sites (given the importance of the honey bee industry to the wider community) should be given a higher priority, and access to resources, of the (especially Government managed Lands), should be guaranteed to the Industry with no reduction of access to resources.

The beekeeping industry is developing an Environment Management System [EMS] document to be included in a National Code of Practice which is intended to assist and ensure the honey bee industry's compliance with the policies of Land Managers, encompassing the various states Act's and Regulation pertaining to apiary and identify the environmental sustainability of the honey bee industry., However, any restricted access must be substantiated by collaborative scientific research to support any threat or action to "lock out" off Public Lands by land managers, research must also be undertaken over a period of apiary occupancy/production seasons and after, [3-5 year cycle], for any recognized indication of effect through apiary presence.

Management for bush fires has changed along with overall management as vast areas of Forestry is changed to Conservation Areas.

Due to the exclusion of stock and timber harvesting of these converted areas, fuel loads increase dramatically, and given the drier years the Australian continent is experiencing, massive bush fires are devastating millions of hectares each year of usable, apiary excluded country, primarily, honey bee resources. (Pilliga Scrub 150,000 hectares, Victoria's North East, over 1 million hectares), country burnt by wild fires in this manner may take 12 – 15 years to recover, before flowering conditions become conducive for honey production.

There is a trend to try to replace denied access to public lands with plantation timber, no plantations are being planted to replicate the natural mixes of flora, [eucalypt and ground flora], not enough land is available to replace the same quantity of denied native flora, planters have no understanding of industry needs to maintain hives or to produce honey, plantations already in ground mostly flower during the winter and are not of mainland species. From May to August, managed honey bees go into hibernation, and have to be encouraged through specific management techniques to be prepared for Almond pollination in early August.

**Recommendations:**

*\* re-introduce cattle grazing in the Mountain country.*

*\* Limited Autumn control fuel reduction burns.*

*\* re-open closed tracks, maintain all existing roads and tracks in public lands for fire access and apiary access.*

*\* Promote the new National Code of Practice (EMS).*

*\* Allow managed honey bee access to Conserved areas, including Buffer Zones.*



*\* Recognize, and gazette all public land as apiary resources in all states.*

*\* Cease the phasing out of apiary access in Queensland,*

**Research, Development, and Education:**

Because the honey bee industry is a small industry both demographically and financially, yet contributes millions of dollars to society, funds for research, development and education will need to be augmented by groups other than the honey bee industry (eg Horticulture, Agriculture and Governments). Linkages workshop identified the need for dependent Industries/Government to be involved in assisting honey bee industry with research, development and education.

Training should also be extended to government employees (DPI staff) to better service the honey bee industry. States Departments of Primary Industry's, [DPI] budgets have reduced the number of dedicated honey bee industry staff (extension/regulatory officers) in recent years, disadvantaging industry and assisting in the spread of known reportable honey bee diseases,. [American Foul Brood, and others].

Research over time, proves to return its costs in benefits and research may find ways to eliminate some of our worst pests and diseases (Varroa Mite).

Education is emerging as a must have, for the beekeeping industry. If the industry is to continue into the future, young people must be trained to take on the role of.

Apiarists, Scientists, Researchers, Industry Extension, industry is undergoing great changes.

Industry has worked with Education and Training to develop Competency Standards for skill based training, however the process is stalled and requires course material to be added and the training package released, promoted and supported by both industry and government.

The Australian Honey bee Industry Council [AHBIC] has initiated a Queen Bee Improvement Program for the production of disease resistant stock, higher productivity, and having resistance from pests. The program will require financial assistance from all beneficiaries (industry sectors reliant on pollination and government).

Education of the school children, public and governments requires funding. It has been suggested that a promotional levy be struck, however given the financial position of the industry this may be difficult to achieve and would require assistance from other sectors.

Education of the general public is perhaps as important as training young beekeepers. The everyday man on the street should be made aware of the value of the honey bee to society and the wider community.

Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland all attend State Agricultural Shows to promote and teach the wider community about Australian produced honey and the value of the managed honeybees for food pollination, it is also used to assist in

financing State Associations' which in turn are run for the benefit of the beekeeper membership. These promotional endeavors are voluntary managed and run.

Training schemes are being prepared, but they must get into the field and be supported by government.

**Recommendation:**

- \* Skills training courses must be supported by Government.*
- \* include apiculture, honey production, need pollination services and it's community values as part of schools curriculum nationally .*
- \* provide finances for the re-printing of the various states "Honey Flora" publications and "Beekeeping Educational Books". To be available to industry, and the school system.*
- \* Promote the benefits of Honey Bees to the wider community.*
- \* Set in place a means where funding can be provided to assist the continued efforts by the States Associations to promote Australian produced honey and Pollination Services to the wider community, eg. Agricultural Shows.*

**Existing Industry and Government Work for Industry:**

Access Workshop	
Queen Bee Improvement Program –	Industry/Federal
Partnership Program -	Federal
Code of Practice (EMS) –	Industry/Federal
Linkages Workshop -	Federal
Quality Assurance (B-Qual).-	Industry
OH &S Training –	Industry/ State
DPI Queen Rearing -	State
Disease and Pest Control -	Industry/Federal/State
Chainsaw Courses –	Industry
Extension dissemination of information -	State
Disease Response (Aus Vet) -	Industry/Federal
Research (HBRDC –RIRDC) -	Industry/Federal
National Sentinel Hive Program -	Industry/Federal/State
National Residue Survey (NRS) -	Industry/Federal
Export/Import Control (AQUIS)-	Federal.

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As an Executive Councilor of the Victorian Apiarists' Association Inc., [VAAinc.], I fully indorse the Submission tendered to the Committee of Inquiry, by the VAAinc.

My position in industry, apart from our family business is as follows,

State.

- > North-Eastern Apiarists Association of Victoria Inc., [NEAAVinc], Secretary 13 years. Member 17 years.
- > NEAAVinc., Resource Manager. 11 years.
- > VAAinc Executive Councilor, 14 years, past State President. Member 30 plus years.
- > VAAinc., Royal Melbourne Show, Manager, Industry Promotional Co-Ordinator.
- > Department of Primary Industry, Victoria, Government appointed Chairman of Apiculture Advisory Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> term.
- > Crop Pollination Association Inc., Secretary, 4 years.

Inter-State

- > New South Wales, Riverina Branch, Executive Councilor. 3 years.

National.

- > Australian Honey Bee Industry Council, [AHBIC], Resource Chairman. 2 years.
- > Federal Council of Australian Apiarists' Associations Inc. [FCAAAA] Secretary. 2 years.
- > National Crop pollination Association Inc. Secretary. 1 year.

It is my hope that as a result of this "Inquiry", we can leave a better and more secure industry business membership to our son and all future industry participants.

Thank you for accepting and dreading our Submission.

Prepared by, Elwyne Papworth.

*Elwyne Papworth.*