



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 16 July 2007

Chair: Alby Schultz MP
Deputy Chair: Dick Adams MP

Burning our bees

The honey bee industry in Victoria is facing a crisis. Loss of access to floral resources on public land has been compounded by the damage done by last summer's wildfires. Many apiary sites have been lost, and some of our best honey producing forests and woodlands will take years to recover. This has occurred at a time when the industry needs to expand to meet the pollination requirements of agriculture – worth billions of dollars.

As Mrs Elwynne Papworth, a leading Victorian beekeeper, explained to the committee in her submission (Submission 74): "The use of the precautionary principal by public land managers to deny access is restrictive to the future expansion and development of the industry, and is destabilising 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."

The House of Representatives agriculture committee will be meeting with Victorian beekeepers at its next public hearing in **Wangaratta**, on **25 July 2007**, commencing at **9 am** and concluding at **5 pm**.

The committee is keen to hear about the problems besetting the industry, including loss of access to floral resources, low farm-gate returns to honey producers, lack of funds for industry research, and the ageing of the beekeeper population.

Witnesses include representatives of the Victorian Apiarists Association (Submission 71), the Victorian Farmers Federation (Submission 27), the Central Victorian Apiarists Association (Submission 22), and Mrs Jodie Goldsworthy (Submission 69), founder and director of Beechworth Honey and former Telstra Young Business Women of the Year for NSW.

Committee chair, Alby Schultz said: "The Australian honey bee industry needs access to native vegetation for honey production and conditioning hives before and after pollination. The industry cannot survive without it. Governments, industry and land managers must work together to ensure access to floral resources for the sake of honey producers and pollination dependent industries."

Mr Schultz emphasised that "better land and fire management is essential to the honey bee industry and to agriculture more widely. Land managers must take the needs of bees into account when clearing, burning and replanting land".

PUBLIC HEARING—Honey Bee Inquiry—Wangaratta, Wednesday 25 July 2007

WHERE: Bogong Room, Gateway Hotel, 29-37 Ryley St Wangaratta, Victoria
WHEN: Wednesday 25 July 2007, 9am–5pm

Public and media most welcome

For media comment: please contact the committee chair, Alby Schultz MP, on (02) 4822 2277 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/

For contact on the day: Mr Schultz: 0428 693 553. Secretariat: 0419 468 689