



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 9 August 2007

Chair: Alby Schultz MP
Deputy Chair: Dick Adams MP

No Bees, No Food?

The pollination role of the honey bee in horticulture and agriculture is shaping as the critical issue confronting the industry in the face of pest and disease threats such as Varroa. Many crops and pasture species are heavily dependent on honey bees for pollination. Some, like almonds, are totally dependent on honey bees for pollination. Without bees, many crops are not commercially viable.

At its next public hearing, the House of Representatives agriculture committee will hear from representatives of the **Australian Honeybee Industry Council (AHBIC)** about the future development of the honey bee industry. AHBIC is the peak body representing the apiary industry in Australia.

In its submission to the inquiry (Submission 56), AHBIC notes: "Honeybee pollination is essential for some crops, while for others it raises yield and quality. Honeybee pollination provides significant value to Australian horticulture and agriculture with services being valued at \$3.8 billion per annum for the 35 most important honeybee dependent crops. When other crops, including pastures such as lucerne and clover, are added this estimate becomes even larger. If honeybee pollination were to stop completely, large losses would be felt in a horticulture sector. **This is because approximately 65 per cent of horticultural and agricultural crops produced in Australia require pollination services from honeybees.**"

The public hearing will be held on **15 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, "Given the importance of agriculture and horticulture to Australia, and the vital role played by the honey bee in agriculture and horticulture, governments and pollination dependent industries must ensure the long term viability of the honey bee industry. This demands investment in research and development to reduce the impacts of pests and diseases; better border security and quarantine measures; and long term access to floral resources."

Mr Schultz further noted that, "We tend to take bees for granted, but they are vital to our existence. We depend on them for much of what we eat and we would struggle without them. Everybody—governments, primary producers and the community—needs to understand that."

PUBLIC HEARING—Honey Bee Inquiry—Canberra, Wednesday 15 August 2007

WHERE: Committee Room 2R1, Parliament House, Canberra
WHEN: Wednesday 15 August 2007, 5pm–6.30pm
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/