



# Peter CRISP MLA

MEMBER FOR MILDURA

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Submission to  
 the House of Representatives  
 Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee

## *Inquiry into the Future Development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry*

Submission by

**Peter Crisp MLA, Member for Mildura**

Prior to my election to Victorian Parliament I was involved in the horticultural industry (Chairman of Sunraysia Citrus Growers ) and the Victorian Farmers Federation (Deputy President and Treasurer of the Horticulture Group).

**Nationals Spokesman for Public Transport and Major Projects**

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## 1. Its current and future prospects

Apiarists are critical to the success of our local horticultural industries, especially almonds and avocados which rely 100% on insect pollination. Other crops reliant on honey bee pollination are;

Crop	Reliance (percentage)
Stonefruits -	70%
Cucurberts –	70% (rockmelons, watermelons, pumpkins, cucumbers etc)
Citrus –	30%

The majority of Australia's almonds are grown in the Sunraysia region, 55% of Australian almonds are produced in the wider region of Mildura and nearby areas, 20% of the region's almonds are exported to India, Asia and Europe.

Our overseas almond markets are expected to expand as yields increase. The following statistics from Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board demonstrate the size of our local almond industry which is reliant on the Honey Bee.

2003 4250 hectares almonds planted  
2004 5500 Tonnes produced  
2004 \$33 million value  
2004 55% of Australian production  
2004 55% of Australian value

Six hundred bee hives are permanently operated in the Mildura Region, and demand exists for many more. Tens of thousands of bee hives are brought into the district seasonally.

*(source: Mildura Region Economic Profile, Sunraysia Economic Development Board)*

## 2. Its role in agriculture and forestry

The national value to agricultural production of pollination by the honey bee industry is estimated at between \$60 million and \$1.2 billion each year. *(source: Mildura Region Economic Profile, Sunraysia Economic Development Board)*

As discussed in Part One above, the honey bee industry has traditionally provided pollination to our almond and avocado industries which are 100% reliant on insect pollination. The Sunraysia region grows the majority of Australia's almonds at 55%.

The role of the honey bee in agriculture and forestry is critical to the long term economic stability of food growing regions.

## 3. Biosecurity issues

Apiarists in my electorate have been contending with the threat of Small Hive Beetle for some time and have expressed concerns that the spread of the beetle was not able to be contained and thus provides a blue print for the spread of other pests and diseases.

With the huge demand for pollination services in Sunraysia any pests or diseases that enter Australia will soon find their way to my electorate.

Australia will need to be vigilant to prevent the entry of Veroamite and whatever is causing colony collapse disorder elsewhere in the world.

#### **4. Trade issues**

Apiarists in my electorate have recently been involved in negotiations with Brunei for the export of product. The Australian honey industry is under pressure from cheap imports and thus needs to find high return niche markets for our unique honeys.

#### **5. The impact on land management and bushfires**

In order to meet the needs of pollination in horticulture and particularly in almonds, hives must be sustained for the rest of the year so suitable sites where hives can produce honey and thrive are of vital importance to the industry and to the horticultural crops that require pollination. This is essentially a state issue and I understand the apiarists are currently involved in a number of issues with the Victorian State Government after bush fires and access to public land.

Recognition of the value of the industry by the State Government is an essential element of the honey bee industry's future.

Yours Sincerely



**PETER CRISP, MLA  
MEMBER FOR MILDURA**

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