

I am writing on behalf of the Southern Beekeepers Association of Tasmania to express the concerns of members of the Tasmanian Beekeeping fraternity regarding the Asian honeybee incursion in Queensland and the decision to withdraw funding for the eradication of this pest.

It has been suggested that this insect is a cane toad with wings, but I would contend that it is much worse than the cane toad, which although an environmental disaster, does not have the same potential to inflict on Australia the ECONOMIC CASTASROPHE that the Asian honeybee has.

If this insect is allowed to become endemic, Australia will never be the same again.

It has been shown that this bee will displace the European honeybee [New Guinea and Samoa] and can adapt to a wide range of climatic conditions. We will not be immune from its effects in Tasmania for long.

The true worth of beekeeping to the Tasmanian economy is approximately \$200m - honey produced [ \$5-6million] with the balance being from the horticultural industries that depend on it for pollination. Approximately 17000 hives are run by 157 registered beekeepers.

Already small impacts are being felt as America has banned honeybee imports from Australia and Canada are reviewing their position. These are only small markets in the 10s of millions, but the real monetary effect will be in the loss of managed hives for pollination in the horticultural industry. The almond industry alone is worth approximately \$400 million.

Pollination demand is projected to increase by 30% over the next decade as the horticultural industry expands.

These industries are being put at risk by a decision of a few who I would suggest did base their decision on the best scientific advice available. It is very regrettable that Dr. Denis Anderson was not invited to the January meeting of CCEPP.

From reports I have read it would appear that the situation in Queensland was improving until the funding was withdrawn at the end of last year.

There has been talk of containment but I fail to see how there can be effective containment of any insect.

In comparison to the billions that will be lost in the coming decades if we do not eradicate this bee – the cost of a few million to carry out the eradication is a very insignificant amount. The decision made today will affect future generations forever.

It is a battle we cannot afford to lose. I urge the committee to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure proper funding be provided for the eradication of this bee.

Peter Norris

President  
Southern Tasmanian Beekeepers Association