

Wednesday 2 December 2009

## **PUTTING THE BUZZ BACK IN AGRICULTURE**

### **COALITION ANNOUNCES NEW BEE INDUSTRY POLICY**

A Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will protect and grow Victoria's bee industry to secure the state's agricultural industry, boost regional jobs and protect the state's billion-dollar food exports.

The Coalition has committed to reinstating bee site licences on public land, previously banned by the Labor Government.

A recent Commonwealth Parliamentary committee report found the honey bee industry contributes directly to between \$4 billion and \$6 billion to agricultural production nationally.

At least 200 bee sites in Victoria have been banned as a result of policy decisions by Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). The Coalition will reinstate bee site licenses that have been withdrawn over the past two decades.

We will actively pursue the expansion of the apiculture industry by finding additional sites and cutting the bureaucratic red tape strangling the industry.

The industry goes to the very heart of Victoria's agricultural and horticultural food production, producing honey and playing a critical role in the pollination of food crops.

We are also committed to maintaining pressure on the Federal Government to ensure quarantine measures are maintained to keep the industry free of devastating pests such as varroa mite.

The Brumby Government has thwarted beekeepers in their attempts to gain access to new and lost bee sites.

Environment Minister Gavin Jennings promised to investigate 200 sites that the Victorian Apiarists Association believes were lost when land was transferred to Parks Victoria and the DSE.

The Minister promised to complete a review by the end of August this year,

# Policy

but under questioning in Parliament last week he admitted only 98 sites have been assessed. Of those, the government intends to reopen just 21 sites to beekeepers.

The beekeeping industry is vital to Victoria's economic and social future.

There are about 200 commercial beekeepers in Victoria who control around 70,000 to 80,000 hives. It is vitally important that unnecessary impediments to the development of the industry are removed.