



**LIGURIAN BEE**  
**26 March 1996**

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** I wish to draw the attention of the House to yet another business success story from Kangaroo Island. Kangaroo Island was declared a Ligurian bee sanctuary in 1885, and it is believed to be the last remaining pure stock of this Italian strain anywhere in the world. In the mild island climate and with a plentiful supply of pollen and nectar, the bee population has expanded rapidly. The fight to keep products free from disease is ongoing, as shown by the fruit-fly outbreak in Queensland and suburban Adelaide. The geographical isolation of Kangaroo Island and the restriction of all honey, pollen, beekeeping tools and equipment being brought to the island ensure that Kangaroo Island apiarists can promote the purity of their honey and develop an export market for Ligurian queen bees. Ligurian bees were imported to South Australia from Bologna, Northern Italy, in the early 1880s and were introduced to Kangaroo Island due to the efforts of the South Australian Beekeepers Association. The South Australian Government established a queen bee breeding station in Flinders Chase in 1944 but the hives were sold to island apiarists after the 1955 bushfires. The Ligurian bee is noted for its docility.

There are more than 1 100 managed hives on the island, with 24 registered beekeepers. In 1982 they formed a Kangaroo Island Beekeepers Association to maintain sanctuary status and achieve a high value, high quality sustainable apiary industry. Canola crops on the island are an added source of pollen, along with native sugar gums, mallee, cup and pink gums. Honey from canola candies quickly, so it makes an excellent creamed honey.

The Clifford family has taken another step and opened up its Honey Farm to tourists. David Clifford manages 150 hives and hopes to expand that to 200 by the end of the season. His honey was awarded prizes at the Royal Adelaide Show last year. At the Honey Farm, David and Jenny demonstrate the methods used in extracting honey from combs: 36 frames fit into the extractor, with each frame producing an average of two kilograms of honey. After filtering, the honey is sold locally and exported to Adelaide and Sydney. A shipment of Ligurian bee honey from Kangaroo Island is believed to have gone even to Italy—a coals to Newcastle achievement! The wax is melted down and some sent to Auburn, South Australia, to be made into foundation sheets in setting up frames; and some wax is used by Sharon and Beverly Clifford to make candles. Wax sheets are also used to make rolled candles. These attractive candles are hand made and distributed to local card shops on the Fleurieu Peninsula. Another facet of this expanding industry is the export of queen bees. These are exported in tiny gauze covered wooden boxes divided into three sections with room for the queen and eight drones. One section of the box is filled with a mixture of icing sugar and honey as food for the queen in transit. These have been sent interstate as far afield as Sweden, and inquiries about queen bee breeding have come from Tonga. Apiarists on Kangaroo Island have set up a selective breeding program to maintain and improve the quality of the queens, and detailed records of this are being kept. For those beekeepers interested in improving their queen breeding lines, two best hives will be selected for inclusion in a joint breeding program. There is a further bee product called propolis. The bees collect this from the buds and bark of trees, change the structure and put it into their hives to fill any holes within the hive. The substance is anti-bacterial, so it not only keeps out the cold but also keeps the hives healthy. One health food shop in Adelaide buys this, and there have been inquiries from a Japanese company where samples have been forwarded for analysis. Further research on propolis is being conducted through the Department of Agriculture.

The Cliffords have a steady stream of tourists going through their demonstration shed, which contains an area set aside for honey and honey-related products. A very popular line is their home-made honey icecream and also honey nectar, a soft drink manufactured by Trend Drinks.

The Honey Farm is a family business, an extra income earner and a place where tourists can see honey production and learn the wider aspects of this business. Members of the Kangaroo Island Beekeepers Association care for the whole environment and have undertaken a 10 year project with a grant from the Wildlife Conservation

Fund to protect the rare glossy black cockatoo nesting locations from competing bee swarms. This entails setting up trap hives with brood comb to which feral bee swarms can be attracted and then removed: 100 such hives have been set up, with beekeepers monitoring the traps in their area.