

16th March 2022

To:

Committee Secretary
State Development and Regional Industries Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000



From:

Jessica Walsh
Founder & Project Manager
Friends of Nerang National Park

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Re: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

To the Committee Secretary,

I welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the extension proposed to beekeeping in National Parks across Queensland until 2044. Friends of Nerang National Park is a community environment organisation founded in 2020, operating in partnership with QPWS&P to deliver on-ground conservation work in Nerang National Park.

One of our current projects is installing 50 nest boxes for greater gliders in the Park. Tree hollows are the limiting resource for greater gliders in Nerang National Park. Occupancy of these nest boxes or natural hollows by feral animals is a highly undesirable outcome, but one that is possible given the current use of apiaries in Nerang National Park adjacent to greater glider populations.

Retaining apiaries in National Parks for an additional twenty years is deeply troubling for a number of reasons which are expanded below:

1. Occupancy of large hollows by honeybees that have left the primary hive. Large hollows are already in rapid decline across Queensland, competition from feral animals in National Parks should be eliminated.
2. The impact of honeybees on native pollinators competing for resources remains unknown.
3. Honeybees in National Parks is incompatible with the cardinal principle of managing National Parks as described by the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NCA).

1. Occupancy of large hollows

Over 300 animals across Australia use hollows (Gibbons & Lindenmayer, 2002). Our National Parks are a refuge for rare and threatened species undergoing rapid habitat loss across the state. Nerang National Park, for example, is a refuge for a number of threatened obligate hollow-dependent fauna protected under the NCA. These include:

- Greater glider (*Petauroides volans*) - endangered
- Powerful owls (*Ninox strenua*) - vulnerable
- Glossy black-cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus lathamii*) – vulnerable

Nerang National Park still has a number of apiaries, as it was formerly State Forest, gazetted to National Park between 2007 – 2009. I have observed swarms of bees in Nerang National Park (pictured below on left) Swarms eventually find a new hive site, usually a hollow, to establish and occupy for the coming months or years. Indeed, European honeybee occupation of hollows suitable for gliders and possums has been observed in Nerang National Park (pictured below on right, arrow points to bees).



A single greater glider requires 1 – 16 live large hollows per hectare in Southern Queensland. Hollows are the main limiting resource for this endangered species in Queensland. In 2016, the greater glider was listed as vulnerable under the NCA and has undergone rapid population declines since. In 2021, the conservation status of greater gliders was changed to endangered, a mere five years after its first listing as vulnerable. Every care should be taken to preserve precious hollows for our native fauna in our National Parks, especially where threatened species are present.

2. Impact on non-feral pollinators

European honeybees are a recognised threat to wildlife due to competition for resources including hollows across Australia. The Department of Agriculture, Water, and Environment lists honeybees as an invasive species. Invasive species should not be granted refuge in our National Parks. Competition from European honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) is listed as a key threatening process on Schedule 3 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* in New South Wales, due to their impact on a number of fauna species.

3. Feral honeybees in National Parks is incompatible with the cardinal principle of National Park management.

According to the Department of Environment and Science, the cardinal principle for managing national parks is: *“to provide, to the greatest possible extent, for the permanent preservation of the area’s natural condition and the protection of the area’s cultural resources and values.”*

Honeybees are non-native and occupy resources required by our threatened native fauna. Beekeeping is not compatible with the cardinal principle. Beekeeping in National Parks does not provide, to the greatest possible extent, the permanent preservation of the area’s natural condition when they are an invasive species with an impact on the natural and cultural values of an area.

Other comments

Pollinators are critically important for the agricultural sector, which is acknowledged in the amendment to the bill. The agricultural sector should be encouraged to create habitat that is suitable for sustaining honeybee populations. It should not be up to National Parks to provide this service to the agricultural sector during a time of unprecedented biodiversity loss.

The beekeeping industry was given twenty years to prepare for the phasing out of apiaries in National Parks across Queensland, as per the amendments to the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* in 2004. Twenty years is more than enough time for beekeepers to find suitable, alternative land for apiaries and feral honeybees. No extensions beyond 2024 should be given for honeybee hives in National Parks in Queensland. Invasive species with an impact on threatened fauna should not be granted access to National Parks.

Sincerely,
Jessica Walsh
