

**SUBMISSION ON THE**  
**NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION**  
**AMENDMENT BILL 2022**

Let me introduce myself. I am Trevor Weatherhead. I am a past President of the Queensland Beekeepers Association (QBA), life member of the QBA and currently Chair of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council. I was a commercial queen bee breeder and honey producer from 1988 to 2012.

I write to support the amendment to the above legislation in relation to the 20 year extension to the granting of apiary site permits on National Parks that have been converted over from State Forests. I would like to commend the current QBA Management Committee for their work with the Queensland Government to arrive at these amendments.

I was involved, as a member of the QBA Management Committee and President, in the issue relating to the removal of apiary sites by 2024, from those State Forests that had their tenure changed to National Park.

In the statement of compatibility it says *“As part of these forest transfer processes, amendments were made to the NCA in 2004 to provide for the temporary continuation of beekeeping in relevant national parks, until 31 December 2024, to provide time for alternative land outside of these national parks to be found; however, finding sufficient and accessible alternative sites has been challenging.”*

One of the reasons given, at the time, was that the sites could be taken away in 2024 and that there were plenty of sites available on private country that would compensate for the loss of these sites on what is now National Park. At the time the QBA said these private property sites were not available. I can remember the Minister for the Environment at the time, Dean Wells, called by the Honey Court at the Royal Brisbane Show (Ekka), and he and I had a conversation re these sites that were supposedly available on private land. Minister Wells said he was advised these were available but I told him they were not.

There was a report issued sometime later which identified that these private sites were not available as had been surmised. The excerpt from the statement of compatibility above says it has been challenging. I would submit that, as the report at the time said, these alternate sites are not there. I am sure the Committee members have been able to access that report.

So I would submit that as these alternate sites, that were supposed to be there, are not there then this would be reason enough to change the current legislation to allow for continuation on the current sites till 2044.

Opponents to the issuing of apiary sites in these National Parks that have been converted over from State Forests often spread misinformation that this would allow for the granting of apiary sites on any National Park. QBA has been clear from the start back in 2004, and even before that in 1999 when the South East Queensland Forests Agreement (SEQFA) was put in place, that access was only being asked for on those National Parks that were converted over from State Forest under the SEQFA process. Many of these sites had been in place for up to 100 years. QBA was not wanting the granting of apiary sites on any National Park that had been gazetted before the SEQFA was put in place.

The statement of compatibility clearly recognises this where it says “*The amendments only provide a time extension and a similar framework to what is currently in place for the beekeeping industry to apply for apiary permits in a prescribed apiary area under the Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Regulation 2017.*”

In the explanatory notes it says “*Apart from when certain types of wilderness areas are declared over national parks in some states, beekeeping that existed before national parks were declared is generally allowed to continue on national parks in NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia.*” The passing of these amendments will bring Queensland into line with these other States.

Whilst beekeeping is known for its production of honey and beeswax, what is often not known is the important role our honey bees play in the pollination of crops for the agricultural and horticultural industry. In 2018 John M. Karasinski published a paper titled “*The Economic Value of Australia’s Insect Crop Pollinators in 2014-2015*”. He estimated that in 2014-15 honey bee pollination was worth \$14.2 billion Australia wide and \$2.1 billion for Queensland. I am sure that the Committee would be able to obtain more recent figures from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries which I would imagine would show a significant increase.

So it can be seen that access by beekeepers to these sites, under consideration by this legislation, is vital to the beekeepers being able to prepare bee hives for this pollination role and also, after the pollination, restore the strength and health of the bee hives back to what they were before the pollination took place. In most cases pollination does reduce the numbers of bees in a hive and the health of the bees in those hives.

Another aspect of the proposed changes as outlined in the Explanatory Notes is “*the prescribing in regulation of areas where beekeeping was lawful before the land was dedicated as national park as apiary areas.*” There was some confusion in the past about the continuation of apiary sites on National Parks that were gazetted by way of purchase of private land or leasehold land. In many cases it was said that there was no evidence of beekeeping in these areas because there was no rubbish left behind e.g. strapping used to hold hives together, parts of frames or boxes. This is testament to the beekeepers being very diligent in not leaving any rubbish behind. This amendment will now allow for evidence to be submitted to show that the area was used as an apiary site.

In conclusion I ask the Committee to support these amendments, particularly as they relate to the extension of apiary sites on those National Parks that currently have apiary sites on them, so that the sites may be granted until 2044.

*Trevor Weatherhead*

Trevor Weatherhead AM

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16 March 2022