



17th March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Cotton Australia is the peak body that represents the interests of Australia's 1,500 cotton growers in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and now into Northern Australia. According to industry statistics 30% of the cotton industry exists in Queensland. While our production can vary significantly from year-to-year, dependent on rainfall and water availability, it is worth on average \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion in annual export earnings and employs approximately 12,000 people nationally.

We are writing to you about the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Namely the proposal to exclude apiarist from National Park apiary sites as we believe this would be detrimental to the future of beekeeping in Queensland and those whose livelihoods depend on the availability of safe, secure healthy Queensland bee sites.

Whilst we recognise the efforts of the Government working to work with the bee industry, we note to date the Department of Environment and Science and industry have been unable to identify or secure alternative land with suitable floristic characteristics, accessibility and land tenure security to replace National Park apiary sites. With the lack of alternative sites available, apiarists would be forced to seek access to private land to feed their hives and meet honey supply contracts.

The result of this would be increased interaction between cotton growers and apiarists. Whilst the Australian cotton industry has successfully reduced its insecticide usage by 97% since 1992, our industry does still rely upon some products to control certain pests that can be toxic to foraging bees.

The Australian cotton industry has been working collaboratively with the apiarist representative bodies across Queensland and NSW in recent years to help minimise any negative interactions. Namely, we have presented at numerous bee industry conventions and events to promote the ability for apiarist to map the locations of their hives on a crop mapping tool called SataCrop, which is a cotton industry initiative to increase the communication between honey producers and land holder.



Further we have promoted the use of another online tool - BeeConnected, to help put farmers and apiarist in touch with each other.

To date, these initiatives, along with a number of other actions taken by us to ensure our growers minimise any risks to bees has had some success and has certainly strengthened the relationship between our industry and apiarists.

However, it is a little known fact that bees can travel up to 10km to forage in crops, and if as an outcome of losing access to National Parks, apiarists have no choice to locate hives closer to cotton growing areas during our peak growing time of October to March, there will be a much heighten risk of accidental bee deaths from bees foraging in flowering cotton crops, even when their hives are located kilometres away.

If apiarists are forced to place their hives in cotton producing regions because of the unavailability of safe and secure locations in previously accessed National Parks that possess the right floristic characteristics, this could potentially hinder the ability of cotton producers to manage their crops without hinderance.

Cotton Australia strongly supports The Queensland Beekeepers Association in their efforts to maintain access to Queensland's National Park apiarist sites as they have previously.

To discuss our support further please contact Paul Sloman, Policy Officer either by email, [REDACTED] or mobile [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

Paul A Sloman

Policy Officer

Cotton Australia