

Hive+Wellness

A U S T R A L I A

17 March 2022

Committee Secretary
State Development and Regional Industries Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000
sdric@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

RE: Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill – 17 March 2022

From humble beginnings in 1953 Capilano Honey Ltd, now known as Hive & Wellness Australia (HWA), has successfully grown into one of the world's leading honey packers. For almost 70 years, HWA has help nurture Australian beekeepers who produce the highest quality honey in the world. The company has built a reputation for product innovation and global best practice in systems and procedures. Headquartered in Richlands, Brisbane, we are proud to be Australian owned and situated in Queensland.

HWA has the capacity to pack more than 45,000 tonnes of Australian honey each year, with exports to more than 32 countries around the world. The company has been recognised with multiple domestic and international awards as well as the highest levels of certification for safety, product integrity and world class production facilities. We are currently purchasing honey from close to 700 rural and regional beekeeping businesses and families, of which over 200 are based in Queensland.

In association with the Queensland Beekeepers Association Inc. (QBA), HWA has been very concerned about the content of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 that currently prohibits beekeeping in national parks from January 2025. Numerous representations and correspondence on the issue has been provided to Department of Environment and Science (the department) as well as the Premier and various Honourable Ministers.

HWA is in full support of the proposed Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

Our position regarding this change to legislation has been communicated through a range of submissions made, starting from 2019, which indicate that access to native forests is the very key to survival for the Queensland honey bee industry.

All previous submissions made by HWA have highlighted that beekeeper access to national park floral resource is fundamental to maintaining healthy beehives. Queensland's national parks provide honey bees with access to key nutritional eucalypt species, such as paperbarks, ironbarks, stringybarks, bloodwoods and various gumtrees. These key species of trees yield nectar that can generate surplus honey production for Australian and global consumers. Additionally, they provide essential honey bee nutrition from the amino acid in pollen and the nectar's minerals, vitamins and carbohydrates. This nutrition is crucial for raising healthy colonies that are in optimal condition to carry out crucial pollination services throughout the agriculture and horticulture industries.

Access to national parks will safeguard Queensland's commercial beekeeping industry and the wider Australian agricultural sector by ensuring the industry's capacity to provide agricultural pollination services nationally.

A fall in Queensland hive numbers, due to depreciating bee health from limited healthy foraging, could reduce the \$30m Queensland honey production industry by over half. Investment and employment in rural and regional areas would reduce. More notably, there would be a major impact on the efficiency of agricultural and horticultural crop

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State Development and Regional Industries Committee

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pollination rendered by managed honey bee colonies. For example, 70% of Australia's avocado orchards are in Queensland and these trees are 100% dependent on honey bee pollination to yield commercial quantities of quality fruit. The Queensland honey bee industry is small, but has a big impact that too often goes overlooked. The honey and pollination industry delivers a large economic benefit by the managed and incidental pollination of crops that support an array of horticultural industries. Figures produced for the eradication program of the mite incursion of *Varroa jacobsoni* in Townsville gives the value of the affected industries. There are industries not classed as affected industries because they are not subject to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD). Figures for the affected industries for 2016/17 are:-

Apples and pears	\$537million	Cherries	\$133.8 million
Almonds	\$513 million	Melons	\$189 million
Macadamias	\$241million	Raspberries &	\$116 million
Strawberries	\$250million	Lychees	\$26.7 million
Blueberries	\$146 million	Passionfruit	\$17.2 million
Summer fruit	\$189million	Vegetables	\$2.2 billion
Onions	\$226 million	Grains (some industries)	\$14.9 billion
Avocado	\$256million	Honey	\$101 million
Cotton	\$1.6 billion		

The adverse impact to honey bee pollination is only set to be enhanced if the exotic pest Varroa mite was to become established in Australia, which would dramatically limit the occurrence of bees in the environment and significantly increase the reliance on managed honey bees and contracted pollination services. In such a scenario, access to national parks to support honey bee health will be crucial to enable industry to best accommodate the states and interstate pollination needs. Without continued national park access, the effective and efficient pollination of Queensland's horticultural crops would be threatened.

The current requirements of the Native Title Act and 2024 prohibition is delivering Queensland with an unsustainable, economically unviable commercial beekeeping industry. Investment by beekeepers in Queensland has stalled due to the uncertainty of national park access, whose floral resource underpins hive health in Queensland.

There is insufficient evidence of the ecological impacts of commercial beekeeping to justify its complete removal from national parks.

HWA has concluded there is insufficient scientific evidence of a lack of ecological risk associated with commercial beekeeping, and therefore it is inappropriate to proceed with an indefinite continuation of beekeeping. The outcomes of the recent government commissioned University of Sydney study are synonymous with preceding studies and the position of industry. There is simply insufficient evidence to attribute specific ecological impacts to the commercial beekeeping industry, and therefore justify the complete removal of beekeeping from national parks. Findings from HWA's on-going collaborative research, in association with the federally funded Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for honey bee products (<http://www.crchoneybeeproducts.com/>), is commensurate with previous scientific findings, that there is insufficient ecological risk associated with commercial beekeeping. It should be noted, with the honey bee industry's tenure and usage of crown lands since Federation, no adverse ecological impact has been identified scientifically.

The Queensland beekeeping industry needs reliable access to state land as further Native Title Determinations continue to be made, which are resulting in a reduction of floral resource for beehives.

HWA recognises and wholly respects that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have rights and interests to their traditional land and waters. However, HWA is concerned with respect to the issue of Native Title Determinations within Queensland national parks. These claims will potentially restrict access to a large majority of our State's apiary sites. Based on data from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) from June 2020, of the total 1,180 National Park apiary sites across Queensland a staggering 987 sites are within areas of Native Title Determination or Claim. 653 sites are within areas where a Claim has been submitted for Native Title Rights, and 345 sites are located within areas already determined as Native Title.



Native Title Determinations threaten the beekeeping and pollination industries for the same reasons identified by the department in respect of beekeeper loss to national parks. HWA hope to see perfecting of Indigenous Land Usage Agreements to ensure access to lawful floral resource for Queensland beekeepers.

Conclusions

Beekeepers and their honey bees have been harmonious and discreet users of state and national parks for over 100 years, here in Queensland and other regions of Australia. Beekeepers have a history of treating crown land with respect, are conservationists at heart, and have a vested interest in conserving our forests and plants as a key contributor to the health and welfare of the bees they lovingly oversee.

With enduring access to Queensland national parks, the Australian beekeeping industry will increase investment, employment and assist with the prosperity of the wider large scale dependent agricultural industries. In association with industry, HWA will continue efforts to safeguard the future of all Queensland beekeeping businesses' that contribute to Australia's vital honey bee industry and the wider Australian agriculture sector.

HWA and industry appreciate the efforts of the Queensland Government to support the beekeeping industry, and for taking action to change the specific provisions of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 (NCA) to permit beekeeping to 2045. Industry and HWA are extremely supportive of the proposed change, as fundamental to the viability of the honey bee industry in Queensland and Australia.

Yours truly,

HIVE & WELLNESS AUSTRALIA PTY LTD



Dr Ben McKee
Chief Operating Officer

