




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.10 pm): I rise to speak on this bill. It really is the bee's knees. There has been a bit of a buzz around the parliament.

Ms Boyd: A buzz in the beehive.

Mr HARPER: Yes, the beehive. We will all 'be-hive' during this debate. I will start by acknowledging the beekeeper association in Townsville and the work that they do. We heard the history from the member for Bonney with the Southport third generation bee people—sweet, sweet! Beekeeping, as we know, plays an important and valuable role and national parks provide the conditions necessary for honey bees to thrive. Before I get into this, I do not want to get too controversial on the whole bees and honey debate, but being the only New Zealand-born MP, I say Manuka honey in New Zealand is pretty good. However, I do acknowledge that Manuka honey in Australia has many medicinal purposes as well. I think we are on par there. I might have a slight bias.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr HARPER: There you go, we have started a good debate. I start by noting the work of the committee. Did you get to taste any of the Manuka honey, member for Bancroft?

Ms Boyd: Yes, I had some. We shared some.

Mr Whiting: Yes, we sampled some.

Mr Saunders: Feel free to talk amongst yourselves.

Mr HARPER: Excellent. The committee recommended that the Department of Environment and Science develop clear and accessible guidelines for beekeeping on national park sites to ensure that any potential risks to the natural environment are appropriately managed. The committee also acknowledged the complexities associated with identifying alternative apiary sites outside of national parks. I note that the committee also recommended that the—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr HARPER: Sorry, I missed that. I thought that was an interjection. Might get a bit of a sting in the tail. Anyway, I continue. At its core, the bill proposes to provide a 20-year extension to allow beekeeping on specified national parks to continue until 31 December. We heard from the member for Scenic Rim, 'Oh, why 2044?' I thought should the LNP be in government in 2044, they might actually get the opportunity to extend it again, but that is a big ask. Firstly, they would have to have a shadow cabinet meeting and then they would need to actually—

Mr Whiting: Premier Scanlon will deal with it.

Mr HARPER: True. I take the interjection. As we know, seriously, it follows an election commitment by the Labor government made in 2020, and it is good to see it in the House today. Currently, commercial beekeeping occurs in a number of national parks due to transfers of state forest

to national parks which occurred predominantly in the early 2000s. Commercial beekeeping activities involved beekeepers utilising tracks and trails to transport hives of non-native European honey bees to designated locations known as apiary sites.

Commercial beekeeping is inconsistent with the management principles for national parks in the Nature Conservation Act, which requires that national parks be managed—and don't we do a great job of that on this side of the House? I do recall speaking to a number of rangers in Townsville after we were elected and the national park group up there had been decimated. They had lost so many positions in the management of national parks, they were glad to see that Labor had got back in and restored those positions in our national parks.

There were some secondary objectives to the bill: to enhance the Department of Environment and Science's ability to prevent and respond to misconduct on areas managed by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service by creating offences for impersonating or obstructing forestry officers; to relocate powers of officers to seize and deal with seized things from subordinate legislation of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 to reflect current drafting practices; to amend the Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993 to reflect intergovernmental changes from the Australian government review of the COAG councils and ministerial forums; to duplicate or remove duplication consultation processes when amending the Wet Tropics Management Plan as a result of changes to the act; and also to correct minor errors of that act.

Other amendments in the bill will: enhance compliance capacity in Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service managed areas; relocate certain regulatory provisions from subordinate legislation into the act following advice from the Office of Queensland Parliamentary Counsel; and reflect changes current with the Queensland World Heritage area.

Beekeeping introduces non-native European honey bees into national parks and is therefore inconsistent with the management principles for national parks. Although there is sufficient evidence that the European honey bees impact on protected areas, they still compete with native honey bees for native fauna or flora resources. As such, beekeeping on national parks is inconsistent with the cardinal principle of preserving the natural condition of these lands to the greatest possible extent.

An existing transition provision which temporarily allows beekeeping to be authorised on specified national parks is scheduled to cease on 31 December 2024. It is predominantly a legacy issue associated with the 1999 South East Queensland Regional Forests Agreement and was intended to be phased out by 2024 as suitable sites for relocation outside of national parks were found. However, this has proven challenging. I know a few other people want to speak on this, so I might wrap up my contribution there. I commend the bill to the House.