




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.59 pm): I rise to address the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Should this law pass in the House here today it will be a good day. If it passes with the amendment moved by the shadow minister it will be a great day. It has been a long time in the making, and why? Because the primary objective of this bill is to deliver on a Labor election commitment to provide a 20-year extension to allow beekeeping on specified national parks to continue until 31 December 2044. That would be a good day. A great day would be to accept the shadow minister's amendment, which would see that open-ended and that beekeepers would be able to remain in those specified national parks for perpetuity.

I am pretty passionate about bees, and I owe my knowledge of bees to three groups of people. The first is a constituent—and a very knowledgeable one at that—Dr Max Whitten. Max was formerly chief of CSIRO Entomology and professor of genetics at the University of Melbourne. I understand that he continues to be an adjunct professor at the School of Biological Science at my alma mater, the University of Queensland. He was the first chairman of the Honey Bee Research and Development Council. His research interests centred on genetic means of controlling insect pests and the ecological genetics of pesticide resistance. He has wider interests in public good research, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and, I might add, the Maleny Golf Club, of which he is founding president, still a very strong member of the executive, and one of the driving forces behind making that establishment the amazing golf club that it is.

In this instance Max, alongside Rex Carruthers—someone well-known to many in this chamber—board member and former president of the Queensland Beekeepers' Association, made a submission to the committee on behalf of the Wheen Bee Foundation, WBF. I want to draw on a number of things they said in their submission. Members can find it attached to the committee's report. I think it is submission number 22. It states—

When the Nature Conservation Act 1992 was amended in 2004 to exclude commercial beekeeping from some 1100 traditional apiary sites in the 49 newly established National Parks after 2024, it was predicated by the belief that the economic impacts would largely relate to a decline in honey production.

This is important. The submission continues, 'It did not take into account the value of pollination ...'. We all know the vital role that bees play in pollination. It is valued at some \$2 billion per annum alone in Queensland, some \$14 billion nationally. There is also, as the submission further states—

... the additional value of the pollination services provided by Queensland beekeepers to major crops such as almonds and canola in southern states; or interstate beekeepers providing pollination services in Queensland. Or,

- the impracticality that alternative pollen and nectar sources could be found, or created, during the two decades leading up to 2024.

That has come to be true. What is important in this submission from Dr Max Whitten and Rex Carruthers is that they look at what can be done to ensure that beekeepers and the Queensland government are not facing this same predicament, if our amendment is not supported, in 2044. They unpack what we need to do in terms of understanding and managing the impact of commercial

beekeeping in national parks and the opportunity to generate knowledge to improve decision-making. They draw on the key observations of two specialists, Dr Nadine Chapman and Professor Ben Oldroyd. Their submission continues—

Chapman and Oldroyd make two key observations:

- On the balance of probabilities, the presence of commercial colonies is unlikely to pose additional stresses on ecosystems beyond those caused by feral bees. Therefore, there is no compelling reason to exclude beekeeping on the basis of the available ecological data. Again, we emphasise an absence of evidence rather than evidence of absence.
- If a decision is made to exclude beekeeping as a result of the precautionary principle or concerns about commercial activity in parks, then we recommend that the opportunity be taken to assess the effects of commercial beekeeping on native flora and fauna in a rigorous way.

That certainly needs to be considered. They also go on to promote two initiatives that will help reduce dependency on floral resources in our national parks for adequate pollination services to ensure food security. They speak about of WBF's Bee Friendly Farming—

Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) is a certification program that works with land managers to help protect, preserve and protect pollinator health.

They also refer to their program Powerful Pollinators as a way of increasing 'the prevalence, health and diversity of pollinators in the landscape.' They have a great little publication that was also included as part of their submission called *Powerful Pollinators*. For those interested in assisting pollinators to do their job throughout our landscape there is a great fold-out of the various species, the shrubs and trees, that will help our pollinators not only survive, but thrive and do the important job they do. I really do encourage members of the chamber to acquaint themselves with that publication. It is put out by the Wheen Bee Foundation. I think it is vital regardless of the outcome today—whether it is 20 years or into perpetuity—as to how we can continue to grow appropriate pollination sites for our bees and other pollinators.

I mentioned there were three groups of people who inspired me to understand and broaden my knowledge around bees. The second is my constituents Ann and Jeff Ross from Hive Haven in Beerburum. The Wheen Bee Foundation talks about other pollinators: one of the obvious ones is the Australian native bee. Ann and Jeff have done fantastic work in sharing the story of the Australian native stingless bee far and wide. They have their specially designed hives from as far as Broome to Brisbane, Cairns to Perth, Cloncurry, Alice Springs and from the Sunshine Coast to Sydney. There is even one at Parliament House in Canberra. There was serious concern about the cold weather in winter, so what do they do? They pick it up and transport it to the residence of the New South Wales Governor at their residence on Sydney Harbour during the winter months. There is one just next door at QUT. Sadly, there is not one here at Queensland parliament. I have made requests previously—and I will continue to make requests—that we consider installing one of Hive Haven's Australian native stingless beehives here on our site so that we can play our part in continuing to share pollinators across our landscape.

There is one other group of people that I want to acknowledge for extending my knowledge when it comes to bees, and that is my kids. Some 10 years ago my eldest children participated in what I think was then called Kids Teaching Kids—it is now called Kids in Action—up on the Sunshine Coast with a group of other students. They unpacked the bee in a very novel and interesting way, including a hip-hop dance. I think *Do the Honey Bee* was the title of the song. I am not going to sing. I am not as good as the member for Kawana at that.

Mr O'Connor: Thank you.

Mr POWELL: I will take that interjection from the member for Bonney. He is not the only member here who will be thanking me for not singing. It was fantastic to see them educate other kids about the bee in such interesting ways. My eldest daughter, Erin, then went on in year 10 to unpack that even further. I understand that she even prepared a TED Talk she uploaded on YouTube about the importance of bees and all of the various aspects they provide.

Through all of those sources I have come to understand the vital role that bees play in our landscape pollinating both native and introduced species, particularly crops. We talked about their economic value. In the absence of other sites—which has clearly been the case over the last 20 years as we have rolled out the South East Queensland Forests Agreement—we must consider keeping bees in our national parks. Let me be specific: we are not calling for the broader expansion of these 1,100 apiary sites and 49 national parks. We need to undertake the further research Dr Whitten refers to. We need to explore other ways for pollinators to move across our landscape. My belief is that, in the absence of scientific research to the contrary, they do not pose any more of a threat than feral bees already do in our national parks; therefore, this legislation should be supported.

Alongside my colleagues here on this side of the House, I again call on those opposite to support our amendment. Let's not come back here in 15 years and rehash this again. Let's extend this into perpetuity. Let's accept the amendment being moved by the shadow minister, the member for Bonney, and let's make a good day an even better day.