




Speech By
Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (5.55 pm): The primary purpose of the bill is to provide a 20-year extension to existing arrangements that enable beekeeping to occur in certain national parks. The committee recommended that the bill be passed. As the committee report notes, it is clear that beekeeping plays an important and valuable role, both for honey production and for other agricultural strategies. You can see from the variety of submissions, including from the macadamia, almond and cotton industries, just to name a few, that beekeeping is about more than just honey production. It is clear that national parks provide the conditions necessary for honey bees to thrive.

The committee has 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. It is also acknowledged that there are complexities associated with identifying alternative sites outside of national parks. To that end, the committee recommended that the department adopt a clear strategy and plan to identify and secure alternative apiary sites over the period of the 20-year extension. The extension will only apply to areas where beekeeping could be lawfully undertaken immediately prior of the transfer of the land to the national park.

I note that environmental groups such as Wildlife Queensland, Gecko and Friends of Nerang National Park have expressed some concerns with the continuation of allowing native bees into national parks, and that has been considered in the decision-making. One of the submissions stated that 'honey bees impact biodiversity in two broad ways via competition for tree hollows and via competition for floral resources such as pollen and nectar.' Of course, this competition would at very different levels depending on the size of the national park, the number of bees being allowed to access the area, and the time period for doing so.

In terms of competition for hollows, it was noted by submitters that gliders such as the greater glider, powerful owls and glossy black cockatoos can, on occasion, be crowded out by honey bees, so of course there must be a balance. The balance is that the extension would only apply to areas where beekeeping could be lawfully undertaken prior to the transfer of the land to a national park.

It is also worth noting that, in addition to the extension of time provided by the amendments to the NCA, new work will be undertaken to seek alternative sites to national parks, to support the adoption of industry best practice and to identify initiatives to assist the industry to progressively relocate off-park over the next 20 years. Alternatively, the loss of access to these sites in 2024 would have an immediate detrimental effect on the supply of honey bee services and products. The government has committed to this further time extension to provide the industry with certainty of access in the near and medium future. This is a sensible compromise between industry and the environment.

Section 92 of the act currently makes it an offence to impersonate an inspector, which is a position that a person is specifically appointed to and has various powers under as described in the act. In these instances, the existing impersonation offence does not apply if someone is impersonating a ranger if the ranger is not appointed as an inspector. There have been instances of misconduct in managed

areas where a person has deceived visitors by impersonating a ranger, but that would not be an offence if they did not purport to be an inspector. A new offence is therefore being inserted to cover that gap. This is a welcome move, as it is a very serious offence and should be treated as such.

In the hearings, the department explained that it is already an offence for someone to impersonate an authorised officer and that the amendments are largely covering a gap. Having previously worked in water resource management myself for the former department of natural resources—not as an authorised officer but as someone who would on occasion accompany them—I can understand the importance of this. The same goes for the moves for consistent legislative provisions that protect staff from being obstructed from doing their jobs.

Going back to the beekeeping part of the bill, I know that there are a number of beehives in my area. In Geebung, Gerns hams has a number. They are a fantastic 125-year-old local business in Geebung. They do great Christmas hams that are smoked on site. I encourage anyone on the north side to check them out. In addition to the bees there, they also have a few sheep and goats, which I think are the closest sheep and goats to the CBD. I commend the bill to the House.