




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (12.47 pm): I, too, rise to speak on the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Before I commence my contribution, I would like to acknowledge my constituent and very good friend the President of the Queensland Beekeepers' Association, Jacob Stevens, who is in the gallery as we speak, as well as the State Secretary, Jo Martin. It is wonderful to have you both here. That shows the great interest that you have on behalf of the membership of the Queensland Beekeepers' Association in this very important legislative process.

Jacob Stevens is a good bloke, not just because he is a constituent of mine but also because he is a very able leader of the Queensland Beekeepers' Association. I credit him with the education I have had on the importance of honey bees in creating healthy food for us, but that relies on healthy bees and it relies on healthy bees having somewhere to stay when they are not pollinating crops for us. That goes to the heart of this particular bill.

I heard the member for Bulimba—forgive me if my terminology is not exactly correct—imply that what we are dealing with here is a legacy of previous eras when honey bees were in national parks. I think the real point here is that this is about national parks which were state forests that have always had honey bees stationed in them. This government has a proclivity for converting state forests into national parks. I have said in the House before—and the minister would know my views on this—that these national parks do not, in my view, come up to the standards which are described in the cardinal principles of national parks which we have heard mentioned. I think it is disingenuous to wring our hands over a matter such as honey bees, which have a very important economic contribution to make to our state, when the national parks with which I am familiar are brimful of weeds, pests and so forth and are a nuisance to their neighbours who are, in my view, held to much higher environmental standards in terms of looking after their own properties.

We have an industry which contributes so much to our state. For too long it has been hanging on tenterhooks for this extension of another 20 years to station their honey bees in national parks. I am in favour of the amendment the opposition is putting forward to make an allowance for honey bees in those national parks in perpetuity.

One of the things which needs to be emphasised in this House is that we depend on honey bees. Pollination services are a vital part of our economy and a vital part of our food supply. I would like to acknowledge my honourable friend the member for Theodore, who himself is a primary producer in his spare time, not that he has much of that. He produces great avocados. I am sure he would agree with me that avocado production, like macadamias and other crops, depends on pollination services by honey bees, and where are these honey bees going to live between pollination servicing?

This is something that Jacob Stevens has explained to me. It is a shame that we are still trying to push for access to national parks for honey bees in perpetuity. We are talking about only brief periods when honey bees would be in national parks. We have not so far had conclusive evidence that they do damage or are a threat to the natural environment. As I said, I believe that any threat they may be held

to impose—of which there is no evidence yet—would pale into insignificance when compared to the threat of other invasive species which the government is not doing enough about in those national parks.

One of the things that beekeepers do when they enter national parks is maintain roads and tracks. They bring very environmentally attuned eyes and ears to the emergence of new pests or erosion and that sort of thing and can be a great conduit to the department about the state of these national parks. I have said in this House in the past that fire access trails and the accumulation of fuels in national parks is of concern to people in my electorate, particularly the many hardworking rural fire brigade volunteers who know some of these places like the back of their hand because for 50 years they have been fighting fires there, and so have their fathers and their fathers before them. I think it is disingenuous for there to be so much attention given to this issue of honey bees in national parks when there are glaring problems which, in my view, exist to a large extent because state forests or other properties are converted into national parks. They do not exist in harmony with the cardinal principles of national parks to begin with and they continue to exist in disharmony with those principles.

I think this House needs to have a really good look at this bill. I urge everyone to support the amendment that stands in the name of the shadow minister for the environment, the member for Bonney, because we need to give beekeepers certainty not just for their own businesses—and they are great business and they work hard—but also for the wider issue of pollination services and the sustainability of the industry so we can have the food we need. When we face some kind of shock which interferes with our food supply, people are not going to be wringing their hands over matters like this. They are going to want their food and they are not going to care how it arrives; they will just want it. We all will. Pollination services will be part of that. I urge this House to do all that it can to assist the industry in the great work that it does not just in producing honey as a food and employing people in electorates like mine but also in acting as a very important part of the agricultural process with pollination services.