

**Submission
No 326**

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: NSW Apiarists' Association Inc

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NSW APIARISTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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President
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State Secretary
Kate McGilvray

27 July 2012

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

To whom it may concern,

Re: Management of public land in New South Wales Inquiry

The NSW Apiarists' Association (NSWAA) represents its members at all levels of government and are the primary link between industry and government in NSW. There are currently 3000 registered beekeepers in NSW, managing approximately 200,000 hives. NSW is a significant stakeholder and represents 40-45% of the total beekeeping industry within Australia.

The use of National Parks by beekeepers is not just for honey production. A vital role of honey bees is in the pollination of fruit, vegetable and pasture crops. National Parks are used to build up bee populations and as a safe harbour for bees before and after pollination contracts. The estimated gross value of honey and beeswax production (GVP) was said to be \$80 million during 2008-09 season (ABARE) production. Whereas the estimated contribution of honey bees to the Australian economy through pollination activity is estimated to be \$1.7 billion¹. It is because of these reasons that the continued use of and access to National Parks by beekeepers is essential to securing Australia's food security.

Honey products that effect human health are a recently scientifically validated component of our industry. This area of scientific endeavour is a relatively new and very important aid to the world's medical profession. The use of leptospermum (manuka) honey, which has very specific antibacterial qualities, has been demonstrated in Australian and New Zealand universities to rival many of the existing treatments for wound management. The medical grade honey is applied to wounds in the form of gels and creams. Honey from these specific Australian floral species has gained worldwide

¹ Keogh, R, Robinson, A & Millins, I (2010) *Pollination Aware Fact Sheet - The real value of pollination*

recognition in recent years. Manuka honey is only produced in New Zealand and Australia. We estimate that up to 80% of the current manuka producing area is located within NSW North Coast with limited access by beekeepers. Greater access to these areas for beekeepers would dramatically increase the industry's ability to produce far more of this very important and valued medical product.

Over the last 10-15 years the NSW apiary industry has had a good relationship with National Parks, due largely to sound policy developed jointly between NSWAA and National Parks in the late 1990s. That said, the industry is increasingly dealing with a diminishing native floral resource base, and beekeeper access issues to apiary sites of all government entities (forestry, stock route/rural lands, crown lands and national park).

The major impediment to the future growth of the NSW beekeeping industry is access to good quality bee sites. Heavy logging, extreme weather events (flood, fire, drought), agricultural clearing, the decline of Paterson's curse to the government program of biocontrol agents, urban sprawl, the slow but sure loss of access to sites, changes to land ownership like that which is proposed with National Parks at the moment and the loss of sites due to poor or impassable roads, are some examples of why we as an industry are rapidly losing floral resources. The beekeepers 70 to 80 years ago saw massive openings of vast tracts of lands and in a lot of cases had bee sites in areas well before National Parks were even thought of. Beekeepers of the next generation saw a plateau, resources were not considered to be a huge problem. This generation is seeing a steep decline in resources and access to them. The NSW beekeeping industry believes that diminishing resources have become the limiting factor for future growth of this very important and essential industry!

Under the current policy when land is purchased by National Parks, beekeepers are able to register their existing use of that area and claim continued use of any bee sites. National Parks issues the beekeeper with an apiary use permit to continue operations (subject to some conditions). In some instances, due to lack of policy knowledge from both sides of the equation, beekeepers have lost sites even though it is written in the National Parks Beekeeping Policy that on transition of land to National Parks that bee sites will be honoured as long as proof of use can be provided.

During the recent river red gum process of transferring land tenure from Forestry to National Parks in the Southern Riverina area high quality sites of the red gum were lost because beekeepers did not have sites booked up. Previous to the extended period of drought experienced over the last ten years these areas were regularly used. Due to financial constraints beekeepers were not able to fully book sites as per usual. The two stations, mentioned in the terms of reference and purchased recently by National Parks, Yanga and Toorale would most certainly have had at some time floral resources which beekeepers would have used from time to time. Under the current policy access to new bee sites on those stations is not allowed. This is a big blow to the industry which often uses such resource areas on a seasonal basis.

There are an enormous number of bee sites that the beekeeping industry could sustainably use within the National Park system that are currently not able to be accessed. Two of the main reasons for this are the removed ability of beekeepers to access sites away from main roads as well as the maintenance of existing roads which would enable access to previously used bee sites. One report published by Somerville (1999)² estimated that at that time the industry had lost 3000 apiary sites.

² Somerville, DC (1999) *NSW National Parks and Beekeeping*, The Australasian Beekeeper April 1999 Vol 100 No.10

The opening up of this country to beekeepers would be a huge boost to our industry and to the entire agricultural economy. The NSW beekeeping industry urges the inquiry to consider the opening up of more sites in National Parks to allow our industry to grow and secure Australia's food security.

The Association would appreciate the opportunity to work with National Parks and / or other relevant departments to develop relevant up to date policies that will enable sustainable use of public resources by beekeepers in NSW.

On behalf of the NSW Apiarists' Association I would like the opportunity to provide evidence at one of the Inquiry's public hearings and am available to attend in Armidale on the **5th October 2012**. I'd appreciate if you could advise if this is possible.

Yours sincerely,

Craig Klingner
President