

SUBMISSION BY THE VICTORIAN APIARISTS' ASSOCIATION INC. TO:
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE:-
INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC GOOD CONSERVATION --
THE IMPACTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES IMPOSED ON LANDHOLDERS

We are pleased to be able to share our interests with Government within the context of this inquiry. As apiarists / beekeepers, we may not stand out as Landholders or Farmers, as we 'farm' our bee colonies across vast areas of Victoria and others across Australia. We produce honey and bees wax (export Income) from farms as well as the Forests, Parks and Reserves. These latter groups of Public Land Conservation areas are where our costs are unfairly borne..... for "Public Good".

Public Land Managers have been expecting our Industry to adjust to the lack of resources which have arisen as a result of them using ' the Precautionary Principle' against us, hence reducing our industry's ability to maintain the status quo, let alone expand.

Some in the State and Federal Government, and the Environmental Movement have expressed a view that because our bees are of European origin that they have no place in the Australian natural systems. This begs the question , and what was the origin of our cattle and our sheep industries !

Further they suggest bees should not be permitted on private or public land within 3 km of any Rare Restricted or Endangered species of plant or animal.

Bees have no regard for fences or artificial barriers. Under some conditions they have been known to forage 16 kms from a hive. How realistic is such a statement of artificial delineation.

Furthermore though many studies have been made by Federal and State agencies no evidence has ever been formally presented that identifies commercially managed beehives as an endangering process for our indigenous flora. Despite this they have been reducing our access constantly over the last 24 - 30 years.

The PUBLIC GOOD derived from the continued and especially expanded access to these unique floristic sites provides diversity in production over most of the warmer (above 15 ° C daily temperatures) parts of Australia.

No other land mass elsewhere in the world has this unique productivity advantage.

Many plant species have been identified formally by Botanists as a result of Apiarists unique knowledge on flowering periods and distribution.

Some Apiarists however, will not share this knowledge , having a real fear that they will be excluded from access to the area.

These policies have resulted in a gradual but real limitation of this industry. If the Grampians National Park first management Plan is used as an example, we find a reduction from over 250 sites to as few as approximately 40 , 12 months ago.... This may be seen to be a States issue . If only it was that simple the Commonwealth Government funded and strongly influenced the policies within the Plan. All other states have the same pressures.

Our association was born in 1892 out of the concern that conservation and regeneration of our forests was needed.

The 1902 Victorian Royal Commission resulted in a complete review of Forest Management, leading to the formation of the Victorian Forests Commission.

Their multi use policies were balanced and effective. One area of Crown land within the House of representatives seat of Ballarat near Ararat, Mt Langi Ghiran, was not alienated from the Crown for clearing because it was so valuable for Yellow Box Honey production Repeated attempts have been made to discontinue access to these areas reserved for the Apiary industry Yet the Park Visitors are not seen in the same light, ie as a threatening process.

Beekeepers require access for relatively short periods at short notice of only weeks and then move on to other resources. Our return to that area may not be for 2 to 10 years dependant upon the flowering cycle and productivity of the species.

If the site is not available our cost is then equal to very low or no productivity for that period. It is a cumulative process.

Pollination of agricultural crops by honey bees is an essential part of the nations food production industries.

\$250 million Food production will be reduced across Victoria because we will have a reduction of available pollinators

There are many examples available if the Standing Committee need to be provided. Members of the Association would welcome the chance to provide details of these important issues at any later time including within a public hearing setting.

Apiarists want and need conservation to be effective. We can contribute substantially to the knowledge base with regard to floral species and distribution. We value add at no cost to the community via crop pollination to a value of \$ 250 million annually yet we only produce a total farm gate value of approximately \$ 9 million for our products. That is an unequalled Public Good from any other source within the economy. A ratio of \$27 PUBLIC GOOD to every \$1 we earn We know our use of the natural flowering of trees is a fully sustainable use of this renewable resource. There are no signs of over production or reduced capability within the last 150 years. Other users of the natural systems have not been so lucky. We believe we are Greenhouse friendly as well.

The original World Conservation Strategy encourage uses by indigenous and other people to be able to use parks and reserves. The recent RFA process pointed to greater income from Apiary permits than from once only woodchip licences over 65 - 80 year rotation within productive forests.

If beekeepers are to be removed from these areas adjustment assistance will be required No such resources are available within the \$60 million Federal R F A process.

We are a Forest Industry,yet compensation for the reduction of our resource base is not available as it is for Timber / woodchip interests.

Thus the benign industry suffers at the hands of the policy makers and gets no assistance yet those who have harvested beyond a sustainable level get Industrial Exit packages.

No we are not looking for Exit packages, we need continued resource access

If Australia intends to continue to produce its own food and expand our food exports, mechanisms to provide certainty to the industry are required. This needs the strength and wisdom of the Federal Government with our industry advice to provide this sustainable outcome