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Submission to the New Parliamentary Inquiry into The Future Development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry

This submission addresses the current and future prospects and is being submitted by Mr. Roy Barnes of Barnes Apiaries Pty Ltd.,

Experience in Beekeeping:

I have 44 years experience in Commercial Beekeeping based in Queensland and am currently one of Queensland's largest producers of honey, operating 1,400 hives with an average production of 173,000 kg of honey per year.

Future prospects of the Honey Bee Industry in South East Queensland:

Under the Queensland Government's current legislation of locking beekeepers out of all Queensland State Forests, converting them to National Parks in the year 2024, there will be no viable Commercial Beekeeping in South East Queensland after that date.

The Queensland Government claims it will find alternative resources for Beekeepers to utilize. As yet they have found nothing, that is not already being used.

The Beekeeping Industry knows that they will find nothing viable. Why? Because the Beekeeping Industry have been searching for alternative resources for years, and with their ability to seek out resources, there is no accessible resource in South East Queensland that hasn't been utilised.

The resources available on Private lands are very limited, as most have been cleared for cattle production or are inaccessible.

Commercial Honey Production is a highly skilled profession, impossible to teach in courses, because a lot of the skills as such are only obtainable through years of experience. It is easy to teach people about basic hive management, but the crucial factor of knowing where and when to place hives and reading the flora, takes years of experience.

Honey Production is not just a case of finding the right trees flowering. In certain areas some species will not produce honey or pollen. For example, Brush Box will very rarely produce honey in low coastal country, but in the high coastal ranges is a very reliable producer. (All

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the high coastal ranges are in State Forest – National Park) from which we will be excluded by Queensland Government Policy.

The area where the tree grows, affects when that tree will flower. For example, Grey Ironbark growing in coastal areas, flowers from June to September. In the foothills of the coastal ranges, the same tree flowers from September to October, and in the high coastal ranges it will flower from November to January - and we have found it to be more reliable in the high mountain areas.

Spotted Gum (the majority of which grows on State Forest) flowers from March to early May in the low forests near Maryborough, from May to June in the Gayndah, Munduberra District, from June to August in the Boondooma area and from October to December in the Chinchilla District, (being an unreliable producer in this area.)

Most Eucalyptus trees do not flower every year. Some flower only once in 5 to 7 years, depending on the rainfall in the area up to 3 years previously, and how long it has been, since they last flowered.

Fortunately for us, different areas flower in different years. So we can work a tree like spotted gum in most years, but not on the same sites.

Requirements for my business of 1,400 hives on 11 sites, working 3 different flower periods, means I need 33 sites in one year and a possible 150 sites over 5 years, just for Spotted Gum alone.

In my business, we currently hold 274 sites on Government Lands at an annual cost of \$20,531.00 or \$14.66 per hive per year. It would be impossible to find private land to replace these sites.

Pollination:

If Varroa mite enters this country, (and there is a strong possibility it will), the initial effect is that all ferrel bee colonies will be destroyed. The Horticultural Industry will then require huge numbers of hives for pollination purposes to get any sort of a crop. With all the crops requiring pollination, there will not be sufficient hives to go around. Bearing in mind also, that a large number of managed hives will disappear.

The Horticultural Industry will be in dire straits should varroa mite get into this country. Adding to this, the Queensland Government policy of shutting off resources to beekeepers, will cripple the Horticultural Industry.

The majority of pollination is required during August, September. Crops such as stone fruits, apples, pears, avacados, macadamias and almonds, all flower during these months.

To have healthy hives suitable for pollination purposes during the early spring, requires access to State Forests for winter flowering trees like

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Spotted Gum, Narrow Leaf Ironbark and Acacia. These trees produce high protein pollen which enables hives to breed during winter , resulting in hives with large bee populations, suitable for pollination services in early Spring.

With Pollination services, large numbers of hives are required during August and September and lesser numbers from October to January, on crops such as rockmelons, pumpkins, sunflowers etc.

It is important for Beekeepers to be able to switch to Honey Production during the other months to remain viable, which in turn means access to State Forests and National Parks.

In Summary:

The Queensland Governments current Legislation, putting an end to Commercial Beekeeping in State Forests/National Parks in Queensland, in the year 2024.

Side Effects:

It will be difficult for the Horticultural Industry to find sufficient hives for Pollinating their crops.

Should Varroa mite get into Australia, lack of hives for pollination purposes would devastate the Horticultural Industry.

Respectfully submitted,

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Roy O. Barnes.