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Secretary: <i>[Signature]</i>

Mr. Peter Barnes
"Greentrees"
396 Teddington Road
Tinana South QLD 4650

The Secretary
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RE: The Future Development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry

THE FUTURE OF THE AUSTRALIAN HONEY INDUSTRY

I am a 3RD generation Apiarist who started beekeeping at the age of 15 and now have 18 years experience in the industry full time, plus a wealth of skills and knowledge to draw on past down to from my father and my grandfather. Based in Maryborough in South East Queensland we are one of the largest honey produces in Queensland and the biggest pollinator of Macadamia nuts in our state.

The current prospects of the honey bee industry and the ever increasing demand for pollination. Over the last few years in the months of August and September, the supply of beehives for pollination has fallen **well short** of demand. There are large areas of new plantings of orchards and crops that will require pollination in the August, September period within the next ten years. The demand of hives for pollination will continue to out strip number the number of hives available at that time of year. Under current Queensland State Government legislation on the future of managed hives in Native Forest Areas, there is no incentive for apiarists to increase hive numbers to meet the demands of the pollination short fall. This current legislation also discourages new investment in the industry.

The future of the honey bee industry in Queensland is grim. The Queensland State Government has put in place legislation to stop beekeeping in most Government controlled Native Forest areas in South East Queensland after the year 2024. The **Western hardwood** areas that are government controlled **are just as important** to the honey bee industry as our other South East Queensland sites. We may get locked out of Western hardwoods sooner than the year 2024. **80% of honey that is produced** in Queensland comes from Queensland Government controlled Native Forest. Over half of the time spent in these Native Forest Areas is not for honey production, but for strengthening bee hives for pollination or a honey flow later on in the season. For example the Spotted Gum Tree which in our industry is vital for strengthening hives in the autumn and winter months by shifting to different areas we can work this tree for 4-8 months of the year (in the right year). An area of trees only flowers well once in 5 years. Huge areas of Native Forest are required to sustain the beekeeping industry over that 5 year cycle. One of the **factors is a drought** and that cycle may go out to once in ten years or more.

Under current legislation the honey industry in Queensland has no future beyond the year 2024. We cannot survive on pollination alone as pollination is NOT all year round. No business can survive a loss of 80% of their income e.g. honey production. The loss of a large part of the honey bee industry in Queensland will be devastating for horticulture industry and the effects will flow through to the wider community.

Manuka type honey has healing properties for wounds. The most common view is New Zealand is the only producer of this honey. **This information is wrong.** Australia produces a small amount of Manuka type honey but has the potential to produce a lot more. However the reason we do not do this is because over 60% of Manuka producing plants in Queensland are in National Parks and World Heritage areas and under current legislation the honeybee industry cannot access these areas. Maybe sometime in the future the health benefits of increased production of Manuka type honey, to the community by allowing the honeybee industry access to these Native Forest areas could be looked at as a future development for the industry and the community.

BIO-SECURITY

I was selected to be part of the honeybee research and development team that went on a trip to New Zealand this year (2007) to study the effects of **Varroa mites** on the industry in New Zealand and apply it to the effects it would have in Australia if or more like when it arrives here. New Zealand has now had Varroa mites for 8 years with one of the major effects to the industry being in the area of pollination. Australia has the biggest population of feral honeybees in the world. These feral bees do well over half the pollination of crops in Australia. When Varroa mites enter this country our study concluded that within 3 years of varroa entering an area, it would wipeout the feral honeybee population. The effects are a massive short falls in hives for pollination and the cost due to the lack of pollination would be tens of millions of dollars. **If the Varroa Mites entered Queensland after the year 2024 and with no access to Native Forests, there would be very few managed hives left due to lack of resources. The cost would be up to ten times greater to the horticulture industry.** The surveillance of Shipping Ports, Airports and Private Vessels is vital to insure we keep pests like Varroa Mites out of Australia. But sadly our surveillance around the country is poor, so it is more the matter of when Varroa get here and not if.

FIRE MANGAGEMENT

A good hazard reduction burning program has positive effects not only for Government and the honey bee industry, but also for farms and the community surrounding these Native Forest Areas. Fire Management through hazard reduction burns is an important issue to the honeybee industry right across Australia. With poor hazard reduction management in some areas of State Government controlled Native Forests; cost to the honey bee industry is hundreds of thousands of dollars in a single year. When a fire goes through an area, it not only burns the undergrowth but the heat also scorches the tops of the trees. All foliage then dies and drops to the ground and if this happens at a time when this area is close to a major flowering of the trees and plants in the under story, it has major effect on the managed hives and income of the apiaries that use these areas. In parts of Australia the honey bee industry is included in the management of hazard reduction burns in Native Forests. By providing information on what time of the year/what year is best to burn a Native Forest Area minimizes the effects on the honeybee industry. Government and Industry working together always produces the best out comes for all concerned, however there are departments within State Governments that control Native Forest Areas who have poor hazard reduction fire management program (i.e.: burning in the wrong conditions) and causing huge fires which devastates the Native Forest Areas for prolonged periods. Yes! Mistakes do happen but there are departments in State Governments with a recorded history of poor hazard reduction management which are still allowed to continue look after Native Forest Areas. The fire management of these areas should be given to another department with good hazard reduction burning skills recorded and who also consult with the honey bee industry to minimize the effects. Our apiary business has worked with Forest Departments with hazard reduction burning for the past 43 years. E.g. protection of beehives while a hazard reduction burning is in operation (I am also the 1st Officer of the local Tinana Rural Fire Brigade which assist the D.N.R & E.P.A with hazard reduction burns and wildfires).

Respectfully Submitted

Peter R. Barnes
Barnes Apiaries Pty Ltd