

**MEDIA RELEASE 3 Feb 2016:**

## **Beekeeping industry frustrated by NSW Government inaction**

The state's top beekeepers are warning that continuing lack of coordinated action by public land management agencies is imperilling the future of NSW's honey and crop production.

"With honeybees facing so many threats all around the world, we have a responsibility to try our best to keep ours here in NSW as healthy as possible," explained Mr Neil Bingley, President of the NSW Apiarists' Association ([NSWAA](#)).

Access to native floral resources – such as large stands of old-growth eucalypts - is not only vital for production of good honey, but it also keeps bees healthy enough to provide the pollination services that much of the state's agricultural sector relies upon to produce food. And in NSW, many of the best native floral resources for bees are found on public lands.

"In recent years public lands access arrangements have become increasingly difficult for the beekeeping industry, for no good reason," said Mr Bingley. "There's wild variation in rules, regulations, forms and fees across the state and between agencies. We're hamstrung by red tape. From year to year there seems to be a steady decline in the quality and number of sites we can access. The sheer lack of coordination or certainty is already forcing some longstanding beekeepers out of business."

And that's not just bad news for the honey industry. "As we all know, no bees means no food," said Mr Bingley. "Yields of crops such as apples, almonds, pears and many others are dependent on pollination by healthy, well-kept hives. There are already concerns that NSW mightn't have enough of its own healthy hives to meet demand this coming spring."

The NSWAA recently welcomed a small step in the right direction, when the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) agreed to make available again 101 sites that had previously been used by beekeepers from across the state. "By deciding to make these sites available again, the NPWS is at least acknowledging the importance of our industry and the services we provide," commented Mr Bingley. "It's a shame other state government land management agencies don't seem to be interested in helping us maintain NSW's food security."

Back in July 2015, NSW Infrastructure Minister Mr Andrew Constance acknowledged concerns that differing governance and administrative arrangements across a range of different NSW land management agencies were unfair and inequitable for beekeepers. The Minister committed to working towards developing a whole-of-government, coordinated, consistent policy for public lands access for NSW's beekeepers. Since then, however, progress has been frustratingly slow, with some NSW agencies apparently refusing to cooperate with state government processes.

"A committee of government departments and industry was formed but has met only once, back in November 2015," said Mr Bingley. "Despite our requests for information we still don't know when – or if – another meeting will be held, or whether any progress has been made."

"We are hopeful that the NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Niall Blair, will soon respond positively to the NSWAA's long-standing request to meet to discuss how to progress this matter,"

added Mr Bingley. “An urgent resolution to this situation will give our members a bit of certainty, cut red tape, and allow our beekeepers to focus on what they do best – delivering some of the world’s best honey and underpinning food security for NSW.”

**For more information:**

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**Accompanying photos:**



**Bee on eucalypt flower.jpg** – Honeybees need access to abundant native flower resources to remain healthy. In NSW, most of these resources are found on public lands, which unnecessary red tape often prevents beekeepers from accessing. (Photo courtesy Suzanne Long)



**Hives in eucalypt forest near Bateman’s Bay.jpg** – Access to large stands of native flowering trees, such as this eucalypt forest near Bateman’s Bay in NSW, is essential if beekeepers are to maintain healthy hives and efficiently pollinate crops. (Photo courtesy Neil Bingley)