



# NSW APIARISTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

ABN: 89 417 216 326

## **SUBMISSION TO THE INDEPENDENT FORESTRY PANEL REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NSW GOVERNMENT FORESTRY INDUSTRY ACTION PLAN**

NSW Apiarists' Association Incorporated ("The Association") is the peak industry body of professional beekeepers in NSW. It is the largest organisation of its type within Australia. The Association represents professional beekeeping activities across the state in a range of policy areas including biosecurity and floral resource access.

Beekeeping businesses are focused primarily on the provision of managed honey bees for paid pollination services and the production of honey. Beekeeping is a year-round operation requiring apiarists to transport apiaries on a need's basis, following successive flowering events. NSW Forests, as managed by NSW Government agencies, represent a vital and critical component of the range of floral species on which beekeepers are reliant.

We submit that current forestry operations are having a major impact on the future viability of the beekeeping industry. Some of the key points of concern are:

1. The beekeeping industry's view is that logging or harvesting of NSW forests has increased in intensity over the years. Harvesting rotations appear to be more frequent, with younger trees being removed. The beekeeping industry requires older, mature trees with a more stable flowering period. Younger regrowth vegetation is primarily in a growing phase rather than a reproductive phase i.e. flowering and seeding. This trend of reducing the age of the forest trees appears to be escalating, diminishing the forests' value to the beekeeping industry. This is also likely to have a negative impact on Australian native fauna reliant on nectar as a food source.
2. Hazard reduction burning is acknowledged as an important management tool in mitigating risk over time of the impacts of wildfire. The beekeeping industry has major concerns about the timing of such practices. Flowering patterns of plant species are not considered when such burns are planned. This has resulted in many incidents where beekeepers have lost the potential benefit of a flowering event. Permits may be paid and sites maintained for many years by beekeepers to utilise a particular forest, only to be let down by the uninformed or indifferent attitude exhibited by forestry management to other forest users, such as the beekeepers.
3. Beekeepers require suitable access to forests to transport bee hives to set down sites within the forests. Roads and bridges are only very basically, if at all, maintained in a safe and useable condition. Beekeepers can pay for a site for many years only to find that when circumstances require the use of a forest resource, that access is no longer possible. No consideration appears to be made by forest managers for the requirements of other users. The evidence is that forest management is focused on the removal of timber, with little regard for other industries.
4. Set down sites for bee hives have various characteristics. Some of the more critical considerations are:
  - Close enough to a road to manoeuvre a sizable truck;
  - Large enough area to accommodate 100 plus bee hives (tennis court area);
  - Not interfere with public;

- Reasonably level and clear of dense vegetation (reduce fire risk);
- Flood free;
- Aspect (sunny position for winter sites).

While, historically, old log dumps provided valuable apiary set down sites, these are now scarce to non-existent as they are ripped up after logging operations have finished in that location. Likewise, existing historical apiary set down sites are not always recognised by forestry management activities. Set down sites within a permit area are sometimes fluid, depending on forestry and other activities occurring within the forest. For example, vandalism and theft of apiary equipment may require the apiary to be placed further away from roads.

More recently, mountain bike trails are appearing in forests. In many cases these are reducing the suitability of some forests for bee sites, particularly coastal forests.

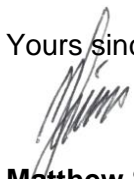
The NSW Apiarists' Association recognises the need for the sustainable supply of timber BUT believes that the experience and observations of members (multiple generations) has provided them with a unique historical perspective clearly illustrating that current timber harvesting levels in NSW forests are NOT sustainable. This is having a major negative impact on the economic viability of the beekeeping industry.

The NSW Apiarists' Association is committed to strong environmental outcomes for NSW as they directly impact on the future viability of the beekeeping industry. There are many native birds, mammals and insect species that rely on nectar and pollen as a major source of nutrients for survival. The NSW Forests are a major resource for such nutrients. The Action Plan being developed will hopefully recognise this environmental contribution made by NSW Forests and not solely focus on the 'wood' or 'timber' story.

NB: The role of timber plantations has little value for beekeepers. Pine trees have virtually no value, whereas hardwood plantations lack floral diversity. The trees generally do not reach full maturity before they are harvested. Flowering during the growth period is often short lived, frequently accompanied with little or no nectar production.

Please refer to the supplementary documents accompanying this submission for further detail on the beekeeping industry's utilisation of public forests.

Yours sincerely,



**Matthew Skinner**  
**President**

13 October 2024