

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN APIARISTS' ASSOCIATION INC.



26th February 2025

Biodiversity Coordination Unit
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SAAA FEEDBACK ON BIODIVERSITY BILL

The South Australian Apiarists' Association (SAAA) is the peak industry association for commercial beekeepers in South Australia. The Association was formed in 1945 and has a long history of representing the interests of South Australian apiarists. We wish to thank you for the opportunity to have input into the draft Biodiversity Bill.

Whilst we provide in principle agreement with the Objects and Principles of the draft Act, we strongly seek to advocate for the role of bees and beekeepers in the protection and conservation of public land to be acknowledged in the bill.

Beekeepers always have been and will continue to be advocates for conservation. The SAAA itself supported the crown land that is now Ngarkat becoming a Conservation Park in mid 1975. Sandy Mathison and Geoff Cotton are responsible for Section 11 (adjacent to Ngarkat) just out of Keith still existing as natural scrub. Along with some concerned locals from Tintinara and beekeepers in the south-east, a petition had been organised to stop the development of scrubland on the edge of town.

South Australia has a long history of strong advocacy from beekeepers for bush/scrub blocks once owned by them not being cleared and instead becoming part of the parks system. Examples of these include Gum Lagoon, Padthaway, Desert Camp and Coxes Scrub, with the likelihood of many others existing.

There are also significant tracts of privately owned scrubland such as the 5000 acres at Marshalls, east of Kiki and Gaskells at Coonalpyn that would have been cleared had they not been owned by beekeepers who understand the importance of conserving our wild spaces. Currently there are several smaller patches of vegetation with high biodiversity value that have been passed down generationally by beekeeper families.

As show above, biodiversity is important to past, present and future beekeepers. But it is not just about the beekeepers themselves. Bees are a keystone species, playing a vital role in preserving biodiversity and ecosystem health. Without bees, many ecosystems would be altered or cease to exist. It is well documented that adding bees when plants are flowering significantly increases the yield and quality of the crop.

There are several matters that are of particular concern to the SAAA. These are outlined below:

- The SAAA is not in favour of substituting Heritage Agreements with the term biodiversity agreements. We believe it is an unnecessary change to a term that is broadly known and commonly used.
- A five year clearance timeline for bee sites is unworkable – natural scrub bee sites are not always useable within a 5 year period due to drought, frosts, previous fire activity, etc. Why clear tracks and site that are not suitable to use in a season?
- Bee sites near proven aboriginal sites should be moved to another suitable site, not just deleted from use.
- Beekeepers should have input into fire control within parks where bee sites are present.
- The role that beekeepers play in uncovering and reporting covert criminal activity, as well as reporting the presence of feral beasts within national parks needs to be recognised and valued.
- Known bee sites deleted from management plans should be re-established and included back into those plans and the existing ones should be automatically included in all management plans.

For migratory beekeepers, access to public land between major pollination events is essential to the future of the industry. Without the provision of resources that build bees up to be ready for pollination events, food security will be threatened. It is therefore critically important that bee sites are maintained, valued and respected.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Title]

[Redacted Contact Information]