

Dear Committee Secretary,

This submission is from Anthony James Eden, Australian Bush Honey. I have been a professional Apiarist since 1980, after starting as a young amateur in the 60's. My qualifications include a Dip. In Applied Science (in Agric. – HAC), with a high distinction in Apiculture. I have some experience with beekeeping in the USA, Japan & France.

A: Beekeeping & the resulting pollination is of paramount importance in Australia, as it is everywhere else in the world. No pollinators eventually = NO FOOD, or at the very least a vastly diminished & unsustainable food chain. Generally, *Apis mellifera* is the most valuable/efficient pollinator in the world & most of them are managed by beekeepers. Most of the pollination is incidental & could apparently be worth up to \$4+ billion pa. It should be noted that *A. mellifera* is the prime pollinator of legumes & increased soil nitrogen availability/value \$, due to legume/rhizobia symbiosis has never been included in the estimates.

Beekeepers mostly chase honey to earn a very modest income in relation to the hours they work (often alone in dangerous eg snakes/heat/stings/ticks/leeches/bad roads/lightning/fires etc, remote & difficult conditions) & the large capital investment outlaid. This production is almost insignificant when compared to the value of incidental/free pollination provided, even though the natural honey produced is exceptional natural food & medicine, with Low GI, antimicrobial & high level natural prebiotic honeys, included in the harvest. Australians have been having a huge "FREE RIDE" on the bees/beekeepers backs since the 1800's.

Environment - Pollination – Food Production – Food Security – Financial Implications: all self explanatory to anyone who has the simplest understanding of living & life itself.

B: Current challenges are huge & for some beekeepers have become overwhelming & we do not (?) have *Varroa destructor* (the elephant in the room) + tracheal mites yet.

Summary: Droughts = no flowers = no nectar/pollen = no bee food = no surplus honey = no money!
PLUS

Chemicals: in particular Neonicotinoids, which are becoming increasingly difficult to avoid, even if you give cropping areas a wide berth. Almost all seeds are being coated with them now, including pasture varieties (clover/lucerne can be a good source of bee food) & even the seeds you are sowing in your private vegetable garden. It is my opinion that these systemic chemicals are the biggest bee killers unleashed yet & we have had a number of events this century where loads of our bees have been adversely affected & it has significantly depleted our income. Neonics have a 19 year ½ life & are water soluble & being transported/spread by floods/runoff, increasing the vast area that has been sown with treated seed. It seems that a mere 1 part per billion is enough to kill a bee & that marine life is also being greatly affected! It is probably the primary cause of Colony Collapse Disorder around the world, which has brought the importance of bees/pollination/food security into sharp focus by those countries most affected to date.

High/extreme cost of doing business in Australia – Fuel – freight - wages – insurance – electricity – red tape – vehicles/machinery – trades people gouging which has been fuelled by the mining boom eg, we use mechanics, electricians (auto + general + electronics), engineers for welding/fabrication/hydraulic work, refrigeration etc.

High Aust. \$: has caused havoc for export markets over several years now, creating a drastic reduction in income – there is simply no point in working for an uneconomic return. The high dollar & the high cost of production/distribution, work in tandem to critically injure ones efforts to export product to eager & appreciative customers overseas.

Small African Hive Beetles, *Apis cerana*, AFB, *Nosema cerana*, *Varroa*, tracheal mites etc etc etc.

Cheap/dumped?/untested imports, some or which I describe as "ALLEGED HONEY"!

The cost of honey production is not reflected in the price paid to producers & then the low/variable duopoly/supermarket retail prices. The "Down ..Down.. Staying Down" style of marketing,

is a systemic cancer that will almost guarantee that great quality, safe food will be in short supply in the future.

The average age of beekeepers is just climbing to a level that will become unsustainable. Apart from being grossly under-rewarded for your time/investment, the rigorous hours & conditions do not attract many participants for long. Most folk cannot handle bee stings to start with. Much of the above would explain that if you've got more than half a brain, beekeeping does not make it onto most occupational radars these days. I have to confess that my involvement in the industry has been a fascination with these insects since childhood & not really about money.

Reclaiming lost bee sites "stolen" by NPWS in the NSW RFAs from the late 1990's on. This had nothing to do with the "environment" & everything to do with political vote buying by a desperate government. Unfortunately, beekeepers were caught up in the cross fire.

Stopping the entry of any more pests & diseases at our borders.

C: Apart from a small, under resourced army of conscientious people in various Gov. departments (plus beagles), who over time have managed to keep varroa (we've been continually told by other various Government employees since 1995 that it's only a matter of time!!!) & some other exotic pests from gaining a foot hold, the biosecurity effort in my life time has been an abysmal failure. The rot started in 1978 with European foul brood disease & as the years rolled on various exotic viruses & pests arrived eg chalk brood probably from imported pollen sold in a Brisbane shop, Small African Hive Beetles courtesy of the USA Air Force at the Richmond Air Force Base in early 2002 – NO AQIS....NO QUARANTINE.....incorrectly indentified by a NSW Gov. Entomologist (Rydalmere?)...finally correctly indentified (OCT 2002) in less than a minute by Dr Denis Anderson, CSIRO, Canberra, after he became aware of the specimens. NSW Gov. quarantine zones enforced – farcical/incompetent – just made it even worse for beekeepers in the end as the beetles had been dispersed far & wide due to the initial incompetence. This event has cost our industry \$10s of millions & is causing lack of pollination in many areas of Eastern Australia. Now we come to the Great Asian Bee Escape in Cairns – Apis cerana, the original host of Varroa destructor stupidly now allowed to colonise Australia.....an unimaginable exercise in "penny pinching" by ignorant people who have now put Australia's future food security at risk for the sake of a couple of million dollars! This probably could have been nailed for less than \$100,000 initially & still achievable for \$2 m a couple of years ago. Is it not interesting that a horse has a cough in NSW & in no time at all, all stops are out, \$10's of millions are flowing & despite complaints from within, horse flu was stopped. This was not a matter of National Food Security...this was a vote winner....I can tell you now that Food Security will be a vote winner in the future, however, it will be far too late to address some of these critical problems when the subject eventually becomes fashionable. We can spend billions of Tax Payers money on boat people, pink bats, school farm sheds & Australia's false economy – the motor vehicle industry & general waste, but we could not find the \$2m (the cost of a Canberra BBQ) needed to knock off Apis cerana in Cairns. Shame on those alleged servants of the public who have unleashed this massive future problem onto the citizens of Australia.

Beekeepers are taxed 2.3c/kg of honey produced & are currently being asked to pay a 100% rise in this tax (a levy is a TAX). This is for biosecurity purposes!!! Beekeepers provide \$billions of free pollination, are under paid/overstressed & now we are expected to shell out for national biosecurity which in my time has pretty much been an epic failure, which has cost me hundreds of thousands of dollars! Well may be it is time this was paid for in the normal manner like Defence, Police, Hospitals etc.

Australia is blessed to have the world's most Varroa/bee mites knowledgeable person/scientist at it's disposal, but you would not know it. Dr Denis Anderson has been starved of funds at CSIRO for years. Where dealing with Varroa stands, Denis is THE light on the hill. Could somebody please find some decent money so that Denis can continue his work? It is of the utmost importance for our food security & the rest of the world.

D: I attended an Australian honey exporters meeting in Canberra earlier this century which was held by AQIS. During the meeting an AQIS lawyer was asked about "Product of Australia" labelling & the fact that one of our packers was putting imported Chinese "honey" into bottles & labelling it Product of

Australia. The critical words in the legislation are “SIGNIFICANT TRANSFORMATION” & a person from that business said they complied because they tipped honey from a Chinese drum into a bottle. AQIS response:...oooh...ummmm...this is a bit of a grey area.....Unbelievable. If it was not so serious it would be a joke? It’s time consumers knew where their food is coming from – at least country of production & percentage in the bottle please. It’s pretty sad when you buy a bottle labelled “Produce of Australia” & the only Australian content is the air under the cap. We are being sold down the drain by cheap, inferior imports – how about applying some rigorous laboratory analysis to honey coming in.

E: “Science underpinning the inability to eradicate the Asian (NOT “HONEY”) bee” is a LOAD OF B...S..T! Many NSW beekeepers flew to Cairns at their own expense to lend a hand, as we know what the future landscape may look like & with A. cerana now given the run of Australia. The ignorant people who made this decision have done a very bad thing for the future of Australia. Future generations will look back at this period of our history with disgust. We had a good window to stop this, but certain people did not act in the National Interest.

The rest of Part E: PASS.

F: I have put in a lot of lobby time on behalf of the industry (for free) like a lot of my peers, trying to help for a better future for this industry & country. Please don’t let this inquiry go to waste as people have put a lot of effort to inform you. Collectively this industry is becoming rather sick of wasting a lot of valuable time. Please consider putting biosecurity onto the national account & putting as much money into research as you can. Any money spent on this industry to help it, will be handsomely repaid. There won’t be much of a future without good food & the beekeepers who are instrumental in helping to produce it.