

SAVEYOURLEATHERWOODHONEY ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT MOVES TO AVOID BEEKEEPING AND POLLINATION CRISIS

THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT SEES THE RISK OF A CRISIS IN THE HONEY BEE AND POLLINATION INDUSTRIES IN AUSTRALIA.

IT HAS COMMISSIONED THROUGH ITS STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY, AN INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN HONEY BEE INDUSTRY.

THE DISCUSSION PAPER PUBLISHED BY THE INQUIRY COMMITTEE RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF A RELIABLE AND ACCESSABLE NECTAR RESOURCE TO ALL AUSTRALIAN BEEKEEPERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE INVOLVED IN POLLINATION. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEATHERWOOD RESOURCE TO TASMANIAN BEEKEEPERS AND ALSO TO THE INDUSTRIES RELYING ON POLLINATION, IS REFERRED TO PARTICULARLY, IN THE PAPER.

THIS ASSOCIATION, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SOUTHERN BEEKEEPERS, HAS JUST COMPLETED A 23 PAGE SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY ON BEHALF OF ALL TASMANIAN BEEKEEPERS.

WHILST COVERING MANY ASPECTS OF BEEKEEPING, HONEY PRODUCTION AND POLLINATION, THE UNDERLYING THRUST OF THE SUBMISSION IS THE NEED TO PRESERVE EXISTING LEATHERWOOD STANDS IN STATE FOREST.

THE RESEARCH LEADING UP TO THE SUBMISSION REVEALS THAT THE CURRENT SHORTFALL IN HIVE NUMBERS FOR THE DELIVERY OF OPTIMUM POLLINATION SERVICES TO FRUIT, VEGETABLE AND SEED GROWERS, IS OF THE ORDER OF 20%. THE PROJECTION OF SHORTFALL BY THE YEAR 2010 IS 50%.

THIS INQUIRY IS THE FIRST TIME RECOGNITION OF THE LOOMING BEEKEEPING RESOURCE CRISIS HAS BEEN CONCEDED PUBLICLY AT ANY GOVERNMENT LEVEL.

WHILE THIS RECOGNITION AND POSSIBLE ACTION IS WELCOME AND LONG OVERDUE, THERE REMAINS A STRONG RESISTANCE TO THE ATTEMPTS BY TASMANIAN BEEKEEPERS TO THE INCLUSION IN THE FOREST PRACTICES CODE, OF AN ENFORCEABLE LEATHERWOOD ASSESSMENT AND PROTECTION PROCEDURE.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS SET UP AN APIARY WORKING GROUP TO RESOLVE THE LEATHERWOOD RESOURCE ISSUE AND OTHER MATTERS AFFECTING THE BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY.

THIS RESISTANCE, IN THE APIARY WORKING GROUP, TO THE PROVISION OF AN ENFORCEABLE REGIME IS, WE UNDERSTAND, COMING FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GROUP AND FORESTRY TASMANIA REPRESENTATIVES ON THE GROUP. FORESTRY TASMANIA WOULD PREFER THE PRESENT VOLUNTARY PROCESS TO REMAIN.

WHILST THE VOLUNTARY PROCESS IS A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD COMPARED TO THE SITUATION WHICH EXISTED AS LITTLE AS 2 YEARS AGO, THERE IS NO ENFORCEABLE GUARANTEE OF ITS CONTINUATION INTO THE FUTURE. FURTHERMORE WE ARE AWARE THAT MANY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING HARVESTING TECHNIQUES AND WHERE HARVESTING WILL OCCUR, ARE OUTSIDE THE CONTROL OF FORESTRY TASMANIA

THE PREMIER HAS IN THE MEANTIME EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE RESULT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH ARE TAKING PLACE IN THE APIARY WORKING GROUP.

WE CALL ON THE PREMIER TO USE HIS INFLUENCE TO ENSURE THAT THE VESTED INTERESTS OF THE TIMBER INDUSTRY AND THE STATUTORY TIMBER QUOTA LIMITATIONS PLACED ON FORESTRY TASMANIA, DO NOT PREVENT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ENFORCEABLE REGIME OF LEATHERWOOD PROTECTION. WITHOUT THIS OUTCOME THE BEEKEEPING AND HORTICULTURIST INDUSTRIES WILL NOT ENJOY LONG TERM SECURITY.

IN THE MEANTIME THIS ASSOCIATION IS MONITORING COUPES AS THEY ARE PREPARED FOR HARVESTING, AS THEY ARE HARVESTED AND AFTER HARVESTING. THIS IS TO ASSESS ANY LEATHERWOOD LOSS AND ENABLE AFFECTED BEEKEEPERS TO ASSESS THE HIVE CARRYING CAPACITY OF THE RELEVANT AREA, AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

BEEKEEPERS DO NOT HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT GOVERNMENT PRESSURE WILL ENSURE THAT FORESTRY TASMANIA CAN AND WILL ABIDE BY THE PRESENT VOLUNTARY LEATHERWOOD ASSESSMENT AND PROTECTION PRACTICE. HOW CAN THE BEEKEEPERS HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT WHEN AN EARLIER PROMISE, THAT IS OF FUNDING FOR SUPPORT OF THE INDUSTRY IN THE COMMUNITY FOREST AGREEMENT, IS NOW SEEN TO BE ALMOST MEANINGLESS. THE GOVERNMENT, AND FORESTRY TASMANIA, HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE FUNDING OF \$11.4M, PROVIDED FOR IN THE AGREEMENT AND ANNOUNCED WITH SOME FLOURISH AS TO BE USED TO SUPPORT SPECIAL SPECIES TIMBER AND LEATHERWOOD ACCESS, WILL ONLY BE USED TO CONSTRUCT ROAD ACCESS TO SPECIAL SPECIES TIMBER, WITH ANY ACCESS FOR BEEKEEPERS BEING ALONG

THE SAME ROADS, IF THERE HAPPENS TO BE LEATHERWOOD IN THAT DISTRICT.
IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE WILL BE NO ROADS CONSTRUCTED SPECIFICALLY FOR LEATHERWOOD ACCESS, EVEN IF THAT WOULD OPEN UP VALUABLE LEATHERWOOD RESOURCE AREAS.
THIS IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE PRIORITY GIVEN TO TIMBER INTERESTS OVER OTHER FOREST USERS, EVEN WHERE UNDERTAKINGS ARE MADE IN WRITING, EXPRESSING THE CLEAR INTENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

IT IS HOPED THAT THE RESULT OF THE COMMONWEALTH INQUIRY, ALONG WITH AUSTRALIA WIDE RESOURCE PROTECTION/ACCESS ACTION, WILL ENSURE THAT IN TASMANIA, THE LEATHERWOOD RESOURCE IS PERMANENTLY SECURE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS AND WILL ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE TO UNDERPIN A STRONG BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY, CAPABLE OF DELIVERING ALL THE STATE'S POLLINATION NEEDS.

THERE IS REAL "LEFT HAND – RIGHT HAND" PROBLEM HERE.

WHILE THE STATE BODIES CHARGED WITH THE RESTRUCTURE OF THE LEATHERWOOD PROTECTION REGIME ARGUE AND VESTED INTEREST REIGNS SUPREME, THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT IS SPENDING LARGE AMOUNTS OF TIME AND MONEY TRYING TO DEAL WITH A LOOMING POLLINATION CRISIS.