



# Townsville and District Beekeepers Association (Inc)

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[www.beesnorth.com.au](http://www.beesnorth.com.au)

## Newsletter No 11: Special Edition December 2024

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### Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be 9 February 2025, venue TBA.

### Next Shop Day:

The next shop will be 4 January 2025

**Have a great Christmas and New Year Break, enjoy your bees**



NATIONAL  
**Varroa Mite Management**  
PROGRAM

## Varroa Mite Management



Are we gambling on our future?

At least the slot machines were off at the beginning of the national varroa mite management working held in Townsville.

Queensland is still negative to varroa but there are no controls in place to stop its introduction. But we are also not to use any treatment chemicals until the first sighting. The Varroa mite workshop did provide an interesting day into the control measures that will be available.

But there is still a lot that we in the North of Australia will have to resolve ourselves and nearly all the examples of control are based in areas and countries where there is a natural brood break – weather gets cold – and this just does not happen here in Townsville.

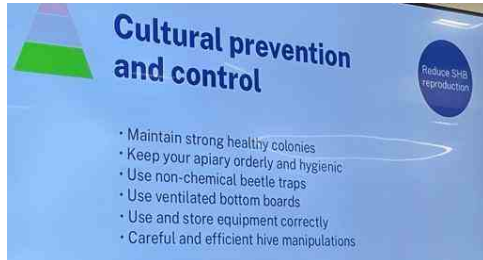
Why is this important? Because only during the brood break will varroa stop increasing numbers and only be surviving on the adults – the PHORETIC phase. Varroa can even survive 5 days or so off the bee.



The presentations were interesting albeit many a little naive. Varroa has not been beaten elsewhere in the world and the control of varroa through chemicals is not considered as a sustainable future in the rest of the world. Hygienic bees are being sought but this has also been looked for a couple decades globally and they are still looking.

When varroa is here we will obviously be holding more training sessions and learn together as a club. None of the chemicals offer treatment, only control, and the queen is always vulnerable if these chemicals are not used appropriately.

Many chemicals persist and cannot be removed from the wax and this is where there are serious issues with the lack of a brood break. [Honeybee.org.au](http://Honeybee.org.au) provides an up to date list of chemical control which could be considered. In the days immediately preceding the meeting ,Oxalic acid had been approved. This is the basic chemical treatment used in the UK.



This was the Ed’s best slide. Maintain healthy colonies. Varroa is a parasite and naturally does not want to kill its host.

In Australia we appear not to have any of the serious viruses that varroa also carry. The most important are Deformed Wing Virus and Slow Paralysis virus. It is the varroa AND viruses AND humans and other factors that make varroa such a devastating pathogen of bees. **Small point:** the DIPRD videos on how to apply the chemical control measures are interesting, but we would like a more bee-welfare friendly approach by the staff and would encourage the videos to be recast.

**Note:** the varroa mites do not affect the native bees.

**And remember our Carla is here to help all of us.**

*I am here to help and support you, whether through practical demonstrations, discussions or Q&A sessions on Varroa. We can meet at your apiary, a café, in a group or one-on-one. You can contact me ph: 0467 236 135 or email: [carla.kersnovske@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:carla.kersnovske@daf.qld.gov.au)*

We also have to keep an eye on the *Apis florea* in Western Australia which also came in with its other varroa type – Eurovarroa.



The club does now own a Varroa model which we can use as an educational tool. It is not life-sized!



When we talk of a brood break when the temperature outside is less than 20 consistently the queen will reduce and then stop making brood.

Temperature °C	Activity
40° or more outside hive	Bearding and cooling hive
38° Outside hive	Workers actively forage for water
33–35° inside hive	Normal brood development Wax secretion in hive
29° inside hive	Brood cannot be made
20° outside hive	Queen bee does not attempt to mate
16° outside hive	Drone bees do not fly
10° outside hive	Worker bees do not fly

Clearly, there is no brood being made in these hives in UK in picture left.

## Xmas Lunch Sunday 8 December at Bohle Barn



The 2024 Christmas dinner was held at the Bohle Hotel on 8 December with 34 members and guests attending. Great camaraderie and laughs as a few awards were given out by president Frana.

**Queen Bee-atrice Award** went to Bosko Susic for his great support of our shop and dedication in travelling up from Ayr for many meetings. Graeme A and John C were present to receive their awards, while Graham W, Dennis F and David M will be given theirs at the next meeting.





## **Blue banded bee embroiled in gold mine rejection**

[JAMES DOWLING](#) and [PAIGE TAYLOR](#)

“The Australian” on line

Seems like our lovely native Blue banded bee (*Amegilla cingulata*) has found itself at the centre of a stoush about the truth, or otherwise, regarding its connection to an indigenous group who claim it is part of their traditional Dreaming story. The traditional link with the bee has been disputed. In her detailed reasons for rejecting the mine proposal, Ms Plibersek said six members of the OLALC, including five Wiradyuri elders, had disputed the veracity of the blue-banded bee Dreaming in a February submission. Despite this, the McPhillamys Blayney gold mine, near Orange in NSW, has not been given a green light for development. This was a controversial decision, and we are likely to see appeals to reverse the minister’s decision.

Meanwhile, our Blue banded bee goes about her “buzziness” collecting pollen and nectar, digging nests in clay slopes, and generally being part of the pollinating team. Blue banded bees are famous for their ability to perform buzz pollination. This type of pollination is really useful on crops such as tomatoes, blueberries, cranberries, kiwi fruit, eggplants and chilies, but our [European](#) honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), is incapable of performing this process. For this reason, the blue-banded bee is extremely valuable to Australian farmers. You can sometimes see 10 or so male Blue banded bees hanging out together with their jaws clamped on to a blade of grass, just being sociable. Meanwhile, the females are hard at work “buzzing” the pollen out of all those fruits and vegies.

Oh, and the photo below is of a female bee, males have 5 stripes ( see right)

<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/creatura-blog/2014/09/blue-banded-bee-a-native-beauty/>

[https://www.lfwseq.org.au/blue-banded-bee/ - :~:text=The colours are caused by,yellow, cream or white markings](https://www.lfwseq.org.au/blue-banded-bee/- :~:text=The colours are caused by,yellow, cream or white markings)



### Tito’s adventure Part 2

#### **My Bee’s Story - Part 2**

By Club Member Tito Parigi

Newsletter readers will be wondering what happened to Tito after he was introduced to bees in Townsville by “ a very large man with big beard who talked a lot”. And NO, it wasn’t Santa Claus.

At that time, the club meetings were held in the homes of the members. There were no more than ten people present, and most of them were quite elderly. So, I went to another of their meetings, again and again, until I eventually bought a hive and started with a group of bees. With the help of the club, which was incredibly supportive , they followed up with people in an amazing way. Back then, there were very few members—I seem to remember around forty or fifty. Now, many years later, for what I know on the hundreds. Little by little, from just one hive, I expanded to five.

I provided honey for all my friends, and even sold some to a few people. It was a lot of fun. The main thing I specialized in was making honeycomb. At that time, even here in Australia, there weren’t many people selling honeycomb. Only in small markets did I find a few others doing it, while my production was practically 90% honeycomb. I created my own label to put on it, with a little koala on it. I really enjoyed doing this work.

One day, I noticed that outside my kitchen, between the bricks, there was a small hole, and I saw tiny black insects buzzing frantically in and out of it. So I became curious and was told they were Australia’s native bees. I bought a book about them and started looking around. Friends told me about someone who had a lot of boxes with these little bees. This person lived about a hundred kilometers from my home, but I managed to find their phone number, so I called and made an appointment.

One day, I went to see him, but I had to wait outside his house for a long time because he wasn’t there. His mother was home, but she didn’t know when he would return or anything. Having driven all that way, I decided to wait. Finally, he arrived, apologized, and invited me in. Behind the house, he had storage areas with countless boxes, stacked one on top of the other, sometimes four or five high. These boxes were about thirty by thirty centimeters, like the ones commonly used now for the native Australian bees, the little bees. He had, I don’t know, probably thirty or forty of these boxes stacked up. These tiny, adorable bees were flying all around. In some spots, there were many of them, and they even landed on my face or around me, giving a very faint pinch, almost imperceptible, just making their presence known. After explaining everything to me, he asked if I wanted one of these boxes. Of course! He said, "Alright, listen, this is what we'll do: I'll teach you

how to make a box like the ones you see here, then come back to me, and I'll put a starter group of bees inside it to get your hive going." Absolutely! So, I took all the measurements, drew it out carefully. The box was made in two parts, an upper and lower section, two levels, with a small hole in the front for the bees to enter. The lower part was for the eggs and the bee colony, while the upper part was just for honey storage. He had me try the honey from these little bees, which is very different from the honey of the regular bees we know. It's much more tangy, and of course, it's not a honey that can be consumed in large quantities. Typically, they produce only a glass or two of honey a year. I built my new box with patience, and after a few weeks, I went back to him to get the bees. When I arrived, as always, he was late, and I had to wait quite a while. But eventually, he started opening one of his hives, and I began to see how the various eggs and the formation of their little cells develop inside. Then he said, "No, this hive isn't ready to be split," so he closed it up. All the little bees buzzing around, he then opened another hive and said, "Here, this one is good, this one can be divided. It's developed enough to be split." So, he cut a piece of the comb, which was shaped in a spiral, and carefully placed it into my box. We sealed all the holes, finished everything, and were ready to go. But I asked him one thing: "How do all these little bees survive here, so close to the sea, with so little vegetation around? How do they manage?" He replied, "They really like the flowers of the palm trees, and along the coast here, there are plenty of palm trees. They were planted for some reason in the past, and the bees thrive on these flowers." Arriving home, I placed the new box not far from the one I had in the wall, and I would check on them occasionally to make sure everything was going well. Over time, I learned how to care for them, and they were doing quite well. After a while, I thought, "Well, I can divide mine too; it's growing strong enough." So, I opened it up, saw that it was in good condition, and decided to split it. I had seen how he did it, so I thought I could manage it. And indeed, I created the second box perfectly. Gradually, I had two, then three, and then I made one for my house on the island, and slowly, the number of hives grew.

The price of these boxes, after a few years, became enormous. Interest in these bees had become very, very popular, and many people wanted to have their own box. So, I said, "Alright, I'll divide them until I have six or seven for myself, and then each year, I'll split them again, sell six or seven, and make a good profit while having fun." In fact, I ended up with six or seven of my own.

Unfortunately, I had decided to take a vacation to Italy. What was meant to be a normal four-week vacation turned into six or seven weeks or even more. When I came back, it was a disaster. All of the hives had been attacked by a wasp, a natural enemy, and no one had noticed. They couldn't be saved anymore. It was entirely my fault because I had sealed the small hives with the wax from regular bees, not the wax from the little native bees. Now, the wax from regular bees is much softer, so the wasps were able to get in easily.

It was a disaster, and I was devastated because something I had worked on so patiently had gone up in smoke. Only one small hive hadn't been completely lost, and I managed to save it, but all the others were completely ruined and had to be discarded.

But it doesn't end there. A few months later, there was a terrible storm with strong winds here in Townsville. During the storm, one of my hives, with regular bees, collapsed, and as it fell, it brought down a second one as well.

I had severe arthritis and could barely move, but I had to save the hive, so I tried. After a lot of effort, I could manage to restore them in position and once I did it, I realized that beekeeping was no longer for me. The next day, I began selling the hives, and now I only have one left.

Fortunately, we can still enjoy some excellent honey and appreciate the wonderful little Australian bees.

**Ed's Comment:** Thanks Tito for your story. Its been a long association with both native bees and European. Members, please send in your story for others to hear about your adventures with bees.

## ***Minutes of Committee Meeting TDBAI of November meeting 2024***

### **Committee meeting at the Bohle Hotel**

26<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Meeting started 18:04 and ended 19:54

Apologies from Liz Henning.

#### Positions

Native bee position filled by Jon McKinstry. Ron nominated and Baily seconded.

Previous meeting notes were not available There were no notes presented from other committee members.

#### Calendar of events:

The upcoming main event is the Christmas Dinner on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December

15<sup>th</sup> December the House of Prayer

23-24<sup>th</sup> May Ag event in Ingham and 20<sup>th</sup> May Bunnings Fairfield.

We had extensive discussion on future club events.

Bunnings in particular. The club is to send out details to all members who may be willing to help.

Bluewater Gardening Club. First Responders.

#### Beginning workshops

Discussion on making short videos on various aspects of bee management and make these available on the website. The major requests would be for flow hive management and native bee management.

#### Timing of club and committee meetings

It was agreed to continue meeting in the afternoon.

Each meeting should have a theme.

Committee meetings to be 3\* a year. Have meeting 1 hour before club meeting. This to be trailed in February.

We need to get the club meetings on live stream system.

#### Various discussion on Fixed and recurrent costs.

Some these are being investigated as they may be irrelevant. For example, the PO Box to be stopped but we need somewhere for mail to be delivered. 4TTT to explain what we are paying for.

ABK is now online rather than paper copy to be added to the library.

#### Permanent venue

This is to be made into a separate meeting.

### Other business

Townsville Grammar School would like a beehive under our mentorship.

Jo Martin to be thanked for the QBA meeting and general help over the years.

### Bee Feed

There is a lot of bee feed at the shop and it is to be given away rather than be disposed.

### ***Vice President Al Cooney had a mini Bee Expo at his home:***

On Sunday 15 December, Dr Trevor and family from Back2Health visited my place for a school holiday treat. Dr Trevor, wife Shara, daughters Lotti and Tori were given some education on Beekeeping, what the inside of a fully functional hive looks like and education on the anatomy of a Bee.

Learning about the growth stages from egg to adult bee and venturing out to see the hive and do some honey extraction on a Flow Hive. The kids walked away with a small jar of Honey each while Dr Trevor and Shara took home a jar of honey to use on the Christmas dinner.

Both Lotti and Tori had a blast with everyone enjoying being suited up as beekeepers for the day. They all definitely enjoyed their education session and walked away with more knowledge and understanding around why Bees and beekeeping is such a vital part of our lives.



### ***Coastal Dry Tropics Landcare Inc***



Also on 15 Dec, some members attended a planting event at the House of Prayer on Thomas St, displaying native bees (colony and solitary) and providing information to the attendees.

It was a good opportunity for us as well, as the CDTLI is donating \$200 to the club for our presentation and also to find that the HoP will be an excellent venue for meetings and workshops.

## Email contacts for the Office Holders 2024/25

You can use these email contacts for the Office Holders, and hopefully they will have figured out how to access them and will respond ASAP.

### TDBAI Office holders and Committee for 2024/2025

Position	Name	Contact
President	Frana McKinstry	<a href="mailto:president@beesnorth.com.au">president@beesnorth.com.au</a>
Vice President	Al Cooney	
Secretary	Liz Hennig	<a href="mailto:secretary@beesnorth.com.au">secretary@beesnorth.com.au</a>
Treasurer	Louise Clark	<a href="mailto:treasurer@beesnorth.com.au">treasurer@beesnorth.com.au</a>
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Website/social media Officer	Vacant	
Native Bees Representative	vacant	
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Committee 3	Greg Skellern	
Committee 4	Carla Kersnovske	
Committee 5	Blake Steward	
Committee 6	Wendy Aspery	

And for all general enquiries: [info@beesnorth.com.au](mailto:info@beesnorth.com.au)

