

Townsville and District Beekeepers Association (Inc.)

www.beesnorth.com.au



PO Box 1115, Aitkenvale QLD 4814

Newsletter No 12, Dec 2015

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Xmas Lunch with the Club
Vale Hotel, 12:30 Sunday Dec 6
222 Ross River Rd, Aitkenvale
Confirm your attendance with Sec. Carla K.
cke00786@bigpond.net.au

Manuka Honey and “Chopper Man”

Ben Hall recently visited Australia on a fishing trip to Hinchinbrook Island. He called in at Heidi and Lindsay's place for a coffee and to check out our backyard hives. I was pretty keen to hear about the crazy stuff he has been doing with bees over in NZ, and here is Ben's story.

I'm a helicopter pilot for a company called Helisika and we're based about 15 nm south east of Lake Taupo. Our primary business is flying people into the backcountry for amazing hunting and fishing trips but about 6 years ago we were approached by a local bee keeper and asked if we could fly in a few of his hives to sites not far from our base. As you can imagine, we found this an unusual request but we get unusual requests all the time in the helicopter industry so we accepted the job.

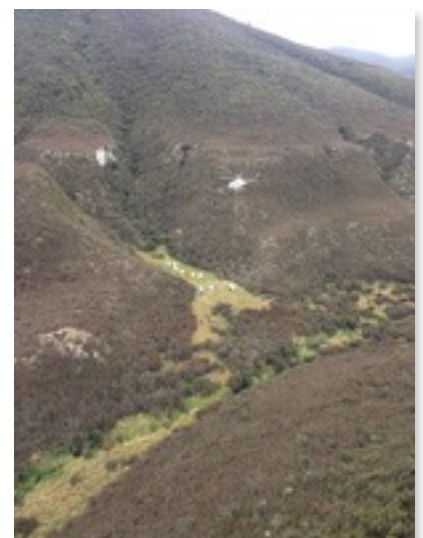
Now, I'm sure all you guys up there have heard about this wonder honey derived from the nectar of the Manuka flower. Manuka is a very common native shrub found all over NZ and the honey produced from this shrub is very highly sought after for it's medicinal qualities. I'm not a scientist so I'm not going to try to explain what these qualities are but I can tell you is that the transport of hives into areas with prolific stands of Manuka has become big business for us.

Things have come a long way in a short time for us and it has been a very steep learning curve. When we started out we were dealing with small numbers of hives: 100 or 200 hive jobs. They are transported on pallets with 4 hives per pallet usually 3 or 4 supers high plus the brood box. Getting these things to fly nicely on a long line took quite a bit of perfecting. Our early efforts had them swinging and spinning violently on the end of the line and a couple of times hives literally spun apart with boxes exiting out the sides like a filing cabinet. We had to go back to the drawing board and eventually came up with the idea of using parachute drogues bridle rigged off the corners of the pallet to hold it straight in flight. This works beautifully and now we fly 2 pallets at a time like this.

This coming season we will be lifting between 6 and 7 thousand hives into the backcountry for 4 major NZ honey companies. It's a partnership between these companies and the Maori landowners who own massive areas of largely unproductive but beautiful wilderness. The really fantastic thing is these land owners can now generate some real income from their land with zero negative impact to the environment and long term sustainability for the future. One of the other upsides of flying these hives into this Manuka country is that there is very little in the way of other plants for the bees to forage nectar from so the quality of the honey can be much higher than areas where the hives are driven in by conventional means.



Ben getting ready to haul those hives



Dropping off the hive pallets in a remote NZ valley

With every type of farming there are risks though and this operation has its fair share. The season is short. The hives are flown in early December after keeping a close eye on the Manuka buds to establish when they will pop to flower. They will come out again in February hopefully laden with honey but a lot of stars have to align to get this result. Most of the sites are between 3000 and 4000 ft above sea level and the weather can be fickle at the best of times. Any wind much above 10 knots will keep the bees indoors eating the profit, and rain will do the same thing. Strong wind will blow the flower clean off the shrub which can drastically cut the season short. Picking the right sheltered site for the hives is critical and judging when to get them in with as little additional food honey as possible to save weight is a calculated risk at best. It's all about timing and careful hive management and if Mother Nature plays the game the rewards can be substantial. Last season the best operators were sending their hives in between 600 and 650kg per lift and they came out at weights ranging from 800 to 1300kgs. It was a good season and the results of that for us are quite a few more hives going in again this season. We've recently purchased another helicopter that will be dedicated solely for this part of the business so we think the industry has real legs and are excited to be a part of it.



Hives waiting to be choppered in

are

I have to admit that my initial interest in bees was purely for commercial gain but I have developed a genuine fascination with the little buggars and love and respect them for the industrious clever little insects that they are. I hope you guys found this story of interest and wish you a great season up there.

Fascinating stuff, many thanks for the article and photos Ben.

Check out Ben at the chopper controls in the YouTube video at: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jE9yuSvimw0>

Youtube videos explain beekeeping for Aussie conditions

The Rural Industry Research and Development Corporation from Australia has produced some excellent videos to explain several aspects of beekeeping for Australian conditions (and with an Aussie accent!!). Take a look at these and share them with Newbees who ask you lots of questions. A great resource for more experienced beekeepers too, as you may find a new way to look after your hives.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/RIRDC>

The videos have been funded by the Honey Bee and Pollination Program, a partnership between the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (HIA) and the Australian Government. They cover:

- the construction and repair of beehives
- selecting and establishing apiary sites
- providing pollination services
- re-queening a honey bee colony
- artificial insemination.

Beekeeper and spokesman for the Program, James Kershaw, says education is important for the long-term future of the industry. "To maintain our honey production and provide effective pollination services, we need every beekeeper to continually add to their skills, improving the way they manage their hives and deal with pests and diseases," Mr Kershaw said. "Unless we are operating at best practice to manage the issues we're already facing, an exotic pest or disease incursion will have a greater impact on beekeepers' costs, their productivity and their ability to move hives around Australia.

"These videos very clearly and simply explain a specific set of skills, and why those skills are necessary for beekeepers, as well as the tools required and how to use them."

The videos have been produced to align with the accredited Certificate AHC 32010 in beekeeping and Certificate AHC 10 in Agriculture. They are available on the RIRDC YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/RIRDC).

For more information about the Honey Bee and Pollination Program visit:

www.rirdc.gov.au/honeybee-pollination

Stay up-to-date with the latest news and information about beekeeping and pollination with the BeeAware e-newsletter. Go to :

beeaware.org.au/subscribe

TDBA inc. minutes for November 15/11/2015

Welcome:

Ron Rapson welcomed new and existing members. We had 26 existing members and 6 new members this meeting. Dan and Chrystal from Bushland Beach, Brendan for Ayr, John from Kelso, Scott and Sarah from Bushland beach.

Apologies:

We have 6 apologies this month, they are listed in the attendance book.

Minutes:

Minutes from the previous meeting moved by Lindsay Trott and passed by John McKinstry.

Business from previous meeting:

The Hermit Park State School have ordered 2 Flow Hives. The club and school have not had a chance for a meeting yet.

Jon has researched getting a trailer more. We are to draw up a plan to cover our needs.

The Christmas get together with the Mackay bee club is on the 12th of December in Bowen, if anyone is interested in going information is available in the last newsletter or contact one of the committee members.

Correspondence:

We received a thank you letter from the Charters Towers City Council for the donation to the Library of the Australian Beekeeping Manual. We have also donated 2 copies of the Australian Beekeeping Manual to the Townsville libraries.

Treasurer's report:

We have returned the over payment. The bank balance is good. We have ordered more stock for the shop. The audit is done and has been sent in for review.

Shop report:

The shop is restocked. We now carry clips to hold down lids, handles for hives, and eyelets for wax frames. There will be a slight price rise from Jan 1.

Library report:

Jon said everything up to date. He may send out some reminders soon.

Newsletter report:

Lindsay would like more stories from club members. He would be happy to visit members at home to take pictures and write a story. He also asked if anyone would be interested become webmaster. Nathan put up his hand. There will be no newsletter in January.

General business:

Ron has noticed his bees are building new comb.

We had 6 club shirts left but sold some at the meeting.

Ben Taylor asked for help to open his hives for the first time, Sonya put her hand up to help.

QBA annual general meeting will be in Townsville next year. QBA will be at the Mercure Inn on the 13/14 July 2016 and the AHBIC conference is 15 July 2016. Dan Donovan has been contacted to see if the club could recommend day trips and excursions before and after the conference. We will have more information about the conference next year.

Steven K asked about honorary members, he asked that a list of honorary members to be listed in the newsletter. If anyone has a someone in mind to nominate as an honorary member please contact committee members.

Jon has contacted Rob Stephens, it is still compulsory to notify if you have AFB but small hive beetle will no longer be notifiable. Jon also checked about the bio security plan for Varroa mite. At the moment there is no plan for Varroa mite,

Jon asked if anyone had experience in writing a submission to put forward a plan. If anyone can help please let Jon know.

Jon and Frana have been called out to a few swarms. Jon bought his bee vac to show members how to make one and how they work. With the drought it will be a tough year.

The club will get a copy of the RIRDC book Fat Bees, Skinny Bees to help with different feeding techniques for bees. You can buy the book for about \$50 or download it for free.

Graham Smith has had a compound pharmacist make up the chalk board solution from the October newsletter. He is selling the solution for \$15 per small bottle. If anyone is interested please contact Graham. The club will sponsor Lindsay to trial the solution and write a report for the newsletter.

Next meeting:

Pimlico Mundingburra Scout Hall in McIntyre St Mundingburra on Sunday 21 February 2016 at 2:00 pm.

Rob Stephens identified the unknown wasp in the last Newsletter as a Flower Wasp, thanks Rob.

Lindsay T and Ray B reckon the tree covered in bees was a non invasive form of Indian Hawthorn.

Hallucinogenic honey and the World's largest honeybee.

Rob Stephens passed on this Youtube link; it's a fascinating doco about collecting the special red hallucinogenic honey in Nepal produced by *Apis laboriosa* (largest honeybee). It also shows the powerful effect the honey has on those who eat it.

Check out: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_b2j_FvYPw

The giant *Apis laboriosa* bee is native to the Himalayas, and builds its large nests (see photos on right) on the south-western faces of vertical cliffs. An adult bee can measure up to 3 cm in length, while a single nest can contain up to 60kg of honey. The bee's red honey, gathered at altitude, sells for about five times the price of regular honey. It has an intoxicating, relaxing effect, thought to result from the grayanotoxin present in the nectar collected from rhododendrons - the national flower of Nepal.

Men who harvest the golden substance are respected and influential members of the Rai community, and are addressed as 'guru,' meaning, 'he who knows'. They work in special ritual clothes called "lukspa", woven from nettle fibers. Although the Rai people divide most village tasks between men and women, the historic honey gathering remains a male-only tradition, passed down from father to son.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2151002/Just-buzz-ness-usual--Fearless-Nepalese-honey-hunters-scale-250ft-cliffs-pursuit-prize--attack-worlds-largest-bees.html#ixzz3qygl5cdl>



The dark, reddish, "mad honey," known as *deli bal* is also harvested in Turkey, (see photo below right) and contains the same ingredient from rhododendron nectar - grayanotoxin — a natural neurotoxin that, even in small quantities, brings on light-headedness and sometimes, hallucinations. In the 1700s, the Black Sea region traded this potent produce with Europe, where the honey was infused with drinks to give boozers a greater high than alcohol could deliver.

When over-imbibed, however, the honey can cause low blood pressure and irregularities in the heartbeat that bring on nausea, numbness, blurred vision, fainting, potent hallucinations, seizures, and even death, in rare cases. Nowadays, cases of mad honey poisoning crop up every few years — oftentimes in travelers who have visited Turkey. <http://modernfarmer.com/2014/09/strange-history-hallucinogenic-mad-honey>

Grayanotoxins are a group of closely related toxins found in rhododendrons and other plants of the family *Ericaceae*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grayanotoxin>



They can be found in honey made from their nectar and cause a very rare poisonous reaction called grayanotoxin poisoning, honey intoxication, or rhododendron poisoning.



Grayanotoxins can be found in honey produced from the pollen of plants such as *Rhododendron ponticum* (see photo on left) that contains alkaloids that are poisonous to humans. Honey from Japan, Brazil, United States, Nepal, and British Columbia is most likely to be contaminated with grayanotoxins, although very rarely to toxic levels. In Nepal, this type of honey is used by the Gurung people both for its medicinal and hallucinogenic properties. (See red honey in jars above right)

Honey produced from the nectar of *Andromeda polifolia* (common name Bog Rosemary) contains high enough levels of grayanotoxin to cause full body paralysis and potentially fatal breathing difficulties due to diaphragm paralysis. Honey obtained from spoonwood and allied species such as sheep-laurel can also cause illness. The honey from *Lestrimelitta limao* (a species of robber bee native to N. America) also produces this paralyzing effect seen in the honey of *A. polifolia* and is also toxic to humans.

One of the earliest accounts of mass poisoning from honey dates back to the first century BCE when Roman troops were allegedly poisoned with honey by the Heptakometes of Turkey. The Roman soldiers were reported to be confused and vomiting and subsequently defeated in battle after eating the honey. We now believe that they were given honey made from the nectar of the flowering plant *Rhododendron luteum*.

[/http://www.poison.org/articles/2015-mar/azaleas-and-rhododendrons](http://www.poison.org/articles/2015-mar/azaleas-and-rhododendrons)

There have been other famous episodes of inebriation of humans from consuming toxic honey throughout history. Xenophon, Aristotle, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and Columella all document the results of eating this "maddening" honey. In the Caucasus region of Turkey, honey containing grayanotoxin known as *deli bal* is deliberately produced, and in the 18th century was exported to Europe to add to alcoholic drinks. Historically the toxin in the honey was derived from the pollen and nectar of *Rhododendron luteum* and *Rhododendron ponticum*, which are found around the Black Sea. According to Pliny and later Strabo, the locals used the honey against the armies of Xenophon in 401 BCE and later against Pompey in 69 BCE.

Azaleas are very close relatives of rhododendrons and can also cause the same type of toxicity. The toxic component of rhododendrons and azaleas can be found in very high concentrations in honey made by bees that feed on them.

Ingestion of the "mad honey" is not the only way people have been poisoned by azaleas and rhododendrons. Eating the leaves, nectar, or flowers of the plants can also lead to toxicity. Although rare, serious and life-threatening toxicity has occurred when people intentionally ate the plant. Similar to myths surrounding "mad honey," there are some areas of the world where the plant is believed to have medicinal properties.

References:

Cardiovasc Toxicol. 2012 Sep; 12(3): 208–215. Grayanotoxin Poisoning: 'Mad Honey Disease' and Beyond.

Lindsay T.



Watch out if your bees start working the neighbour's Azalea or Rhododendron gardens!!!



Is CCD on the decline or a beat up??

-beehives and bee numbers now at 20 year high, but beekeepers at risk!

<http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/2015/07/30/beepocalypse-myth-handbook-dissecting-claims-of-pollinator-collapse/>

<http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/2015/08/10/beemageddon-honeybee-numbers-at-20-year-high/>

<http://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/2015/09/24/crisis-shift-bees-may-not-facing-apocalypse-beekeepers/>

Tasmania swamped by demand for Leatherwood honey

Just like the soaring demand for NZ Manuka honey (from *Leptospermum scoparium*), there is a rush on for Tasmania's unique Leatherwood honey (from *Eucryphia lucida*). Leatherwood honey has been shown to contain similar or higher antibacterial activity to Manuka honey. Tasmanian honey export values increased by 80% in the 2 years from 2012 to 2014 from \$1.61 m to \$2.82m, with a further increase predicted for this year. Mr Bourke said that meeting the increased demand was difficult due to the low numbers of new apiarists entering the industry, and difficulty accessing Leatherwood trees in remote forests. A new \$2.6m state-of-the-art extraction plant, and apiarist training centre, is now under construction at Sheffield in Tasmania's north, and should help the industry expand. The centre received a \$1.2m federal Innovation and Investment Fund grant.



Bees working Leatherwood flowers

Asian and European demand for floral honeys has boomed in recent years, with Tasmanian Manuka honey fetching \$160/kg and Leatherwood honey commanding around \$70/kg. Australian Honey Products produce 25% of Tasmania's prized Leatherwood honey and receive weekly visits from overseas importers eager to take whatever they can secure - but supplies are limited.

Article submitted by Graeme Smith, from The Weekend Australian, 31 Oct 2015



My favourite honey
Leatherwood, mmmmmmm



Lindsay Bourke, owner of Australian Honey Products at Mt Roland near Sheffield, Tasmania with a nice small frame of Leatherwood honey. 70% of Tasmania's total honey production is now from Leatherwood sources.

Photos: https://www.google.com.au/search?q=leatherwood+honey&espv=2&biw=658&bih=778&tbn=isch&imgil=c5ph0-w1114pIM%253A%253BMyFd2detTyH3dM%253Bhttps%25253A%25252F%25252Fwww.eurogrocer.com%25252F1641-p-Premium-Natural-Honey.html&source=iu&pf=m&fir=c5ph0-w1114pIM%253A%252CMYFd2detTyH3dM%252C_&usg=__bLYoL7ChSPfIIIV0Nxxs16fkn-c%3D&ved=0CD8QyjdqFQoTCOiLnNzJhMkCFvVhpgod4_0Arw&ei=ljdBVujyEeXDmQXj-4P4Cg#imgrc=c5ph0-w1114pIM%3A&usg=__bLYoL7ChSPfIIIV0Nxxs16fkn-c%3D

Note the changed Xmas Lunch venue!!

Xmas Lunch with the Club

Vale Hotel, 12:30 Sunday Dec 6

222 Ross River Road, Aitkenvale

Confirm your attendance with Secretary Carla K.

cke00786@bigpond.net.au

Hives wanted to Buy

50 European bee hives wanted !!!

We received a request from Paul Marsh on behalf of the Central Qld Beekeepers Association to let him know if any members know where they can get a supply of 40-50 new hives for their members.

Contact: Paul paul@bee2u.com.au

Native bee hive wanted to Buy

Douglas Schafer recently purchased 180 acres on the Woodstock Giru road out from Townsville and wants to purchase a native bee hive for Christmas. Any contacts or advice you can share would be greatly appreciated.

Contact: Douglas at fityatools@bigpond.com

Gold Coast Amateur Beekeepers Society Field Day - by Ray B

It was a great pleasure being able to attend my first Gold Coast Amateur Beekeepers Society Annual Field Day which was held on 25 Oct 2015. As well as numerous shows and other PR events on their calendar, the club also hosts a "Field Day", a bee-version of an agricultural field day. It was a gold-coin entry to an all-day event starting at 8:30am with a welcome by the President and an opening speech by the local Federal member, Karen Andrews. This was followed by a series of talks including a highly informative presentation by Dr Shona Blair on the medicinal benefits of honey. The take-home message was the multi-modal anti-bacterial activity of all raw honeys, with an additional mode for Manuka/Jelly Bush honeys. The medicinal benefits of orally taken honey is the subject of new and promising research. The second talk was by Mr John Tadman on lid and bottom board design where he strongly advocated fully meshed bottom boards for beetle control and added ventilation. It also is a prime strategy in *Varroa* control if/when it arrives in Australia. He also advocated fully closed and insulated lids which he says enhances circulation and reduces moisture build-up under the lid, important for chalkbrood control. The last talk was on SE Qld bee-friendly flora by Mr Len Arkadieff. He brought in a sample of dozens of different plants for people to see first-hand which plants to look out for. He had a strong message about the importance of high quality pollen to build up hives especially before and after a honey flow to "beef-up" the bees! Many weeds visited by bees are for pollen, not for nectar. Conversely, most trees which produce copious amounts of nectar are poor pollen producers. A diversity of flowers is therefore vital for bee health.

All up approx. 250 attended the day, down on previous years when apparently up to 400 attended. The lower attendance was attributed to a lack of media exposure this year. Personally, I loved the bee-friendly plant stand which sold tube stock of dozens of different back-yard plants, including Jelly Bush, several lavenders types, and many more. These were all prepared by a very keen member. I walked away with a bag full! Other stalls sold honey, wax, cosmetics, t-shirts and craft goods.

A highlight was the judging of honey, wax, capped frames and baking competitions. The judging was done by Peter Warhurst, ex DPI and obviously still keenly involved with bees. He certainly had his work cut out for him from 8am to 2pm with notepad and a bucket load of plastic spoons!

There were also several trade stalls, including ones by Burnett Beekeeping Supplies and Zenith Timber Industries who did a good trade. Apparently there was a second hall which was dedicated to beekeeping for beginners, but unfortunately I somehow missed that. No one was going hungry with an outdoor bbq lunch, as well as several other stalls selling snacks, tea, coffee and cakes. All up an excellent day and highly recommended for anyone travelling through the area next year towards the end of October!

Ray B



A packed hall listened to some very informative talks.



Some of the wax sculptures in the "Decorative Wax" category were pretty impressive.



Peter Warhurst, assisted by a club member was kept busy all day with judging.



Beautifully capped frames...the honey flow this spring has been quite good apparently

Prize winners and members selling some of their wares



TDBA Office holders for 2015/2016

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President: Ron Rapson ronald.i.rapson@team.telstra.com

.....
Vice President: Paul Payne trapper4812@gmail.com

.....
Secretary: Carla Kersnovske cke00786@bigpond.net.au

.....
Treasurer: Frana McKinstry franajon@gmail.com

.....
Newsletter Editor: Lindsay Trott trottlindsay@gmail.com

.....
Librarian: Jon McKinstry franajon@gmail.com

.....
Equipment Steward: Frana McKinstry franajon@gmail.com

.....
Committee Members: Dave Bowtell spanner1969@gmail.com

.....
Dave Turnbull turnbuld@bigpond.net.au
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**Club Membership Fees for 2016 are due:
now \$25/year or \$15 part year
(still the cheapest in town)**

Pay by direct debit (put your name OR hive Registration number in the reference field)

Bank details: Townsville and District Beekeepers Association Inc,

Bendigo Bank BSB: 633 000 Account: 141 466 078

Get access to discount equipment, free advice, access to bee mentors, news about nucs, swarms, hives for sale, raw honey and wax availability, a Native Bee special interest group, and a monthly meeting with tea, coffee, eats and live hive openings - what a bargain. Oh - and a monthly Newsletter too !!

Please welcome our new members and give them a hand with their questions and interest in all things Bee!

Carson C. from ???

Cristi M. from Castle Hill

John and Julie S. from Rasmussen

Chrystal and Daniel H. from Bushland Beach

Michael C from Douglas

Brett B. from Belgian Gardens

Frank W. from Moranbah

Club Shop Items- New Price List

These prices are only available to current financial members

<u>Item</u>	<u>Price \$</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Veil - cotton	15.00	
Veil - ventilated	20.00	
Jacket / Round hat	55.00	
Ventilated jacket	70.00	
Full Suit - ventilated	95.00	
Gloves	20.00	
Super - Dove tail	26.00	
Super - Treated Ply	35.00	
Lids	25.00	
Bases	20.00	
Lifting Cleats (Handles)	5.00 pair	
Spring clips	2.00	new
Hive tool (S/S)	15.00	
Hive tool (Yellow)	8.00	
Smoker	35.00	
Queen Excluder - Wire	20.00	
Queen Excluder - Plastic	6.00	
Frames - Full depth	1.50	
Foundation - Plastic	2.00	
Foundation - Wax	1.60	
Eyelets pkt 500	15.00	new
Eyelets pkt 100	3.00	new
Bee Brush - Natural bristle	10.00	
Bee Brush - Synthetic bristle	8.00	
Queen Catcher	3.00	
Frame Gripper	10.00	
Bee Feeder	1.50	
Gate valve	10.00	
Capping knife, serrated	15.00	
Comb scratcher	8.00	
Honey jars 250gm	0.65	
Honey jars 500gm	0.75	
Honey Pails 1kg	1.25	
Strainers (fit bucket)	80.00	new
TRAPS		
Apithor trap	6.00	
Silver Bullet trap	7.00	
BeetlTra bottom trap	20.00	
TK Beetle mat	6.00	
"Die Ya Bastard" trap	2.00	
Diatomaceous earth	2.00	
Booklet - Managing AFB	6.00	
Club Polo Shirts	15.00	
Full depth super	25.00	Unassembled
Lid	25.00	Unassembled
Base	20.00	Unassembled

TDBA Starter Kit -

The Perfect Gift for a budding Beekeeper

All available in Townsville:

Club Members Price Only!

Bee Jackets \$50 Hive tools \$5

Bee Brush \$7 Gloves \$20

Smokers \$35

All five items sold as a Beginners Kit \$90



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Available from: Pender Beegoods,

PMB 19, MAITLAND NSW 2320

LOTS-A-STINGS

Honey, wax, boxes, frames, plastic foundation and much more. Pollination services. Will help new members get started with bees

.Dan Donovan: Ph 0428 218 816

