

Newsletter No.4: May 2026

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- Shop details – sell swap, shop, and coffee
- Web site: <https://beesnorth.com.au/contact-us/>

Next Meeting:

Sunday 17 May

2pm start

Hermit Park State School

Use the McKimmin Rd gate

Bring a chair. Tea, coffee and nibbles available.
Free chats with experienced and novice beekeepers.

Member Profile:

Vice President Al Cooney

Previously, before becoming a Beekeeper I was in the Australian Army. I had three different trades during my service. I started out as a Petroleum operator then transitioned to become a Storeman for a short time before finding my original calling 'Aviation' supporting the Army's helicopters in a ground based roll, funny as Bees are also into aviation.

Anyway, so my military career lasted just shy of 15 yrs, I had been deployed to the Middle East twice (Iraq & Afghanistan) before I chose to leave full time service. From my exit I started driving coaches for Calypso Coaches here in Townsville where it would take a turn for the best.

My career turned into a driver to the stars. I was their entertainer coach driver for Australia. So many amazing people and so many memories were made throughout those years.

Amazing musicians from Suzi Q, Don Powell from Slade, Andy Scott from Sweet to Alice Cooper to Ice House and other international bands like Katchafire a reggae band from New Zealand. As I travelled up and down the east coast of Australia I made many friends abroad that still reach out from time to time. As the years rolled on I found myself driving for Greyhound Australia based out of Townsville. As a couple of the club members have already



heard this story I thought I'd get it out in the open and tell the world as if it hadn't done so already.

I started a shift like many others at 1am from the Townsville depot (driver change) we completed the change over and I drove north to Cairns in the darkness of the night. Two and a half hours later I pulled into Cardwell for the first stop as normal with no issues. After the short stay we departed and headed north once again. As we were almost into Edmonton a lady walked down the centre of the coach and said 'I'm on the phone to the Ambulance, I am pregnant and my waters have broken' I asked if I could take her phone and talk to the 000 operator. When I spoke, I stated that I was going to

pull into the service station at Edmonton and to send the ambulance there. On arrival and as soon as I applied the breaks I opened the door only to have her rush out to the footpath to lay on her back. As I jumped up I stole the blanket of a passenger and rushed to her side covering her. I rushed back in to grab the first aid kit and when I



returned the baby's head was already out. I continued to deliver the baby roadside prior to the ambulance arriving and whisking her off to hospital. About two weeks later I drove to Cairns to catch up with Mum and Baby only to find out she had named her 'Alana' after me.

A few years later I had to retire due to injuries that have caught up with me from the Army and my service overseas. This is where my lovely wife and my soulmate introduced me to beekeeping. We started eating anything and everything bee related then we found a young guy in the UK named Alex (YouTube search 'JustAlex') even though he was in the UK the way he spoke about his beginner journey into beekeeping means me say 'Let's do this'. From there we are a good 3-4 years into beekeeping, I've had my own hives swarm twice and caught many. I have learnt so much about bees and all the hive types but we managed to get the FlowHive because of the extraction process being easy and with less cleanup. Even though all the inspections remain the same as every other hive. I have 5 hives now and I think I will attempt to maintain that number but I guess the girls will decide for me.

Let me finish by saying this.

From a beginner to let's say an average beekeeper, I have learnt so much about bees and how they support us in every way thinkable, it's only fair we support them in doing their best to keep us alive.

Regards

Al Cooney

VP TDBAI

From the TDBAI President

April turned out to be a full month for club members, starting with a very successful trip to Charters Towers to demonstrate the Varroa Controller machine. We had 31 people attend with several taking the opportunity to travel in comfort in a bus arranged by Lou and Al. We'll make the bus option available for other regional meetings too. Sharon, Ron and Frana gave three back-to-back presentations at a local OSHC centre which was very well received, and the following week some members met with representatives from BeeSTAR, to check out an innovative hive monitoring system.

We then held a special Varroa Controller workshop and demonstration for ABC Landline, in conjunction with their visit to the Port surveillance hives, organized through DPI. The last day of the month had us conducting another presentation at Townsville South SS, this one as part of the TCC Sustainable Schools Initiative. Straight after the school presentation it was off to the Townsville Airport to do a native bee removal.



Plenty of supervision in removing the airport bees

May is also shaping up to be very busy with twelve events and meetings already scheduled.

In other news, we received advice that our club was successful in obtaining a grant from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to start our building project – we have the funds, the building plans and the quotes, but we're still working with TCC to finalise the site. Also, we have been nominated in Volunteering NQ for The Community Volunteering Program Impact Award. Winners will be announced later this month.

Minutes – March General Meeting

No minutes were taken as the March meeting time was the trip to Charters Towers. Of note, the catering by the Charters Towers Civic Club was amazing, it was worth the trip for the home-made treats and sandwiches. Unfortunately, Ron W. was unable to participate, he was stuck back at Bivouac Junction with a seized starter motor. A huge thank you to Phil for organising the venue and to the members who helped out with the prep before and during the session.



The display set up at Townsville South SS. We gave each student a solitary bee hotel too. We were gifted this beautiful painting at the end of the session.

Varroa Controller Workshops and Demo – they are Free!!!!

Meetings to display the Controller will be held in the Ingham district, the Burdekin and Innisfail/Cairns area later this year. The focus of this meeting will be a presentation on and practical demonstration of the Varroa Controller machine. Other varroa management options will also be on display. The meetings will be open to all interested people and will be promoted on Facebook, our website and via other media.

Monitoring still matters. Please continue performing your alcohol washes and drone uncapping and remember to report results through the [Bee 123 form](#). Regular monitoring is one of the most important tools we have to detect varroa early and reduce its impact when it reaches North Queensland.

Currently, in Brisbane, many beekeepers — even those actively monitoring and treating — have experienced significant hive losses due to unmanaged or feral colonies around them. Early detection will continue to help us respond quickly and protect healthy hives before infestations escalate.

Thank you all for the support, conversations, and commitment you've shown throughout my time as VDO. Keep looking after yourselves, your bees, and stay connected with each other as we continue preparing for varroa in North Queensland.

Carla Lisle (Kersnovske)



Major setback for beekeepers as varroa mite chemical resistance detected again

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-04-13/varroa-resistance-chemical-concerns/106550056>

Beekeepers are facing another major blow after resistance to amitraz, one of the two most effective chemicals used to control the destructive varroa mite, was confirmed.

Biosecurity Queensland's Varroa Mite Innovation and Resilience Initiative manager Robert Stephens said the resistant mites have been detected across south-east Queensland, including the Southern Downs, Ipswich, Logan, Brisbane, Redland Bay and the Moreton Bay region, as well as in northern New South Wales.

Mr Stephens said while the discovery was concerning, it should serve as a warning to the industry. "Beekeepers have been through a lot, and this isn't good news," he said. "But it is a wake-up call ... beekeepers need to follow best practice when managing varroa, particularly by rotating chemical treatments every time they treat."

The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) said the discovery, in south-east Queensland and northern NSW, is likely a new incursion of varroa, separate from the population first detected in New South Wales in 2022. The industry said the same populations that previously tested positive for pyrethroid resistance have also confirmed amitraz resistance.

"That's pointing towards potentially a new population of mites," said the council's chief executive Danny Le Feuvre.

Within these resistant populations, both pyrethroid (Bayvarol and Apistan) and amitraz (Apivar and Apitraz) treatments are less likely to be effective and, in some cases, complete treatment failure has been reported according to AHBIC. For the majority of beekeepers in both NSW and Queensland, treatments will continue to be effective due to the resistant populations being limited in their distribution. "To find resistance to the two most efficacious treatments is a huge blow," Mr Le Feuvre said. "Beekeepers are going to have to manage these mites with a significantly reduced toolbox."



A varroa mite, a pest that can weaken bees and make them more susceptible to pathogens, feeds on a honey bee. (Supplied: Alex Wild, University of Texas at Austin)

A new incursion?

The prospect of another incursion has alarmed the industry, particularly after the federal government recently closed [its four-year investigation into the origin of the 2022 varroa outbreak](#) without offering a conclusion on how or when the mite arrived in Australia.

"We still don't know how these mites are arriving in Australia or how to close those pathways," Mr Le Feuvre said. "That puts us at risk of even more devastating pests." AHBIC has called on the federal government to reopen the investigation.

A spokesperson for the federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry confirmed to ABC Rural that genetic tests were underway to determine if this is a new outbreak. "The Department has received a report from NSW DPIRD advising of a possible second introduction of varroa mite into Australia, involving a different chemical-resistant strain" they said.

An estimated one in four beekeepers left the industry after varroa hit in 2022, and now those who remain are under intensifying pressure — with soaring diesel prices, rising chemical resistance, extreme weather and honey prices that in some cases do not cover production costs.

Comment on this latest news from President Frana

QBA Update

Testing has confirmed that the miticide-resistant varroa mites detected in Queensland and New South Wales represent a separate incursion, unrelated to the original 2022 detection, with eradication not considered technically feasible. While no new exotic viruses have been detected in the hives tested to date, genetic analysis indicates that the AR1 (rhabdovirus) associated with these mites represents an exotic strain that is genetically distinct from the endemic AR1 virus identified in the original Newcastle population.

NOTE: this raises more questions like - Where and how did they get in? Where did they originate?

When varroa is eventually detected up here, how do we know if they will be the resistant strain or the original strain. That will impact on treatment processes.

Broken frames?

Check out this quick fix to give more life to broken frames. These brackets were purchased from Ceracell in NZ



Club Activities

A special session on the Varroa Controller machine was run on **Wednesday 29 April** in Kelso, from 10:30am till about 2pm. The purpose of this session was a presentation on and practical demonstration of the Varroa Controller machine for DPI and ABC TV Landline. It was filmed by the ABC and Rob Stephens was interviewed for a segment on the Landline program. A big shout out to Frana, Al and the Club members who helped out and attended at this special event.



Hive monitoring and management

Zac from BeeSTAR was in Townsville Wed 22 April and wanted to meet up with any beekeepers interested in hearing about their hive monitoring products

BeeSTAR (www.beestar.com.au) is built with beekeepers in mind, offering practical tools to help you better understand and manage your hives. Their technology gives you real-time insights into what's happening inside the hive—helping you track colony strength, activity, and conditions without needing to open it as often. For beekeepers, that means fewer disruptions, smarter decisions, and the ability to stay on top of hive health whether you're in the backyard or managing multiple apiaries. BeeSTAR is all about making day-to-day beekeeping more efficient, informed, and sustainable.

From the internet

Florida Beekeepers wearing the latest in fashionable ties

<https://view.flodesk.com/emails/69b465632345aece502a0b7c>

Don't try this at home kids!!!

Laurence Cutts (left), Logan Cutts (center), and Stephen Cutts (right) wear a bee beard at the Ninth Annual University of Florida Bee College.
(Photo Credit: Logan Cutts)

Oxalic acid and glycerin strips approved for Varroa treatment in Canada

This information was originally published February 20, 2026 by the Canadian Honey Council



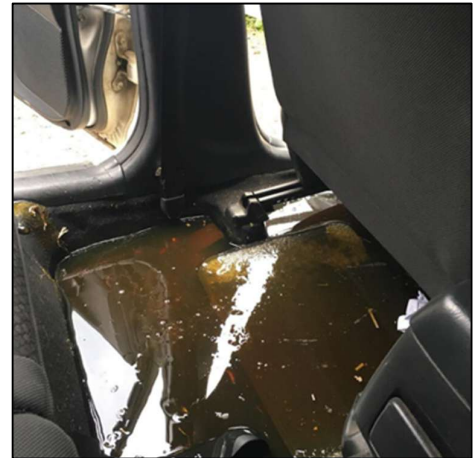
The Canadian Honey Council is pleased to announce that it has received registration approval for an important new method of treating honey bees for varroa mites.

The new method, using glycerin and cellulose strips as a delivery method for oxalic acid dihydrate crystals, was recently approved by the Canadian Pest Management Regulatory. The CHC applied for the registration as part of its long-standing tradition of supporting Canadian beekeepers with access to effective treatments and medications.

Honey spills and thrills

Received a photo from President Frana, who said "This is what you don't want to happen when carrying honey in the back of the car – note: NOT mine."

This looks suspiciously like the back seat of a car I am familiar with – no names at this stage.



Wild honeybees now officially listed as endangered in the EU

<https://theconversation.com/wild-honeybees-now-officially-listed-as-endangered-in-the-eu-267239>

"You might think honeybees are thriving – after all, the honey industry is growing and its bees are well looked after by beekeepers. But not all honeybees live in hives. Across Europe, colonies still live in the wild, nesting in tree cavities and other natural spaces, just as their ancestors did for millions of years. Now, for the first time, these wild honeybee populations have been officially categorised as endangered within the European Union. That's according to the latest update to the IUCN Red List, the world's official database of species conservation statuses..."

Heavy metal bees

"Honey bees (*Apis mellifera* L.) have been established as environmental monitors to assess the aerosol contamination of the environment in the vicinity of beehives. During their wide-ranging foraging trips, these hymenopterans catch particles in flight and while collecting nectar, pollen, or water. This study demonstrates that honeybees can be employed not only to detect major particulate matter emitters, such as mines or industrial plants, but also smaller, localized aerosol sources, such as shooting ranges.



Club Shop – now a shop, swap and stop – and sell

We will have a gazebo set up with new items on show and a coffee machine, so call in or stay on after collecting your order. A great opportunity to ask questions about your bees, or just to have a chat. We will also have a Buy Swap Sell table, not limited to beekeeping items. feel free to bring things along.

Shoppers – **log onto the website and place your order there: Accounts\Shop**

Shop opening is first Saturday of the month. Collection at other times by arrangement and when volunteers are available. Email orders will be given priority and serviced – but walk in orders may be completed if time allows. Pre-order before midnight on the preceding Thursday

Location: 3/38 Rendle St, Aitkenvale

Time: 9am – 10:30am

Reminders: membership renewal are sent by email – now \$35 p.a.

Membership fees can be made electronically to:

Townsville and District Beekeepers

BSB: 633 000

Account: 141 466 078

Please make sure you add your Surname or subscription number so that your membership can be signed off.

Welcome to our New Members

Existing Club Members are encouraged to assist/mentor our Newbees. They have joined the club to learn about bees, so even if you only have limited experience, give them a hand if you can. Invite a Newbee to your hive opening and discuss what's inside the box, let Newbees experience hive openings to become more confident, and you will learn more yourself by trying to explain what's going on in there.

When Bee Foundation

Keep up to date with the latest news and research from the When Bee Foundation which is an Australian not-for-profit charity that promotes awareness of the importance of bees for food security and raises funds for research. Their newsletter provides very informative industry updates as well as education on bees. Check out their page and subscribe to their newsletter [here](#)

Subscribe to the Bee Aware e-newsletter and stay up to date

The Bee Aware newsletter is an e-newsletter for beekeepers and growers of pollinator-reliant crops, or anyone else simply interested in beekeeping or the pollination of crops. Each newsletter contains the latest in news, research and development, as well as upcoming events relating to honey bee biosecurity and the pollination of horticultural and agricultural crops. Townsville features in Issue 52 due to the latest AHB and Varroa incursion.

<https://beeaware.org.au/subscribe-to-newsletter/>

Native Bee Newsletter – join the group and check out some great info

The CROSS-POLLINATOR – Newsletter of the Australian Native Bee Association

Original articles, new information and news from the world of native bees. The Association has branches in Sydney, Brisbane, Wide Bay and Gladstone, but no Townsville branch?? Are there enough interested native beekeepers to get one “flying”?

Check out these sites:

<https://australiannativebee.org.au/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Australian.Native.Bee.Association/>

<https://www.instagram.com/australiannativebeeassociation/>

Editor needs your input – why not tell me your story? Club Member Profile Questionnaire

Send stories and pictures to :

Lindsay Trott: trottllindsay@gmail.com Or: Lesley Barr <lesleybarr@y7mail.com>

Name /HIN /Suburb /Native or/and European bees /No of hives/area of hive locations? Type of hives? / Type of foundation? /Beetle protection?

Year commenced beekeeping?

Who was your mentor?

Who is involved in your household?

Is anyone allergic/sensitive to stings?

What has been your biggest success? / failure?/ mistake?/ biggest lesson?

What would you do differently if you had to start beekeeping again after a disaster like fire/ AFB /Varroa /cyclone

Do you sell/barter/give away honey?

How much honey does your average hive produce?

Do you make any other products from your hives?

Do you volunteer for the Club at Open days, markets, school events, public displays?

Would you like to participate? Any stories you would like to tell? Attach photo please?

That's it!!!!

Just fill it out and send it to me, and you will be a rock star in the Monthly Newsletter.

Please provide more than just a one word answer!! Cheers The Ed.

Blooper of the Month?

Send me your blooper for totally anonymous recognition- honestly

TDBAI Committee is involved in many activities – can you lend a hand?

Contact any of the Committee Members to find out how to get involved

TDBAI Office holders and Committee for 2025/2026

Position	Name	Contact
President	Frana McKinstry	president@beesnorth.com.au
Vice President	Al Cooney	
Secretary	Doris Newitt	secretary@beesnorth.com.au
Treasurer	Louise Clark	treasurer@beesnorth.com.au
Event Co-Ordinator	vacant	
Biosecurity Awareness Officer	John Carr	
Newsletter Editor	Lindsay Trott	editor@beesnorth.com.au
Assistant Editor	Lesley Barr	
Membership Officer	Frana McKinstry	membership@beesnorth.com.au
Shop Managers	Ron Newitt & Mark Finn	shop@beesnorth.com.au
Shop Assistant	N/A	
Librarian	Beryl Smart	
Website	Toni McMahon	
Native Bees Representative	Jon McKinstry	
Committee 1	Maria Finn	
Committee 2	Greg Skellern	
Committee 3	Carla Kersnovske	
Committee 4	Blake Steward	
Committee 5	Liz Hennig	
Committee 6	Sharon Durham	
Committee 7	Tatiana Stefanos	