

Townsville & District **BEEKEEPERS**

<https://beesnorth.com.au>

ASSOCIATION INC



Newsletter No.7: August 2026

In this Issue:

- Native hive heaven with Darryl
- Randy Oliver visit with Frana
- Pt 2 QBA Conference summary from Blake
- Presidents Report
- Pests, diseases, problems – and solutions
- Club activities roundup
- Internet and other News articles - Monthly Blooper
- Club info and links
- Shop details – sell swap, shop, and coffee
- Web site: <https://beesnorth.com.au/contact-us/>

Next Meeting:

Sunday 9 August

9:30am start

Herbert River RSL

Varroa Controller Workshop
Bus from Townsville is available

Club Member Darryl R. goes native!

Story and photos from Darryl

Check out Darryl's front yard and magnificent hive collection. Looks like he is real "bee whisperer". An impressive array of species here.

My name is Darryl, age 65, and I live in Kelso. I have been a Native Bee enthusiast and Club member for the past 2 1/2 years, collecting bees and being mentored by a Native beekeeper friend with years of experience. The mentoring helped my path to understanding and working with these bees much smoother and saved me some of the pain of losing hives. In this time I have collected together via purchasing, undergoing educutions, splitting and finding hives in danger of loss in different locations. I have accumulated approximately 50 hives comprising of *T. hockingsi*, *A. australis*, *A. cassiae*, *T. davenporti*, *T. carbonaria* and *T. clypearis* in a mixture of logs and boxes.

Initially, I constructed boxes from 25mm plywood and have now progressed to 38mm hardwood for all future boxes, with an interest in using a form of aerated concrete at some time. I have moved toward establishing gardens of suitable plants as a food source for the bees to cover throughout the year. I'm now at the stage of propagating some hives for sale in the coming years as I have reached the holding capacity of my home at this time (see front yard photo above!). The biggest problem faced so far is being impatient and wanting to split / educt before the hive is full and ready (all good learnings).

I haven't been able to attend many Club meetings or events to date as I'm still working, but hope to be able to when retired. Look forward to producing and learning more as I get my hives in order, and attending some future meetings where I can encourage others to become enthusiasts in the Townsville area.

Regards TDBAI Member, Darryl R.

Ed: Darryl, you appear to have the magic touch with our native bees, and some of these are notoriously finicky and slow to settle in to new homes. Most (if not all) of these are endemic to Australia, some are tiny (Australia's smallest bee I suspect) and some are quite rare and localised in distribution. *T. davenporti* was only newly described as recently as 2004.

Great work Darryl, and I hope you can make it to some meetings to inspire and mentor more native fanciers. Your order list for hives will be rapidly filled.



Notes from a visit and discussion with Randy Oliver from <https://scientificbeekeeping.com/>

Frana McKinstry

I was lucky enough to meet Randy Oliver on the 18th of June at his place in Grass Valley, CA.

When I first arrived, he showed a screening system designed to allow returning field bees, while preventing robbing bees entering a hive. He described his method of gluing a metal disc to the bee thorax (100 bees) which are removed by a magnet inside the entrance thus giving a count of the field bees able to find their way through the entry maze. Very much a work in progress.

Notes that I made while talking to Randy included his comment that: It is better and easier to keep the mite load down than to bring it down once it is high. He stated that “the people who are advising beekeepers on how to manage mites know shit about the varroa mite”.

Oxalic acid mixed one-to-one with glycerin in his homemade strips is the most common treatment that Randy uses; he sees no need to use commercial strips. After trying three methods of delivering oxalic acid, he has concluded that dribbling is better than vaporising.

A very high efficacy mite kill can be indicative of resistance building up in the mites, whereas a lower efficacy means the mites are less likely to become resistant. This is counter-intuitive, but his testing supports it.

Formic acid is fine to use at higher temperatures such as those we have in Townsville. We need to read the article that Randy has written on applying formic acid in hot weather and to consider the “flash-off” response in the hive to the initial application of formic acid. Randy is trialling the NASSENHEIDER system for the delivery of formic acid inside a beehive, Beequip in NZ sells this, and our club has been approached by the supplier in Germany.

When I asked Randy what he thought about another system, he replied, “Don’t ask me what I think; I will only tell you what I know, which is backed up by data.” Following this, Randy expressed doubt about the varroa incoming load described at the recent QBA conference. They said that in some locations 100 mites per hour were entering the hive, but only 300 mites per day were being located on the sticky mats. We need to check the source of this information and do ongoing testing to see if that is indeed the case.

Spending time with Randy was incredibly informative. He showed me experiments he was doing on different acids affecting bees. He had formic acid, oxalic acid, and a third acid (I forget which) on miniature strips. He put a small number of bees into cups with these strips and measured both the death rate of the bees and the mite fall-off rate. So far, citric acid killed all the bees; that is the only result I particularly remember. Oxalic acid still seems to be better. He was also taking dead bees and putting them into a solution that showed how much oxalic acid remained on the bees’ bodies after they had been in contact with it.

He showed me another experiment on the evaporation rate of formic acid versus oxalic acid in a hive. This involved setting up two containers at the same temperature in a sealed environment and recording the evaporation rate of each. The formic acid was evaporating, he thinks, more slowly than the oxalic acid, but he is not sure of the final results yet; he will write a paper on it eventually.

We also had a chat about Norroa. He said that yes, it can be effective, but it is quite expensive overall and probably not cost-effective on a large scale. We talked about the Terra Vera system, which I checked out when in Albuquerque NM. There is a separate article on that.

I asked him about his thoughts on the Varroa controller machine. He said that yes, it works, but it is also expensive and very time-consuming, requiring removal of brood frames, treating them, and returning them to the hive. As we know already, it is expensive for a backyard beekeeper and extremely time-consuming and costly for a commercial beekeeper, given the number of machines that would be required.

Randy said that when he first experienced varroa, he ended up losing all his hives and had to start from scratch. He now runs hives where he gets an incredibly low varroa mite count on any given day and is still testing various methods of mite control. He breeds his queens for very hygienic traits, gentleness, and high honey production – the trifecta. His bees were so quiet that when we opened a hive and did a mite wash, we just wore shorts and T-shirts, with no protective gear whatsoever. Only one mite came out of that wash, and it was six days into a formic acid trial.



One of the things that Randy said is that people believe you will easily kill the queen when you use formic acid. He says that when he applies the acid, there is no problem with the queen at all. What concerns him is that some people remove the queen in order to “protect” her, apply the formic acid, and then put the queen back. This often leads to the assumption that the formic acid killed the queen. However, Randy suggests that may not be the case, because he has observed bees balling a queen in that situation. My input was that it is possible the formic acid scent upsets the overall pheromone balance such that the bees see the queen as an interloper and do away with her for some other reason.

When talking with Randy about how to do initial inspections to check for the presence of varroa, he is disinclined to do drone uncapping. Instead, he recommends sugar dusting. That is not the same as a sugar shake. For sugar dusting, you take a strainer and powdered sugar and sift it lightly over the bees across the frames inside the hive. This still causes varroa to drop off, if they are present, and they land on the sticky mat.

When checking colonies for general brood health and for culture checks using alcohol or detergent washes, he takes bees from brood frames near the brood nest but not from frames containing actual open brood and very young larvae, which would give a skewed reading. I don’t recall the reasoning but it made sense at the time.

I recommend that members visit his website <https://scientificbeekeeping.com/> and read his articles – he is extremely knowledgeable and very easy to talk to.

President Frana interviewed Randy Oliver on her recent trip to the USA Grass Valley CA, 18 June 2026

I have not used synthetic treatments for 25 years. That is proof of concept. We run a commercial almond operation every year, and it is completely doable if you understand how to do it. That is why I published *Scientific Beekeeping* and related practical material.

Now, coming back to oxalic acid: I would not treat hives pre-emptively. I would first monitor using sugar dusting. You only need to test a couple of hives across the apiary. That will tell you when mites are actually present and when brood is involved. At that point, you can start preparing to prevent the mite population from building.

People often misunderstand resistance development. They think that a low level of a treatment in a hive will breed resistance. That is entirely wrong. In fact, low-efficacy exposure generally does ****not**** breed resistance. Resistance is usually driven by high-efficacy treatments.



There is almost always a fitness cost associated with resistance. That means the genes or alleles that give a mite resistance also reduce its ability to reproduce or compete in some way. However, coumaphos was an exception. With coumaphos, there appeared to be no fitness cost. As a result, within about three years, resistant mites completely outbred the susceptible mites. Even after beekeepers stopped using it, the resistance remained in the population. Ten years later, mites were still resistant.

Fluvalinate was different. If beekeepers stopped using it for several years, non-resistant mites could outcompete the resistant ones again. Amitraz also appears to have had a strong fitness cost, which may explain why it took around 25 years for resistance to become a major problem. But now, in some operations, up to 95% of the mites are resistant, and amitraz is no longer effective.

In Australia, it seems you may have skipped ahead 25 years. In the United States, the industry relied heavily on amitraz for a long time, including off-label use before it was officially registered. After watching fluvalinate and coumaphos fail, I decided to get off that treadmill and move toward natural treatments. I expected amitraz to fail quickly, but it lasted much longer than I expected.

In many other countries, including parts of South America and Europe, beekeepers no longer take synthetic miticides seriously. They rely much more on natural treatments, such as formic acid, oxalic acid, and thymol. These are generally harder for mites to develop resistance to, although I would never bet against evolution. You should still rotate treatments.

The key point is this: ****efficacy drives resistance****. If a treatment kills 95–99% of mites, it strongly selects for the few resistant mites that survive. Those survivors reproduce and become the dominant population. The higher the efficacy, the faster resistance can develop. This is counterintuitive, but it is important. One way to avoid resistance is to maintain a refuge population of non-resistant mites. Those non-resistant mites can outbreed the resistant mites, especially when resistance carries a fitness cost.

Ultimately, the long-term solution is selective breeding. Treatments are useful, but breeding bees that can handle mites is the end goal.

If Australia detects deformed wing virus, then you may want to consider importing resistant stock rather than spending many years developing your own breeding program. We have been working on our program for around 11 years. If you can avoid deformed wing

virus for now, that buys you valuable time. I am surprised that deformed wing virus has not been detected in Australia. It is a common insect virus throughout much of the world. If Australia has had multiple mite incursions and none of them carried deformed wing virus, that does not quite add up.

There is also discussion that the amitraz-resistant mites in Australia may have come from a different incursion than the original 2022 detection. The original incursion would not likely have developed resistance that quickly. There may even have been a third incursion, with mites first appearing in one part of Queensland and then spreading through New South Wales soon after. If deformed wing virus is eventually found, Australia may need to reconsider its strategy and potentially bring in resistant queens to save years of breeding work.

Regarding RNA-based treatments such as NoRoAH, I was involved in the early planning discussions back in 2008. At that time, the big question was how to get the RNA into the mites. The breakthrough was discovering that it could be delivered through nurse bees by feeding it to them. The nurse bees then pass it through the brood food pathway, exposing the mites.

A commercial beekeeper friend of mine has done testing with these products and says they do work. However, they are expensive. In Australia, I understand the cost is about \$20 per sachet, with two sachets used per hive. When varroa first becomes established, you are likely to experience an initial wave of high mite pressure. Once the feral colony population crashes, that initial reinvasion pressure may decrease. During that invasion period, regular treatment will be important.

Colonies can tolerate repeated oxalic acid treatments, especially by vapor or extended-release methods. However, I would not recommend repeated dribble treatments.

We use oxalic acid dribble in our nucleus colonies every spring. We create an induced brood break by starting nucs with queen cells. On day 18 after making the nucs, we dribble them, rain or shine. We have tracked the results and have not seen adverse effects when it is done properly.

For application, we use a garden sprayer set to deliver a consistent dose. It is simple and efficient.

Some people say oxalic acid dribble is too hard on bees or that it forms crystals in the hive. But vapor also forms crystals; in fact, vapor coats the bees with oxalic crystals. There may be debate about crystal size or distribution, but the claim that dribble is uniquely problematic needs to be examined carefully.

We buy formic acid by the 55-gallon drum and oxalic acid by the pallet, so we are very familiar with applying acids to hives.

I am not a fan of oxalic acid vaporization for commercial use. It requires more equipment, takes longer, costs more, and requires batteries, power cords, or generators. There are also safety concerns. You do not want to inhale oxalic acid vapor. If you inhale it once, you will not want to do it again.

Vaporization can be effective during winter if the colony is broodless. But if there is brood present, it may take seven or eight treatments to bring mite counts down. In that situation, it is not very efficient.

In Australia, where many colonies do not experience a natural brood break, I would not rely heavily on vaporization.

One useful strategy would be to split colonies every year to create an induced brood break. Once you have a broodless period, you can use oxalic acid to bring mite levels close to zero. That gives the colony a clean starting point and makes future control much easier. The goal is to start with mite counts as close to zero as possible and then keep them low.

Mite population growth becomes increasingly difficult to control as numbers rise. When your mite wash count is one or two, the colony may be gaining only around 10 mites per day. But when the mite wash count reaches 20, the colony may be gaining 300 to 400 mites per day. At that point, control becomes much harder.

This is what many people do not understand. You do not want mite levels to rise in the first place. It is much easier to keep mite numbers low than to bring them down after they have built up.

The main principle is simple: keep mite counts low from the beginning, rather than trying to rescue colonies after mite levels become high.

Part 2 of the QBA Conference 2026 Report by Blake Steward

TDBAI supported Clubbie Blake Steward at the recent conference, and he was extremely diligent and thorough at reporting back to us with his summary of the proceedings. The Newsletter will carry 2 Episodes of Blake's summaries. Here is Part 2

Honeybee Pesticide-Parasite interactions – Varroa Destructor

Jeff Williams, a Canadian researcher now based in the southeastern United States, shared insights from his global work in beekeeping and bee health. He spoke about the strong beekeeping cultures he experienced in places like Switzerland and the value of international collaboration. Williams introduced his research on neonicotinoid insecticides, explaining that they negatively affect honeybee queens by reducing survival, mating success, and reproductive quality. His studies showed that queens exposed to neonics mated with fewer drones and had impaired sperm counts, which may contribute to the queen-failure issues reported worldwide. He also noted unexpected physiological changes, such as enlarged ovaries in exposed queens, though the biological significance remains unclear. Williams emphasised that queen problems may not be the root cause but rather a symptom of broader stressors. He highlighted the importance of understanding brood presence throughout the year, especially in warmer climates where brood rarely stops. He encouraged beekeepers to stay closely connected to their colonies and adapt management practices accordingly. Williams

also described the benefits of the U.S. land-grant university system and the need for stronger research and extension capacity in Australia. His overall message stressed the need for continued research collaboration and improved varroa-management strategies to address global bee health challenges.

AUS Honey Market

Jodie Goldsworthy provided an overview of the Australian honey market, emphasising the financial pressures beekeepers face alongside the challenges of varroa. She explained that Australia produces roughly 20,000 tonnes of honey while about one-third of the market is now filled by cheaper imported honey, which sets the retail floor price and forces major supermarkets to follow. Imported honey, often from countries linked to adulteration, creates a widening price gap that Australian producers cannot compete with at the low end. She highlighted that adulterated honey is now the world's most commonly adulterated food, with technology spreading to new exporting countries such as Vietnam and Thailand. Despite this, Australian consumers consistently rate local honey higher, showing they value quality, provenance, and trust over price alone. The speaker stressed the importance of premiumisation, storytelling, and brand building to lift returns for beekeepers. She also noted that large-scale marketing campaigns are extremely costly, meaning industry efforts must be strategic and targeted. The session closed with optimism, pointing to population growth, cultural shifts, and rising consumer interest in food origin as strong long-term opportunities for Australian honey.

Tracking Varroa virus shifts in Australia.

John Roberts explained that as varroa becomes established in Australia, bee viruses will shift and become a major driver of colony losses alongside the mite itself. He outlined Australia's current virus landscape, noting four common viruses and confirming that deformed wing virus (DWV) is still not present in the country. Early surveillance shows varroa has already introduced some varroa-associated viruses, signalling that Australia's virus profile is beginning to change. Roberts highlighted that varroa amplifies viruses by injecting them directly into bees, which increases viral loads and can select for more harmful strains. He also noted that Australia has more than forty lesser-known or uncharacterised viruses, any of which could behave unpredictably once interacting with varroa. He stressed the need for continuous national virus surveillance, as early detection is essential for managing new incursions and understanding how Australia's virus landscape evolves.

Biosecurity QLD VMIRI update

Queensland's current varroa situation, noting rapid spread across twenty-four local government areas and the first detection in Central Queensland, alongside confirmed chemical-resistant mites. He highlighted a sharp rise in beekeeper registrations over the past decade, but early signs now show plateauing numbers and increasing cancellations as some beekeepers consider leaving the industry. Surveillance through B123 reporting and departmental fieldwork has revealed high rates of positive detections, with 75–80% of recent submissions showing mites. The department is also managing resistance monitoring, virus investigations, sentinel hive programs, and new AI-assisted surveillance tools. Several industry-led projects have been funded through the Community Bee Innovation Fund, supporting education, biotechnical management, and pollination preparedness. Legislative updates, engagement programs, and behavioural research continue to guide Queensland's transition into long-term varroa management.

How to Avoid Resistance to Synthetic Varroa

Cooper Schouten explained how varroa mite resistance develops, why it is spreading quickly in Australia, and why treatment failure is now widespread across multiple states. He noted that resistance can arise through several mechanisms, reduced pesticide penetration, behavioural avoidance, metabolic breakdown, and genetic mutations, making the issue complex and highly variable between regions and seasons. Mapping shows resistance to both major chemical groups across NSW, Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia, meaning beekeepers cannot rely on any single treatment. Schouten emphasised that resistance is not black-and-white: some chemicals may still work in certain locations or years, and resistance can sometimes decline if a product is removed from use. He stressed the importance of integrated pest management, including organic treatments, chemical rotation, biotechnical methods, and frequent monitoring. He also encouraged beekeepers to use resistance testing, either laboratory testing or simple field assays, before investing in treatments, to avoid costly failures.

Testing Virus transmission pathways in imported bee semen and honey

The speaker presented results from two AgriFutures projects examining the risk of deformed wing virus (DWV) entering Australia through imported honey and imported bee semen. Testing showed that raw, unprocessed imported honey often contains detectable DWV, while processed honey did not, and although transmission to bees was generally low, one trial showed a small possibility of infection. Overall, the risk from honey appears low but not zero, especially if varroa is present to amplify any introduced virus. The second project tested DWV-positive imported semen by inseminating Australian queens in quarantine, finding that many queens became infected but no transmission to brood was detected in either experiment. These results suggest that while queen infection can occur, vertical transmission may be less frequent than previously thought, meaning the overall risk from semen importation may be lower than expected. The speaker emphasised the need for strong virus surveillance, careful sourcing of genetics, and maintaining strict biosecurity measures as varroa continues to reshape Australia's virus landscape.

Various Testing of Oxalic Acid treatments

Liz Frost outlined the three main oxalic acid-based varroa treatments, dribble, vaporisation, and oxalic-glycerine strips, and explained how each works differently depending on brood levels. She emphasised that dribble and vaporisation only kill mites on adult bees, making them far more effective during brood breaks, while strips can continue working as newly emerged bees carry mites out of capped cells. Frost shared case studies showing that oxalic dribble can reduce mite loads dramatically in broodless colonies but is far

less effective when brood is present, requiring repeated applications. She stressed the importance of correct PPE and safe handling, as oxalic acid is corrosive. Vaporisers vary widely in design, and beekeepers must consider hive setup, airflow, and fire safety when choosing equipment. Homemade oxalic strips showed inconsistent results, with chewing rates, hive temperature, and nectar flow all affecting performance. Frost highlighted that multiple oxalic treatments are likely to become essential tools as resistance spreads, especially in warm climates with continuous brood. She closed by demonstrating how the varroa management tool helps beekeepers choose suitable treatments when resistance, brood levels, and honey supers limit their options.

ED: Great work Blake, you can be the next Club Secretary with these note taking skills.

President's Report

Given this newsletter has so much reading, a comprehensive report will be held over till next month – suffice to say that the club is hosting activities at the rate of two a week, always looking for assistance from members.

Happy Beekeeping
Frana

General meeting – June 2026

Meeting overview

The meeting was held in an informal format due to the absence of several key committee members, but still attracted strong participation. Twenty-six people attended, including four visitors, and eight members sent apologies.

Guest speaker and topic

Guest speaker Jon McKinstry presented on the management of Varroa mite, focusing on both chemical and non-chemical control methods. His extensive experience and enthusiasm for bee health were evident throughout the session.

Chemical control: vapour treatment

Jon concentrated on vapour-based chemical treatment (e.g. oxalic acid vaporisation) as one of the options for Varroa control, emphasising strict adherence to product labels and directions. He highlighted the importance of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)—including properly fitted respirators, chemical-resistant gloves and eye protection—and demonstrated masks and other PPE that are suitable for vapour treatments, along with examples that are not adequate. Practical tips were provided on maintaining and storing PPE to ensure ongoing effectiveness and safety.

Non-chemical / equipment-based control

As an example of a non-chemical approach, Jon introduced the Varroa Controller, a device designed to treat capped brood using controlled heat and humidity rather than miticides. Thermal or heat-based Varroa tools are one of several recognised chemical-free strategies alongside brood breaks and drone brood removal. Jon discussed options for housing the controller so that club members could access it, underlining the potential for shared equipment to support integrated pest management.

Brood transport and warming box

Jon explained how brood frames can be safely transported from individual apiaries to the Varroa Controller using a specially designed warming box. The box incorporates a heat pad to maintain a stable temperature and a humidifier to prevent capped brood from drying out during transport and treatment. Thermal treatments must hold brood within a narrow temperature and humidity range to avoid damage to developing bees while targeting mites. The unit is powered by a standard battery power tool, making it practical and portable for beekeepers.

Questions and informal discussion

Jon concluded his talk with a question-and-answer session, allowing clarification of aspects of both chemical vapour treatments and the Varroa Controller. Following the formal presentation and discussion, the group adjourned for afternoon tea and continued informal conversations about Varroa management and potential shared use of the controller.

Check out where Varroa has spread to in Qld

Varroa surveillance map:

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/.../varr.../surveillance-map>

Bee123 reporting:

<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/e7fb92e833744be7b2b32d25981779bf?portalUrl=https://qportal.information.qld.gov.au/arcgis>

Varroa information:

<https://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/varroa>

Support is also available through Biosecurity Queensland and local beekeeping clubs.

Where to go for help or advice about Varroa

For assistance and questions, you can reach the VMIRI team at: varroa@dpi.qld.gov.au or bee.biosecurity@dpi.qld.gov.au

Two of Queensland's former VDOs have taken on new roles within the VMIRI program and are also available to contact:

Sarah Hickman – Engagement Officer 0436 848 913 sarah.hickman@dpi.qld.gov.au

Tonia Johnson – Bee Biosecurity Officer 0439 269 892 tonia.johnson@dpi.qld.gov.au

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)

Club Activities

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

Meetings to display the Controller will be held by TDBAI in the Ingham and Burdekin districts later this year. The focus of these meetings is a presentation on and practical demonstration of the Varroa Controller machine. Other varroa management options will also be on display. The meetings are open to all interested people.

Next Demo:

Tuesday 15 September at Home Hill SHS

These workshops are free of charge and include refreshments. All members, friends and any interested people are encouraged to attend, so spread the word to the wider community. Further information will follow.

Blooper of the Month, or year?

News from the internet and around the hives

Ed: **A late update** on Ray's queen saga.

Ray loses another queen on the GC - total now 10 queens down.



Newsletter readers would remember from last month's woeful story from Clubbie Ray Berkelmans on the GC. Normally Ray is a clever bloke and can solve most bee problems and many electronic ones too. This time the bees have him over a barrel. Ray detected a drop of at least 5 kg in the hive weight in a short space of time on one of his recently requeened hives (Ray runs his own designed and built wifi connected hive scale communication system).

When he went out to check things that afternoon he found the swarm (and his new queen!!) way up a 10m gum tree (see pic on right) in the backyard, but they were gone by next morning. Make that another queen in the lost/died/absconded tally – **Now at 9.**

One of his few successful re-queening events last month turned out to be a swarmer, and you guessed it, they took off. Ray got the swarm back in a hive box (see left) and wacked a queen excluder under the bottom of the box and above the base, thus keeping the queen in and allowing the workers in and out. But no, the swarm queen turned out to be a dud and it's a queenless hive – again. Make that a **tally of 10 queens** - either duds, unmated, gone missing, swarmed or just refusing to lay fertilised eggs.



Good news for almond growers, or the best way to spread Varroa to WA?

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-07-26/bee-sent-from-wa-to-varroa-mite-ravaged-sa-almond-pollination/106959770?utm_source=abc_news_app&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_campaign=abc_news_app&utm_content=mail

You can see the story in the link above, about the varroa free hives being trucked from WA to SA for the almond pollination period.

My big question is: where are these hives going after they have been exposed to varroa in SA?? Back to WA???? I understand they will not be returning to WA

“Three prime movers humming with mite-free bees have crossed the South Australian border and another two trucks will make the journey in the coming days.

The bees were purchased by a commercial almond grower in a deal understood to be worth more than \$2.3 million.

A dozen WA beekeepers delivered their bees to collection points in Donnybrook, Gingin and Esperance last week, fetching \$350 per hive.”



A truck brimming with bees on its way to a collection point. Road trains will take the bees to an almond farm. (Supplied: Steve Sammut)

Is *Grevillea* toxic to bees?

<https://jerry-coleby-williams.net/2025/06/18/do-grevillea-poison-bees/>

Jerry Coleby-Williams (Gardening Australia) is always a source of surprising new information about plants and critters that inhabit them. Recently he answered a viewer's question about the possibility of *Grevillea* plants being toxic to bees due to cyanide naturally produced in the plant.

“*Grevillea* flower buds, seed pods and seeds are cyanogenic, that is, they conduct sap capable of manufacturing hydrogen cyanide on exposure to air. This toxin is a defence against grazing, nibbling pests which expose themselves to sap. Some pests have adapted to consuming certain levels of cyanide. Others accumulate it so they in turn become toxic and unpalatable to predators.”

“*Grevillea robusta* has the only records of harmful effects to humans through contact dermatitis and herbivores through cyanogenic glycosides by eating young leaves. Honeybees don't rank highly amongst pollinators in their ability to metabolise toxins and they are exposed to a myriad of them through foraging in megadiverse Australian bushland.

Bees come into contact with pollen and nectar, not sap.

Honeybees with a healthy gut flora have two lines of protection: their own metabolism and that of their gut flora.

Nectar and pollen are rewards that entice pollinators. If honeybees or other pollinators of *Grevillea robusta*, including megabats, marsupials, birds and stingless bees – exhibited poisoning by consuming pollen and nectar, we would already know.”

Young bee drover shows some real dedication

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-07-26/sophia-croker-the-bee-drover-beekeeping-vs-varroa-mite/106953802>

23 year old Sophia Croker runs 1,000 or more hives with her father all over the rural regions of Australia. Interesting story on how she keeps her enthusiasm and energy going for an industry that is being punished by cheap honey imports, rising fuel costs, Varroa, and any number of other obstacles – all for the love of bees.



RNAi Biopesticides research – University of the Sunshine Coast

<mailto:varroa@dpi.qld.gov.au>

Exciting new research is underway at the University of the Sunshine Coast, supported by a [Community Bee Innovation Fund grant](#) from the Department of Primary Industries. Professor Robert Harvey (pictured) and Dr Roy Barkan are in the early stages of researching unique RNAi biopesticides with the possibility of developing a “knock down” treatment, designed to directly kill mites while maintaining hive safety (different from Norroa™).

RNAi Biopesticides interfere with the expression of genes necessary for particular biological functions in a pest insect. As natural products, in the treatment of Varroa mite, the risk of developing resistance, like that found in traditional miticides is incredibly low.



Depending on the product's mode of action, these products are also less likely to have negative impacts on bee health and honey quality.
While Norroa™ and other RNAi treatments are not currently available in Australia, this product research predicts a possible innovative future for sustainable managed beekeeping.

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.

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

Location: 3/38 Rendle St, Aitkenvale

Time: 9am – 10:30am

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 Thursday before shop opening time.

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 and photos

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/>

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	vacant	
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	

Editor needs your input – why not tell me your story?

Club Member Profile Questionnaire

Send stories and pictures to :

Lindsay Trott: trottlindsay@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