



# Beekeepers Association of the ACT

Newsletter of the Beekeepers Association of the  
Australian Capital Territory Incorporated

Meetings of our Association are conducted on the third Thursday of every month (except December) at the Yarralumla Primary School Hall, 24 Loftus Street, YARRALUMLA, ACT 2600

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[www.actbeekeepers.asn.au](http://www.actbeekeepers.asn.au)

<https://www.facebook.com/BeekeepersAssociationoftheACT>

July 2017

**Monthly meeting: 20 July 2017, Yarralumla Primary School at 7:30pm**

## AGENDA

- 1930 Introduction & Welcome: President (Cormac Farrell)
- 1935 Beeginners Corner
- 1945 Presentation: Warre Hives with  
Warren Clendenning & Cormac Farrell
- 2030 Networking (light supper)
- 2100 Meeting close

**Phil Andrews Secretary (0408 539 579)**

### President's Report

Biosecurity update-  
National bee pest  
surveillance program

Introducing your  
committee: Cormac  
Farrell

Honey harvesting: a  
new guide

Bee Buzz box

Native bee news

Magazine review:  
National Geographic

Vale: Cec Mercer

Feedback?

Links to our websites

Classifieds

## President's Report

Dear Members,

**This month brings to a close our series of presentations on the different hive types that are commonly used in Australia, with a presentation on beekeeping with the Warre hive.** We have been trying to provide an overview of hive designs in the lead-up to spring, which is generally your best time to fill a new hive with a colony. I personally really like the Warre design and philosophy, and have had several of these hives.

The discussion will be led by one of our long-standing members, Warren Clendenning, who is one of our 'go to' people for advice on natural beekeeping. Members will now have had at least a brief introduction to the various approaches and hive types, perfect if you are looking to get your first hive or even add a few new ones to your apiary.

Training courses are a major focus of activity by the Association, and we are about to release expressions of interest for providers covering a range of training courses in preparation for our spring and summer training period. We now have the Jerrabomberra Wetlands apiary fully set up and ready to expand the range of courses that we can offer to members and members of the public

interested in beekeeping. If there is a beekeeping instructor that you would like to learn from, feel free to pass this on to them and encourage them to propose a course.

Of course, for most (if not all) of us beekeeping is a lifelong learning experience, and our hive management team are planning on hosting a series of apiary sessions in spring and summer to keep the learning process going.

These will be held on the Saturday or Sunday after our regular meeting at Jerrabomberra Wetlands. This will be a great opportunity to learn advanced beekeeping techniques like the biosecurity checks for the Sentinel Hives, as well as a chance to connect with other members. We are still sorting out the details, but it is a great idea – keep an eye on the newsletter and the forum for more details closer to spring.

**Regards,**

**Cormac Farrell, President**



## **Biosecurity update: National bee pest surveillance program**

The National Bee Pest Surveillance Program is an early warning system to detect new incursions of exotic bee pests and pest bees.

The program involves a range of surveillance methods conducted at locations considered to be of most likely entry of bee pests and pest bees throughout Australia.

There are two major objectives:

1. Support for the export of bees to countries sensitive to exotic bee pests and bee diseases
2. Exotic bee pest and pest bee early warning

To learn more about the program, visit the [Plant Health Australia website](#) and download the summary or watch the video.

From the [Plant Health Australia website](#)

# Introducing your committee

## A chance to get to know your committee members

### Cormac Farrell

I joined ACT Beekeepers Association about five years ago I think, and was really impressed with the welcoming atmosphere. I have had an interest in bees for a long time, but as a botanist focused on native ecosystem conservation, mostly this revolved around native bees.

Honeybees were a recent thing, prompted by the failure of fruit-set in our home apricots. My partner and I figured that a hive in the backyard would fix this problem (it did) and we might get a few jars of honey for ourselves and friends. Our first harvest was a very funny debacle. We had completely underestimated the amount of honey that you get out of a full box, we just had a dozen jars or so. Shortly afterwards every Tupperware container in the kitchen was full of honey, and we had to start using saucepans. We still laugh about it now.

The number of colonies that I manage has steadily grown, and I now have a couple of Langstroths and a Warre in the backyard, as well as several more Langstroths and Ware hives throughout the suburbs that I manage for friends. I provide hives for pollination for a small boutique orchard, and get 'paid' in the most amazing gourmet varieties of apples, pears and berries. I love to cook so having these is a lot of fun, if you haven't discovered heritage fruit varieties you really are missing out!

My highest profile apiary is the most recent one - what started as a crazy idea and a few tentative emails has led to me becoming the head beekeeper for Parliament. I still can't quite believe that we got that one over the line, but I will happily take the opportunity to promote beekeeping!



I really like honey for cooking and just to eat (Ironbark is my favourite) but I also make use of other bee products like pollen and propolis. I do a fair bit of judo and jujitsu, around 6-7 sessions a week as well as weights and cardio, which tends to result in a lot of wear and tear on the hands and feet.

Propolis tincture is a lifesaver for treating this - it seals cuts and abrasions with an antibiotic film that still sticks to you under strapping tape. Very handy.



As for work, I am the senior environmental scientist in the Canberra office of an engineering and infrastructure design firm, where I am the national lead for environmental management on our large Defence projects.

I am also the technical lead for bushfire protection, which sees me all over the country supporting the main design teams with specialist advice. I really enjoy the way my job takes me to places that you would not normally visit, and I try to make a point of sampling the honey from each region.

We really are super lucky here - an incredible range of flavours and textures from our native flora. As it happens, I get to make sure that our rehabilitation plantings are pollinator-friendly with a range of species that happen to be excellent honey producers 😊

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## **Honey harvesting: a new guide by Dr. Doug Somerville and Bill Winner**

**Bill Winner, Capilano Beekeeper Services Manager and Doug Somerville, DPI Technical Specialist Honey Bees, are co-authors of the new *Honey harvesting and extracting guide*.**

Beekeepers can get practical information on harvesting and extracting honey with the new publication, produced by NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Tocal College, and launched at the NSW Apiarists' Association Conference in May.

DPI Technical Specialist Honey Bees and co-author Dr Doug Somerville said the guide [Honey harvesting and extracting](#) informs beekeepers of the best management practices to harvest and extract honey to ensure they get the highest quality product.

“This practical guide will assist beekeepers whether they are small-scale recreational or commercial operators,” Dr Somerville said. “Important information on the best way to handle honey, including food quality, food safety and compliance with legislation are covered in the guide.”

“Beekeepers are advised of the best way to remove honey from the hive so that it retains its natural goodness and the highest quality product is produced.”

**“With care, honey can be removed with minimal or no contamination.” says Dr Somerville.**

ACT beekeepers may remember Dr Somerville from his presentations at our Field Day. While this year might not be the best one to launch a new guide on harvesting and extracting honey, the guide is timely for setting up for the new season.

*(From the NSW Dept of Primary Industries Press Release 23 May 2017)*



## **Bee Buzz Box - Hive management report**

### **Hive Buddy working bee 22 July**

**Spring might appear an eternity away, but hive buddies are gearing up for a real buzz.**

If it is not wet or too cold on the Sunday after this month's meeting, we will be doing general maintenance around the apiary such as branding hive gear, moving top bar hives onto heavy concrete pavers, weeding, and assembling and painting nucleus boxes to give ourselves that early start.

Bring along some afternoon tea. This is a great chance to meet up with other keen 'budding' beekeepers. Help us plan for that opening up of hives in early spring, which is guaranteed to present challenges and many surprises

#### ***Where and when:***

**Jerrabomberra Wetlands Apiary**

**2 Dairy Road FYSHWICK**

**Sunday 23 July**

**12 noon to 4 pm**

In the past we have simply headed out to the apiary to fix a problem or simply to tackle the myriad tasks to be done.

There is no formal structure, no calendar and many things are done at very short notice. We don't muck around and work on the simple principle that you're welcome if you can make it and wield a hive tool.

We will text or email all hive buddies to postpone the working bee if the weather turns sour.

## Queen orders

Queen ordering offered at the last meeting has closed. If you want queens by mid-spring order yourself now by looking up the ads in [The Australasian Beekeeper](#) or by asking around.

We have ordered 10 'hygienic strain' Italian queens for the apiary requeening, and a standing order for a further 30 for club members. We will be emailing out direct deposit payment details once we know exactly how much they will cost and give you a rough delivery time.

Most of the queens will end up in nucs pending evaluation of the performance of existing colonies:

If you have ordered one of the queens the following golden rules apply:

- queen acceptance and performance of ordered queens are not guaranteed
- payment will be up front to secure order (TBA)
- queens need to be collected at designated central location (TBA, probably at the club apiary)
- orders are often delayed due to unseasonal weather
- order shortfalls in the unlikely event of queens not arriving alive may mean some orders will need adjusting down.



**Queening double three frame nuc at JWA 11 November 2016:** close-fitting hive mats went on top and there are separate entrances at each end

If you would like to sign up as a hive buddy, please see Alan or Christine at our monthly meetings or email us:

**Alan Wade**  
**Hive Manager**

[alanlynnewade@me.com](mailto:alanlynnewade@me.com)

0417 775 201

**Christine Joannides**  
**Assistant Hive Manager**

[christine.joannides@gmail.com](mailto:christine.joannides@gmail.com)

0412 214 632

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## Native Bee News

### Native Bee Home Construction Workshop Saturday 9 September 1:00pm

While the young native bees are still growing and not quite ready to emerge from their winter nests, it is time for us to get ready preparing new homes for the 17/18 season. We had some success last season at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands apiary with wooden blocks containing drilled holes, so we have an expanded program this season.

There are essentially three types of nests that can be made:

1. Wood blocks or tree branch segments with deep drilled holes (3-10mm diameter, 100-150mm deep) – good for resin bees.
2. Clusters of stems made from bamboo, lantana, fennel stem, paper straws, or similar material (100-200mm lengths) – good for reed bees.
3. Holes in soil/clay blocks (mud bricks with starter holes) – good for blue-banded bees.

The plan is to spend an afternoon putting together some homes using whatever material we can gather, and to share ideas on design and potential locations. Club members might like to try putting one or two bee homes in their gardens.

This pdf provides [information and design ideas](#) – current thinking seems to be that big multi-style homes are less attractive to native bees than the smaller one-style homes – and smaller ones are easier to make!

The workshop will be held in my back garden in Yarralumla. There will be more information to follow on what to bring etc. Please RSVP ([peterabbott@inet.net.au](mailto:peterabbott@inet.net.au)) if you would like to come.



***Native bee homes can be a stylish addition to any garden***



## Native Bee News cont'd

### NSW Native Bee Workshops by Megan Halcroft

The Upper Shoalhaven Landcare council is hosting three native bee and pollinator workshops at the end of July. Workshops will be held at Queanbeyan on Friday 28 July, at Braidwood on Saturday 29 July and at Michelago on Sunday 30 July. **These events are free but places are limited.**

The workshops will cover:

Morning: The importance of pollinators; Plant /bee co-evolution; The role of honey bees' in food security; The pollinator crisis; Alternative pollinators

Afternoon: Building bee hotels

RSVP: by 25 July to [actlandcare@act.gov.au](mailto:actlandcare@act.gov.au)

**Peter Abbott**

0421 227 315

[peterabbott@inet.net.au](mailto:peterabbott@inet.net.au)

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### Magazine Review: *Australian Geographic* July-August 2017

Who doesn't love the [Australian Geographic](#)? It is always a great read, and there is even more reason to get hold of this month's edition. It's obvious from the great photo on the front cover that this month's feature is about bees.

Insect photographer, James Dorey, has been driving around Australia for three and a half months, covering 26,000kms to photograph native bees. There are some amazing pictures of bees in his featured article *The Secret Life of Bees*, as well as other interesting and varied articles you've come to expect from this unique magazine.



James Dorey has given us a captivating glimpse of our diverse native bee population. He found bees almost everywhere he went, from the Alps to the deserts around Lake Eyre, at the tropical Top End and around the wheat fields of Western Australia. He hasn't neglected the European honeybee either, with a wonderful close up of a drone's eyes. My only complaint about this article is that it doesn't show more of his pictures!

**Well done, James Dorey and Australian Geographic.**



## Vale: in memory of Cec Mercer

Lyn Shiels

Cec Mercer passed from this life peacefully in his sleep on Monday 26 June.

He was 98 years old and had lived an active full life. Cec began beekeeping in Deniliquin and Wangaratta in the 1950s and moved to Canberra in 1964. For a time he tried to manage his bees in Victoria but eventually sold them and thought his beekeeping days were over. However a Greek man asked him to care for his three hives when he went to Greece, so he was back in beekeeping. Gradually he built up his hives and became a small commercial beekeeper although he always said he was a hobbyist. He described these times as his "glory years".

Cec was made a Life Member of the Association in recognition of his contributions to beekeeping in the ACT and to the Association. Since beginning keeping bees in the late 1940s, Cec had built up a great fund of knowledge and experience which he was always willing to share with others. He was especially interested in helping new or inexperienced beekeepers. Many tyros gained much experience and knowledge early in their beekeeping by accompanying him to his hives and helping with the various tasks.

*One of my abiding memories of Cec at the Canberra Show was his assurances to children who had bought a small wax mold that if they put it under their pillow the bees would sing them to sleep.*

About four years ago Cec's family helped him move to Ballina where he lived his remaining years in an aged care hostel on the Richmond River. It wasn't like being independent but he was content. He enjoyed good health, retained his interest in bees and many other topics, enjoyed his walks along the river bank and enjoyed his food which he once told me "just appears in front of you".

Many people will remember him with affection for his generosity with his time and knowledge, his honesty and loyalty to his friends and his indomitable spirit when times are tough. A gentle peaceful death for a fine man, a true gentleman who was loved and respected by many in beekeeping, his church and local communities.

## **Newsletter content and feedback**

**Have your say about what you'd like to see reported, contribute pictures and articles, or just give feedback!**

**Go to our website below, select 'Forums' on the left-hand side of the menu, and then 'Members forum'. Respond to the topic: Newsletter articles.**

**We'd love to hear from you!**

**Your editors: Juli and Stuart**

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### **on line**

**Our website: [www.actbeekeepers.asn.au](http://www.actbeekeepers.asn.au)**

It's all there in one handy location: information, news, forums and links. Register to take part in the forum discussions, ask a question or provide advice.

**Have you taken a look?**

**More photos and information from our [forum](#) at the [website](#) or [Facebook](#)**

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