



Opportunities
to improve access
to floral resources
for beekeepers on
public lands

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Public land access is important for commercial beekeepers in all Australian states. It underpins essential pollination services for **Australian agriculture** and the nation's food security. It provides much of the Australian honey crop and it provides a safe haven for short-stay honey bees that allows them to be 'conditioned' and strengthened ahead of crop pollination.

Over time, changes in the tenure of public land and public land management have decreased **beekeeper access** to essential floral resources and the quality of the remaining resource. Recent bushfires have added to this challenge. Floral resource access has been identified by the industry's as its number one priority.



Snapshot of beekeeping in Australia¹



Commercial beekeepers

1800



Commercial hives

530k



Production from public forests

39%



Production from private forests

39%



Tonnes average honey production per year

20k



In honey crop and beeswax production

\$147m

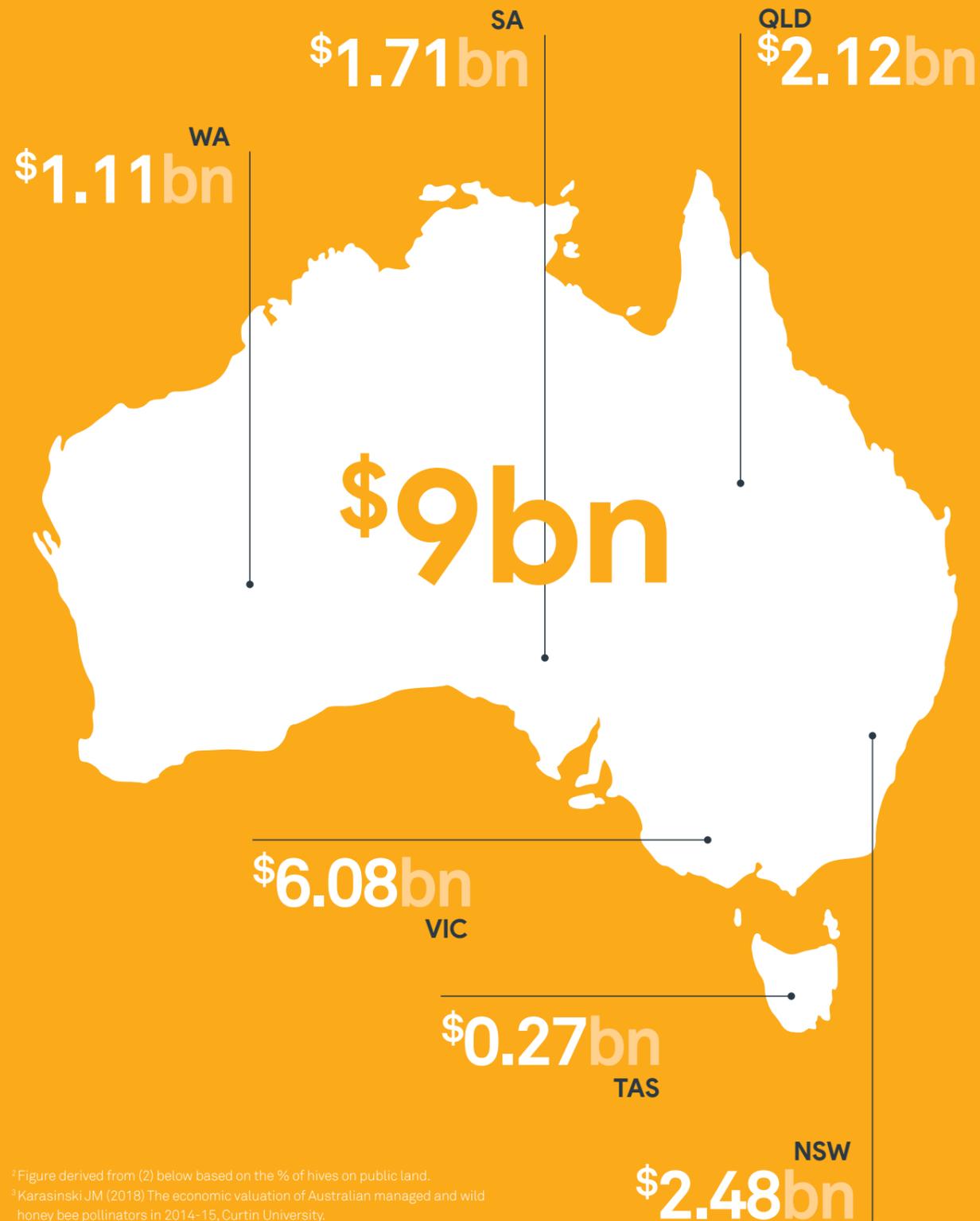


Annual contribution of pollination to economy

\$14.2b

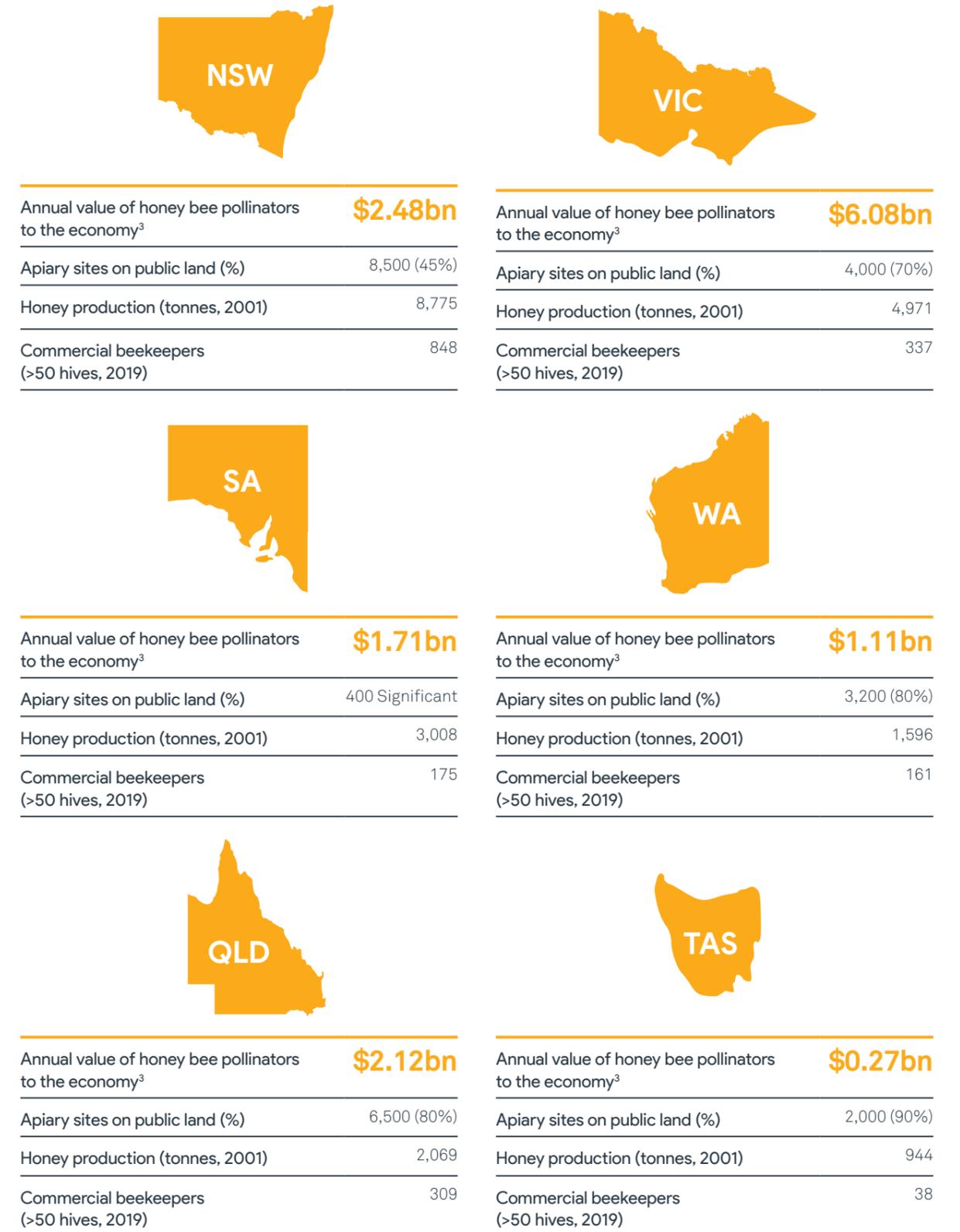
Data sourced from Michael Clarke and Danny Fe Feuvre, Size and Scope of the Australian Honey Bee and Pollination Industry (AgriFutures Australia Project No. PRJ-012405)

Access to public lands contributes about **\$9bn** in annual value to the economy from pollination services²



² Figure derived from (2) below based on the % of hives on public land.
³ Karasinski JM (2018) The economic valuation of Australian managed and wild honey bee pollinators in 2014-15, Curtin University.

Bee keeping across Australia



Securing the future of the honey bee and pollination industry through improved access to public lands.

There are several opportunities to improve land management practices on public lands and underpin the sustainability of bee keeping and pollination services across Australia.

- 1 Access to public:** Land State government approaches in Tasmania and Victoria actively encourage the expansion of the honey bee industry on public lands. The industry believes there is an opportunity to replicate these approaches in a nationally consistent way.
- 2 Market for transfer of apiary sites:** Best practice incorporates the transfer of apiary sites between beekeepers for a profit combined with a more secure tenure for public land sites such as through a lease or licence.
- 3 Security of tenure:** Apiary permits can be easily revoked, and more secure forms of tenure can provide certainty for beekeepers. A licence granted in perpetuity for example, and tradeable, would be a capital asset. The Gippsland Forest Apiary Plan with Special Management Zones for apiary is an example of tenure best practice. These zones are gazetted for the exclusive use of beekeepers in perpetuity.
- 4 Removal of sunset clauses:** Sunset clauses create uncertainty and are a disincentive to invest, produce honey and deliver pollination services. The industry is likely to be better served where sunset clauses on public land apiary sites are limited and managed through flexible renewals.
- 5 Flexible site renewal period:** Different renewal periods are required by beekeepers typically in the range of 6 months to more than five years. Short renewal periods for example work for highly ephemeral areas where flora may bloom for a short period. A balance needs to be struck between current permit holders having first right of refusal on permits at renewal and ensuring a small number of beekeepers do not dominate a resource.
- 6 Cost recovery basis for fees:** Fees should be set at a modest level that recognises the honey bee industry's contribution to pollination and food security. Fees are best determined on a transparent cost recovery basis.
- 7 Equitable support for access tracks:** The maintenance of public land access tracks is an important issue in all states. There is an opportunity for greater sharing of responsibility for access tracks, recognising the contribution such tracks make to weed management and firefighting. One approach is for land management agencies to take responsibility for main routes with beekeepers assisting with spur tracks.

The opportunities across the States to support access to public lands

NSW	National framework to allow beekeeping in all suitable public land tenures Access to sites across the National Parks estate
VIC	Special Management Zone status for all public land sites Bee friendly forest management – harvesting strategies and 'cool' controlled burns Access track maintenance
SA	Bee friendly whole of State public land access approach
WA	Beekeeper conservation zones Clear guidelines for native title Better access
QLD	A retraction of the excluding sunset clause in the Nature Conservation Act 1992. Retention of sites in National Parks a critical priority ⁴ Research on the importance of different vegetation classes across the State to the viability of beekeeping
TAS	Examine forestry clear felling and burning (sterilises the land and stops leatherwood regrowth) Access to areas that were previously part of the forestry estate

Status of support for beekeeping on public lands

	NSW	VIC	SA	WA	QLD	TAS
Support for access to public land	○	○	○	○	○	○
Market for transfer of apiary sites	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
Support for security of tenure on public land sites	○	○ (Gippsland only)	Nil	Nil	Nil	○→ (for existing sites)
Absence of sunset clauses	✓	✓	✓	Unlikely	✗	✓
Flexible site renewal period	Partial 5 years	Yes 1-10 years	No Annual	Partial Annual, multi-year	Partial 0.5 to 5 years	Partial 10 years
Cost recovery basis for fees	✓	✓	✓	Partial	✓	✓
Support for access tracks	None	○	None	None	○	○

KEY ○ Good ○ Moderate ○ Limited ○ Low ○ Very Low

⁴Nationally, the highest and most immediate priority is change to the QLD Nature Conservation Act 1992 which stipulates the exclusion of all apiary activities on land managed by the QLD Parks & Wildlife Service by 31 December 2024.



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