

SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS STRENGTHEN SMALL-SCALE HONEY PRODUCERS IN AUSTRALIA

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BEN MOORE

BEN'S BEES, AUSTRALIA

With a focus on natural beekeeping practices, I am committed to educating my community about the importance of supporting local beekeepers through the marketing and sale of local honey, generating positive social networks, and the sharing of knowledge.

Central to my beekeeping philosophy is the environment, family, healthy living, the promotion of small business, community, and a “buy local” ethos.



UNIQUE AUSTRALIAN REMOTENESS

Australia is the sixth largest country in the world.

Over 91% of Australia, is covered by native vegetation (mainly desert landscapes with native plants such as saltbush, albeit sparsely).

For tens of thousands of years, the lives and sense of cultural identity of Indigenous Australians were inextricably linked to the land, its forms, flora and fauna.

More than 80% of Australians live within 100 kilometres of the coast.

Only 6% of the Australian landmass is arable.



AUSTRALIAN BIODIVERSITY

Australia is one of the most biologically diverse countries on the planet.

It is home to **more than one million species of plants and animals**, many of which are found nowhere else in the world.

About 85% of flowering plants, 84% of mammals, more than 45% of birds, and 89% of inshore, freshwater fish are unique to Australia.

Included in this biodiversity are **over 1700 species of native Australian bee!**



Australia Post, Native Bee stamp series, illustrations by Kevin Stead, 2019

AUSTRALIAN REMOTENESS

“Around 10% of Australia’s population lives in rural or remote areas. These comparatively small communities – largely farmers and Indigenous land managers – currently steward most of the country...

There are many good news stories of sustainable agriculture around Australia, however our ongoing biodiversity crisis requires transformative policy change and federal leadership.

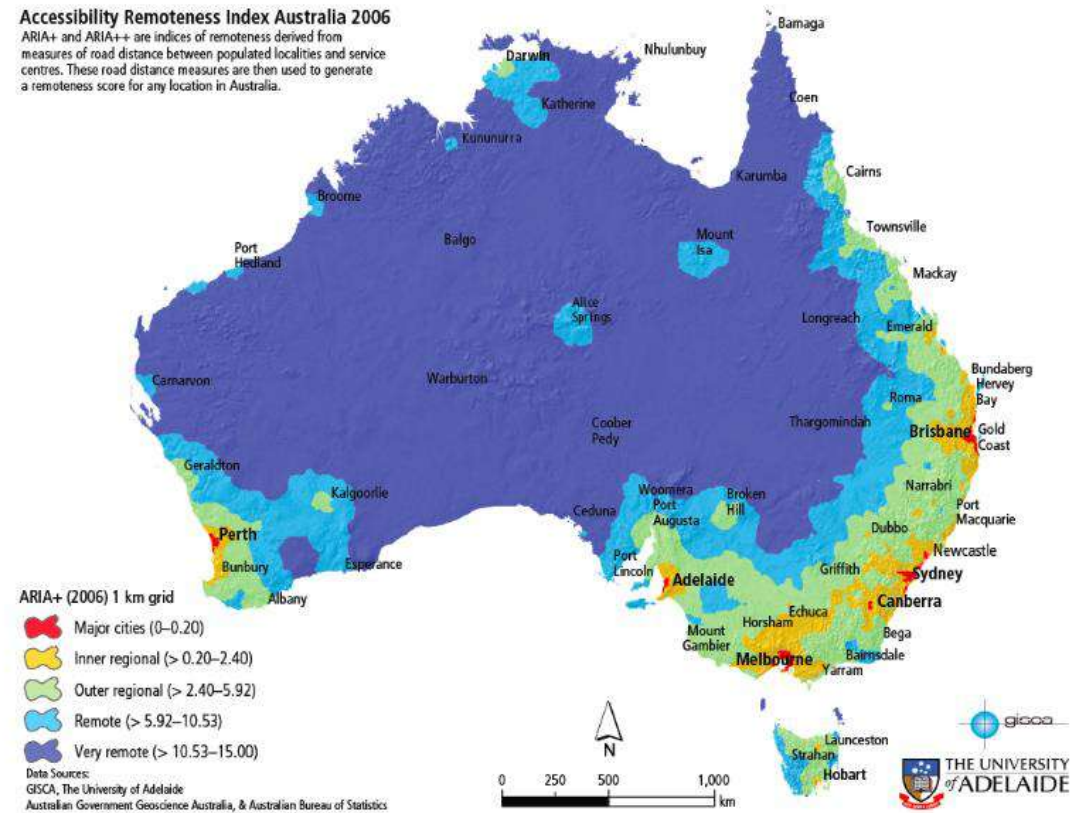
One bold first step would be addressing the current paradox of sustainable agriculture in Australia.”

Jacqueline Williams, Research Fellow & Lecturer, School of Environmental and Rural Science, University of New England, ‘Australia urgently needs real sustainable agriculture policy’ *The Conversation* 2019

Map of Australia showing areas of varying geographic remoteness

Accessibility Remoteness Index Australia 2006

ARIA+ and ARIA++ are indices of remoteness derived from measures of road distance between populated localities and service centres. These road distance measures are then used to generate a remoteness score for any location in Australia.



The University of Adelaide, Australian Government, Australian Institute of Family Studies website
<https://aifs.gov.au/publications/families-regional-rural-and-remote-australia/figure1>

CITY TO COUNTRY: STAYING IN TOUCH

“As urban centres grow, Australians are becoming increasingly disconnected with the life on farms and stations, but **social media is slowly changing that trend.**”

Nowadays platforms like Facebook and Instagram are playing an increasingly important role educating city dwellers about where their food comes from, paddock to plate.”

Fowler, Courtney. 'The digital farmer: Using social media to bridge the urban-rural divide in Australian agriculture.' ABC NEWS Rural 7 May 2018



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THE FACTS: BEEKEEPING IN AUSTRALIA

‘The money's in honey... if you're a big bee’

FarmOnline (2017)

- Beekeepers in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales are doing better than other states in Australia
- While beekeeping businesses have a cash income average of \$70,400, many small beekeeping businesses (less than 200 hives) are running at a loss
- The honeybee industry is an important sector of the Australian economy, with the gross value of production estimated at \$101 million in 2014–15
- “The industry survey found that the majority of beekeeping income came from honey sales (85 per cent of cash receipts) in 2014–15.” - David Galeano (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences)



Image: FarmOnline website

TOPIC: SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS STRENGTHEN SMALL-SCALE HONEY PRODUCERS IN AUSTRALIA

The use of social media in apiculture for

1. **knowledge** sharing
2. generating **profit**
3. **community** building



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WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media are “Websites and applications that enable users to **create and share content** or to participate in social networking.” (Oxford Dictionary)

Social networking is “The use of dedicated websites and applications **to interact with other users, or to find people with similar interests to one's own.**” (Oxford Dictionary)

Social media influences consumer behaviour, opinions and attitudes.

Honey producers can use social media as a tool to connect and build strong relationships with their customers.



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TELL YOUR STORY

Be yourself. Stories make us human. Stories connect us.

“People work for good causes because of a deep-rooted, heartfelt desire to change the world, regardless of the salary. **That same story can attract your customers.**”

Once we start telling our stories, we start building connections. Stories, you see, are what bind us together, as humans, as individuals, as a community. Share your story, and when you need supporters, sales or even volunteers, they’ll be there, ready and willing to help you and your cause. Share your “why”, and others will find their “why”, too.”

Anthill website, “Here are 5 ways how digital marketing will help your social enterprise change the world”, 2018



KEEP IT REAL

Sharing the pickles (and prickles!) of beekeeping can be informative, make your audience laugh, and be a welcome change from overt commercial promotion.

Just remember: your story is about *bees* and *honey*, don't lose sight of your cause and your product!



THE MOST EFFECTIVE SOCIAL PLATFORMS

In Australia:

1. **Facebook** – 15 million Monthly Active Australian Users
2. **YouTube** – 15 million Unique Australian Visitors per month
3. **Instagram** – 9 million Monthly Active Australian Users (FB/ Instagram data)



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FACEBOOK

PLATFORM: Online social media and social networking service in a diary-like format

BEN'S BEES STATS

1. Assisting sales of honey: 10/10
 2. Promoting business services (rehoming of bees; bee hives etc): 8/10
 3. Connecting to other beekeepers/ professional network building: 10/10
 4. Educating the public: 10/10
 5. Increasing interest in my small business/brand: 7/10
- Facebook seems to be the best platform for my business to sell products
 - I can see that my customer base is mostly in Victoria and Australia.



YOU TUBE

PLATFORM: Video-sharing website

BEN'S BEES STATS

1. Assisting sales of honey: 5/10
 2. Promoting business services (rehoming of bees; bee hives etc): 5/10
 3. Connecting to other beekeepers/ professional network building: 9/10
 4. Educating the public: 9/10
 5. Increasing interest in my small business/brand: 5/10
- I watch YouTube for information.
 - I don't advertise my business via this channel, however I see its potential for translating practical information and promotion (documentary-like format) and will utilise it in the future.



INSTAGRAM

PLATFORM: Photo and video-sharing social networking service

BEN'S BEES STATS

1. Assisting sales of honey: 7/10
 2. Promoting business services (rehoming of bees; bee hives etc): 6/10
 3. Connecting to other beekeepers/ professional network building: 10/10
 4. Educating the public: 8/10
 5. Increasing interest in my small business/brand: 7/10
- Instagram has many followers, and allows me to reach a broad audience through interesting images and stories.
 - The word-limit for this platform can be limiting



Instagram

KNOWLEDGE, PROFIT, COMMUNITY

How does social media strengthen small-scale honey producers in Australia?

KNOWLEDGE

Social media can share information around beekeeping practices, environmental issues related to apiary, and methods of selling and marketing honey, especially for those in remote areas

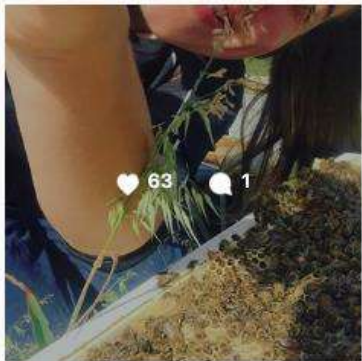
PROFIT

Social media can connect small-scale honey producers to a wide, and often dispersed customer base (due to Australia's geography, both as a country and internationally). It can be used to promote individual honey products. Social media can boost your brand and create accessible links to your online store.

COMMUNITY

Social media can build a supportive community for your beekeeping and honey business. It can connect small-scale honey producers to other beekeepers from "hard-to-reach" locales, in their own country and overseas.

SPREAD THE WORD: BUILDING A BEE COMMUNITY



AUSTRALIAN REMOTENESS: HONEY MAP (BEE THE CURE)

“Australia’s whole honey industry is under threat from imported honey....

...We have been able to create this community honey map which connects consumers to beekeepers.

We suggest consumers purchase local raw honey direct from beekeepers.

The solution to the global bee crisis is beautiful. According to the United Nations Small Scale localised farming can feed the world. Growing food small scale means we can grow food without poisons. If honeybees can thrive so will the human race. Bees teach us we can all win if we cooperate....

...Honey is a sacred and should be treated as such. Selling directly enables the beekeeper to sell at retail prices. Hopefully this adds security for the beekeeper and enables the local community to experience local raw honey.” Simon Mulvany, Bee The Cure



CASE STUDY: TASMANIAN LEATHERWOOD HONEY

- Native to Australia
- From the pristine and remote wilderness on the western side of Tasmania, where the Roaring Forties roll through, bringing constant moisture to the Leatherwood trees (or *Eucryphia lucida*).
- “bioactive” compounds
- “slightly liquid, [with] a smooth creamy texture”, with “balsamic scents which develop quickly into clean fresh notes of citrus fruits and white flowers” and a flavour that is “lightly spicy” in its finish
- high antioxidant quality
- prebiotics for stomach health
- wound-healing properties (comparable to Manuka)



THE CAPILANO CRISIS: CRUSADING FOR LOCAL AND ETHICAL HONEY PRODUCTION

In 2018, Australia's biggest honey supplier was accused of selling "fake" honey that was not 100% pure, but mixed with other substances.

The crisis gave the small-scale local honey industry momentum, and strengthened the community of local honey producers in Australia.



AUSTRALIAN “BUY LOCAL” ETHOS

Nine out of ten Australian shoppers aged 14 years and over are more likely to **buy Australian-made products** than ones made offshore. (Ray Morgan research, 2019)

“The primary reason why eating local is good for the planet is the reduction in energy resources required for transport and storage. Generally, the further a food has travelled from “paddock to plate”, the greater its impact on the environment. This is because of fuel used in transport and increased greenhouse gas emissions used for refrigerated storage.”

(Karen Charlton, ‘10 tips for eating locally and cutting the energy used to produce your food’, SBS, 2016)

**Australia is a vast and largely remote country –
Look after the environment and buy from your
friendly beekeeper next door!**



SOCIAL MEDIA SUCSESSES: BEN'S BEES

- Inclusion in local farmer's markets and "buy local" events
- Ben's Bees International Exchange Program
- Presentation at apiary conferences
- Workshops (community level, across Australia)
- Media appearances (national television, radio and newspaper)
- Successful sale of Ben's Bees Honey (online store, markets, independent retailers, "honesty" system on property)
- Supportive global network of colleagues

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Podcast (2020)
- Publication (2020)



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TIPS: USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE LOCAL HONEY

- Keep it personal, tell your story
- Know WHY your honey is special and make that known
- Make friends – a network helps spread the word about your business and generate honey sales
- Stay active – contribute to your chosen online platforms every few days to maintain interest and generate a following. This is important when you run a small business.
- Have genuine reasons for doing what you do! Beekeeping is not about money, it's about passion, but making a living from honey comes from your sincere interest in bees and beekeeping
- Build a community – help your friends and colleagues succeed by promoting their skills, knowledge, and, of course, their honey!

