

## **Bob McDonald OAM, 1931-2020**

Recently, after a short illness, Bob McDonald passed away peacefully in Castlemaine, surrounded by his large family. We are all very saddened by Bob's death but feel immensely comforted that he lived a good life, helped a lot of people and worked hard to advance the beekeeping industry.

We feel grateful to have been part of his life and will continue to try and live up to his example of living a full life with service to others.

Bob leaves behind a great legacy in beekeeping, having fallen in love with bees at the age of 16 and created a successful, commercial beekeeping business. He dedicated himself to this craft for 72 years, and by extension to the industry and people who shared his passion.

While all this work in beekeeping was happening, Bob was also:

- A dedicated husband of 60 years to Eileen.
- A father to six children.
- A grandfather to 19 grandchildren.
- A great grandfather to four great grandchildren.
- A Scout master for more than 21 years.

Family was always important to Bob, including his four siblings and a single mother who raised them through the difficult Depression years and subsequently as a war widow.

There have been a number of things written about Bob and his service to beekeeping, most recently in a piece in the December 2020 Australian Bee Journal. In retrospect, this was a timely interview and we thank both the Victorian Apiarists Association and John Kennedy for organising this.

Bob is a great loss to the beekeeping industry. He was not a tall man but his contribution was that of a giant and his dedication to the development of our industry was outstanding. He fought on behalf of the rank-and-file beekeeper with whom he so closely identified. He reached out to local beekeeping groups, teaching the basics of beekeeping, through to regional and state representation and on to national roles.

Bob had a long-term belief in the strength of the beekeeping industry and what can be achieved collectively. He observed the influence other industries had been able to exert economically and politically and leaves a lasting legacy in building that influence within Australian beekeeping. Some of these achievements include:

- 38+ years of national beekeeping representation in groups and subcommittees of the Australian Honey Board, the Federal Council of Apiarists Associations Australia, National Council of Crop Pollinators and the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council. Bob's service to the national industry only ended in 2004 during a board upheaval culminating in his departure as an executive. While this event was a lasting disappointment for Bob, the service that he and Eileen performed in bringing Apimondia to Australia was ultimately recognised 10 years later. Bob remained an interested observer in industry developments and freely offered his insights to anyone who asked.
- He was an integral part of the team that developed AHBIC after the AHB was shut down by government.

- He was central to winning the right to host the international Apimondia for Australia in 2007.
- The inaugural President of the Crop Pollination Association, a group created to represent, educate and develop beekeepers and others in the eastern states of Australia on the provision of professional crop pollination services. Bob was also part of the team to form the NCPA which provided the national representation of pollinators.
- A past President of the Victorian Apiarists Association and on the Executive for many years as well as numerous subcommittees.
- For many years in conjunction with others from the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Apiarists Association he was central to efforts to improve the access to the public land resource base throughout Victoria. Thanks to them all and the Victorian government we now have one of the best systems for access to floral resources for beekeeping in Australia.
- In conjunction with the Victorian Agriculture department Apiary Team of the time he was critical in establishing the first sentinel hives in Victoria for what was to eventually become part of our first point of defence against varroa, the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program.
- He was an integral part of the team that developed the Central Victorian Apiarists Association in the mid-1960s, a regional group that gave voice to many beekeepers throughout central and western Victoria.
- A critical part of the Bendigo Branch of the VAA that has been organising and running one of the longest running annual beekeeping field days in Australia, for 40+ years.
- With Eileen, constantly opening their house to fellow beekeepers, who sat at our kitchen table to talk about bees, beekeeping and the industry. Bob always remembered the difficulties he had in learning the craft of beekeeping and was determined to make it easier for those who followed him.
- His monthly column, Seasonal Notes, in the Australian Bee Journal was testament to his philosophy that all beekeepers should be equipped with tips and knowledge to find honey.
- He provided encouragement and support to the many beekeepers who started with him as employees but then ventured out on their own as full-time commercial beekeepers.
- Recipient of the Goodacre Award for meritorious service to the Honey Bee industry.
- Recipient of the Order of Australia Medal for service to the Honey Bee industry.
- Joint recipient with Eileen of the AHBIC Award of Excellence for winning the Apimondia Congress for Australia.

Bob will be greatly missed and always remain in our hearts. Professionally, throughout the whole beekeeping community in Australia, we should also remember his contribution towards shaping the future of our industry.

His legacy is not only the actual changes that he was part of, but his example in how much can be achieved by these bodies and through the strength of collective action and unity.

He was a very good man.

Thanks Bob. By Peter McDonald, on behalf of the McDonald family.

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