

2026 Board Elections – Candidate Profiles

Peter Bell

Beekeeping experience

I started my interest in bees at the age of 14 working part time then full time for Cloakes Honey. In 1979 I moved up into the beautiful Mackenzie Basin, to manage a small beekeeping business. In 1985 I met my wife, Ali. Six months later we bought the business I was running, and we got married. We moved to Twizel to base our beekeeping business. The hydro project was winding down we were the first of a new breed- business people with nothing to do with the power project.



Over the years Ali and I grew our business and now our eldest son is the major shareholder. Mackenzie Country Honey runs 2800 hives, producing an average of 120 tons of honey per season. We have three married sons, all of whom we have helped into beekeeping businesses.

Over the 40 years I have lived in Twizel, community/volunteer work has been part of what makes me tick, volunteering for town of Twizel and the NZ Beekeeping Industry. These include:

- The Twizel Event Center building project committee member to completion.
- Deputy Chair of the Twizel Community Board for 3 years and Chair for the next 3-year term.
- Deputy Chair Fed Farmers Bees for 3 years and completed a three-day Federated Farmers Rural leadership course in Wellington “Getting Your Wet”
- Committee member of a joint working group between the two NZ beekeeping groups. Fed Farmers Bees and National Beekeeping Association. We were charged with bringing the two industry bodies together to form a new modern industry group.

I was a Board member of Betta Bees- a queen bee breeding company. The company was in bad shape. We made a major loss in my first year. Together with two other board members we got the finances back under control. With the beekeeping industry in rapid decline from an unsustainable high, we got approval from the shareholders to put the company into voluntary liquidation. My time as a board member of Betta Bees was by far the hardest business experience, I have been involved in, but worked as an unpaid board member to get the best outcome for the Shareholders and the Beekeeping Industry. My current roles include:

- Director of Mackenzie Country Honey Ltd
- Trustee of the High Country Medical Trust - about 6 years. Chairman for 3 years.
- Board member of High Country Health Ltd and been a member for 5 years

I will be semi retiring from Mackenzie Country Honey after this coming season.

What you would bring to the Board

As you can see from my background, I have strong governance experience and practical beekeeping expertise to support beekeeping going forward. I have a strong work ethic and commitment to deliver the best outcomes for beekeepers, and I understand the dynamics of working for collective industry good. I am keen help unite the beekeeping industry once and for all. Mackenzie Country Honey Ltd has always paid a volunteer conscription to whatever industry group we have been part of, believing there is no free ride when it comes to having our industry represented to government and on the world stage.

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Murray Bush

Beekeeping experience

I have recently retired from 38 years of commercial beekeeping running up to 2500 hives based in Marlborough. Our specialty honey was non-Manuka and our operation was split between harsh high country and coastal environments. We also operated our own packing with retail label and sold directly to NZ supermarkets.

Apple pollination was once a major focus until trees were replaced with vines. I have extensive experience across all facets of commercial beekeeping.



What you would bring to the Board

I would like to offer my time and knowledge to HBNZ as after a lifetime of commercial beekeeping and commercial honey packing, I still have a fire to be involved and see the NZ beekeeping industry succeed.

My strengths are logistics and mediation, working with multiple opinions to reach a common and ideally constructive ground. I ran the finances of our business for 30 years, so bring financial skills and understanding to the table. I understand the complex balance of producers and packers, as I covered both bases for the last 35 years, and the new HBNZ needs to make this balance work while keeping "old fashioned" beekeeping ethics and practises alive.

I am not a scientist and occasionally technology challenged, but I fully understand if beekeepers do not openly embrace a scientific questioning mentality, we are going to suffer in a new AI driven world. The list of initial tasks are incredibly daunting, but we must get grassroots beekeepers back into a position where they feel heard, valued, and definitely part of the decision making process

I have no conflicts of interest. Our beehives and retail label were sold and I still enjoy seeing their continued success with new owners.

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2026 Board Elections – Candidate Profiles

Matt Goldsworthy

Beekeeping Experience

I have been beekeeping for 18 years across both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. During my time with Taylor Pass Honey Co., I worked with up to 8,000 hives and managed a team of 23 beekeepers. Gaining extensive experience in commercial beekeeping operations and team leadership.

Today, my wife Sarah and I own and operate the Mountain Valley Honey and J Bush & Sons brands in Nelson. We also run packing and extraction facilities which includes other local beekeepers honey.

Our business currently manages approximately 4,000 hives, providing pollination services, queen bee production, nuc and hive sales, and honey production. We have a small amount of export honey too.

What I Would Bring to the Board

I am putting my name forward for the HBNZ Board because I am committed to the long-term success of New Zealand's beekeeping industry and want to contribute to building a strong and effective industry body. With honey prices beginning to stabilise, I believe this is the right time to focus on bringing the industry together and working towards strong industry.

My experience combined with the practical knowledge gained from growing a successful business in last 5 years through challenging market conditions, has shown me how significant results can be achieved with limited resources. I bring a practical, solutions-focused approach and a willingness to think differently when addressing industry challenges.

I am also prepared to challenge ideas that may not be in the best interests of beekeepers. I value strong industry connections and believe collaboration is essential to the sector's success. Last season, we hosted a regional beekeepers' gathering for the top of the South Island, helping bring local beekeepers together to share ideas and strengthen relationships.

I appreciate your consideration and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the future success of the New Zealand beekeeping industry. If elected, I will work hard to ensure the voice of practical, working beekeepers is heard, while continuing to adapt, innovate, and respond effectively to new challenges the industry will face. Helping HBNZ build a stronger, more united, and sustainable future for our industry.

Welcome anyone to get in touch with any questions and have a chat.

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Barry Hantz

Beekeeping experience

Hello my name is Barry Hantz from Hantz Honey, I am a third-generation commercial beekeeper. Hantz Honey has been in the business of beekeeping for 75 years, with myself having worked in the family business over the last 25 years. I started in the business at the bottom - working beehives and learning the ropes... safe to say that after 25 years ...I am fully qualified and suitably experienced in all aspects of commercial beekeeping and running a successful beekeeping operation (although there have been a few memorable moments along the way!). Currently we are running around 5000 beehives (double brood nests) through-out Ellesmere, Darfield, Rakaia and Dorie Pendarves. We are the second largest beekeeping operation In Canterbury. Predominately, we are clover honey producers on the Canterbury Plains, we do have some beehives on Manuka, up at Springfield. We have been producing comb honey for many years and it's one of our specialty lines. Our other main income is from pollination – we provide bees to pollinate blackcurrants, blueberries, small seed crops like radish, onions, pak choi through to canola, chickery and carrots. We also do some cage pollination using nucs. We sell honey domestically and export, offer contract extraction and packing services, produce our own queens and sell queens domestically. We employ 15 staff to run our operation. As you can see there's a bit going on!



What you would bring to the Board

My goal is to develop a united bee industry group which is highly functional, achieving solid outcomes for the beekeeping industry and financially sustainable. To provide valuable input into the HBNZ board through the knowledge and experience I have gained in past roles and initiatives. Encourage ALL beekeepers (old and new) to become members of HBNZ and to actively take part in an industry group – it's that old adage "you get out... what you put in!" If we all "put in", then the opportunities across bee health, biosecurity, research, sales and marketing... are endless!

Governance Experience – I bring extensive leadership and communication skills, connections with beekeepers and outside organization's...

- Member of National Executive of Federated Farmers - Representative for Bee Industry Group - 3 years
- Chairman of North Canterbury Bee Industry Group Federated Farmers – 3 years
- Active member of North Canterbury Bee Industry Group 2002-2016
- Active member during the previous merger of NBA & Federated Farmers Bee Industry Group to form Apiculture NZ 2016
- Supporter and attendee of APINZ Canterbury Hub Meetings & Beekeeper Day's Out 2016-2024

Business Experience – the need to build to a strong financial base so HBNZ can achieve financial independence and give something back to members (beekeepers) for their trust and support.

I am currently running two businesses Hantz Honey and Ezyloader NZ.

Science / technical – strong interest and advocacy for bee health in New Zealand, past, present and future.

- One of the first beekeepers to financially support Trees for Bees in their research and development
- Hantz Honey has worked with Lincoln University in various science and research projects
- Supporting and taking part in Breeding for Varroa resistance - VSH project – Rae Butler

I hope you take from this summary that I am not just a 'talker' but also a 'doer', I believe the beekeeping industry would truly flourish if it had a united industry group, hence my nomination!

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2026 Board Elections – Candidate Profiles

Cameron Martin

Beekeeping experience

Together with my wife Rose, we run our 1600 hive family business, employing two full time additional team members in the Eastern Bay of Plenty region. We specialise in bulk honey production and Kiwifruit pollination, with beeswax and propolis supply being additional, more minor, areas of our production.

I have been fulltime commercial beekeeping for 30 years now, I am a second generation beekeeper with lifelong exposure to the beekeeping industry, and my interest in beekeeping grew with more involvement in my parent's apiary business.

In the early 2000's I also spent 2 seasons in Alberta, Canada, working for a large commercial beekeeper, and I continue to take interest in what is happening within the beekeeping industry in various countries to keep aware of industry innovation and concerns internationally.

I often attend, and occasionally help organise, our local regional industry field days, at times traveling further afield to also keep up to date. I feel it is beneficial to all beekeepers to attend various informative and social industry related events to encourage upskilling, knowledge sharing, and to discuss industry concerns.

What you would bring to the Board

For many years I have volunteered my time in various roles in the NZ beekeeping sector, firstly with the Waikato branch of the NBA, where I was secretary then President for a few years, and then for the last 6 years serving on the New Zealand Beekeeping Incorporated (NZBI) executive. Through these roles I have gained governance experience, and I am keen to expand on this.

My experience has given me an insight into managing diverse opinions, prioritising tasks, what is involved in professional advocacy at a Government level, and the importance of clear communication. I believe I have a solid grasp of the beekeeping sector in NZ and continue to take regular interest in international industry goings on. I am always willing to learn and after 30 years of commercial beekeeping, I know you never stop learning and it also teaches you adaptability and the importance of staying positive.

I am interested in serving on the HBNZ board as I believe the priority for the board needs to focus on keeping commercial beekeeping in NZ profitable and sustainable. Healthy beehives are the foundation that the rest of the industry is built on. For that to be achieved the focus areas must be Bee health, Biosecurity (AFB PMP, Yellow legged Hornets, working with Biosecurity NZ to ensure no more exotics such as Tropilaelaps, SHB, EFB arrive and establish themselves in NZ), and strong advocacy to Government to ensure the importance of the Beekeeping sector to the NZ economy is understood.

I am under no illusions as to the workload the new board will have to undertake to establish itself as the organisation that all NZ beekeeping industry participants want to be a member of. It will have to gain trust and integrity for this to be achieved.

I believe HBNZ will need to be a member driven organisation. Members must be able to contribute ideas for what they want HBNZ to focus on. Reestablishing and maintaining regional groups will go some way in achieving this.

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Julian McCurdy

Beekeeping experience

I've grown to be General Manager of Forest & Bees Native Honey and have been involved in commercial honey production, operations and export specifically since 2019. My work here covers the practical realities of commercial beekeeping: hive operations, queen and stock performance, crop planning, extraction, testing, inventory, logistics, staff, customers, compliance and commercial decision-making.



We are approximately 670 hives currently, we use annual acquisition and splits to get to 800+ hives, with an additional 700-hive joint venture type hive placements for the 2027 season. We go hard for Mānuka in Taranaki and try each season for more consistent performance while operating in a very dynamic ecosystem. Before Forest & Bees, my experience with bees, beekeeping, apiculture business systems and beekeeping technology started in 2010 through BeezThingz and since 2016 through BuzzTech.

I've trained and supported six apprentices to accreditation with another 2 ongoing, including 2 women through Level 4. I have also led queen cohort work, Varroa Sensitive Hygiene selection strategies and built VSH tracking into BuzzTech app workflows. This gives me a bottom-up and top-down view of the industry: from apiary work, bee health and genetics through to technology, export, compliance, business management, chemistry, sales and industry strategy.

What you would bring to the Board

I'm interested in the short-term Board role because the industry has reached a pivotal point that shows real hope. HBNZ needs clear priorities, reliable information flows, practical member engagement and decision systems that turn frustration into action. I want to help bring systems discipline to the room: define the problem properly, connect the right people, use evidence, measure progress and keep the focus on outcomes for commercial beekeepers.

My strongest contribution would be whole-system thinking backed by practical execution. I can connect field reality, commercial pressure, technology, training, regulation, science, export requirements and member needs into plans that people can use. I bring experience building businesses, products, teams and workflows; raising and deploying capital; improving processes; managing risk; and translating complex technical issues into plain-language decisions.

At Board level, I would help HBNZ sharpen priorities, build better feedback loops with members, use data more intelligently, and create clearer accountability around projects. I would support practical frameworks for advocacy with government, researchers, laboratories, exporters, landowners and regional beekeeper groups. My focus would be on industry outcomes: profitability, bee health, biosecurity readiness, pollination value, workforce capability, credible data, trusted standards and stronger market access.

I would not come to the Board to protect a narrow individual interest. I would come to help improve the system commercial beekeeping depends on.

While serving, I'll remain General Manager of Forest & Bees Native Honey and founder/CEO of BuzzTech. I happily declare these interests and manage any actual or perceived conflicts openly and transparently, including stepping back from any discussion or decision where conflicts may arise.

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Jaime McRae

Beekeeping experience

I am a commercial beekeeper based in the lower North Island. Throughout my 15+ years in the Apiculture industry, I have led operations all over the North Island. I have experience across hive management, bee health, industry development, industry/ government advocacy & surveillance plans, preparation and planning of 1000's of hives into different pollination, and honey production blocks.

Alongside my beekeeping activities, I have been actively involved in industry discussions, developing innovative technologies and systems aimed at improving hive health monitoring, disease detection, biosecurity readiness, and beekeeper education. My work has provided me with a strong understanding of both the operational realities faced by commercial beekeepers and the wider issues affecting the industry, including bee health, biosecurity risks, pollination services, market pressures, and long-term sustainability.



What you would bring to the Board

I am seeking election to the inaugural Honey and Bees New Zealand Board because I believe this organisation signifies a unique opportunity to unite New Zealand's commercial beekeeping industry and provide strong leadership during a period of significant change and challenge for our industry. Over my 15+ year's experience in commercial beekeeping, I have developed a strong passion for improving bee health, biosecurity, industry sustainability, research, and innovation.

Through my extensive involvement in beekeeping, product development, and industry focused projects, I have worked on initiatives aimed at improving disease detection, biosecurity preparedness/ polices (including Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet incursion with MPI), hive health monitoring, and beekeeper education. I have worked in every aspect of beekeeping from Extraction, Queen rearing, Export Queens & Bees, Pollination, high end Manuka production, managing small to large teams and businesses (including in different industries), CEO, Board member of multiple incorporated groups, and a Primary ITO Apiculture trainer. These experiences have given me an extensive insight into both the practical realities of commercial beekeeping and the broader challenges facing our industry.

I would bring a practical and future focused perspective to the Board. I believe Honey and Bees New Zealand must be an organisation that not only tackles the challenges we face today but also prepares the industry for future challenges and opportunities both domestically and internationally. This includes strengthening our biosecurity, investing in research and innovation, improving industry engagements, market access, advocating effectively with government agencies, and ensuring that New Zealand maintains its reputation as a world leader in beekeeping and bee health management.

I am committed to acting in the best interests of the industry, working collaboratively with fellow directors, and help establish a strong foundation and direction for Honey and Bees New Zealand.

My focus would be on building a unified, sustainable, and resilient industry that delivers value for commercial beekeepers while protecting the long-term future of New Zealand beekeeping.

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Keith Rodie

Beekeeping experience

I started beekeeping the Manawatu Whanganui region in 1978 when times were different, hives were more of a pleasure to run (no varroa) and honey wasn't worth a lot prior to the Manuka boom. By 1982 we were running 2000 hives; involved in honey packing/wholesaling and from 1985-91 placing 1500 – 1700 hives into Kiwifruit pollination. Subsequently, I went on to do other things leaving the business with my brother Bill who bought me out in 2000. In 2010 my son Ash and I formed KAAJ Limited which farms (circa) 1000 hives on Manuka with another 150 odd holding wintering sites/producing feed honey. From 2013-16 I was asked to go on board with Manuka Health successfully establishing their supplier network and overseeing honey procurement, leaving this when it sold out of New Zealand ownership.



Today KAAJ Ltd, with the addition of my son Josh, owns back country blocks for Manuka honey production, ETS and grazing and farms (Deer and Cattle) in the Manawatu supporting 4-5 full-time positions. A fully integrated/multiple income stream rural business (centred on beekeeping). My position is Managing Director of KAAJ Limited (I am not involved in day-to-day beekeeping)

What you would bring to the Board

I'm excited that an organisation effectively by the commercial sector for the commercial sector looks set to emerge from the ashes of past endeavours and would like to see this to a successful conclusion (not withstanding I also advocate for close interaction with other industry sectors).

My experience in contract negotiation, governance, sales, marketing and advocacy gives me confidence in my ability to contribute through the initial establishment phase of this new organisation. A part of our business endeavours is 'KAAJ Group Purchasing'. This purchasing group was set up some 6-7 years ago and has been responsible for members saving many thousands of dollars on Varroa treatments, Bee health/Feed products, Drum Purchasing, Honey Testing and anything else we can muster savings on.

I advocate for:

- Published bulk honey pricing such as is available for almost every agricultural sector on a weekly/monthly basis
- Travelling industry liaison/advisory officers as a conduit for catchment varroa treatment timing; the distribution and sharing of industry information and the organising / moderating of area group meetings.

For an industry with exports of close to \$500M I see our individual contributions to governance as pitiful and suggest there's got to be a better way towards a more productive outcome and a far better future for future generations of beekeepers.

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Ben Stewart

Beekeeping experience

14 years ago, I transitioned from a career in online design and marketing to take the helm of our 45-year-old family semi-commercial beekeeping business located in the beautiful Gisborne/East Coast region.

Through hard work and strategic management, I've successfully expanded our hive count to 2,000. At the same time, I took on the role of area manager for Oha Honey, overseeing up to 5,000 hives, which was essential in ensuring productivity and enhancing honey yields. My experience also includes managing First Light Honey, where I contributed to the packing of 300 to 400 tons of manuka honey each year. Recently, I decided to downsize and focus my efforts on our cherished family business, Bee Farm Ltd., where I now manage around 1,000 hives. This shift has allowed me to enhance both pollination and honey production while committing to the highest standards of quality, hive health, and sustainability in our beekeeping practices.



What you would bring to the Board

I have worked in the beekeeping industry for several years and am optimistic for our future. This is an important time for our industry, and I can share valuable insights while keeping the bigger picture in mind. I believe in working with all beekeepers across the country, regardless of their size or background. Everyone deserves a chance to contribute. Now is the time to create a national organization for beekeepers. This group can represent our shared interests and provide support and research to improve bee health, ensure biosecurity, and promote our local businesses. I want to join the board because we need strong leadership at this critical time. I aim to use my experience to help guide our industry through challenges and seize new opportunities. It's important to me that everyone's voice is heard as we support our beekeeping community and focus on growth at both local and national levels.

We need to define what a professional beekeeper is. Setting clear standards will help us speak with one voice for our industry and gain support from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). This will boost our credibility and improve collaboration across the sector. We have several opportunities to strengthen our beekeeping industry as part of a national effort:

- We can develop a shared approach to biosecurity and pest management education, especially for managing varroa.
- support local pollination services that benefit our regional and broader agricultural/horticulture communities.
- We should communicate the value of the New Zealand honey and bee industry, highlighting local contributions and unique honeys and products.
- We can proudly promote that New Zealand does not import honey, showing our ability to provide pure honey to local and international markets.

We can build on this strong foundation to explore and innovate in beekeeping, making our industry a centre for best practices and new ideas. With my experience as a manager, business owner, and commercial beekeeper, I offer a strategic view and valuable insights to the national board. My goal is to promote informed decisions that lead to positive outcomes for our local region while also contributing to the growth of the national industry. I am dedicated to working with others to ensure that our industry thrives for generations to come.

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