



SERVE TO CHANGE LIVES

ROTARY CLUB ESSENDON (RCE) CENTENNIAL “BEE HAPPY PROJECT”

1 THE PROJECT (July 2020 to August 2021)

The Rotary Centennial project to build 100 beehive boxes was proposed by Dr Michael Portelli D.C at the December Board meeting of the Rotary Club of Essendon in 2020. Encouraging discussions had been held with Moonee Valley councillor, Crn John Sipek and council officer, Diana Amato as well as members of the Strathmore Mens Shed (SMS) to gauge support for a beehive box project. Several beekeepers Rom and his son Paul Kucera, who had looked after some beehives for Dr Portelli for several years, were also happy to support the project. After several meetings from interested parties, the RCE approved the funds to purchase 10 Double Beehive Kits (i.e., 2x10=20 boxes) from preliminary quotes from Bob’s Beekeeping at around \$270 per Kit (2 boxes). RCE also approved funds for the training of 5 people. Bob’s Beekeeping also provided full details of material take off and assembly drawings of the Double Kits.

Discussions and meetings took place with MV council, East Keilor RC, Strathmore Men’s shed, MV Beekeepers and Bendigo Bank to gain community promotion and potential additional funding. From this meeting and further follow up the Maribyrnong Bowling Club’s meeting rooms and storage facilities were made available to the Bee Happy project team. A RCE evening meeting was organised where well attended and lively presentations were provided by four Beekeepers. A ‘Laminated non escape viewing beehive box’ was brought along for everyone to see the bees in action. The Beekeepers talked passionately about beekeeping and the benefits of bees to mankind's food supply and joy of beekeeping. The beekeepers donated some containers of their honey, which was quickly auctioned off and raised several hundred dollars to the project.

A meeting was held with SMS to kick off the work, review what tools and jigs were required. It was decided to purchase the Double Kit prepared components from Bob’s Beekeeping and then paint, assemble, and provide wiring clamps. The work commenced in early 2021 and the 10 double kits (20 boxes) were completed by April. [REFER TO PHOTOS](#)

RCE held a fundraiser cocktail party at MV council rooms in May to assist the Gippsland Fire relief effort. \$7,800 of the funds were directed to fabricate a further 30 double kits (60 boxes) and these will be donated to Traralgon Central Rotary club for distribution to local beekeepers that were affected by the bushfires. East Keilor Rotary Club advised that they wish to be a part of the 100 year project and have placed an order for a further 10 Double Kit (20 boxes) thereby achieving our goal of 100 Beehive boxes in our centennial year.

The RCE and the EKRC hope to travel to Gippsland in the Spring to present the hives and have some fellowship with our regional Rotarians.

Locally in Moonee Valley, it was recognised that a Beekeeping club was needed if the project was to be sustainable. So, the Moonee Valley beekeeping club was born with its inaugural meeting held on 5th July and now intends to meet monthly at the Maribyrnong Bowls club. The Beekeepers will work with the Moonee Valley council and the RCE and assist with their experience and training that needed to be organised prior to allowing people to have beehive boxes installed at sites. MV council is working closely to provide an area where to locate hives with captured swarms.

2 BEE INFORMATION AND COLLECTION MEANS

Basic Bee Facts

Bees account for approximately 1/3 of food for human mankind. Currently numbers are reducing around the world due to climate change, bush fires, and mankind vegetation destruction.

A queen bee can lay 2,000 eggs a day. Worker bees only live for 6 weeks. Worker bees can go out and seek pollen in a 7km radius from the Beehive Box. There are not many drone bees. There are soldier bees at the entrance to the Beehive Box protect insects and other vermin to enter the Beehive boxes.

There are very low death rates due to bee stings from people who suffer from Anaphylaxis which is a severe allergic reaction and is potentially life-threatening. All people involved with bees should be aware of this medical condition and fully understand medical treatment once stung by a bee.

During the warmer months September to January, Bee Swarm to propagate their species. The queen bee lays another queen bee and after the young queen bee has 'learnt the ropes' the old queen bee leaves the Beehive nest. She will take a quantity of worker bees with her creating a swarm which she is in the middle of. The swarm will leave the Beehive nest and look for another location such as tree hollows, chimneys, guttering etc to create a new home.

5 WAYS to Start a Beehive Colony

Purchase a Nucleus Hive and Box (\$350-500)

Easy, queen/stable hive, instant kick off and portable

Collecting a Swarm – called Bee Removal (need box \$150)

Timing warmer months only, need experience and right box, risks, notice from council

Buying a package of Bees (\$180-\$250)

Risk of bees not settling in a new box, could abscond, problems with queen

Buying a new Queen bee (\$50) Splitting an established Beehive (new box \$150)

Risk of bees not settling in a new box, could abscond, can do all year round

Swarm Trap – Box with Lemon grass and swarm condensate (need box)

Hit and Miss, need to place near an operating beehive colony and monitor

3 FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Commercial Fruit and Vegetable Produce Growers

These commercial organisations required Bees to pollenate their produce and may not have their own beehives for his. Rotary clubs can initiate projects to create beehive colonies and give to them or arrange for rental of the colonies during the correct time.

Individual Rotarian

Rotarians may discover an interest in beekeeping as a hobby and Rotary Clubs may wish to arrange a donation of the beehive box to them and then share the honey for ongoing fund raising for that rotary club.

Youth Vocation opportunities

Rotary club Bee happy type projects may offer opportunities to organisation like the Youth Projects to provide a part time hobby/employment for disengaged youths as there will be set up of MVBKC type groups provide beehive colonies, train, and support them.

School Student Bee Education and Tours

The councils and Rotary Clubs may be able to arrange a protected viewing area to display bee keeping and information boards at a suitable safe location where school children could visit and be educated on bees. An example of this is the Strathmore Mens with council owned bush land area behind their building.

The BEE HAPPY PROJECT initial details can be found in the ESRAG Website Projects (first project listed).

So far RCE has been contacted by the following clubs for further information & presentation

- Caroline Springs
- Pascoe Vale
- Wollongong NSW
- East Keilor