

NBA REORGANISATION - AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS FINALLY COME

From: Bay of Plenty Branch, NBA

This article provides background information on a set of rule changes to restructure the organisational activities of the NBA. The proposed new structure is based on a number of recommendations and proposals for restructuring of the industry organisation which have been made over the years. What makes this proposal different is that it is not just another idea for discussion; it is a concrete set of changes to our association's rules to actually bring about much-needed change. In the past, our association has had the luxury of drawn-out consideration of organisational change. However, major changes in the way government provides services to the industry is compelling change. The rule changes are being proposed to make the NBA a more professional and effective association, while at the same time improving the democratic representation of beekeepers' interests. The rule changes will create an organisational structure more similar to other effective and dynamic industry associations in New Zealand society.

At a Special Meeting to be held as part of this year's conference, changes to the rules related to reorganisation of the NBA will be voted upon. The Bay of Plenty branch has developed the rule changes to put into effect the following overviewed industry structure changes. We want the industry to be clear that the ideas are not ours alone, nor do we believe we have 'all the answers'.

The proposals have come after many years of discussions within the industry. They are little more than a restatement, with some reflection and development, of ideas that have been talked about within the industry for many years.

History of the NBA Reorganisation Discussion

Over the past ten years there have been several calls from within the beekeeping industry to restructure the NBA. All have had in common the desire to improve the association's professionalism and accountability, and to bring it more into line with other effective industry representative organisations such as the Fruitgrowers Federation and VegFed.

In the late 1980's the NBA Executive discussed a reorganisation based around the idea of a 'Council' to replace the current Executive structure. The Council would be composed of representatives of the various industry sector groups - packers, comb honey producers, queen breeders, and so on. From these discussions the need for high quality technical

and policy advice and representation were also identified as critical. The outcome was the payment for a part time Executive Officer, the late Ted Roberts. This use of the Executive Officer considerably increased the NBA's ability to plan and respond in a professional manner through a very difficult period of legislative change.

At the NBA Conference in 1994, specific workshops were conducted to get ideas for possible organisational structures. Again, the need to have sustained policy advice and representational ability available to the association was identified as a high priority.

Pressures Leading to Reorganisation

While there has been much talk about such a reorganisation, there has been little action, probably because the current structure (and a high level of personal commitment from some Executive members) just managed to cope with the increased pressures placed upon it by changes in government policy.

The upcoming changes to government servicing of the beekeeping industry will increase these pressures to a whole new level. In effect, the politicians' decision to restructure government services is also forcing the NBA to restructure so that the association can cope with the shift in responsibility from government to industry. There will be adverse consequences for the future development of beekeeping in this country if the NBA does not restructure to some extent to prepare for the challenges of the future that isn't that far away.

There is a need for an effective policy capability within the association which is not vested in the transitory elected executive. Government is likely to continue to make decisions which could adversely effect the profitability and success of the beekeeping industry (Australian honey imports are an obvious example).

To be successful in the government policy arena in the future, the NBA needs to retain a person who has proven and effective channels of communication with government, and who can argue with both conviction and a strong understanding of beekeeping technical matters. In the past, the NBA has relied to a greater or lesser extent either on purchasing these skills from MAF Qual (with the obvious potential for conflicts of interest) or on the voluntary efforts of NBA executive members, whose effectiveness has been subject to both pressures from work, and pressures from within the political process of the organisation. The result, for the NBA, has been a high degree of variability in both the quality and effectiveness of

beekeeping industry policy representations to government.

The BOP Branch's Proposal - How Did It Come About?

The Bay of Plenty branch of the NBA created a committee earlier this year to examine the various reorganisation schemes and to recommend rule changes for the up-coming Conference and Annual Meeting of the NBA. The committee met on a number of occasions, and collectively agreed on a structure that would be capable of meeting the needs of the future.

The Current NBA Executive Structure

The NBA Executive committee currently consists of six members elected on a national basis. Three are resident in the North Island, three resident in the South Island. They serve a two year term, and they are allowed to serve more than one term.

The real demands on an Executive member go far beyond the time and the meetings. The NBA Executive must actually *do* most of the jobs proposed. If there is legislation to read and comprehend, it is the individual Executive members who must do it. If there is a financial analysis to undertake, it must be done by someone on the Executive.

With the size of the industry and the very real needs imposed by a beekeeper's own business, there are often times when the abilities have simply not been there. This is not to demean the contributions of individual Executive members, but the reality is that the 'job' of being an Executive member at present is a very demanding one.

There have been many elections over the past years for Executive members where there were only enough nominations to fill the empty seats. In other cases, there have not even been that many members willing to stand, and an appointment would be made. This is indicative of both the quantity and quality of work expected from Executive members. Even beekeepers who are hard working, successful and good managers know that the demands of actually carrying out the work required of Executive members may be more than they can afford to volunteer to the industry.

The Proposals Outlined

A. The Executive

In working through the problems, the BOP branch concluded that the Executive should be reconstituted to become truly a policy setting body for the association. The members of the Executive need to be effective at representing

members and communicating back to them. What better unit, then, than the branch level to elect an Executive representative? The proposed rule change provides for each branch to select an Executive member as part of the branch AGM held in April of each year. Industry internal communication and policy making would then be an immediate function of each of our branch's input.

The change from an 'implementation' body to a 'policy setting' body would allow for fewer meetings, and more fairly distribute the workload to the point that more members would consider taking part and contributing.

B. The Management Committee

From within the larger Executive committee a Management Committee will be selected. Membership of this committee is entirely at the discretion of the Executive. Members will serve on the Management Committee only so long as they have the confidence of the Executive and are able to demonstrate the required abilities.

It is this Management Committee that will hire/fire and oversee the management of the Executive Director, working constantly to implement the policies accepted by the Executive committee.

C. The Executive Director

One consistent element of the proposals to reorganise the NBA involves the use of an Executive Director. With the size of our organisation, it is clear that the industry could not afford (or really need) such a position to be full time. The need for effective advice, analysis and representation of the industry means that considerable capability is required, however.

The Executive Director should be someone of proven ability, professionalism and skill in the areas of policy development and governmental interface, who can put substantial time and effort into providing credible and effective representation of beekeeping industry concerns to government.

The person should also have a proven ability to develop or oversee the development of quality systems for the administrative functions of the NBA to a level which would pass the impending strict government audit.

D. The Executive Secretary

It is probably not appropriate to expect the supplier of day-to-day administrative services (the Executive Secretary) to be responsible under the supplier's current contract to develop the quality systems that the NBA requires. There is also considerable benefit to be gained from an objective party developing such systems, especially since

under the terms of the PMS, at least, they will be subject to audit by outside parties.

The Executive Secretary would still be providing the administrative services required by the NBA, but would be provided with more consistent guidance, and the expectations of the delivery of the services would be clearly identified.

E. The Executive President and Vice-President

The NBA will still need a president and vice-president, but the importance of the roles changes somewhat within the proposed structure. Rather than having particular powers and authority, the president and vice president will perform a public representational role for the association. The president will still preside at conference, the annual meeting and the meetings of the Executive. The ability to manage meetings, effectively working through complex issues to arrive at agreeable solutions will be essential.

F. Financial Implications

The increase in the size of the Executive must immediately raise questions of finance. In considering the re-organisational proposal, bear in mind the changes in the nature of the Executive, as well. To be an appropriate policy-setting 'board of directors' for the NBA, the Executive would need to meet in person perhaps only twice each year (once in conjunction with the Annual Conference).

The current Executive of six members meets over three days for four of its meetings, with a further set of meetings at the Annual Conference. Executive members are paid accommodation and meals for a longer period for that meeting.

Travel costs for the current Executive can be thought of as 6 members to attend 5 meetings each, or a total of 30 'member roundtrips'.

Under the new proposal, a branch's Executive member would, presumably, be that branch's delegate to Conference (Delegates to Conference are currently paid a one way airfare to attend the conference). With only the two

meetings, travel would be 16 members to attend 2 meetings, a total of 32 member roundtrips, less the 16 one way fares (8 round trip equivalent) paid currently to the delegate, making a total of 24 member roundtrip fares.

A similar exercise with meals and accommodation costs indicates that the increased size of the Executive need not have dramatic impacts on the cost of management of the association.

We believe there will be considerable savings in administration costs, brought about by the more efficient use into the future of modern communications technology. With the change in function from policy/administration/technical advice currently expected and paid for to our Executive Secretary and administrative services, further savings could be made to assist the changing face of the organisation.

The money previously paid to Ted Roberts in his role as Executive Officer of the NBA was reallocated with the NBA budget. One item that has remained is an allowance for 'Technical Advice'. It is exactly this sort of advice that an Executive Director would be providing.

It is difficult to get a clear picture of the NBA's current and anticipated financial position. The committee providing this proposal believes, after viewing and discussing the financial figures available, that the proposal is not at all fanciful. The NBA could most certainly implement these proposals with the same degree of financial certainty that it undertakes in operating with the current structure.

The Future...

No one should be under any illusion that the next few years will be easy for the NBA. Even with the changes outlined in this article, the NBA will face tremendous challenges related to the requirements for and provision of services heretofore considered essential.

We believe that the reorganisation described will best position the NBA to remain a viable and effective representative body for the beekeeping industry. We look forward to your constructive comment or direct support.

COMPOSITION AND RELATIONSHIP OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

