QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 334
Asked on Wednesday, 7 March 2007

MR LAWLOR asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)

QUESTION:

How did the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries assist in the development of 'Medihoney', a medicinal honey which has been approved for use in Queensland hospitals?

ANSWER:

Medihoney® is a natural wound-care product produced by Capilano which has been found to be active against a range of food and medical pathogens. The product is based on a jelly-like honey from Leptospermum trees which was found to have potent antibacterial activity.

Researchers from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) Innovative Food Technologies undertook a 5-year research project co-funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) to identify specific geographical areas which produce bio-active (antimicrobial) honey.

More than 3 000 honeys from around Australia were screened using an agar well diffusion assay. The active honeys contained particular phytochemicals collected from the flowers by the bees, and included in the specific type of honey (Jelly Bush Honey). While the Leptospermum trees grow along the whole east coast of Australia, it is only in isolated pockets of native heathland that these particular active honeys are collected.

The result of this work was that the industry partner (Capilano) registered a honey product (Medihoney®) with the Therapeutic Drug Administration.

Medihoney® has been approved for use in Queensland hospitals and has particular application in surgical healing and infection control in hospitals where many bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics.

This range of "medicines" are now used in home and clinical settings throughout Australia and internationally. These honey products are used for the treatment of burns, ulcers, eczema and wound, throat and eye infections. Honey is applied directly to the affected area. Trials have proven these honeys to be effective against antibiotic-resistant microorganisms such as Golden Staph.