



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE
STATEMENTS BY SENATORS

Honey Industry

SPEECH

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Speaker Colbeck, Sen Richard	Question No.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania) (13:55): I rise today to make a contribution in support of the manuka honey industry in Australia, particularly in my home state of Tasmania. Canberrans are used to pronouncing manuka differently than we do back home in Tasmania. The name manuka goes back a long way in my home state of Tassie. In fact, the leptospermum plants from which the manuka honey derives were first recorded in Tasmania back in the 1880s and the first manuka honey was recorded as being produced in South Australia from plants deriving from Tasmania in the 1830s. It was with some pleasure that I, along with my Tasmanian colleague Senator Bushby and the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Mr Littleproud, was able to announce \$165,000 for the Australian Manuka Honey Association—funded under the Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation program—to assist and support the Australian Manuka Honey Association in addressing some emerging issues in international markets and to share manuka honey production methods overseas.

It's a very important time in history for the Australian industry, particularly given attempts by our friends across the ditch in New Zealand to effectively register manuka honey as a trademark and as something of their own that is produced only in New Zealand. In my mind the Kiwis should not be allowed to get away with this. As I've indicated, this product comes from a plant that originates in Tasmania. It has a history going back a long way. It is an important product for the Australian honey industry, particularly the Tasmanian honey industry.

The suggestion that New Zealand should be able to trademark the name, quite frankly, to me is a complete absurdity. If I could send a clear message to our friends in the UK, where they are attempting to do that right now, it would be: 'Don't fall for this. The product clearly originates from Australia and Tasmania.' I say to those in the UK and in New Zealand: 'We don't mind sharing the name of the product. The global market for this variety of honey is big enough for us both.' It is a very high-value product and it has medicinal properties, which is one of the things that make it valuable. They don't have to pull some sort of smart alec stunt, like trying to trademark the name for themselves. We can work together.

I know the view of the Australian Manuka Honey Association is that this market is big enough for us all. We can work together to market this great quality, high-value product around the world into the key markets, particularly the UK and Asia. We can share that name between us. We don't have to try to do each other over, as is occurring by New Zealand trying to trademark the name against its originator for their own gain. In my view this is purely an attempted marketing exercise by New Zealand. As I said, they should not be allowed to get away with it. I encourage them to work cooperatively with us.

Senator Whish-Wilson interjecting—

Senator COLBECK: Senator, I take your interjection. Shame on New Zealand for doing that. They should be working cooperatively with us, as our industry is prepared to do with them, so that we can both take advantage of the value of this industry in high-value global markets. Supply of this product in the market is quite obviously limited by the availability of the manuka trees—the leptospermum and the other varieties that work with that. I urge the UK not to fall for that, but to allow us to get on and work together.

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senator Colbeck. It being 2 pm, we will move to questions without notice.