



Media Release

Consumer and Business Affairs

14 December 2006

Dangerous - Poisonous 'Message in a bottle' found on Territory shelves

Seeds from the deadly *Abrus Precatorius* plant have been found inside a novelty product for sale in some Territory retail outlets.

Sold as 'Message in a Bottle' has prompted an urgent consumer warning.

Any product containing these seeds, which are about the size of a tic-tac, and are also known as Crab's Eye, Gidee-Gidee, Precatory Bean, Rosary Pea and Jequirity Bean are extremely dangerous.

The seeds of *Abrus Precatorius* are 3.1mm long, bead-shaped, red in colour with a small black spot at the base of seed. The raw seeds contain abrin, a ribosome inactivating protein that is one of the deadliest plant toxins known. One seed, if cracked and swallowed, can be fatal to an adult. Half a seed consumed in the same way could be fatal to a child.

The item being sold is closed with only a cork-like stopper, without any safety seal.

The Acting Commissioner of Consumer Affairs Gary Clements confirmed that the deadly seed was initially found in a novelty product being sold in discount stores in Darwin and Katherine, and ongoing investigations are continuing to find any other outlets who have been supplied by a Queensland importer via various wholesalers, whereby they will be immediately removed from the shelves.

Consumer Affairs Officers are working with traders to ascertain how many of these items are in circulation in the Territory and to expedite the best method of recalling and disposing of them.

Mr Clements said "Anyone who has purchased these items perhaps as a stocking filler for Christmas or as a novelty gift, should return them to the place of purchase for a full refund, immediately.

Consumers who do not wish to return the items can dispose of them by sealing the unopened bottle in a sturdy plastic bag and placing it in their wheelie bin.

He said ".They should be kept out of reach of children who may mistake the seeds for lollies.

For further advice and assistance contact Consumer Affairs on 1800 019 319.

Media contact: Gary Clements 89 35 7730

NOTE: Media can contact James Pickett 8935 7701 Consumer Affairs for a photo or to view the product
