

## Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill 2025

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2 June 2025

Queensland Parliament  
Primary Industries and Resources Committee

**By: online submission portal**

To whom it may concern,

**Submission to the Queensland Parliament Primary Industries and Resources Committee**

**Re: *Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill 2025***

The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research ("QIMR Berghofer") welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill 2025* ("the Bill").

QIMR Berghofer, a statutory body reporting to Queensland Health, is one of Australia's most influential medical research institutes. Throughout its 80 year history QIMR Berghofer has consistently delivered impactful research to advance Queensland's understanding of pressing medical and public health challenges. Some of QIMR Berghofer's major scientific and medical breakthroughs include:

- (a) Discovery of the Ross River virus in 1963, leading to significant public health measures;
- (b) Identifying a causal link between Epstein-Barr virus and lymphoma and some forms of leukaemia;
- (c) Proving that regular sunscreen use reduces the risk of skin cancers in 1986, providing the scientific basis for clinical and public health advice around the world about skin cancer prevention;
- (d) Participating in a global collaboration to identify the role of the BRCA1 gene in breast cancer; and
- (e) Preparing statistical modelling that informed aspects of the Queensland Government's public health strategy for the reopening of State borders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective legislation is essential to safeguard the operation and future success of the Institute. We strongly support modernising the legislative framework governing our operations to align with contemporary governance standards and research priorities.

QIMR Berghofer endorses the Bill's objectives to:

- (a) Strengthen governance, accountability, and transparency;
- (b) Facilitate agile decision-making through delegation powers;
- (c) Support commercialisation of research outcomes; and
- (d) Ensure financial and operational sustainability.

These reforms are critical to maintaining QIMR Berghofer's competitiveness in translational research and attracting top-tier talent.

## **Key Provisions**

### **Increased focus on commercialisation**

In Australia, the environment for research funding has become increasingly competitive. Traditional sources of grant funding, such as those from the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Research Council, are subject to intense demand, with success rates for major grants often falling below 15%. This heightened competition means that even world-class research projects may struggle to secure sufficient funding through grants alone.

Given these constraints, the ability to commercialise research outcomes is more important than ever for the sustainability and impact of leading institutes like QIMR Berghofer. Commercialisation provides alternative and supplementary revenue streams through licensing, partnerships, royalties, and the creation of spin-off companies. This not only helps bridge funding gaps but also enables the Institute to reinvest in new research, infrastructure, and talent.

The Bill recognises this shift in the research funding landscape by expressly including commercialisation of intellectual property as a core function of the Council (Explanatory Notes, p. 3). This legislative clarity:

- (a) Signals to funders, partners, and staff that QIMR Berghofer is committed to maximising the value of its research;
- (b) Enables the Institute to attract Council members with commercialisation expertise, strengthening its capacity to navigate complex IP and industry landscapes; and
- (c) Provides for equitable incentive arrangements, motivating researchers to pursue innovations with commercial potential.

### **Appointment of Council members and key management**

QIMR Berghofer supports the Bill's proposal to shift the responsibility for appointing and removing Council members from the Governor in Council to the Minister (clauses 12, 16). This reform brings several important benefits for the Institute's governance and operational effectiveness:

- (a) **Timely Appointments:** Ministerial appointments allow for a more streamlined and efficient process, reducing the administrative delays often associated with Governor in Council procedures. This ensures that vacancies can be filled promptly, minimising disruption to Council operations and decision-making.
- (b) **Agility in Governance:** The ability for the Minister to appoint and, where necessary, remove Council members enables the Institute to respond rapidly to changing circumstances, including the need for specific expertise or to address emerging governance issues.
- (c) **Balanced Approach:** While the Minister's appointment power increases responsiveness, the Bill retains appropriate checks and balances, including clear criteria for appointment, removal, and disqualification. This ensures that governance standards are upheld without compromising the Institute's operational independence or research integrity.

Similarly, QIMR Berghofer also supports the Bill's provision for the Director to be appointed by the Council, subject to Ministerial approval. This dual-approval model offers a balanced and robust governance framework for leadership selection whilst ensuring that those with the closest understanding of the Institute's operational needs and strategic direction lead the recruitment process. Ministerial approval provides an important check, but does not introduce the same level of procedural delay as Governor in Council involvement.

The Council's ability to appoint an Acting Director for up to six months (with possible extension upon Ministerial approval) ensures that leadership transitions are smooth and the Institute's operations remain uninterrupted (Explanatory Notes, p. 2). This flexibility is vital for maintaining momentum in research programs and organisational initiatives, particularly during periods of leadership change.

### **Express power of delegation**

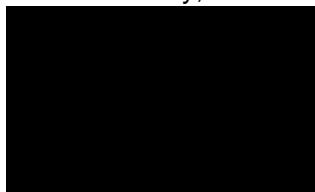
One of the significant operational reforms introduced by the Bill is the inclusion of express powers of delegation for both the Council and the Director. Under the previous legislative framework, there were no provisions allowing the Council or the Director to delegate their functions or powers to appropriately qualified staff. This limitation constrained the Institute's ability to operate efficiently and to respond flexibly to the demands of a large, complex, and rapidly evolving research environment.

The Bill addresses this gap by expressly empowering both the Council and the Director to delegate their functions or powers to suitable staff members. It is anticipated that this power will facilitate streamlined decision making processes and allow the Council and Director to focus their attention on matters of strategic priority.

### **Conclusion**

QIMR Berghofer endorses the Bill as a necessary and timely step to modernise our governance framework. We are grateful for the support of the Queensland Parliament in progressing this important legislation, and we are confident that its passage will safeguard the future of the Institute for generations to come. By strengthening our foundations, this Bill will enable QIMR Berghofer to continue advancing medical research and improving the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders and the broader Australian community.

Yours sincerely,



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Director and CEO  
QIMR Berghofer