




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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PUBLIC HEALTH (MEDICINAL CANNABIS) BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (9.44 pm): I rise to support the Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2016. In so doing, I particularly want to pay tribute to two members of the Maleny community which I have the privilege of representing. In early 2014 two gentlemen, Harold Hopper and Bill Price, came to see me about medicinal cannabis oil usage in our community. Both Harold and Bill cited many examples that were known around the world of how medicinal cannabis was producing remarkable results. Harold explained the incredibly difficult situation he was facing with his wife suffering from severe dementia and going downhill very quickly. Bill, on the other hand, has a daughter who began seizures at the age of nine. She is now 40 and in full-time care. Even as recent as today, Bill informs me that she has had a severe seizure and has had to be hospitalised again for fear of cardiac arrest. Bill often laments that if only his daughter could have accessed cannabis oil she may have led a near normal life, but I must also point out that Bill's daughter has never had medicinal cannabis oil because of its illegality and because she has been under the constant care of a doctor.

Harold ended up coming to a branch meeting of the LNP in Maleny, and he outlined the serious need for medicinal cannabis to be prescribed by local doctors to reduce the pain and suffering not only of the patients but also of the family members who have to stand by and watch helplessly as their loved ones suffer. In Harold's own words, it is no wonder that many people simply took matters into their own hands rather than wait for the government to take action. As a result of Harold and Bill's input into the Maleny branch of the LNP, two resolutions were passed and forwarded on to state council that met in Townsville. I want to read both of those resolutions, but I would reflect that at that time there was a bill before the federal parliament considering the establishment of medicinal cannabis trials. The first motion read—

That this State Council of the LNP supports the Commonwealth government's multi-party group who are working on a bill that, if passed, will allow a medical trial for cannabis oil to be used in the treatment of illnesses.

The second was—

That this State Council of the LNP encourages the State Government, should the Commonwealth Government pass the medical trial for cannabis oil, to offer to run a medical trial in Queensland.

It is testament to the fact that those two motions were passed and agreed to by the state council of the LNP that there was clearly a need and there was clearly a desire within the state of Queensland, and indeed within the members of the LNP, that trials be commenced in Queensland, and Harold and Bill certainly wanted to see those trials started on the Sunshine Coast. The fact that they were carried also confirmed to Maleny branch members that their grave concerns were shared across the state. Subsequently, a few of those members travelled to Canberra in March 2015 to appear before the Senate select committee to give evidence of the great need for regulation so that medicinal cannabis could be prescribed by doctors in Australia. To Harold and Bill I am pleased to say that hopefully tonight their desires will come into law, and for their sake I want to touch on a few key aspects of the bill.

The first is that it will establish a regulatory framework, that is, a legal framework, to facilitate treatment with medicinal cannabis whilst preventing unauthorised use, and that framework provides two pathways for a patient to receive treatment. The first is under the single-patient prescriber pathway where a medical practitioner who believes that their patient may benefit from treatment with medicinal cannabis may apply to the chief executive of Queensland Health for a medicinal cannabis approval to prescribe a medicinal cannabis product for the patient. The second is under the patient class prescriber pathway, where a regulation may state a class of specialist doctors having an as-of-right authority to prescribe specific medicinal cannabis products for patients suffering a specific range of conditions without the need for any additional chief executive approval.

The bill defines the term 'medicinal cannabis' as a cannabis product used for human therapeutic purposes but not a product already registered. It defines a 'cannabis product' as being part of the cannabis plant, derived from the cannabis plant, or a drug that has or is intended to have a substantially similar pharmacological effect as part of the cannabis plant or something derived from the plant.

It was noted by the committee in its deliberations on this bill that—

A national working party will decide the initial list of specialists, however, speciality areas are likely to include paediatric neurology, oncology for the treatment of symptoms arising from chemotherapy and palliative care medicine.

The committee noted further—

It is expected the list of suitable patient conditions for medicinal cannabis treatment under the patient-class prescriber pathway may expand as more reliable scientific evidence becomes available.

As an aside, I know that there are a number of primary producers in the electorate of Glass House who are potentially looking forward to the ability to produce medicinal cannabis. It is important to point out that, although this matter is not contained in the bill, the committee has recommended that the Queensland government, through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, prioritise its investigation of options for obtaining a licence to cultivate and manufacture medicinal cannabis in Queensland.

It is also important to point out that this bill will be reviewed after two years of operation. Therefore, it is with much pleasure, and after speaking with Harold and Bill today, that we see this bill potentially come to fruition so they can potentially see some light at the end of the tunnel. In the case of Bill's daughter, here is hoping that it is not too late.