




Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2016

**PUBLIC HEALTH (MEDICINAL CANNABIS) BILL**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.12 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2016. I have long supported the legal use of medicinal cannabis where clinically appropriate. It is something that I feel very passionate about and it is something that many of my constituents in Brisbane Central also support very strongly and have spoken to me about. As lawmakers, we have a responsibility to do the right thing by patients with chronic conditions and diseases who may be able to benefit from medicinal cannabis. Right now in Queensland, there are children with treatment resistant epilepsy suffering violent seizures, cancer patients in palliative care who need help to control nausea, and I could go through a long list. How can we, in good conscience, deny those patients the medical treatment that they need; treatment that will ease their suffering and that of their families?

This bill will give Queensland nation-leading laws that will provide safe and timely access to medicinal cannabis products. Cannabis use will remain unlawful in Queensland. This bill will not change that. Importantly, the bill provides robust approval processes for medical practitioners who prescribe medicinal cannabis. It includes strong safeguards to ensure those products are used safely and only for lawful purposes, including the appointment of authorised persons to investigate, monitor and enforce compliance with the act. The bill also provides for strict labelling requirements on any lawfully prescribed and dispensed medicinal cannabis products. Health authorities will also be empowered to suspend, cancel, vary or impose conditions on a medicinal cannabis approval. Therefore, I believe all of the safeguards are in place.

The evidence is clear that under the right medical supervision medicinal cannabis can deliver powerful therapeutic benefits to particular patients. I do not want to deny those patients access to effective treatments that will improve their quality of life and that of their families and carers. We already know that Queenslanders overwhelmingly support the introduction of medicinal cannabis in this state. We have heard that 96 per cent of respondents to an online survey said that they would support the appropriate use of medicinal cannabis. That is another compelling reason to change the law so that those who need to access medicinal cannabis can do so safely and under the proper supervision of medical experts.

I thank the committee for the great work that they have done. The committee is chaired by the wonderful member for Nudgee, who does a great job. I am so proud to be part of the cabinet to which the health minister brought this issue for consideration. Since it was introduced to the House, there has been unwavering support for the bill that is before the House tonight. I congratulate the minister for doing that. I commend the bill to the House.