




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

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GENE TECHNOLOGY (QUEENSLAND) BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (3.47 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Gene Technology (Queensland) Bill 2016. I would like to thank my fellow committee members and committee staff for their efforts.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I cannot hear the member for Lockyer. He seems to be mumbling over there. Genetically modified foods are not new in our society. Recently I spoke to quite a few of my residents, in particular Betty and Lauren, about genetically modified foods. I will discuss that further soon. They highlighted their concerns about the technology and the information supplied by the government and departments to ensure that these foods are safe. That was a question that I asked during the committee process.

As I said to these residents, modified food and plant products are certainly not new. They have been in our society for quite some time. It is not a new technology; it is an evolving technology. As CSIRO states on its website in explaining the different types of genetically modified products, gene technology has a range of applications which include research—for example, in biology and medicine with GM micro-organisms, animals and plants; agriculture, incorporating resistance to pests or diseases, herbicide tolerance, altering the timing and duration of flower production or improving nutrition; and therapeutic goods, modifying micro-organisms to produce therapeutic products such as insulin and vaccines.

With the information that is out there in our community, a lot of people think we are playing God with these plants and organisms. Unfortunately, this misnomer has been created and a lot of residents are concerned. During the committee process, the member for Buderim asked some very good and very valid questions to the research scientist. The member for Buderim expressed his concerns, and his concerns are very valid. I want to refer to an article that appeared last year on news.com.au under the heading 'The truth about genetically modified food'. I found the article to be extremely interesting. It stated—

Genetically modified food is a source of great controversy, yet most of us are eating it every day. If you cook with canola oil, snack on biscuits and chocolates, drink soy milk or eat tofu—

You name it and it is out there in our society. In the article, Professor Stephen Leeder from the University of Sydney said—

A lot of GM crops are engineered to tolerate 10 times the normal level of herbicides. Those herbicides have been demonstrated to be carcinogenic.

When there is information like this out there, it does breed concerns in our general population. Lauren asked me how she can put her trust in a system that she felt was not open and transparent, and that is something I say to the minister. This information needs to get out there; the testing needs to get

out there so that people know that it is safe and that it is not going to cause these genetic dispositions or cancer et cetera. We need to ensure that all the right information is out there in the public to stop the misnomers.

Betty highlighted to me an issue with genetically modified food. She comes from a farming background and she said that when they were growing crops which were genetically modified they did not need to turn the soil over anywhere near as much so that saved the water content in the soil and it potentially saved any run-off. She used to live up near the Burdekin and it saved soil run-off into the Great Barrier Reef. This genetically modified technology is actually helping in terms of the nutrients flowing on to the reef so that is certainly another bonus with this. I found it interesting that this information which explains these added benefits is not out there in the community. That is why I say to the minister today that we need to get this information out there to explain to our constituents that GM is not a bad thing, that it is a good thing in the long run because we can produce more food.

I will now turn to the bill. The creation of a lock-step approach with the federal government certainly does remove uncertainty and red tape when it comes to the providers in Queensland. I do appreciate that there is an opt-out option because certain things may not be in Queensland's best interests, as I explained to Lauren. It is good that this bill does have that opt-out option, and she did feel a degree of comfort knowing that.

Overall, I see no fundamental problems with the bill and I do support it. When it comes down to it, we are a small planet and we are trying to produce enough food to feed all of the hungry mouths. As we all know, the population on the planet is growing and we need to ensure that we can feed those mouths. We need to have efficiencies in the way we grow our foods. If gene technology is a way of doing that, then that is a path we need to prudently follow.