




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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HOSPITAL FOUNDATIONS BILL

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (11.37 am): As chair of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, it gives me pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Hospital Foundations Bill 2018. The bill was introduced in August last year in the previous parliament and was reported on by the former health committee in October 2017. The former committee recommended that the bill be passed and that during the bill's second reading the then minister for health and minister for the ambulance service clarify some items, which the department has done in advice to us. The bill lapsed when the parliament was dissolved on 29 October 2017 prior to its second reading. The current version of the bill is substantially the same as the previous version save for minor and technical amendments that were identified as being required by the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel.

The committee had regard to the report of the former committee and information used by the former committee, such as written advice from the Department of Health and advice from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries during a public briefing. The committee called for submissions on the new bill and received two, one of which was identical to the sole submission received in 2017 by the QNMU. Given the similarities between the bills and that the committee received only one submission by the due date but accepted a late submission, the committee decided not to hold a public briefing or public hearing.

The bill proposes to repeal and replace the Hospitals Foundations Act 1982. The Hospitals Foundations Act provides for the establishment for and regulation of hospital foundations, of which there are 13 across Queensland, such as the Townsville Hospital Foundation, which help the hospital and health services support the Queensland public health system generally.

They do this by raising funds to improve facilities, support educational and training opportunities for staff, fund research and support and promote the health and wellbeing of communities. The bill further proposes to streamline the legislation, remove unnecessary prescription, ensure that legislation reflects hospital foundations' current operational practices and amends the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to enable industrial cannabis seeds to be grown for human consumption in Queensland. I suggest that allowing for the growth of industrial cannabis in Queensland could be good for jobs especially given the Queensland climate.

The former committee recommended clarification of two matters which the Department of Health very kindly provided. They explained that not requiring a hospital foundation to obtain ministerial approval to acquire a business by way of a gift but requiring ministerial approval to acquire a business by another means was acceptable because acquiring a business is considered a high-risk financial transaction and is not a transaction routinely entered into by hospital foundations. The department also explained that exempting hospital foundations from obtaining ministerial approval if a business is acquired by gift is based on practicality because in some instances it may be impossible for a hospital foundation to seek the minister's approval before acquiring an asset by gift.

The department also explained the intended interaction between clause 66 of the bill in relation to property invested in a hospital foundation and provisions of clauses 52 and 53 in relation to obtaining ministerial approval for certain special financial arrangements. It explained that clause 53 makes clear that the minister's approval is not required before a hospital foundation can acquire or dispose of particular property received by gift. It also explained that clause 66 applies to any property that is subject to a condition or trust and allows a hospital foundation to dispose of property that is subject to a condition or trust if the property is unfit for purpose, not required or of insufficient value. In effect, both clauses 53 and 66 alleviate the administrative burden for hospital foundations when dealing with assets.

I thank the Department of Health for its very helpful advice. The explanatory notes to the bill state the hospital foundations and hospital and health services, or HHSs, were given consultation drafts of the bill for comment and that the hospital foundations were supportive of the bill. The explanatory notes also state that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries held a forum with a range of industry stakeholders to discuss the proposed amendments to the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 and that stakeholders supported those proposed amendments.

Our committee was greatly aided in its examination of the bill by the work of its predecessor committee, the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee. The former committee's work was invaluable to this committee. I would like to thank the former chair, the member for Nudgee, Leanne Linard, and the members of the committee, including my colleague the member for Caloundra, who continues in this parliament on that same committee as deputy chair. I thank all of my fellow committee members for their contributions on our first bill and our fantastic and very busy committee secretariat staff, Mr Rob Hansen, James Gilchrist and Lorraine Bowden.

I acknowledge the fantastic work of the members of the Townsville Hospital Foundation. Recently I met with the General Manager, Judy Higgins, as we had a general discussion on some aspects of the bill before us. Despite tough times in Townsville over recent years, our foundation has done remarkable work. The \$6.2 million paediatric ward development at the Townsville Hospital was helped enormously by over \$1.2 million being raised through the Townsville Hospital Foundation. They should each be acknowledged and commended for their outstanding work. I am pleased to advise members of the House that I shall not frighten them this year by wearing a bright pink floral number, as I did in 2015 as a dare by our hospital foundation. I raised thousands of dollars on that day, a day that is still in my mind. However, anything is possible. In a few weeks I will present our Townsville Hospital Foundation with a framed gift that I know will assist them in raising more funds for our foundation.

I note that the committee recommends the bill. In relation to the two amendments to be moved during consideration in detail that the minister spoke of, they are straightforward. I am glad to hear from the member for Mudgeeraba that there is no opposition in regard to this bill or the amendments. I support the bill and recommend it to the House.