




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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HOSPITAL FOUNDATIONS BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (2.44 pm): I support the Hospital Foundations Bill 2018. I thank both the current and former committees for their work on this bill and I thank the submitters. The bill is fundamentally about modernising and updating the legislative frameworks to support the fine work of hospital foundations. Generally, foundations start as volunteer-run outfits, established to raise much needed funds to support the good works of their local public hospital. Foundations are still fulfilling that role, but the way that they do it has changed greatly.

Let us consider the fine PA Research Foundation and its amazing achievements. It started in 1984 and, since then, its achievements are truly staggering. Let us consider the legendary Russell Strong and the work he did in the field of liver transplants. Just a few years after he developed what became known as the Brisbane technique, I had the great privilege of looking after some of the infants who had received liver transplants using that very technique. I saw firsthand the lives saved through the work of Russell Strong, funded by the PA Research Foundation. There have been many other significant developments. No doubt the development of artificial corneas for transplant has saved the sight of many people.

Recently I met Professor Ranjeny Thomas, whose research into rheumatoid arthritis has been funded over the past 24 years. Professor Ranjeny is a member of the congregation at Faith Works United Church in my electorate. She took me on a tour of the Translation Research Institute. The work she is doing in relation to rheumatoid arthritis is having significant flow-on benefits for a whole range of autoimmune disorders.

I doubt anybody in this House would be unfamiliar with the name Professor Ian Frazer and the incredible work he did developing a vaccine against cervical cancer, which is an incredibly difficult and devastating disease. His research was funded by the PA Hospital Research Foundation. The vaccination has led to Professor Frazer confidently making the statement that Australia will become the first country to eliminate cervical cancer. That is an amazing achievement by the hospital foundation.

I could go on to describe many more achievements, as the array of research funded by the foundation is truly incredible. It has gone on to establish and run the Translational Research Institute, behind the PA. I have had the opportunity to visit that truly incredible institution and I encourage all members to consider going there.

To achieve all of this, the foundation requires a good deal of money. To raise that money, it is run by a modern and professional team, supported by an army of volunteers. The foundation's fundraising activities are run professionally and certainly raise invaluable funds. I have no doubt that that story is repeated around the state. Therefore, it is only appropriate that we modernise the legislation to reflect the changing nature of these foundations. For example, the existing legislation requires that a foundation has a secretary who must be a senior officer of the associated hospital. The bill establishes the position of a managing executive officer and recognises this is, in fact, how most foundation management structures have evolved. The existing legislation is quite prescriptive of the powers that a

foundation can exercise. The bill proposes a less prescriptive approach, giving the foundation all the powers of an individual, including the power to enter into contracts and agreements. This reflects practices that would be accepted in any modern philanthropic organisation.

While the bill proposes less prescriptive terms in terms of powers, I am pleased that it contains provisions that will lead to greater transparency and accountability, ensuring that the minister has the appropriate oversight where there are concerns about a foundation's governance or financial viability. I note the concerns raised by the QNMU regarding the composition of the board, particularly that there is no requirement to have people on the board with nursing or midwifery experience. I also note the committee's comment in relation to this matter. I cannot support that comment. I note the department's response which says that there is nothing that precludes people with health expertise from being on a board. I have no doubt that most boards will contain people who have health experience.

I also note that this bill places obligations on board members to act in an impartial manner in the best interests of the foundation. I have been around nurses, doctors and allied health professionals much of my working life so I understand the passionate advocacy that nurses, midwives, doctors and other health professionals are capable of on behalf of their patients. I understand the sentiments of the committee.

I will always strongly advocate for nursing, midwifery and allied health clinical practice research because I believe it can be conducted and implemented more quickly and cost-effectively than research into new pharmaceuticals or medical equipment. However, I believe the provisions in this bill would require me, if I were a board member, to act impartially and balance my personal biases against the best interests of the foundation and its objectives.

This bill streamlines the legislation to support hospital foundations. It will make it easier for foundations to get on with the job of gaining support from the community for health research. The community understands the importance of health research and is prepared to back it with funding.

The role of these foundations in supporting research is increasing in importance as we see the Turnbull government slashing billions of dollars from the university sector—another source of health research. The public fundamentally get the need to fund health research. Sadly, the Turnbull government does not have the insight of the general public. Their refusal to pay a fair share of GST funding for hospitals will have broad-ranging implications. Sadly, these foundations may be left to carry the load in terms of funding for health research.

I support this bill so the foundations can get on with their job of raising money to support hospitals, particularly in the area of health research. I would call on the Leader of the Opposition to end the silence and call on Malcolm Turnbull to pay us a fair share of GST and tell him to stop the cuts to university funding. I commend the bill to the House.