




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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HOSPITAL FOUNDATIONS BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (11.28 am): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Hospital Foundations Bill 2018 as the shadow minister for health. This bill seeks to repeal the Hospitals Foundations Act 1982 and replace it with a new legislative framework. This new framework will allow for foundations to support the public health system in Queensland. This bill generally deals with the property that hospital foundations can hold and manage, how foundations and their boards are established, and how they are administered and overseen. Secondly, the bill makes amendments to the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to allow for industrial cannabis to be further developed. This follows a decision at the federal level to enable some hempseed products to be sold as food.

From the outset the opposition will not be opposing this bill. Hospital foundations do great work in this state by supporting their hospital and health services and supporting the Queensland public health system more broadly. They do this by raising funds that go towards improving facilities, supporting educational and training opportunities for HHS staff and funding research. Importantly, hospital foundations support and promote the health and wellbeing of their own local communities.

Currently, Queensland has 13 hospital foundations that work alongside our HHSs. These include hospital foundations in our regional areas, including in the Far North, Ipswich, Mackay, Toowoomba and Townsville. There are also metropolitan foundations such as the PA Research Foundation, the Prince Charles Hospital Foundation and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Foundation. There are also other foundations on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast and well as a Children's Hospital Foundation and an HIV Foundation. I particularly acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Gold Coast Hospital Foundation, which works hard to support our front-line health services on the Gold Coast.

Over the 35 years since the legislation was passed, foundations have undertaken a wide range of initiatives to support their local health services and improve health outcomes for Queenslanders, particularly through fundraising. Their support includes grants and in-kind support for medical equipment, life-saving research and professional development and travel opportunities for staff. Importantly, as we know, modern facilities are vital to having a world-class hospital and health system, and hospital foundations have provided facilities to support patients, staff and the community for the past three decades. In 2016-17 alone, the foundations collectively raised more than \$74 million for their HHSs—a huge sum that will go a long way. All of that has been achieved chiefly by volunteers who give up their time and devote their efforts to a very worthy cause—to achieve better public health outcomes.

The foundations are supported by a full-time-equivalent staff of over 180, but the vast majority of those who contribute are unpaid. In fact, collectively foundations have a volunteer workforce that is estimated to be at well over 4,000 people. That is 4,000 Queenslanders who routinely get out and about to assist with a hospital's fundraising efforts out of a genuine concern for their community and their health service. As a registered nurse and as the shadow minister, I personally thank the thousands of volunteers who have contributed so much to our health system through foundations.

In the 35 years since the Hospitals Foundations Act has been in place, a lot has changed. It is our hope that this bill will allow for a more streamlined approach to foundations and allow them to continue their vital work under a more appropriate framework for contemporary Queensland. Currently, hospital foundations are established as statutory bodies under the act. In fact, they are set up as bodies corporate that are governed by at least seven members. These members need to be appointed by the Governor in Council and a member of the hospital and health service, such as the chairperson of the board, or a nominee.

The current act also prescribes a specific membership requirement for foundations. At the moment, the act requires a body corporate to include an employee of a university or another educational institution. The act also requires bodies corporate to include an employee of a hospital within the associated HHS. The current act is considered burdensome and unnecessarily prescriptive. It is also considered to be not in line with current drafting standards. In essence, after 35 years, the current act no longer accurately reflects the needs of foundations.

This bill means that we can be more flexible when it comes to appointing members of foundations. Instead of specific requirements, members will be appointed based on their knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation. They will also be appointed based on their expertise in a relevant field. That can include expertise in areas including business, financial management, marketing, communications, health, law, or another relevant field.

In terms of the bill's amendments to the Drugs Misuse Act 1986, we know that last year the federal government amended the Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code. This amendment allowed for the sale of food in Queensland made with low-THC hempseed. However, currently, the Drugs Misuse Act does not allow for the production of industrial cannabis seeds for the purpose of human consumption in Queensland. That means, to produce food made from hempseeds, these seeds will need to be sourced from other states. That is despite commercial industrial cannabis protection for things such as fibre already being licensed in Queensland under the act. Therefore, the amendment seeks to enable industry development, which is commercially led, within the cannabis industry while also dealing with some pre-existing issues within the act.

The bill was reintroduced after it lapsed when the previous parliament was dissolved. This new bill contains a number of minor and technical amendments that were identified by the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel as being required. They include amendments to the hospital foundations provisions, including some minor grammatical corrections and word changes. Similarly, the clause to amend the Drugs Misuse Act provides for a number of minor word changes.

I thank the members of the committee for their consideration of bill, particularly my colleague the deputy chair, the member for Caloundra, as well as the member for Nicklin for their hard work in scrutinising this bill. I note the committee made one recommendation and that was that the bill be passed. During the committee's consideration of this bill two submissions by two stakeholders were given to the committee. One was from the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union, which supports the bill but raises concerns about proposals to change the composition of boards.

I also note that the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service raised a concern that this bill will mean that funds raised by the local hospital foundation may be diverted away from supporting the HHS and towards broader health services in that community. I will be asking the minister to clarify that in consideration in detail. Although it is encouraging to see this HHS contribute to the discussion, it is worth noting that this bill is not making changes to the way in which hospital foundations operate, or their broad principles. Instead, the bill is simplifying the membership of the board to allow for greater flexibility.

I understand the minister will be moving amendments to the bill that are outside the long title and I appreciate the briefing from the minister's office this morning on this matter. These amendments are technical in nature, but both fix up errors that were made by previous bills that were introduced last year that made changes to the drug court and the Mental Health Act. It is disappointing that these amendments have been rushed in and could not go through the committee process, but we understand the need for operational certainty for both the mental health system and drug rehabilitation and treatment orders. As I said, the LNP will not be opposing the amendments but note that they are retrospective in nature, which will close off any potential issues relating to the period of detention a person serves in an authorised mental health service.

Again, I acknowledge all of those who play a role in supporting their local hospital and health service. The LNP believes in providing a world-class hospital and health system for Queenslanders. The role that volunteers play in supporting their hospital foundations is absolutely vital.