




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 3 April 2019

HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.08 pm): I want to concentrate my contribution on the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill that repeals the Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Act and makes consequential amendments. It is really important that we continue to progress the medicinal cannabis act reforms and the state based regime that allows patients to access medicinal cannabis. It establishes a robust system for Queensland Health to control medicinal cannabis so that it can only be prescribed by suitable medical practitioners where there is evidence of its health benefits.

The LNP supports the health benefits of medicinal cannabis when it is overseen by medical practitioners in order to help patients where there is evidence that it will help treat certain conditions. We have all had advocacy in our electorates because we understand that medicinal cannabis may be suitable to treat things like: severe muscular spasms and other symptoms of multiple sclerosis; chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting; some types of epilepsy with severe seizures; and palliative care, where there is loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and pain.

I want to limit my contribution because of the time that is left here tonight. This is also a great thing for pharmacists in our regions. Currently, each individual pharmacist who dispenses medicinal cannabis in Queensland must have a dispensing approval. Dispensing approvals are site specific so pharmacists working out of multiple pharmacies require an approval in each pharmacy they work in. Queensland is the only state that requires pharmacists to have an approval to dispense medicinal cannabis, and there are more than 4,000 pharmacists in Queensland.

I want to thank John Hall, the director of Agri Fibre Industries in Bundaberg. After 20 years of developing hemp and medicinal cannabis technologies and research, he agrees with the streamlining of the process to take away the duplication and unnecessary overregulation of the medicinal cannabis sector. I acknowledge David Gillespie and Louise Blatchford for their work in this important sector. We need to work hard to make sure the region will see the benefits of using hemp as a rotational crop.

The issue that we have in Queensland is that the Drugs Misuse Act and the Drugs Misuse Regulation mean the details are very restrictive on how to go about research with the operation. I want to acknowledge the minister for taking that on board and at least agreeing to have a conversation with this group outside this forum. That is an important way forward to make sure we can get this important sector up and running.

For example, at present a researcher cannot send samples of leaves or flowers for routine analysis of cannabinoids and other THC to a laboratory outside Queensland without a complicated research agreement. The approved laboratory in Queensland—the forensic lab at Coopers Plain—cannot release levels of CBD in the samples that they test for research and other legislation that allows for THC testing. For Queensland to be a serious player in the research area, we need to bring legislation and regulations in like other states in Australia. It is also appropriate—

Mr SPEAKER: Members, in accordance with the business program agreed to by the House, the question is that the bill be now read a second time to which it has been proposed that the question be amended by omitting words and inserting words in the member for Kawana's amendment