



Speech By
David Lee

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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QUEENSLAND INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH BILL 2025

 **Mr LEE** (Hervey Bay—LNP) (3.58 pm): I rise to speak to the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill 2025. Recently the health minister, the Hon. Tim Nicholls, and I hosted the 50-year anniversary of the Australian Leukaemia Foundation. This is a cause close to my heart, and I commend the Fraser Coast leukaemia volunteers for their tireless work over many years in raising funds through Shave for a Cure and Light the Night. Each day, 55 Australians are diagnosed with leukaemia or a blood related cancer. That is one Australian every 26 minutes. Sadly, 17 Australians are lost to this pernicious disease each day. The Leukaemia Foundation's research road map is a commitment to address the urgent and complex challenges posed by blood cancer in Australia. They have an aspirational quest for zero preventable blood cancer deaths by 2035.

The Queensland Institute of Medical Research, QIMR, has a long history in blood cancer research, producing groundbreaking treatments that have transformed the way all cancers are treated. QIMR pioneered the first ever trial offering DNA sequencing of people with blood cancer to match them with new and effective treatment. QIMR has also delivered cutting-edge CAR T cell therapies to people with blood cancer. CAR T therapy is a form of immunotherapy that re-engineers a patient's own T cells. In my Hervey Bay electorate the Cancer Care Centre, GenesisCare and the Forbes Cancer Care Centre at St Stephen's Hospital provide first-class cancer care and treatment.

This crucial bill provides for contemporary governance systems and processes and best practice in public governance. QIMR is a Queensland statutory body and world-leading medical research facility. It has over 1,000 scientists, staff and students who research hundreds of diseases and conditions in 60 specialised laboratories. It is managed and controlled by a council. The institute was established in 1945 under the QIMR Act for the purpose of initiating and conducting research across many branches of medical science, with a particular focus on diseases of significance in North Queensland. It celebrates its 80th birthday in November. It was originally intended to conduct research into tropical diseases in North Queensland. However, QIMR now conducts research into areas such as cancers, infectious diseases, mental health, chronic disease and genetics. According to the 2025 annual report—

Some of the world's most prestigious journals featured QIMR Berghofer's work ... including:

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- *British Journal of Dermatology*
- *Journal of Hepatology*
- *Lancet Infectious Diseases*
- *Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology*
- *Molecular Cancer*

...

- *New England Journal of Medicine*

These published papers added to scientific knowledge on a range of topics such as scabies, liver cirrhosis, vitamin D supplementation, malaria, multiple sclerosis, childhood cancer, endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer ...

The QIMR Act has been significantly amended throughout its 80-year history and it no longer meets the contemporary expectations of governance. The existing act fails to provide for contemporary governance standards for the council, including clearly defined functions, management of conflicts of interest, membership requirements and integrity standards. This bill will address these matters by repealing and replacing the outdated Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945 with a contemporary and fit-for-purpose legislative framework for the QIMR to continue its world-class medical research.

Good governance begins and ends with strong and decisive leadership. Clause 11 of this bill provides for the swift and timely appointment process of council members. It is about allowing the council to remain competitive in attracting high-calibre members and keeping abreast with non-government research organisations. Strong governance is integral to public trust and confidence. To this end, the bill transfers the responsibility for council appointments to the health minister, enabling judicious appointments without compromising the rigour, integrity and transparency in the appointment process.

Predictably, Labor's statement of reservation demonstrates short-term political thinking. Labor opposes the clause 11 amendments which are ultimately directed at improving transparency and accountability. This is a desperate Labor opposition that will say and do anything to curtail best practice governance. Queenslanders know that Labor has a deplorable track record when it comes to contemporary best practice public sector governance. Remember the Coaldrake report into the culture and accountability of the Public Service under Labor. Remember the DNA laboratory debacle. Remember the alleged cover-up of Dr Sean Brady's forensic inquiry into the Callide coal-fired power station. Labor spent 10 years asleep at the wheel—

Mr McCALLUM: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. The speaker has strayed well outside the long title of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Thank you very much. I was listening, and I have not finished yet, member for Hervey Bay. I appreciate what you are saying but, as I said to the member for Mansfield earlier, please ensure that what you are talking about does adhere to the long title of the bill. Please continue.

Mr LEE: It relates to clause 11, Mr Deputy Speaker. Labor spent 10 years asleep at the wheel and now it pretends to care—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Hervey Bay, take your seat. Member for Hervey Bay, I had given you instruction on what to do there, so thank you for considering that. You did not need to reply to that. You may now resume.

Mr LEE: I now turn to the conflict-of-interest provisions. The act currently does not provide for conflict-of-interest procedures for council meetings. To promote integrity and transparency, this bill provides for disclosures of material personal interests in matters to be considered by the council that could reasonably conflict with the performance of their duties. In such circumstances, where the member makes a disclosure they can participate in the meeting but not vote on the matter. In circumstances where there is no disclosure by a member, this does not invalidate the ultimate decision of the council.

This bill also provides for commercialised incentive payments by reforming the arrangements in relation to commercialised incentive payments to researchers and provides for greater flexibility for QIMR to reward its researchers in a timely and equitable manner whilst retaining Governor in Council approval for extraordinary and high-value payments. Recognising commercialisation translates research into real world health and economic outcomes by encouraging world-class research through financial incentivisation. QIMR has said that commercialisation 'helps bridge funding gaps but also enables the Institute to reinvest in new research, infrastructure, and talent'.

In relation to gifts and donations, according to its 2025 annual report, QIMR received more than \$18 million in donations and bequests. This bill clarifies the council's authority to deal with gifts consistent with financial legislation and best practice. This reform provides QIMR greater flexibility to use community support effectively and responsibly.

In closing, I thank the dedicated researchers, inventors, donors and support staff for their extraordinary contribution to medical science and population health. It is these outstanding contributions that put Queensland as a global leader in medical research. I commend the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill to the House.