



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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QUEENSLAND INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH BILL 2025

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (4.06 pm): I begin my contribution by acknowledging the incredible work that has occurred and still occurs at the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. The Labor opposition is full-throated in our support of the life-changing medical research that happens at QIMR. It really does make a direct, positive difference in the lives of people in all 93 electorates of this parliament, and that needs to be acknowledged. I am proud to place that on the record on behalf of the Bundamba community, where the medical research that has occurred at QIMR has helped so many people in so many ways in our community.

As many speakers from the opposition have said, we support the majority of the content and reform that is contained in this bill. The current act is a pretty old piece of legislation, having been around since 1945. It has certainly been amended many times over those 80 years, so having a more bespoke and updated act is more appropriate. Having said that, as many other speakers from Labor have signalled, we do hold some concerns around clause 11 and the removal of Governor in Council oversight of the appointment of members to the QIMR council, but I will come back to that a little bit later.

We certainly support efforts to modernise the legal and governance framework around QIMR. Their work and their legacy are really incredible, from immunotherapy research—speakers have referenced the discovery of Ross River virus—to important research into melanomas and skin cancer prevention. I want to place on record my concern with the funding cut of over \$2 million by the Crisafulli government to public skin cancer research. QIMR undertook the QSkin study and laid the groundwork for what is an important public health matter here in Queensland. To have over \$2 million cut from public skin cancer funding and prevention programs is shameful.

I note that QIMR has been responsible for the discovery of the gene responsible for haemochromatosis and, of course, QIMR supported some of the public health strategy response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Who could forget that during the COVID pandemic the then LNP opposition, under the leadership of the member for Nanango, called for our borders to be opened?

Mr LEE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): The member has just started speaking about this. I am listening carefully. I will allow him to go on at this point.

Mr McCALLUM: For the benefit of the members on the other side of the House, as I was saying: QIMR were proud to provide research and their expertise into the public health response for COVID-19, during the time that the LNP wanted to open our borders prematurely and let that virus rip.

Government members interjected.

Mr McCALLUM: They do not like it!

I turn to the issues around clause 11 and the council appointment process. We do not support the removal of Governor in Council oversight of the appointments to the QIMR council. We believe that the removal of Governor in Council oversight jeopardises the integrity and transparency of the

appointments. We have heard previous speakers from the government talk about the governance framework that is contained in this bill, citing that there will be improved governance, accountability and transparency arrangements. That is not true, in my opinion. In fact, how can you say that there will be more accountability and transparency when you are removing Governor in Council oversight? It does not make sense.

The minister and the government have not made the case as to why Governor in Council oversight should be removed when that is the usual process. If that is the threshold that is normally applied to these kinds of appointments, why is it being taken away in this case? There has been no explanation from the government. I hope that the minister will put on record why the government is deciding to remove Governor in Council oversight. It is not enough for government speakers to stand up like lemmings in this debate and running their lines, saying that it will improve governance and accountability when it clearly will not.

There is a lot to be worried about. We know that this government has form for making appointments that are political in nature. After this bill passes—as it undoubtedly will, because the government will use its numbers—who is to say that it will not be the former member for Burleigh who is appointed to the QIMR council? He has already been appointed to an energy GOC and to Work Health and Safety. Maybe he will be on the QIMR council. Maybe an ex-federal LNP politician will be appointed.

Mr JANETZKI: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance again. There have been various contributions to the House with respect to board appointments. They have previously been ruled out of line and I ask that the member be brought back to those matters that are relevant to the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am looking at the explanatory notes. We see on page 3 that 'the Bill shifts responsibility for Council appointments and removals from the Governor in Council to the Minister' and the appointment process 'provides that Council member remuneration and allowances will be determined by the Minister, rather than the Governor in Council'. What we are talking about is the appointment process by the minister. This is actually in the greens. I would ask people to keep their comments to that appointment process. If people do go outside of relevance, I am sure they will be pulled up. I want to point out that this is in the explanatory notes. I call the member to resume.

Mr McCALLUM: This government's form when it comes to these kinds of appointments is absolutely terrible. Look at the appointment process for the Chief Health Officer. That has been an absolute debacle that has embroiled this health minister, who is responsible for bringing this bill to the House.

When we look at proposed section 11(2)(a) we see reference to corporate governance; public or academic administration; health or clinical research; health ethics; financial management; and fundraising. With the form that this mob have, they will be appointing another LNP donor. Fundraising experience seems to lead to an appointment by this government to important positions of leadership in public organisations in Queensland.

I will finish my contribution around the issue of commercialisation. It is a competitive environment that these medical research organisations compete in. I say to the government: rather than commercialising the research that could be put to public benefit and be available to everyone, fund QIMR properly. Increase their funding. Do not use this as a wedge for more privatisation of our healthcare services. Do not use this as cover for putting more of your LNP mates on government boards. There is no low that this government will not stoop to. That is why it cut over \$2 million from skin cancer research.