



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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QUEENSLAND INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH BILL 2025

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.03 pm): I rise to speak about the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill. All Queenslanders—especially this Labor opposition—are rightfully proud and will always be extraordinarily supportive of the work that public research does, especially the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. For the most part, we support the changes that are proposed in this bill, including the making of incentive payments for those researchers who in the course of public research make discoveries that have tremendous value for all Queenslanders and indeed, in some cases, the entire world.

I had the privilege of being able to sit in on the committee to ask the department and officers about the bill. I reflected on the nature of public research into public health. So often those for-profit and only-for-profit researchers in large companies seek to work on the nature of drugs that they know will provide a solution that while being positive for people, is primarily focused on providing the maximum profit possible. An interesting example of this is the GLP-1 drugs, which is the class of drugs that includes the recent weight loss drugs. There are enormous profits being made—it is a significant section of the GDP of Denmark—but the original research was pure research which was not aimed at making an immediate return. In fact, it was looking at secretions of very obscure lizards that come from Mexico and South America, the so-called Gila monster. This seemingly unconnected pure research which, of course, had no profit motive and was totally created by public research institutions actually led to enormous changes in the way that we are doing new derivations of drugs. That very last piece obviously comes from companies that are seeking a for-profit motive, and good luck to them, but we should not rule out that so much of this research was in the public interest. It was an obscure public interest that went on to have enormous public benefit. We often see those who criticise public research and public universities being critical of that type of research but we never know where it will go and nothing is more telling than that research there.

I want to thank those researchers. If they get that support and a bonus in retirement—because often their research will be many years in the future—I think that is a good thing. I want to express some concerns, though. We do not support the removal of the Governor in Council and oversight of the appointments—this is too important to be undermined. I was really disappointed in this report. I notice that a previous member pointed out there is a majority of the government that does these reports so, if there are the reservations such as the ones that were clearly raised about the appointments to the council of the Queensland Medical Research Institute—it is understood that all similar governing bodies in Queensland require Governor in Council approval for appointments. This was in the statement of reservation. Why was it omitted from the main body of the bill? It was certainly discussed, it was certainly important, but this report is done by the majority of the committee and the majority of the committee chose to ignore this really important thing. That is not true of the debates that happened in 1945. They knew this in 1945, but this government has forgotten these key principles. The honourable member Foley, who was the secretary of health, made it clear that the institute will be controlled by a council which will be composed of members set out under the bill who will be appointed by the Governor in

Council. These principles were set up in 1945 to have a clear diffusion of powers. I note the member spoke about the role of the British system that this government throws away—you spoke about the flag of which he is such a supporter—but this government throws away those principles.

It is not just the Labor member Foley who thought they were important. Some members on the other side may know Mr Nicklin—though few know the history since the merger of the LNP has reduced any of the values they once stood for—but Nicklin stood for values. Mr Nicklin said—

Then we have one member nominated by the Minister to represent the Government.

He had concerns about one member nominated directly by the minister. He asked—

What is the minister's intention there?

Frank Nicklin, who went on to be premier of this state, whose memory here today those opposite throw away, traduce, undermine, have no value for, said—

What is the minister's intention there? Does he intend to nominate a prominent research worker, or is the nominee to be a layman—

to do his bidding? This was the question that Nicklin put forward. This is what those opposite ignore. This is the tradition of the British Westminster system they throw away—they throw away the King; they throw away the flag. Frank Nicklin went on—

The appointment of the council that is to be responsible for the direction of the activities of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research will be one of the most important provisions of the Bill ...

Although this committee chose not to speak about it, in his speech Frank Nicklin highlighted it as one of the most important provisions of the bill. He went on—

... and I expected that at this stage the Minister would have given us fuller information on the composition of this council.

Frank Nicklin knew it; Foley knew it; we know it. The opposition members of this committee made it absolutely clear that this was an important issue, but—and I say this for all of those listening and especially for the young people who are learning how this process works—the government dominated majority forced their will into the report to ignore this key issue.

Frank Nicklin would be very disappointed with this committee. I wonder how much interference there was from the minister's office or, indeed, the minister himself. He wants to get his way, to make the appointments he wants—the very appointments Frank Nicklin questioned when he asked why the government would want to have one appointment and what were they up to. We ask the same question. We ask: why was this report so embarrassingly scant on dealing with these key issues that had been principles of conservative parties in this state for 75 years but now have no place? We ask why and how much the minister's office interfered in that. They had to be included in a statement of opposition but are clearly, as Frank Nicklin said, a key part of this bill.

I am deeply disappointed. We could do better. We could have proper principles fulfilled. We could have Governor in Council continue to have oversight of these appointments, but this LNP government traduces those very principles. The minister gave out talking points to say, 'Look what you did on some other board.' That is not good enough. The health minister needs to be responsible for what he is doing, not point fingers at others and not take away this key framework that means there is a proper appointment process.