




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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QUEENSLAND INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH BILL 2025

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.43 pm): I rise to support the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill 2025, a bill that reinforces our government's focus on improving health outcomes, strengthening integrity and ensuring Queensland remains at the forefront of world-class medical research. This bill introduces a modern, fit-for-purpose framework for QIMR, updating governance and integrity provisions, addressing operational limitations and reducing administrative burden. These reforms will strengthen QIMR's governance and competitiveness, enabling it to focus on world-class research that improves health outcomes for Queenslanders and enhances our state's reputation as a leader in medical research.

The bill replaces the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945 which has served QIMR well for 80 years but no longer meets today's needs. Unlike those opposite, the Crisafulli government is not asleep at the wheel. We are proactively reforming outdated legislation to ensure Queenslanders continue to have access to a world-class health system that not only meets today's demands but anticipates tomorrow's challenges. Our population is growing in size and age, which places new pressures on our hospitals and health services. That is why alongside essential infrastructure projects, such as the new 600-bed Coomera Hospital and the new H block at Gold Coast University Hospital, we are strengthening the very foundation of healthcare progress: research. Every day new discoveries and technologies are transforming how we diagnose, treat and prevent disease.

The Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill 2025 exemplifies this government's commitment to ensuring our statutory bodies remain modern, transparent and responsive. The new framework reflects contemporary standards in public administration, governance and integrity. The parliamentary committee received four written submissions alongside a public briefing and hearing. These came from the Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, QIMR Berghofer; the Australian College of Nurse Practitioners; the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes, AAMRI; and the College of Children and Young People's Nurses. Queensland Health also provided a departmental response to the issues raised. Throughout the bill's development, Queensland Health consulted QIMR and its council, both of whom support these reforms. Between 2023 and 2025 Queensland Health conducted three rounds of external consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including medical research institutes, universities, funding bodies, unions, professional associations, legal bodies, state agencies and federal regulators. Stakeholders were generally supportive of the bill and its focus on modernisation with feedback incorporated where appropriate.

QIMR is Queensland's homegrown, globally respected medical research institute. Founded in 1945 with just seven staff working from an ex-military hut in Victoria Park, it has grown into a research powerhouse with around a thousand scientists, clinicians, students and support staff. In a former term of government it was my privilege, along with other representatives of a previous health committee, to actually visit the institute. I have to say that some of the research that we witnessed on that occasion was nothing short of astounding. In fact, one of our visits was during the COVID period, not in the early days but toward the back end of the COVID period that we experienced as a state.

It was remarkable to speak with researchers who were actually growing, as they described, human hearts in Petri dishes so they could test some of the COVID vaccines on real-life human tissue. I remember them asking us to go into this particular room and look through a microscope. There lying in this tiny little Petri dish of about 30 samples—there were five or six rows each way—there appeared to be miniature hearts. I do not know whether it was my imagination or the theatre of the moment, but they actually appeared to be beating of their own volition such was the work of these scientists. Some of the work they do is absolutely mind-boggling. The imagination, the creativity and the courage it takes to venture into some of these realms is commendable, but it is also somewhat mind-boggling to see where our scientists are taking us.

On that occasion we also had opportunity to witness some 3D printing in that scientists were 3D printing with bio-organic material the scaffolding that would one day hopefully help rebuild breast tissue. The theory behind that particular research, although I am sure it still had a long way to go, was that in installing the scaffolding it would eventually fill with fatty material from the body and then the bio-organic material would dissolve as a way of regrowing or replacing breast tissue. I am sure there are many in the House who can see the importance, the significance and the courage of that kind of research.

One of QIMR's many significant achievements was the discovery of Ross River virus in 1963. If anyone has ever had the opportunity to visit the institute, they will have seen that it has maintained numerous populations of mosquitoes from all across the country. It has managed to breed them and keep them alive, in some cases for decades, and this has allowed it to do significant work into mosquito research and the spreading of insect-borne diseases. It was this advanced rapid blood testing and the deeper understanding of this mosquito-borne illness, in research led by Professor Ralph Doherty and his team into Ross River virus, that enabled the medical industry to look more objectively at how to treat Ross River fever and to understand what causes the severe joint pain, the fever and the rashes. As someone who was diagnosed with Ross River fever back in the 1970s, I am personally very grateful for that early work done in the sixties by the institute and the work that it has done in diagnostic and treatment breakthroughs because of that research.

As QIMR celebrates its 80th anniversary this year, I want to extend my sincere thanks to its researchers, inventors, innovators and support staff. Their dedication, skill and passion have cemented Queensland's reputation as a global leader in medical research. This bill ensures QIMR has a strong legislative foundation—the foundation that it needs to continue this vital work driving innovation, improving health outcomes and shaping a healthier future for all Queenslanders. I commend this bill to the House.