



Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2025

QUEENSLAND INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH BILL 2025

Resumed from 22 May (see p. 1435).

Second Reading

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services)
(12.22 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to address the second reading of the QIMR Bill 2025. Firstly, I welcome to the chamber representatives of QIMR who are here today. They are part of the legal team at QIMR, and attending parliament to listen to this second reading speech is uniquely suited to them. Welcome. No doubt I will get a critique of my delivery and of the actions taken from QIMR in due course. It is good to have them here in the chamber as this very important piece of legislation is debated by members on both sides.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Primary Industries and Resources Committee in conducting its inquiry into the QIMR Bill 2025 and thank the committee for its report. I note that this committee does not normally carry out investigations into health legislation, but it was appropriate in these circumstances. The committee made one recommendation: that the bill be passed. I appreciate the committee's support for the bill.

As the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, I am committed to ensuring Queensland's statutory health bodies operate with integrity, efficiency and agility. Our health system is constantly evolving. Every day new discoveries are being made, new technologies are emerging and new pressures are being placed on our hospitals, clinicians and researchers. If our statutory bodies are to continue meeting these challenges they must have the right legislative tools and governance frameworks to support their work. I often say we cannot keep doing things the way they have been done in the past. We need to be agile. We need to be able to move quickly. We need to give our institutions and our bodies the capacity to do so.

The Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill 2025 is a prime example of this government's commitment to reforming outdated legislation so our statutory bodies remain modern, transparent and responsive. This bill replaces the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Act 1945. That act has served QIMR well for 80 years, but it is no longer adequate for today's needs. The new framework reflects contemporary standards for public administration, governance and integrity. In fact, the need for this bill was first raised with me by Professor Arun Sharma upon my coming to office, and we have had a number of very good discussions in relation to the 80-year anniversary of QIMR and this bill.

QIMR is one of Queensland's great institutions. It is a homegrown, world-class research facility that has improved health outcomes here and across the globe. From pioneering cancer and infectious disease discoveries to breakthroughs in mental health and population health, QIMR continues to be at the forefront of medical science.

One of QIMR's latest research projects has unveiled the next generation of its world-leading melanoma risk prediction calculator to help all Australians take action against that deadly cancer. This cutting-edge online tool now includes 16 personal risk factors such as skin type and sunspot history. This is an example of practical prevention, allowing for earlier intervention, smarter targeting of skin checks and fewer lives disrupted by late diagnosis. Prevention is incredibly important, and this research will ensure Queenslanders have access to early intervention. QIMR is turning knowledge into protection to give everyone a fair shot at living a healthy life without melanoma.

QIMR has also launched a new study called Q-Inform to help researchers find the best and most effective way to provide people with information about their individual risk of developing melanoma. By using existing genetic and survey information from the QSkin Sun and Health Study database, researchers will examine whether informing participants of their individual risk for developing melanoma is associated with stronger adherence to recommended skin cancer screening guidelines. Q-Inform will put knowledge in the hands of all Queenslanders, while giving researchers the tools they need to turn genetic insight into real-world protection.

That is not all. Recently, QIMR researchers also discovered how brain stem cells transition between active and resting states. This insight could transform brain health research and cancer therapies. They have optimised the Masterswitch antibody, bringing a promising new targeted therapy for advanced bowel cancer closer to human trials. In a groundbreaking collaboration with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the Victorian Royal Children's Hospital, QIMR scientists have successfully grown three-dimensional human heart tissue in the lab, creating a completely new way to test medicines for genetic heart conditions. How amazing.

These are not just scientific achievements; they represent hope for Queenslanders and for families around the world affected by illness and disease. They are a powerful reminder of what is possible when we invest in medical research.

I will summarise the aspects of the bill that I think are of most importance. I turn to commercialised incentive payments. This bill ensures QIMR has the legal and governance foundations it needs to continue the vital work I have described. At the heart of QIMR's success is collaboration. Research breakthroughs are almost never the work of one person; they are the product of teams of researchers, clinicians, statisticians, PhD students and many others working across disciplines and projects, yet under the current act only those classified as 'discoverers' or 'inventors' are eligible for commercialisation bonuses. This narrow definition excludes the very many contributors who play an essential role in bringing some of these discoveries to life.

The bill addresses this by replacing the word 'bonuses' with 'commercialised incentive payments' and clarifying eligibility to include all contributors to commercialised research. This ensures all those individuals who meaningfully contribute, whether they are staff, students or collaborators, have strong incentives to innovate and can share in the rewards of successful commercialisation.

The bill also updates the approval process for these payments to create a more practical and proportionate system. Governor in Council approval will only be required for very large payments—where payments for a single piece of intellectual property exceed \$10 million in a financial year or where an individual contributor would receive more than \$5 million for a single project in a financial year. These thresholds are consistent with existing government policy and provide strong oversight of significant payments.

The approach strikes the right balance. It preserves transparency and accountability for large payments while giving the council the flexibility to recognise excellence, to reward innovation and to retain the brightest minds. These reforms ensure Queensland remains and perhaps can even be a better destination for world-class research.

I turn to council membership and integrity. This bill modernises QIMR's governance arrangements to meet the expectations of a modern health system and the Queensland public. Obviously, a bill designed in 1944 for 1945 is not reflective of the standards we expect today.

Strong governance is not just a legal requirement; it is essential to maintaining public trust and ensuring QIMR can focus on what it does best: world-class medical research. That is why the bill puts in place clear and timely reporting requirements. It will require QIMR's council to notify the minister of any matter that could significantly affect the institute's finances, operations or management. This means issues such as major litigation or serious financial risks can be identified early and addressed transparently rather than left to escalate.

The bill also makes appointments to the council more efficient. Responsibility for appointments will move from the Governor in Council to the minister, allowing vacancies to be filled quickly so the council can stay focused on its critical work. Importantly, this reform preserves the rigour and

transparency expected of public appointments. I note this change is supported by QIMR. I want to read from their submission dated 2 June to the committee. They state—

QIMR Berghofer supports the Bill's proposal to shift the responsibility for appointing and removing Council members from the Governor in Council to the Minister ... This reform brings several important benefits for the Institute's governance and operational effectiveness:

- (a) **Timely Appointments:** Ministerial appointments allow for a more streamlined and efficient process, reducing the administrative delays often associated with Governor in Council procedures. This ensures that vacancies can be filled promptly, minimising disruption to Council operations and decision-making.
- (b) **Agility in Governance:** The ability for the Minister to appoint and, where necessary, remove Council members enables the Institute to respond rapidly to changing circumstances, including the need for specific expertise or to address emerging governance issues.
- (c) **Balanced Approach:** While the Minister's appointment power increases responsiveness, the Bill retains appropriate checks and balances, including clear criteria for appointment, removal, and disqualification. This ensures that governance standards are upheld without compromising the Institute's operational independence or research integrity.

These changes are clearly supported by QIMR. The size of the council will also be refined by capping membership at nine. This reflects the current size and structure, keeps meetings manageable and ensures the council continues to bring together diversity of expertise and perspectives.

Integrity is at the heart of public confidence in QIMR's work. The bill empowers the minister to request criminal history reports before council appointments and requires existing members to disclose if they are charged with or convicted of an indictable offence. It also introduces new disqualification provisions and gives the minister clear powers to remove council members who engage in misconduct or act in a way that undermines the standards expected of publicly funded institutions.

The bill also addresses conflict-of-interest management. It makes clear that any council member with a material personal interest in a matter must step aside from deliberations and decisions. This is a simple but vital safeguard to ensure the public can have confidence that QIMR's decisions are made in the best interests of the institute and the people of Queensland.

The director of QIMR plays a pivotal role in guiding the institute's research strategy, building partnerships and maintaining operational excellence. Under the current act, the director must be appointed by the Governor in Council. This process can be lengthy and limits QIMR's ability to recruit swiftly in a highly competitive environment for research leaders. The bill streamlines the process by allowing the council to appoint the director subject to ministerial approval. This strikes the right balance between council autonomy and appropriate government oversight.

To further strengthen accountability, the bill requires the director to notify the council if they are charged with an indictable offence or become insolvent. Failure to do so without reasonable excuse will be an offence attracting a maximum penalty of 100 penalty units. The bill also allows the council to appoint an acting director—currently it cannot—for up to six months when required, ensuring leadership continuity during periods of absence or transition. Finally, the bill enables the council to delegate functions to the director and allows the director to subdelegate to appropriately qualified staff. This ensures decision-making happens efficiently, at the right level and by those with the relevant expertise.

I turn now to gifts and donations. The bill clarifies QIMR's ability to receive gifts and donations. QIMR's research is supported not just by government funding and grants, which it is, but by the generosity of the community. In 2023-24, the institute raised more than \$17 million in donations, bequests and philanthropic support. These contributions are vital to advancing research and innovation.

The bill clarifies the council's authority to deal with gifts that may be impractical or inappropriate, ensuring they are managed transparently, in line with financial legislation and in the best interests of QIMR and its work. This is a small but important reform that gives QIMR greater flexibility to use community support effectively and responsibly.

QIMR celebrates its 80th anniversary in November. For eight decades it has been at the forefront of discovery, delivering real-world health benefits and putting Queensland on the map as a leader in medical research. It is one of our premier research organisations. Queenslanders should be proud of it. Queenslanders should be happy to support it. The LNP Crisafulli government is happy to support it.

I want to take this opportunity to thank QIMR—its researchers, support staff, the administrative team who are here today—and council members for their extraordinary contribution to science and health. The dedication, skill and passion of these individuals have made Queensland a leader in global medical research. Their work has given hope to patients, improved treatments and inspired future generations of scientists.

Over my time in this place I have had the benefit of having many tours of QIMR including, most recently, after being appointed health minister but prior to that in many roles. I have enjoyed the

hospitality and the information provided by QIMR and I acknowledge the great work they have done. This bill is about giving QIMR the legislative support it needs to continue this vital work. It strengthens integrity, improves governance and ensures the institute remains agile and competitive in a rapidly changing world. This government is committed to backing Queensland researchers, empowering them to make the discoveries that will save lives and improve health outcomes for generations to come. I look forward to the debate on the bill and to its passage.

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (6.18 pm), in reply: In concluding this section of the debate on the Queensland Institute of Medical Research Bill 2025, I thank members for their contributions to the debate. I acknowledge and thank those opposite for their support of the bill and recognition of QIMR's life-changing work. However, I do question some of their bizarre contributions, and I will return to those because they have been many and varied. I have to say that their understanding of history is extremely limited and we will be happy to take that on.

I also say to members opposite, including the member for Logan, that Frank Nicklin would know what he was doing. He would not be sitting on your side of the House and he would not be supporting some of things that you support. Frank Nicklin was a true representative of Queensland and he helped build this state. He persevered in times of adversity to ensure that this state was built. I say to the member for Logan: we do know our history. We do not have people who went off, having been premiers of this state in the 1930s, to try to sell dud mines to the people of New South Wales and subsequently having to resign as members of the federal parliament as a result of that. We remember him pretty well.

For nearly 80 years QIMR has led innovation, trained generations of scientists and delivered breakthroughs that have improved the lives of countless Queenslanders. This bill ensures QIMR can continue that legacy with strong transparent governance. It provides a modern legislative framework with clear functions, integrity safeguards and efficient appointment processes. These reforms ensure that decision-making is accountable and conflicts are properly managed and the bill enables QIMR to keep pace with contemporary medical science.

I turn to issues raised by members during the debate. It will not surprise you, Mr Speaker, if I say that it appears some members did not bother reading the bill. The member for Miller suggested that vesting appointment powers in the minister somehow makes the process secretive or less transparent. Not only does that claim fail to stand up to even basic scrutiny but it is also plainly hypocritical for reasons that I will now explain.

Ministerial appointments of statutory boards are routine, well established and transparent. Across government there are many examples of boards and councils where members are appointed directly by one or more responsible ministers. I will give a few examples. The board of Queensland Rail is appointed directly by the responsible minister. Who was a former transport minister who helped in that process? The member for Miller! Whoops. It is another thing he forgot about. It is another mistake he has made. It is another error from the member for Miller—loose, sloppy, lazy and selective.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I obviously take offence at those sledges and ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: The member has taken personal offence. I ask that you withdraw.

Mr NICHOLLS: I withdraw. Members of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board are appointed by the minister under legislation brought into the House by those opposite, as are board members of the Radiation Advisory Council, the Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council and the Clean Economy Expert Panel. A former premier is on that panel. She seems to be dabbling in everything around clean energy and batteries. I wonder who might have been appointed to the boards of the Financial Provisioning Scheme Advisory Committee and the Electrical Licensing Committee by the member for Miller. Members of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland Advisory Council and the Public Trustee Advisory and Monitoring Board are appointed by ministers, mostly under legislation that those on that side introduced into and passed through this House.

It is surprising that the member for Miller has such a short memory. Given the member for Miller's history, which we on this side will never forget, it is no wonder he wants to forget just as he forgot to advise the then premier about a change in the cost of delivering a major transport project and then issued a media release that had the wrong number on it anyway. We all know about the member for Miller's history and the member for Miller's memory: it ain't as good as it ought to be. However, we can always help.

Those opposite appear to have very short memories because the Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board was established less than three years ago under those opposite. They were entirely comfortable with ministerial appointments when they were making them but now that they are on the

other side of the chamber, like Chicken Little, they come in here as if the sky is about to fall on their heads. How hypocritical can they be? They came into this place and criticised the government for what they had absolutely no issue with while they were in power. Now, it is the worst thing ever. Throughout the debate in relation to this process, they failed to acknowledge what the Queensland Institute of Medical Research said in its submission to the committee. I will come back to that.

As I said, the member for Miller appointed several members of the board of Queensland Rail under section 16 of the Queensland Rail Transit Authority Act 2013. That was our legislation, absolutely, but did you change it? You had a decade. Did you change it?

Mr SPEAKER: Minister—

Mr NICHOLLS: Through the chair—

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr NICHOLLS:—here is a question for the member for Miller: did he change it in a decade? No! Did he seek to change it? No!

Mr Bailey interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, pause for a moment. Member for Miller, I know there is some provocation but there is no need to continuously interject.

Mr NICHOLLS: The hypocrisy knows no bounds. In accordance with that act, which the member for Miller was happy to operate under for the better part of a decade while he was a minister until he self-selected himself out of that portfolio, the appointments were and are still made directly by the transport minister and the Treasurer without any Governor in Council process. The member for Miller now criticises this government for adopting the same model he has made extensive use of. It is transparently hypocritical because in this very chamber he stood and said—

Today I inform the House that Queensland Rail board member David Marchant has accepted the role to succeed Mr Strachan as interim chair of Queensland Rail ... I welcome Mr Marchant's appointment and look forward to working with him and the Queensland Rail board.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think the minister is straying a long way from the bill when talking about transport authorities. I was brought back to the bill when I spoke about going—

Mr SPEAKER: Your point of order is on relevance, I presume?

Mr BAILEY: Relevance and inconsistency.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I know you are responding to certain comments but I encourage you to stick to the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: I think the method of appointment spelled out in the act is consistent with that of many boards, councils and oversight bodies in other pieces of legislation. The method of appointment formed the subject matter of a substantial amount of debate and commentary by those opposite. I listened to most of it and I did not take exception to very much of it at all. In fact, I think I took one point of order in relation to skin cancer but nothing else in relation to their commentary. The debate was very wideranging, including by the member for Logan who just concluded the debate, on the appointment of people to the board. I think it is relevant to say that there is hypocrisy in the argument advanced in the debate on this bill in relation to the appointment process and to draw the House's attention to that hypocrisy.

The member for Miller not only stood in this place and spoke about his appointment of a new member to the board of Queensland Rail but he also issued a media statement in respect to that. Why did he make those ministerial appointments and trumpet them through his media statements when he now claims such ministerial appointments, to use his words, 'reduce transparency'? Not only did he stand in here and speak about his ministerial appointment and not only did he issue a media statement about that; he now says that that process reduces transparency. There is no logic to the member for Miller's argument. That does not surprise those of us on this side of the House, but it is worth highlighting that he was perfectly comfortable exercising those powers when he was in the chair yet now describes the very same process as secretive and untrustworthy. Why did the member for Miller make those appointments when the member for Bundaberg, the genius of constitutional law here in Queensland, claims that removing the Governor in Council process jeopardises the integrity and transparency of appointments and is inconsistent with the Westminster system? He even went so far as to suggest that the LNP is calling for a republic.

Debate, on motion of Mr Nicholls, adjourned.



Hon. TJ NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (7.30 pm), continuing in reply: Prior to the dinner break I was responding to a number of the comments made by members in the House in relation to the bill. I was dealing with the governance issues at clause 11 of the bill and in particular the appointment of members of the council. I was highlighting some of the discrepancies and the hypocrisy in some of the arguments made by those opposite.

I will continue with respect to the appointment process by the minister. This type of appointment process is a normal, accepted feature of Queensland's statutory governance framework, including under laws introduced and maintained by those opposite. As I said in my second reading speech, the current Governor in Council process can take many months. During that time, key council positions can remain vacant, leaving the institute without the leadership it needs to continue its vital work. The reform is not about secrecy or solely about convenience. It is about ensuring timely, accountable and effective governance for one of Queensland's most important research institutions.

In terms of the Governor in Council approval process and the claims made by those opposite, we can examine some of the appointments made under Governor in Council to address some of the issues raised by those opposite in relation to who is appointed to positions under Governor in Council. Some of those people include, for example, Dave Hanna, who was appointed under Governor in Council—a CFMEU operative and now a convicted rapist. He was appointed by those opposite. We have Linda Lavarch, a former ALP parliamentary member, appointed under Governor in Council and currently still on the board of Metro North. I have not taken any steps to remove her and I am content to allow her to continue to serve in that role. She was appointed by the member for McConnel to chair the Work Health and Safety Board. That was another political appointment by the member for McConnel.

We have Jade Ingham, who was appointed to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. This was a Governor in Council appointment and another Labor affiliated appointment. We have Jacqueline King, the former Queensland Council of Unions state secretary, appointed to the board of CS Energy. That was another Governor in Council appointment. We have Penny Tovey, another Labor member, appointed to the board of CS Energy under Governor in Council. We have Anthony Lynham, a former member and minister in this House, appointed under Governor in Council. He is chair of Seqwater, chair of WorkCover Queensland and chair of the Port of Brisbane Corporation. They are all Governor in Council appointments. We have the member for Miller's old mentor, Jim Soorley. We remember Jim. I remember Jim. The poor old member for Miller could not survive in council once Jim had gone. He self-selected himself out of council in 2004.

Mr BAILEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. As fascinating as some treatise back in the 1990s is, it is not relevant to this bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr O'Shea): I will ask the Minister for Health to keep his comments relevant to the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Of course, I will do so, Madam Deputy Speaker. In doing so, I note the many and numerous occasions those opposite referred to the appointment of some members of this side of politics in their contributions to the debate. I think the former member for Burleigh featured very prominently in quite a number of their contributions. Sauce for the goose is apparently not sauce for the gander, according to the member for Miller. Whilst we were content to allow that to occur, we see another sign of the hypocrisy of the member for Miller coming through again. There is no consistency in his argument, no logic in his argument and no rationale in his argument. There are many instances where what the member for Miller says is completely different to what the member for Miller does. Quite frankly, his arguments lack any coherence. They lack any sense of consistency. They are completely contradicted by his actions when he was a minister. It is a very spurious argument.

We heard the member for Logan speak about the committee process. I am unaware of what occurred in committee. I have not spoken to any of the committee members about what occurred in committee. I have obviously read the committee report. The committee report is quite concise and clear. It makes one recommendation—that is, that the bill be passed.

There is no evidence that I see that the other members of the committee voted against it. Did they vote against the committee report or did they not vote against the committee report? The simple question is: did they vote against it or did they not? If they voted against it, I would have some respect for the argument, but we do not have any indication that this is so bad that we must vote against it.

What are they going to do? They either support it or they do not. If they do not support it then they are going to consign the QIMR to working under 80-year-old legislation. Are they going to sneak in at the last minute and circulate an amendment to the bill? They cannot vote against that clause

because there will be no appointment process. They have to move an amendment if they are going to make it work. I predict that the member for Miller might move an amendment in the dying moments of consideration in detail. We will see.

They say they support QIMR, but they pay no attention to both the verbal submission made to the committee and the written submission made to the committee which says that QIMR supports the governance model proposed in this bill. QIMR wants the governance model in this bill. They say they support QIMR but they do not support QIMR's submission in relation to the bill. The hypocrisy of the Labor opposition in this place knows no bounds. Their inconsistency knows no bounds. Professor Arun Sharma, appointed to the council by those opposite, stated—

We support the proposed reforms to the appointment of council members, the director and the CEO. Currently it has to go to the Governor in Council, but we believe the agility required to address these things via the Minister for Health strikes an appropriate balance ... We are competing in a global environment. If we have to appoint a director, they may come from overseas and it may involve visa processes. These are lengthy processes. In the current geopolitical context, Queensland's and Australia's quality of life and our medical research capability allow us to attract talent, and we need that agility.

That is from the chair of the council himself, supported by Professor Fabienne Mackay, who also put that in their written submission.

The council itself is responsible for identifying the mixed skills and expertise required, conducting open, competitive and merit-based recruitment processes and recommending the best candidates to the minister for appointment. I understand that merit-based appointments are an alien concept to those opposite, but we know the under pressure and underperforming Leader of the Opposition was not appointed on merit; he was appointed by his union powerbroker mates in the UWU. If this opposition truly believed in merit-based appointments, we would see the member for Greenslopes in the role of shadow health minister rather than the member for Miller, but obviously they do not.

This bill goes to the heart of what this LNP government is about. We are calmly and methodically ensuring that the services that Queenslanders need in the health and wellbeing portfolio are provided in a timely and efficient way. It complies with the request made by the QIMR themselves. It delivers a modern, accountable and transparent framework for the operation of QIMR, not just for the last 80 years but for the next 80 years and well into the future. More strength to their arm.