

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN FUTURE FUND AMENDMENT
(FUTURE HEALTH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUND) BILL 2019**

Third Reading

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health) [1.35 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [1.35 pm]: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the third reading of the WA Future Fund Amendment (Future Health Research and Innovation Fund) Bill 2019. My contribution will be relatively brief this afternoon. The member for Darling Range and I were talking about the title. Throughout my contributions, I have been talking about the fund being called the health research fund. The word “medical” does not appear in the title at all. We looked at the short title and the long title of the bill. Given the size of the bill, it is interesting that the word “medical” does not appear in the title at all. It is an interesting reflection when we talk about the bill.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy): Members! Member, do you seek to take interjections during your third reading speech?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I was hoping to keep it short.

Mr R.H. Cook: Short is good, members.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, keep it parliamentary. Member, I will interpret that as you are not going to take interjections. I will ask other members not to interject.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I always like to keep the door open, just in case.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Please continue with your comments. Members, there is no need to reply.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It is very important as we reflect on this bill to talk about a couple of things that were raised by the opposition during consideration in detail. I appreciate the fact that the Minister for Health and the advisers from Health and Treasury provided very substantive answers. To the credit of the minister, every time we asked questions, and certainly when we asked questions to which the minister had to come back to us with more information, he provided that information to us, and I appreciate that. I am always heartened to see bipartisan support, particularly from the Liberal Party, the major party in opposition, with the government supporting an important bill and taking a collaborative approach. I wish more people would see such collaboration in this place from time to time. I think that is what they expect their parliamentarians to do.

Medical research is a very important part of the future health needs of Western Australia and, indeed, the world, generally speaking. I am always very impressed that in the Parliament and in talk across the kitchen table, we exalt the names of those medical researchers who have contributed a great deal to Western Australia. People such as Fiona Stanley and Fiona Wood are household names. They are heroes of modern Western Australia because they have made what I think has been an important contribution to the advancement of our health needs in WA. A bill that supports such important research and innovation in our state is well worth supporting. The reality is that no matter where the innovation has taken place or what has occurred, the impact has been quite significant. I have had discussions with Fiona Wood and talked about the spray-on skin innovation. A burn that occurred from an incident in Bali, for example, was treated from an innovative idea and research project here in Western Australia—indeed, in this city. The global implications for that treatment have been immense.

The idea that we can seek to ensure that we foster such an important entrepreneurial heart of our health sector, encouraging more medical research through this legislation, and then the ability for us to capitalise on the commercialisation of that is eminently sensible. The Liberal Party in opposition supports that concept. I like the idea that we have a future industry. Wherever we might be in decades' time, I hope that we will look back on this bill, which builds on an important initiative of the Liberal–National government, which established the future fund in the first place, and we can see that some important contributions have been made in this space, in particular in medical health research and innovation.

We flagged throughout consideration in detail some of our concerns with regard to governance. We have had that as part of active consideration and discussion. The transparency and accountability of the board still remain of concern, as do, indeed, the recommendations that may come to this minister or any future health ministers about projects and arrangements that may be supported. I think it is important to have maximum transparency and accountability. Although we would not seek to amend governance framework documents through legislation, we of course need to have flexible rigour around the more contemporary issues of the near future, and I encourage the minister and the government to ensure that as much disclosure as possible be made available to the people of

Western Australia about the advisory group and any pecuniary interests or conflicts of interest its members might have, so we are not in a situation in which this minister or future ministers, regardless of their party, are obliged to defend a decision made by the research advisory group, only to later find that there was a conflict of interest. That is not something that I think the government should have to respond to. The best way to avert that is to ensure maximum accountability and transparency of advisory group members and the decisions they arrive at. That is reflected in the conduct and governance arrangements of the National Health and Medical Research Council, Infrastructure Western Australia and Infrastructure Australia. If the opposition were in office, we would certainly be looking to ensure that maximum level of transparency and accountability going forward.

I reiterate the opposition's support. This is an important contribution to the future economy of Western Australia and to our ongoing economic diversification as health needs and our reliance on medical research here and across the world become more acute and important in the provision of individualised medicine. Indeed, perhaps we can avert what we might now consider to be debilitating or fatal illnesses and diseases, so that they become manageable in the future. We might no longer see people dying of something that we might now think of as relatively commonplace and obviously very disheartening. With that, I reiterate the Liberal Party's support for this bill. If it comes to a division, we will indeed be voting for it because we think it is an important piece of legislation that will continue to enhance Western Australia's leadership in this sector, here and globally.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA) [1.42 pm]: I, too, rise briefly to reiterate what I said yesterday during consideration in detail, when we were discussing some of the amendments. I appreciate the consideration that the government and the minister undertook when we were debating the merits of quarantining 25 per cent of the funds that would be invested in the repurposing of the Western Australian Future Fund. We understand that the government has no appetite for supporting those amendments and, as a result, the Nationals WA will be unable to support the Western Australian Future Fund Amendment (Future Health Research and Innovation Fund) Bill 2019 when it comes to the final vote.

From the outset, the Nationals disagreed with the repurposing of the future fund. As we went through the process, we sought to deal with some of the disparities and inequities in health service outcomes that we are confronted with on a daily basis in regional Western Australia. Those disparities and inequities might have been improved by us shining a light on and directing some of our best and brightest to thinking particularly about innovation and research into improving health outcomes in regional areas. Unfortunately, we could not come to an agreement on that and we are very disappointed. I have said on a number of occasions that I do not disagree with the shadow spokesperson for health that investment in health research is imperative. As a state, we should be very proud of the investment we have undertaken. We believe there was another way to fund the government's election commitment and proposal. It is not that we are opposed to increasing certainty for the sector and continuing to invest in the very important area of health research; it is simply that we do not agree with the repurposing of the future fund. We tried, from our perspective, to improve it.

The debate has been respectful; I think we have proved that we can agree to disagree on some things. The Nationals WA, as a party, has agreed to not support the bill. We will see whether there are some changes we can make by way of amendment in the Legislative Council when the bill progresses there, and see whether there is an appetite to pursue any such amendments. Perhaps there will be some support in the next stage of the debate. But as it stands at the moment, unfortunately, the Nationals do not feel that we can support this legislation. We thank the minister and his advisers for the briefings they have provided to us as we have considered this legislation. I wish them well as they progress the bill to the next stage.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health) [1.45 pm] — in reply: Thank you very much for the opportunity to close the debate on this important piece of legislation, the Western Australian Future Fund Amendment (Future Health Research and Innovation Fund) Bill 2019. It was an election commitment, and this is an important day for medical research in Western Australia. I think it will be a potential game-changer in ensuring that we take our place as a world leader in medical research, innovation and technology.

The member for Central Wheatbelt said that she was very proud of the investment we have made in medical research in Western Australia, and we should be, but we need to do more. We are falling behind other states and we are at a point at which we really need to make a decision as a community about what sort of future we want, and how we are going to secure that future and make sure that we bring to bear the medical research, innovation and technology that we need. This is an important piece of legislation because it will secure funding into the future. A number of members opposite made comments that there are other ways of funding this, but the unique way in which we are funding this will secure funding into the future. Many of our medical researchers essentially become good at applying for grants and at lobbying successive governments to top up the finances for further research efforts. This legislation will provide a secure stream of funding into the future so that we can make long-term commitments—not only as a government, but also as a community of medical researchers—to creating a centre of excellence in medical research and innovation here in Western Australia. That is why this legislation is important; it is about our future. I commend the previous Liberal–National government for bringing the Western Australian Future Fund into being;

it was an important piece of legislation. It was to mature by 2032, but there are important opportunities to be taken now as a community through this legislation.

I know the Nationals WA wanted 25 per cent of funds set aside for regional residents, but I just do not think we can do that in the context of medical research. A small Aboriginal child at the Telethon Kids Institute, whether they live in metropolitan Perth or in the regions, will benefit from these resources, and that is a really important issue to bear in mind. This is not about us and them; this is about us as a community. The work that will get done under this legislation will ensure that everyone in the community will benefit, particularly those who are, at the moment, facing disadvantage in their health experiences.

I want to thank a few people for their support for this legislation. Professor Ian Puddey, who is now retired, was the former dean of the medical school at the University of Western Australia. He originally came to me and said that we had to significantly improve our medical research funding efforts. It was from his conversations that I initially started this journey. I also acknowledge Professor Bruce Robinson and Mr Frank Cooper, who were important influences on the approach we took. Professor Robinson impressed upon me the importance of going to Canada to look at the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund and the important role it has played in ensuring that Alberta is a centre of excellence in cancer research and services. The whole medical research community has been supportive of this process. I also acknowledge Professor Peter Klinken; Professor Fiona Stanley; Professor Jonathan Carapetis; Ashley Reid from the Cancer Council; Professor Gary Geelhoed, head of the Western Australian Health Translation Network; and Professor John Challis, who was an academic at the University of Toronto and provided a lot of guidance in the early days. In particular, I thank the Treasurer, Hon Ben Wyatt, for his insight and assistance in crafting the policies that have now led us to the point of being in a position to pass this legislation today. I also thank the advisers from the Departments of Treasury and Finance who have assisted in this process: Ms Melissa Lui Yuen, Mr Michael Banazis, Ms Lita Geros and Ms Leanne Follows. Their support and advice throughout this process has been invaluable as we pulled this legislation together.

Finally, I will touch upon a point made by the member for Dawesville. I thank him and his colleagues for their support of this legislation. The member for Dawesville referred to the importance of governance, and that has been uppermost in our minds all the way along. This is not about a future health minister picking winners. This is not about future health communities making sure that they feed each other's projects to the exception of great up-and-coming medical researchers. This is about setting up Western Australia as a centre of medical research and innovation excellence. We should all seize upon the opportunity that this legislation represents. I commend the Liberal opposition for its support and seeing the opportunities that we now have before us. These opportunities will not accrue to this government necessarily, nor will they accrue to a government of a different colour into the future. These opportunities will accrue to the public of Western Australia, whether they be sick kids in Perth Children's Hospital, the chronically ill in other hospitals or members of the community living in regional Western Australia. We will all benefit from the advances in medical research. I reflect on a comment made by the member for Bunbury in his second reading contribution; that is, this is a gift from one generation to another. It is the knowledge that we will give to future generations through medical research, innovation and technology that will see us go forward as a community and as a society. Members, this legislation will save lives. We should be proud of the step we have taken today. I understand that the Nationals WA members are disappointed that we have not agreed to their amendments, but I must say, member for Central Wheatbelt, that 25 per cent of nothing, given that the Nationals are not going to vote for the legislation, is zero. We will all benefit from it. The Nationals' communities will benefit from it, regional communities will benefit from it and Western Australia as a whole will benefit from it. This is important legislation, of which I am very proud. I commend the bill to the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy): Members, before I put this to the vote, the third reading of this bill requires an absolute majority. If there is a dissenting voice when I put the question on the third reading, I will divide the house. If there is no dissenting voice, I will count the members present and declare the question to be carried by an absolute majority if that is indeed the case.

Question put.

The ACTING SPEAKER: There is a dissentient voice, so a division is required.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr T.J. Healy) casting his vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 13 November 2019]
p8843b-8846a
Mr Roger Cook; Mr Zak Kirkup; Ms Mia Davies

Ayes (42)

Dr A.D. Buti	Mr D.J. Kelly	Dr M.D. Nahan	Ms J.J. Shaw
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke	Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup	Mr K.M. O'Donnell	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr A. Krsticevic	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr P. Papalia	Mr D.A. Templeman
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr S.J. Price	Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr D.T. Punch	Mr R.R. Whitby
Mrs L.M. Harvey	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mr J.R. Quigley	Ms S.E. Winton
Mr T.J. Healy	Ms L. Mettam	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr M. Hughes	Mr S.A. Millman	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms C.M. Rowe	
Mr P.A. Katsambanis	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms A. Sanderson	

Noes (4)

Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr D.T. Redman	Mr P.J. Rundle	Ms M.J. Davies (<i>Teller</i>)
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Ms R. Saffioti

Mr V.A. Catania

Question thus passed with an absolute majority.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.