




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BAILLIE** (Townsville—LNP) (4.42 pm): I rise to speak to the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill 2025. This bill will enable the current trial of electronic monitoring devices underway at sites across Queensland, including Townsville, to continue for another year, until 30 April 2026, and ensure a meaningful and comprehensive evaluation can be conducted. Electronic monitoring devices provide real-time alerts about the location of youth offenders. These devices support our police officers working to ensure young offenders who have committed crimes and have been released on bail are complying with the conditions of their bail, including residence and curfew requirements.

This bill pertains to the electronic monitoring trial and allows it to be used under certain circumstances. In 2021, a two-year trial of electronic monitoring devices was introduced by the previous government; however, the conditions it was operating within meant the data collected offered very few insights into the efficacy of the devices in deterring young people from reoffending and breaching bail conditions. The initial trial by all accounts was an abysmal failure.

In the first 12 months of the initial trial's operation, only five youth offenders—three of whom were from Townsville—were ordered to wear an electronic monitoring device as a condition of their bail. The 2021 trial failed to even confirm the effectiveness of electronic monitoring in deterring offending behaviour because not enough youth offenders were ordered to wear electronic monitoring devices as a condition of their bail. Bowing to pressure in 2023, the former Labor government extended the trial for another two years and made piecemeal changes to electronic monitoring; however, once again, Labor failed to make use of electronic monitoring and only 36 monitoring conditions were issued for 30 distinct youth offenders. It took six months for Labor to respond after the then police commissioner publicly called out the electronic monitoring failure in February 2024, calling on the Labor government to revisit the use of electronic monitoring for youth offenders.

In August 2024, further amendments were made to the Youth Justice (Monitoring Device Conditions) Amendment Regulation to add additional trial locations and, again, change the parameters, but, critically, the previous Labor government failed to extend the sunset clause, which was set for 30 April this year. That meant there was never going to be enough time for a meaningful and comprehensive evaluation.

Put simply, we need more time. We need time to evaluate and assess the data to determine the efficacy of these devices. The additional data and information are critical, as they will shape our future position on electronic monitoring and ensure our conclusions and evaluations from the study are well informed. Electronic monitoring devices, when applied correctly, have the ability to reduce offending and provide offenders with an opportunity to re-engage with education or employment whilst keeping our communities safe. A well-executed system of electronic monitoring could be an important tool in reducing youth crime, supporting rehabilitation and fixing Labor's youth crime crisis.

The Crisafulli government will ensure that this trial extension is not wasted. We want to see a comprehensive review to ensure our decisions are backed by evidence and focused on reducing crime and reoffending rates. After a decade of weakening laws, Labor's youth crime crisis will continue unless we can implement consequences for actions and address the skyrocketing reoffending rates.

The Crisafulli government are not wasting any time. We have passed the Making Queensland Safer Laws, which includes Adult Crime, Adult Time. We appointed an expert legal panel to monitor and advise further changes and strengthen our laws going forward. We have opened up the courts to reporters and put the rights of victims ahead of the offenders. We have made sure detention is no longer to be used as a last resort. We have announced additional funding to open up two new courtrooms in Townsville, which will reduce the wait time for victims to see justice carried out. We have given the judges the ability to hand down sentences in line with community expectations. We have given our police more tools so they can do their job more effectively, as well as initiated Queensland's first dedicated rapid response unit, the Flying Squad. Additionally, we are investing in early intervention and rehabilitation by putting the Staying on Track program and Regional Reset out to tender.

Electronic monitoring devices are another tool, another string to our bow, which provides an opportunity for young offenders to engage in education or work with a view to being rehabilitated. They are a tool our courts and police can use to help keep our community safe. Queenslanders want to feel safe where they live. People in Townsville want to feel safe enough to put the bins out at night. They want to be able to go to bed at night without having to consider whether to hide their keys or keep them in an easy place for an intruder to find. We need to address the youth crime crisis to help residents like Mal, from Belgian Gardens, who said that his wife does not feel safe driving in certain parts of Townsville for fear of getting carjacked.

Our police are working hard, and we have given them more resources to crack down on repeat youth offenders. Police know who these young people are and we have given them the tools to do their job: enforce the rule of law and bring these young people to account for their crimes. Electronic monitors which show the whereabouts of known youth offenders are an extremely valuable tool for police. If we are to turn around the reoffending rate of 94 per cent, we need to continue with rehabilitation. These devices are not just about punishment; they are about prevention, supervision and giving young people a chance to change whilst protecting the community.

It will take time to break the cycle of crime, but we will not hesitate to put victims of crime first. Unlike those opposite, we will work every day to make sure we fix Labor's youth crime crisis. The use of monitoring devices on repeat offenders is about helping young people turn their backs on crime by keeping them from behind bars and offering them an opportunity to get back on track. That is exactly what our government's Staying on Track and Regional Reset programs are all about.

Staying on Track will deliver a 12-month rehabilitation program for youth exiting detention. We want to help young people reintegrate into their communities. We want to see them turn their lives around and put an end to the detention merry-go-round we have seen under Labor. We need to make sure that they get the support and skills they need to build a positive future. Helping young offenders break the cycle is what our comprehensive suite of programs and policies sets out to achieve. Tenders for the Staying on Track and Regional Reset programs are now open. I encourage local providers and those working across North Queensland to make submissions.

The consequences of youth crime are felt deeply in my community of Townsville and across Queensland. It is felt in people's homes, in businesses, in parks and in streets. Almost every day I speak to someone impacted by crime. We acknowledge that crime is out of control and it is not where it needs to be. We will continue to work hard and make the changes necessary to continue to resolve the youth crime crisis until it is a distant memory that we look back on and never have to think about again.

Extending the trial of electronic monitoring devices is more evidence that this government is determined to fix the youth crime crisis and to deliver on our promise to reduce victim numbers and keep all Queenslanders safe. This bill proposes to extend for 12 months the expiry of section 52AA of the Youth Justice Act. It means that the expiry date would become 30 April 2026. It simply extends the trial so that a robust evaluation of the trial can occur, including time for consultation with stakeholders, to inform decisions by the government about the use of electronic monitoring in the longer term before the provisions expire. I commend this bill to the House.