




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 1 April 2025

YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (6.20 pm): I acknowledge the great contribution from the member for Barron River. She is a true champion for Barron River and, I dare say, the best member for Barron River this House has ever seen.

Here we are, cleaning up another mess made by the former Labor government. Not so long ago, Queenslanders were left to live in a state where crime was out of control and people were scared to go outside or, even worse, scared to become victims in their own homes. That is the legacy of the former Palaszczuk and Miles Labor governments. In 2021, the former Labor government introduced a trial whereby a charged youth offender could be granted bail with a condition imposed that they wear an electronic monitoring device. The trial had a sunset clause of two years. The initial trial was an abysmal failure because not enough youth offenders were granted that bail condition. Given the two-year trial period, one would have thought that many youth offenders were affected, but only five were included as part of the trial.

Mrs Poole: How many?

Mr HEAD: I take that interjection. Across the state of Queensland, in the middle of a youth crime crisis involving many youth crime offenders, in two years they could find only five.

Mr McDonald: They were worried about the headlines.

Mr HEAD: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. They were more worried about how things looked than how they really were, which meant that they were a government that chased headlines rather than youth criminals. Concerns about the lack of the bail condition being imposed were raised by an LNP member, the member for Glass House, in a committee hearing prior to the bill being voted on in parliament in 2021.

Mr McDonald interjected.

Mr HEAD: I take the interjection; it was very wise counsel from the member for Glass House, a great Minister for the Environment and member of this House. Due to that failure, in 2023 the trial period was extended by another two years in an attempt to collect some data that might be helpful in deciding whether to make the trial permanent or do something a bit different. However—surprise, surprise—this was yet another failure by the former Labor government. During the extended trial, a few more youth offenders were granted bail with the condition imposed. This being the second time around, one might think they had learned their lesson and increased the numbers, maybe by 10 times, but no. In that period, only 36 offenders were issued with a bail condition involving an electronic monitoring device.

This is another example of poor communication and, frankly, mismanagement by the former Labor government. Their decisions and their administration of the government meant that these changes were not adequately adopted and implemented. As previous speakers have said, geographic restrictions meant that the trial could not be implemented in much of Queensland and communities were left in the lurch. Communities that could have benefited from the program were not included in the trial.

The main purpose of this bill is to extend by one year the trial period for electronic monitoring devices to be imposed on certain youth offenders, allowing more comprehensive data to be collected. Someone rightly asked why the government is extending a trial by another year when it has already been extended for two years. The difference is that we now have a government that puts the rights of victims in front of the rights of offenders and is not scared to take up the fight for Queenslanders and drive down victim numbers. While we do not back down from things that we think will work, at the same time we are a responsible government.

A government member interjected.

Mr HEAD: I take the interjection; it is a very much needed fresh start for Queensland. There are far too many victims of crime in Queensland and too many victims of crime in the electorate of Callide. Over the years, cars have been stolen and vehicles and businesses have been rammed. Frankly, it has been an atrocious experience that, in a developed nation and a state as good as Queensland, we should not be experiencing. The comprehensive data that will be collected will form part of our decision-making processes going forward. We need good data—

A government member interjected.

Mr HEAD:—and evidence-based data—I take the interjection—to make good decisions, which is what this government is doing. We are making measured and methodical decisions. To be eligible to be released on bail with the condition of wearing an electronic monitoring device, the youth must be at least 15 years old. In his contribution the member for Maiwar spoke about kids, and I think he said something about forgetting lunch and things like that. Maybe I cannot relate to that because as a 15-year-old I did not ever forget my lunch. Maybe that was because I like food a little too much! As a 15-year-old, I certainly did not forget my lunch.

Mr McDonald interjected.

Mr HEAD: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. The person can be a serious offender. That is who this legislation is targeted at. Many 15-year-old Queenslanders know right from wrong so, frankly, I find that argument absolutely ludicrous.

As other LNP colleagues have outlined, there is some early evidence that this program absolutely works. There is anecdotal evidence and evidence-based data that shows that it works. We want to ensure we give this a proper crack. In Queensland now we have a government, a cabinet and a Premier who are committed to getting crime under control. We have ministers who are going to administer their departments and hold them accountable to make sure these programs are rolled out in Queensland.

In the first sitting of the 58th Parliament, the Crisafulli government introduced the Making Queensland Safer Laws, which we had committed to. Following that, the Expert Legal Panel was appointed to provide advice and recommendations to the Queensland government. I note that the changes being made to the electronic monitoring device program could apply to the Adult Crime, Adult Time laws that we have passed. Because of our tough laws, there are now stronger offences that the magistrates and the courts have to uphold given the structure of Queensland's governance arrangements and the separation of powers. With this law on electronic monitoring devices and the previous laws that we have passed, youth offenders released on bail can be electronically tracked beyond the current expiry of the trial.

The LNP have listened to Queenslanders who voted for a fresh start. We make no apology for doing what needs to be done to improve community safety and reduce the number of victims of crime in this state. This amendment bill expands the indictable offences to include violence and threats of violence. An important benefit of electronic monitoring devices is to relieve pressure within the Queensland Police Service by minimising visits to youth offenders who are on bail and to ease the pressure created by 10 years of Labor's failures. The Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee recommends that the bill be passed. As stated in their submission, Voice for Victims supports the proposed one-year extension for the trial period as it is both timely and necessary.

In her contribution the shadow minister said some things that I thought were a little strange. She talked about blank pages in the bill. I think she was trying to reflect on the fact that we were not doing our job properly or we did not have a job to do. She failed to mention that the only reason we are debating this bill, which has a blank page inside the cover page—every bill that comes before parliament has that, I might add—is another Labor failure. We would have loved to have the data to roll this out permanently or put this to a legal panel for further advice and recommendations; however, we did not have the data and are now fixing this problem. I am proud to be part of a government that listens to Queenslanders and puts community safety first. I commend the bill to the House.