




Speech By
Hon. Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. DR LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development) (7.41 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill. There are two reasons Queensland needs this legislation: victims of crime and our communities deserve practical solutions to youth crime that are proven to make a difference; and the failures of those opposite. I was just talking to my colleague the health minister about how this trial was introduced. At the time, we were sitting opposite and we listened to the then government crow about how this was going to provide a solution to the crime problem in Townsville. They said it was going to make a huge difference. They forgot about simple things like telecommunications and network coverage, which are pretty important. We had young offenders running around with GPS tracking devices who could not be tracked because there was no reception. That made a mockery of the trial.

That trial was announced in 2021 in reaction to the death of Jennifer Board in Townsville. Following that tragic event, the now Premier and I called on the then Labor government to get it right, but they did not. When launched, the trial only included 16- and 17-year-olds, meaning fewer than half of hardcore youth offenders were eligible. It took just a few months for it to become obvious that offenders under 16 years of age needed to be included. At the time, the *Townsville Bulletin* referred to four offenders in Townsville who were 'allegedly involved in a slew of incidents' not being eligible.

In the first three months of the trial only three young offenders in Townsville were even considered as potential candidates, despite an average of 300 young offenders being arrested in that locality each year. One of the key reasons was network coverage being inadequate. In other words, Labor failed to plan. This trial gave false hope to communities right throughout Queensland. More importantly, it gave false hope to victims of crime. We have to question whether those failures were deliberate or another illustration of the incompetence of those opposite.

More than three years after the trial was announced, Labor again fiddled at the edges, changing the parameters of the trial but failing to extend the timeframe to allow proper assessment of the efficiency. People living in fear and people who have been victims of Labor's youth justice failures deserve a thorough approach to addressing youth crime. A thorough approach includes looking at what is available and properly assessing it.

In stark contrast to Labor, the Crisafulli LNP government has been quick to act on youth crime. In stark contrast to those opposite, we have continued to work on the issue, with updates to the Making Queensland Safer Laws. To date, we have seen some examples of monitoring making a difference, but a few examples do not overturn 10 years of weakened laws under the Labor government. Our community wants assurance. They want action. By extending this trial, we can conduct a comprehensive review to inform government decisions. We know that monitoring alone will not put an end to youth crime. Thanks to those opposite, we have 10 years of failures to address. Once the trial is complete, we can look Queenslanders in the eye and tell them whether monitoring belongs as one of the strategies to make Queensland safer.

Let us look at why a youth offender might be granted bail with an electronic monitoring condition. They have to be at least 15 years of age, be charged with a prescribed indictable offence, have been previously either found guilty of at least one indictable offence or charged with an unrelated prescribed indictable offence in the preceding 12 months and consent to wearing the electronic monitoring device. These are not angels. These are hardcore youth offenders who know that they are committing offences. These are the hardcore youth offenders who are tearing the hearts out of communities like Townsville. I have lost count of the number of times I have stood up in this place and talked about the impact that has had on communities such as Townsville. These offenders need to be held to account. This trial is about giving Queenslanders the truth they deserve, instead of the kneejerk reaction we saw from Labor in response to a tragedy.

Those opposite have no choice but to support this bill or it will confirm what we all know and think—that is, they do not believe their so-called solution stood a chance of making a difference. It will confirm the division within Labor and it will confirm that the Leader of the Opposition's days are indeed numbered. As the Premier has said, we are not focused on those numbers. We are focused on reducing the number of victims of crime. That focus means looking at all of the available options fairly and based on results. By supporting this bill, we are making a commitment to delivering the truth to Queenslanders. I call on all members to do just that.