Speech By

David Lee

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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MOTION

Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Mr LEE (Hervey Bay—LNP) (7.49 pm): I rise to speak to the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025. This is a bill to amend the Youth Justice Act 1992 and the Youth Justice Regulation 2016. This bill is great news for Hervey Bay after a decade of decline that gave rise to the youth crime crisis. Youth crime inflicted significant economic damage throughout our hardworking small business community and terrified many older members in our community. Meanwhile the former Labor member for Hervey Bay remained in witness protection, reportedly dismissing the youth crime crisis as a media beat-up and quickly retreating from Labor's vacuous and patronising slogan of 'keeping us safe and strong'. Hervey Bay cannot risk returning to the bad old days of Labor.

Section 52AA of the Youth Justice Act provides that the court, in certain circumstances, can impose on a grant of bail a condition that a child must wear an electronic monitoring device while released on bail. This bill makes several substantial amendments. Firstly, the bill amends section 52AA(10) of the Youth Justice Act to provide permanent electronic monitoring by removing the expiry date of 30 April 2026 after a period of five years have expired. Secondly, it removes the existing geographical limitations under section 52AA to allow for the use of electronic monitoring on any youth offender throughout Queensland. To give practical effect to this amendment, the bill amends the Youth Justice Regulation and removes part 2A, 'Geographical areas for monitoring device condition' and schedule 1AA, 'Geographical area for child to live in'. Thirdly, the bill removes the restrictive eligibility criteria that requires a youth to be at least 15 years of age, to be charged with a prescribed indictable offence and to have been previously charged with a prescribed indictable offence or found guilty of an indictable offence. Finally, the bill simplifies the matters which a court must consider when determining whether an electronic monitoring device condition is appropriate.

It is important to understand the legislative history behind this amendment bill. It is a history that speaks to Labor's muddled and chaotic policy on the run. It is a story that exemplifies a pattern of obfuscation. It was Queensland Labor that substantially weakened the youth justice legislation by removing detention as a last resort, abolishing breach of bail as an offence and closing the Childrens Court to victims, their families and the media. In 2021 section 26 of the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill inserted a new section 52AA into the Youth Justice Act. Subsection (10) provided that this section expire two years after commencement. That was on 30 April 2023. Then in 2023 section 14 of the Strengthening Community Safety Bill extended the application of section 52AA by a further two years, until 30 April 2025. The Crisafulli government is taking a calm and methodical approach to the electronic monitoring law, and in April 2025 we extended that sunset clause for a further year, to 30 April 2026. This 2025 amendment was because of Labor's half-hearted and rushed legislative agenda.

A credible and robust qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the effectiveness of electronic monitoring devices requires a sufficiently large and statistically significant sample size, and that is why we extended the trial in 2025. The *Evaluation of the electronic monitoring trial: final report* was released in October 2025. According to the final report, the outcomes were generally positive and electronic monitoring conditions were associated with bail completion, reduced reoffending, lower victimisation and reduced time in custody. The report speaks about wraparound services being central to the success of electronic monitoring devices. We are doing just that. We have our gold standard early intervention programs like Regional Reset and the Kickstarter program.

Labor's breathtaking arrogance is self-evident in a misleading and deceptive statement of reservation where it is stated—and wait for it—

It is clear this bill is an expansion of the strong tool implemented and trialled by the former Labor Government.

Let's be very clear: Labor's trial from the very beginning was set up to fail because it was impossible to conduct a robust, qualitative and quantitative assessment with such a manifestly restricted cohort.

Let's look at some quick EMD statistics. In relation to high bail completion, 114 EMD orders had been completed as at 30 June 2025. Of those 114 with completed EMD orders, 72 per cent resulted in successful completion of bail conditions. There was a 24 per cent reduction in relation to the comparison group in the likelihood of reoffending. A lower proportion of EMD episodes was associated with offences involving victims during bail compared to the comparison group. There was less time in custody: 46 per cent of EMD episodes spent less time in custody during bail compared to 96 per cent in the three months before the episode.

Labor's soft approach to crime has given rise to a youth crime crisis in my electorate of Hervey Bay and indeed Queensland. Clearly, when it came to reforming the youth justice system and putting the rights of victims first, Queensland Labor just does not have the ticker. An inconvenient and embarrassing truth for Labor occurred on 9 February 2024 when the former police commissioner Katarina Carroll said, 'I will always provide frank and fearless advice to the government.' The former police commissioner described electronic monitoring devices as a very, very powerful tool. Her comments came following the tragic death of Ipswich grandmother Vyleen White. Sadly, at the time of Ms Carroll's statement 33 EMD devices had been issued but only five were in use.

Section 52AA has been considerably simplified to provide that a court may impose a bail condition that a child must wear an electronic monitoring device while released on bail if the court is satisfied, in addition to the matters mentioned in 52AA that: imposing the monitoring device condition is appropriate having regard to the suitability assessment report given to the court under subsection (4); and any other matter the court considers relevant. The court must continue to apply all of the requirements under section 52AA(2) before imposing electronic monitoring as a condition of bail.

In closing, the Crisafulli government is taking a proactive and transformative approach to youth justice. This side of the House is delivering for Queenslanders some of the strongest youth justice monitoring laws in the country. We are a government that listens to Queenslanders, and in October 2024 Hervey Bay resoundingly voted for a Crisafulli government that would provide stronger youth justice laws, hold youth offenders accountable for their crimes and provide a youth justice system that puts victims first. Queenslanders know that we cannot risk a return to a chaotic Labor government whose botched youth crime policy was evident in a 2016 five-point plan, in a 2019 four-point plan, in a 2020 five-point plan and in a 2022 10-point plan. I commend the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill to the House.