




Speech By
Donna Kirkland

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs KIRKLAND** (Rockhampton—LNP) (6.04 pm): The Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill extends the trial of electronic monitoring devices for just one year to ensure a meaningful and a comprehensive evaluation can be conducted. Our community was initially excited to hear of the electronic monitoring trial but then later disappointed to hear of the insignificant pool of eligibility for the trial. The trial was first introduced in 2021. With rapidly escalating crime rates being experienced in my community, families and business owners were beginning to feel the effects of the youth crime crisis—a crisis that arose resultant of Labor’s watering down of the Youth Justice Act in 2015, with a generation of repeat offenders having grown in their brazenness and lack of regard for a law that left them basically untouchable. The 2021 Labor-delivered EMD trial was a glimmer of hope that lacked credibility due to its small participant pool selection able to be collected within the time period of the trial. How could a proper evaluation even be considered when the test pool was less than adequate, with just five offenders across the entire state being eligible for fitting of the devices—not 500, not 100 but five, just five?

Mr McDonald: Five?

Mrs KIRKLAND: Just five. Shame. It is important to note here that during the committee’s hearing in 2021 the LNP member for Glass House had specifically warned the previous Labor government of this exact potential issue. During the committee’s hearing on 8 March 2021, the member mentioned this. Of course, because common sense was not implemented, the trial proceeded without taking on board relevant concerns raised by the LNP member for Glass House and the trial was a failure.

In 2023, as the youth crime crisis was engulfing our communities, particularly across regional Queensland, the then Labor government conceded and extended the trial for another two years. That again restricted the eligibility for fitting of the devices to a small cohort that was clearly misrepresentative of the magnitude of youth crime sweeping the state. What resulted was yet another complete waste of taxpayer dollars and precious time, with only 30 youth offenders being captured in that trial across the whole state. Within a youth crime wave, we recorded 6,225 juvenile offence charges at June 2024.

Because this trial was not being taken seriously by the then Labor government, crime statistics would continue to grow, with the Queensland police statistics revealing shocking data: in August 2024 Mount Isa had 4,000 offences per 100,000 people; Townsville, 1,541 offences per 100,000 people; Far North Queensland, 1,373 offences per 100,000 people; Capricornia, where I live, 1,081 offences per 100,000 people—and it went on. How on earth could a trial of just 30 offenders even begin to capture what was happening in order to prevent its continued escalation and criticality of the impacts on our communities?

These preliminary numbers were clear. The piecemeal changes the former Labor government made were not delivering results. To the wonder of victims of crime across the state, the then Labor government actually made a change. It added further trial locations and, finally, Rockhampton was added to the list. However, true to form, it did not extend the trial for a period that would enable proper

evaluation of that data and trial success measurement, putting a sunset clause on the trial that would expire in April this year. There would never have been sufficient time to properly evaluate the impact of the amended trial before it expired.

There was some anecdotal evidence. In July 2022, a 16-year-old in Logan was fitted with an electronic monitoring device after several periods in detention. The court granted bail with conditions, including residential arrangements and locality restrictions, which the youth successfully adhered to and they have not reoffended. In November 2024, a 16-year-old in South-East Queensland successfully completed two months of bail conditions with an electronic monitoring device. The sentencing magistrate noted the young person's high level of compliance and that they did not go on to reoffend. In January 2025, a 17-year-old in Brisbane was granted conditional bail with an electronic monitoring device and a curfew. The youth not only complied with all of their conditions but also re-engaged with school and actively participated in rehabilitation services.

These anecdotal results show that half of the young people who were subject to EMD orders do not reoffend. That is really positive. Imagine if this trial had been done right in the first instance back in 2021 with meaningful, comprehensive evaluations. Simply extending the conditions for offenders would have, according to these anecdotal preliminary observations, seen fewer victims of crime and perhaps even intercepted significant violations of families across Queensland.

This comprehensive review will inform government decisions about electronic monitoring for youth offenders. Only thorough, well-designed trials can advise decisions on permanency of electronic monitoring and that is what the extension of this trial will do. I am proud to be a part of a government that properly approaches government decision-making processes with a measured and considered mind to assure communities a comprehensive and evidence-based review has been conducted. We make no apologies for doing what needs to be done to improve community safety and reduce victims of crime in this state.

The outcome of the committee report was a recommendation that the bill be passed. At the public hearing the Queensland Family and Child Commission commented on the need for not only a quantitative but a qualitative data evaluation and that is what the extension of the trial will enable. It is important that the trial finds a balance between rehabilitation and the protection of the public. This Crisafulli-led government is focused on delivering that balance with our Making Queensland Safer Laws, including \$485 million for early intervention, crime prevention and rehabilitation programs.

I would ask how the fitting of just one electronic monitoring device over the last eight months within the Rockhampton region even comes close to a proper litmus test of its effectiveness, given the Rockhampton region saw a 253 per cent increase in assaults, a 216 per cent increase in robbery and a 226 per cent increase in car theft under the watch of Labor—most of these offences committed by repeat youth offenders. The extension of the EMD sampling period also increases the number of participants. The purpose of the trial is to test the probability of permanent implementation of a measure that has the potential to deter repeat offences and reform offenders from a life of crime.

The Crisafulli LNP government promised to bring in the Making Queensland Safer Laws before Christmas, which we did. We promised we would bring in more tranches of these laws after consultation with industry experts; we have done this, with more to come. The Crisafulli government is committed to restoring safety in our communities and reducing victims of crime. This bill reassures Vishal from Ram's auto repairs that we are leaving no stone unturned in making certain every potential lever is explored as a means to reduce crime in this state and in his business where he has way too many reels of CCTV footage of the same youths repeatedly committing offences at his business. I commend the bill to the House.