



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Record of Proceedings, 11 February 2026

YOUTH JUSTICE (ELECTRONIC MONITORING) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms MORTON** (Caloundra—LNP) (5.21 pm): Today I rise to speak on the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill. This bill is about a simple promise: Queenslanders deserve to feel safe where they live—in their homes, on their streets and in their communities. In Caloundra and right across the Sunshine Coast, people tell me the same thing: they have been tired and frustrated with a system that has felt like a revolving door—kids arrested, bailed and then back out committing offences again; families locking up earlier; small businesses spending more on security; and ordinary residents changing how they live, how they park, when they go out and even how they open their garage doors at night. This is why this bill matters. It is a step in delivering stronger bail laws, making electronic monitoring for youth on bail permanent and statewide, removing unnecessary restrictions and ensuring courts have clearer powers to manage risk. This bill is not about slogans; it is about strong laws backed by evidence to reduce reoffending and ultimately reduce the numbers of victims.

We cannot pretend that we arrived at this point by accident. For a decade the former Labor government weakened Queensland's youth crime laws. It made detention a last resort, it abolished breach of bail as an offence, it constrained courts and it created a system where consequences for actions were missing, leaving victims and families unseen and unprotected, and it is Queenslanders who paid the price. Queenslanders called for stronger laws. Labor's response was electronic monitoring that was so narrow and so restrictive that hardly any youths were ordered to wear a device. Electronic monitoring was introduced as a two-year trial in 2021, but it was rolled out in a way that was bound to fail. In the first year of operation only four youth offenders were placed on an electronic monitoring device as a condition of their bail—four. That is not a serious trial; it is a policy experiment designed so narrowly it can never produce meaningful results.

In April 2025 the Crisafulli government extended the trial by 12 months until April 2026 so that a comprehensive, independent evaluation could be completed and properly inform decision-making. That evaluation has now been delivered. The findings are clear: when a young person was wearing an electronic monitoring device they were 24 per cent less likely to reoffend. That is one in four kids on bail not committing another crime. The report found that 72 per cent of youth on electronic monitoring completed their bail conditions, reoffending was 63 per cent for those wearing a device compared with 81 per cent for those not wearing one, and youths wearing a device committed fewer offences involving victims—40 per cent compared to 66 per cent. In an environment where communities like Caloundra are demanding real action, this matters. It shows that electronic monitoring works as a supervision tool and it changes behaviour.

This bill does four key things: first, it makes electronic monitoring permanent by removing the expiry provision; second, it makes electronic monitoring statewide unless a court is advised that a location does not have the necessary or suitable services; third, it removes restrictive eligibility criteria, including the 15-year-old age limit and the complicated offence and location rules that meant courts often could not use this tool, even when risk was obvious; and, fourth, it simplifies the matters that courts must consider so magistrates can apply common sense and focus on what matters—risk, compliance and community safety.

This bill gives every court in Queensland the power to place an electronic monitoring condition on any youth granted bail from age 10 to 17, including first-time offenders, if the court deems it suitable. That is a major strengthening of the system because it trusts courts and gives them the tools they have been missing. This bill is not about punishment for punishment's sake. It is not an alternative to detention. If a youth offender should be in detention, they will be. This bill is about what happens when bail is granted, ensuring bail is not simply a piece of paper with conditions that cannot be enforced. Electronic monitoring means there is nowhere to hide if a youth chooses to breach or reoffend and the police can respond faster when conditions are broken.

The report also found that electronic monitoring is even more effective when paired with support services, and that is why this government is investing not only in stronger laws but also in the supports that prevent reoffending. Evidence tells us that youth offenders who engage with bail support services are less likely to reoffend than those who receive none.

This is why our government has delivered the largest investment in bail support services in the last decade—\$44.3 million funded over the next four years. We have delivered \$75 million to save and expand youth co-responder teams statewide, because under Labor the program had no funding beyond June 2025 and was set to fall off a cliff. We have committed \$90 million for specialised crime prevention and youth justice schools designed to take disengaged, high-risk youths off the streets and back into education, training and the pathway to a job. On the Sunshine Coast we know that when young people disengage from school, community and structure the risks rise quickly. These investments mean we are not only enforcing conditions; we are giving young people a pathway back.

Importantly, we are listening to victims. Victim advocates have made it clear that, yes, early intervention and rehabilitation are vital, but the rights of offenders must not crowd out the rights of victims to live safely. Victims want fewer victims, and nobody wants to be a victim.

One of my favourite parts of being involved with this process was hearing anecdotal evidence that when a youth has a device fitted other youth offenders stay away. What a great opportunity to break a cycle for vulnerable people by keeping other youth offenders away from them, and as a parent I would want to utilise all tools available to have that outcome. That is what support looks like. Let us give these kids a real chance at their pathway back.

In Caloundra and across Queensland, people want to see action that is measurable—not announcements, not pilots designed to fail, not endless tinkering. This bill delivers measurable reform, strengthens bail, reduces reoffending, reduces victim numbers and restores confidence that bail has credibility and enforceability. This bill will help ensure we continue to head in the right direction, because every percentage point of lowering victim numbers represents real people, real families and real peace of mind restored in communities like mine. I say a big thank you to Minister Gerber, her team, her department, the committee secretariat and the committee for all of their hard work on this important legislation. I also want to acknowledge all of the witnesses who came forward in the hearings to have their say.

I am confident that every step towards reducing victim numbers plays an important role in keeping our community safe. I liken it to a toolbox. In this case we are adding another tool to fight the youth crime crisis. This bill is not a silver bullet, but it is part of the puzzle. It is a strong step forward. It makes electronic monitoring permanent, it makes it statewide, it removes Labor's confusing restrictions and it strengthens the ability of our courts to protect Queenslanders while supporting young people to comply and change the course of their lives.