




Speech By
Martin Hunt

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Record of Proceedings, 1 April 2025

YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (12.04 pm): I rise to address the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill 2025, which is a significant step in the Crisafulli government's ongoing commitment to enhance community safety and address youth crime in Queensland. I am sorry that, along with her colleagues, the member for Bulimba wants to complain about having to come back into parliament. They have had to drag themselves in here to work on amendments to the Youth Justice Act.

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. You have been very strict in your rulings in regards to that. I suggest we start off on a good note.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): The member is only 20 seconds into his speech. I give you adequate warning to remain relevant.

Mr HUNT: I have bad news for the member for Bulimba because there will be many more amendments to the Youth Justice Act. We know they do not like working past six or seven o'clock at night, but we are here to work for the people of Queensland and to protect Queenslanders and we will do so unapologetically. There will be more changes for which I am sorry, not sorry, member for Bulimba.

As the member for Nicklin and chair of the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee, I have had the privilege of overseeing the examination of this bill and its implications for our justice system. I thank the members of the committee and the secretariat for ensuring this urgent bill was reported back to the parliament within the shorter timeframe provided to allow the extension to occur prior to the expiration date of the previous trial.

The objective of the bill is to extend the current trial of the EMDs for youth offenders by an additional 12 months, moving the expiration date to 30 April next year. This extension is crucial to allow for a comprehensive and meaningful evaluation of the trial's effectiveness in reducing offending rates among youth offenders and enhancing community safety. The journey of the electronic monitoring trial has been marked by challenges and learning opportunities, to say the least. Initially introduced as a two-year trial in 2021, the program aimed to assess the viability of EMDs as a condition of bail for certain youth offenders. However, the initial phase faced significant hurdles.

In its first year, only five youth offenders were subject to electronic monitoring orders and those limited numbers were insufficient to draw meaningful conclusions about the program's effectiveness. Early on, concerns were raised about the potential inadequacy of data for evaluation. During the committee's hearing on 8 March 2021, the member for Glass House expressed apprehension that the small cohort might hinder informed decision-making post trial. Despite these warnings, the previous government proceeded without adjustments, leading to a review that could not confirm the effectiveness of electronic monitoring in deterring offending behaviour due to the limited application of the devices.

In 2023, acknowledging the shortcomings, the former government extended the trial for another two years and implemented incremental changes, yet the application remained limited with 36 electronic monitoring conditions issued for 30 distinct youth offenders across various regions. These preliminary

figures indicated that the piecemeal changes were insufficient in achieving the desired outcomes and the then police commissioner, Katarina Carroll, publicly highlighted the need to revisit the use of electronic monitoring for youth offenders, emphasising its potential as a constant supervisory tool over intermittent police checks.

In August 2024, further amendments were made to the youth justice regulation, expanding trial locations and altering some parameters. However, critically, the sunset clause remained set to expire on 30 April 2025, leaving inadequate time for a thorough evaluation of the new conditions. The failure to extend the trial period, alongside the expansion of its parameters, meant there was never going to be sufficient time to properly evaluate the impact of the changes before the trial's expiration. This oversight risked rendering the efforts ineffective and left our communities without clear evidence of the program's potential benefits.

As with everything, during the youth crime crisis created by the former Labor Miles-Palaszczuk government their heart was never in it. They knew they had to try something to overcome the crisis, but they just kept listening to the same advice that got us into the situation we are in today and we have to clean up their mess. Their half-baked efforts were to make it look like they were trying to do something but their half-baked efforts made the situation worse as a generation of untouchables was created. As a police officer for the past four years, I had a front-row seat and saw that unfolding.

The current government recognises the necessity of a comprehensive evaluation to inform future decisions regarding EMDs for youth offenders. By extending the trial to 30 April 2026, we aim to collect robust data on the effectiveness of EMDs in reducing offending. We aim to assess the impact on community safety and evaluate the potential for EMDs to assist youth offenders in re-engaging with education or employment opportunities.

Currently, for a youth offender to be granted bail with an EMD they must: be at least 15 years old; 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. The list of prescribed indictable offences has been expanded to include specified offences involving violence or threats of violence, reflecting, again, our commitment to addressing serious crimes effectively.

Whilst comprehensive data is still forthcoming, anecdotal evidence suggests potential benefits of electronic monitoring, and the minister outlined a couple of those. In July 2022, a 16-year-old in Logan, after several periods in detention, was fitted with an EMD as a condition of bail. The youth successfully adhered to all conditions, including residential arrangements and locality restrictions, and has not reoffended since. In November 2024, a 16-year-old in South-East Queensland completed two months of bail conditions with an EMD. The sentencing magistrate noted the youth's high level of compliance and absence of reoffending. In January 2025, a 17-year-old in Brisbane was granted conditional bail with an EMD and a curfew. The youth complied with all conditions, re-engaged with school and actively participated in rehabilitation. These instances highlight the potential of electronic monitoring to support rehabilitation and reduce recidivism amongst young offenders.

The Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee has recommended that the bill be passed, recognising the importance of a thorough evaluation to inform future policy decisions. Stakeholders have expressed their support for the extension. Voice for Victims, for example, emphasised that electronic monitoring could provide crucial real-time information, enabling earlier intervention and potentially preventing greater harm to innocent members of the public. They strongly support the 12-month extension to gather sufficient evidence and longitudinal data to evaluate the true impact of EMDs on reducing offending rates among youth offenders.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission recognised the potential of electronic monitoring as a valuable supervision tool, but they highlighted the need for both quantitative and qualitative data evaluation. They stated—

Electronic monitoring should be viewed as one tool within a larger framework that supports youth reintegration and helps reduce recidivism.

The Cairns Regional Council also voiced strong support for the extension, citing the high concentration of serious repeat youth offenders in Cairns. The council stated that an extended trial would allow for a more thorough assessment of the effectiveness of electronic monitoring in enhancing community safety, deterring repeat offending and improving the supervision of high-risk youth offenders. The Crisafulli government is committed to restoring safety in our communities while ensuring youth offenders have the opportunity to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society. Electronic monitoring, when applied effectively, has the potential to achieve both of these objectives.

We acknowledge the concerns of some stakeholders regarding the limitations of EMDs. As the QFCC noted, strapping on a device is not as important as strapping on support. This government understands that electronic monitoring alone is not a silver bullet. That is why it forms part of our comprehensive Making Queensland Safer plan. The programs, as outlined by the minister, include: Gold Standard Early Intervention, Regional Reset, crime prevention schools, youth justice schools, Circuit Breaker Sentencing, Staying on Track and a victim advocate service—a total of \$485 million in funding. Queenslanders deserve to feel safe in their homes, businesses and communities. This government makes no apology—

Ms FARMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I seek your guidance. You sat me down earlier because I was speaking about the same things. I am seeking your ruling on the content of the member's speech.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): Take a seat, member. If you have an issue with my direction, you know that should be done in writing. The member may proceed.

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. The debate is outside the long title of the bill. One of our members was sat down for addressing the same issues.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nicklin, could you explain how your current contribution is relevant to the bill?

Mr HUNT: Mr Deputy Speaker, many of the stakeholders during committee hearings expressed that electronic monitoring was one thing but it needed to be coupled with youth programs and early intervention. It was brought up in committee hearings and it is covered in our report as well.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, you may continue your contribution but please go back to the bill.

Mr HUNT: This government is listening to the concerns of law enforcement, victims of crime and local communities. We recognise, as the minister outlined, the fatigue surrounding the constant modifications to this trial over the years, and we are committed to ensuring this extension delivers clear and conclusive evidence on the role electronic monitoring devices can play in our youth justice system. This bill is about ensuring accountability, supporting rehabilitation and, above all, protecting Queenslanders. We are proud to do that. I commend the bill to the House.