



Speech By
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YOUTH JUSTICE (ELECTRONIC MONITORING) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (8.14 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the bill before the House tonight, the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill. I note from the outset that electronic monitoring was introduced under a Labor government. The evaluation that has been provided by Nous Group, which was tabled here in the House in December last year, is a pretty riveting read for 116-odd pages. It goes into the methodology around the eligibility and how that qualitative analysis was conducted. This evaluation refers to the fact that this was a limited cohort and that it was specifically designed to be a limited cohort and that is taken into consideration.

At times I have heard government members talk about the botched rollout, but at the same time referring to an evaluation that praised the effectiveness of electronic monitoring under this program. It is a kind of Schrodinger's evaluation: it is botched, but they are going to continue with a lot of the outcomes that were mentioned specifically in this report.

The electronic monitoring trial that was introduced under Labor and expanded was acknowledged from the outset as a trial and a tool. That does not mean a statewide rollout; that means a deliberately targeted strategy. The evaluation report referred to the supports that were fundamental to the success that was achieved in the program. Those were programs that again were introduced by the Labor government.

Nominated quite pointedly throughout the evaluation is the youth co-responder team, another Labor innovation in the youth justice space. Everywhere throughout this evaluation the success of electronic monitoring in the trial is linked specifically to interactions between the cohort that had the monitors fitted and youth co-responder teams. Right up until 2024 the Labor government was rolling out more and more youth co-responder teams throughout Queensland.

The statistics show there were 114 young people who received an electronic monitoring device, but those 114 people were responsible for 5,667 alerts. Every single one of those over 5,000 interactions required a follow-up. We do have youth co-responder teams throughout the state. We have QCS who are the first point of call, but in terms of turning up to find out the cause, that was the responsibility of the youth co-responder teams. In the event there was no youth co-responder team—keeping in mind that most youth co-responder teams do not operate 24/7—that goes back to general duties police. It was identified in the trial that with only 114 young people it was an impost on QPS.

My concern is in relation to expanding the trial statewide. Clearly in legislation it is not going to happen statewide. It is unfortunate that those people who will not be under the cover of EMD will not know because the department will refuse to tell them whether people can be fitted with EMDs. I am sure anyone checking their phone at any given time will be able to determine whether they are in a site where offenders will have EMDs. It is not that hard. If you are expanding statewide—and I will caveat that—and you are increasing the eligibility—and the evaluation report recommended that—and you decrease the age to 10 years old—so we will potentially have kids in primary school with these devices

fitted—the number of alerts will exponentially increase from 5,667. When we have police who are run off their feet, whether it is in relation to DV, mental health or a whole range of other calls for service, this will exponentially increase calls for service.

Notwithstanding the 48 extra police officers who have been redistributed—keeping in mind that that is specifically for DV teams—my concern is about the operational impact on the police on the ground. Can anyone tell me that police in their area are idly sitting around, waiting for a call to see whether someone's battery has failed or whether someone is breaching their bail conditions? This means more calls for service on already pressed QPS officers. I am concerned about the areas of policing that are going to have to be put off while police respond to this. As I said, the youth co-responder teams throughout Queensland do not operate 24/7. Some of them have only a handful of police officers as well as YJ officers and a 24/7 operational roster is not covered, so that impost will go on to uniformed police elsewhere.

I want to acknowledge the amount of wraparound support that is required. During the committee inquiry, the department was very reticent to outline the support services that are available throughout the state. We have had some recent media releases around an offender school in Logan, although that will not open just yet. There are funding requirements for the intensive case management that is required. We must keep in mind that the original trial and the evaluation determined that those children involved in the trial already had an amount of support around them. That was the cohort that was set to succeed. If the program is to be expanded to a wider cohort where there may not be family supports and there may not be an offender school that can help them to adjust and if we are talking about primary school kids then I want to know where in my local area the supports will be to make sure those kids have every chance. We know that once kids go to jail they are on a path to reoffending. All of the statistics show that once a child ends up in custody in the corrective services system they have a greater chance of further and more frequent offending. If EMDs are a tool that is about keeping kids out of jail unless it is absolutely necessary in terms of consequences for their actions, I want to know that they will be set up to succeed. The young people on the original trial were supported to succeed.

This is not a silver bullet. When we talk about a reduction in reoffending, we are still talking about an average of seven offences per person in relation to those who were fitted with a device as opposed to the control group, so this is not a silver bullet. This requires intensive support and an increase in the youth co-responder teams not only in terms of location but also in terms of resourcing to make sure the increased operational burden on uniform and general duties police does not tie up that very limited police resource. We need to be honest with Queenslanders that this is a tool, that it will not be a silver bullet and that, as identified by the union, our police will bear the brunt of the increase in the expanded cohort throughout the state. In addition, we need to have those wraparound support services in place and ready to go. This is going to rely on keeping a child safety and youth justice workforce that is fully engaged, because we know that once there is a turnover in case managers we have backward steps in relation to outcomes. I wait to see a further evaluation.