



Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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### **YOUTH JUSTICE (ELECTRONIC MONITORING) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (8.35 pm): All Queenslanders deserve to be safe and feel safe in their homes, on their streets and in their communities. They also deserve confidence that the laws passed by this parliament are not only appropriate in intention but also effective in practice, fair in application and humane in outcome. There are no competing goals. Community safety and compassion are not opposites. When done well, they reinforce one another.

No political party, no member of parliament and no government has a monopoly on the desire to keep Queensland safe. These are shared responsibilities and must be met with seriousness, honesty and evidence. The Queensland Labor opposition has always supported laws that reduce the number of victims, prevent reoffending and stop young people from becoming entrenched in the justice system. We will continue to do so.

It is in that spirit that the opposition supports the intent of the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill, but not without significant reservations. Electronic monitoring can be a useful tool. It can provide structure, accountability and reassurance for victims and communities. It was trialled by the former Labor government for a narrow cohort of older, high-risk repeat offenders and only alongside intense supervision and wraparound support. That trial made one point unmistakably clear: electronic monitoring is not a solution in itself; it is a tool whose effectiveness depends entirely on how, where and with what supports it is used. The evaluation found that the electronic monitoring devices do not prevent offending on their own. Their impact is shaped by implementation, by service availability and by the presence of trusted adults, youth workers and, more importantly in some cases, culturally appropriate supports.

Witness after witness—victims' advocates, community leaders, legal experts and frontline services—reiterated the same message: monitoring without support is a recipe for predictable failure. This bill significantly expands the scope of electronic monitoring beyond the narrow parameters of the original trial. This is worth mentioning. That expansion raises serious questions that remain unanswered.

Firstly, wraparound support services should not be optional. They are the engine room of any successful youth justice intervention. Youth co-responder teams, bail support services, intense case management, family support, schooling, stability and trauma informed care are what reduce reoffending. This is a complex program and it has to be because it is a complex issue. Without them, electronic monitoring risks becoming a blunt surveillance method that increases technical breaches, not to mention police call-outs—and we have heard those numbers—and court involvement, particularly for young children, First Nations children and those in regional and remote Queensland.

The opposition is deeply concerned that the government has not clearly identified where these services are operating, where they are absent and who is funded, for how long and what gaps remain. Referring parliament and the community to a general website does not reflect transparency, by any means. Queenslanders, including victims, have a right to know whether the supports that make this policy work exist in their communities.

Secondly, funding certainly matters. Many bail support and youth services face funding cliffs beyond June 2026. Announcements of large funding packages mean little if services are not yet operating or if experienced providers are left in limbo—and we are hearing from some of those experienced providers. The evidence before the committee suggests a worrying gap between announcement and delivery. Good policy cannot be built on short-term funding, uncertainty and, most importantly, staff turnover.

Thirdly, technology is not neutral. Queensland's geography matters. Large parts of regional, rural and remote Queensland experience inconsistent and non-existent mobile coverage. The evaluation identified connectivity problems, GPS drift and false alerts that trigger unnecessary police responses. They mention this and they talked about this. These issues disproportionately affect First Nations communities and remote regions, increasing the risk of breach and escalation rather than rehabilitation.

It is neither honest nor fair to suggest that electronic monitoring will work equally across the state when network coverage does not. Communities deserve clarity about where the technology is reliable, where it is not and how failures will be managed so that children are not punished for infrastructure gaps beyond their control.

Fourthly, children are not just small adults. Developmental science tells us that young people are impulsive, identity-forming and highly influenced by peers. Wearing an electronic monitoring device, particularly in school or community settings, can stigmatise, isolate and entrench negative identity. Many children placed on monitoring are there for compliance issues, not for new serious issues. Labelling them as dangerous risks is doing long-term harm in the name of short-term reassurance. This must be acknowledged in any process. If rehabilitation is the goal then policies must build bridges forward, not shackle children to their worst moments.

Fifthly, oversight and review are essential. The trial data is limited, is geographically concentrated and does not include younger children. I want to say that again: the trial data is limited, is geographically concentrated and does not include younger children. The expansion proposed in this bill goes well beyond what has been evaluated. A legislated review mechanism is not a sign of weakness; it is a mark of responsible lawmaking. It provides reassurance to communities, victims and practitioners that if something is not working it can be fixed.

Finally, implementation depends on people and leadership. Electronic monitoring is not 'set and forget'. It requires sustained investment in police, corrective services, youth justice staff and non-government partners. It requires stable departmental leadership and genuine collaboration with a variety of sectors. Without that, even well-intentioned laws will falter.

In conclusion, the opposition supports the intent of this bill because communities are hurting, victims deserve protection and youth offending must be addressed, but support cannot be blind. Queenslanders deserve honesty, evidence and transparency, not false hope. Electronic monitoring can play a role, but only if it is properly resourced, fairly applied, supported by services, reviewed rigorously and grounded in an understanding of young people, not fear of them. We owe Queenslanders safety, we owe victims justice and we owe our young people a future that is shared by opportunity, accountability and care, not just surveillance.