




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms MARR** (Thuringowa—LNP) (12.36 pm): I rise to support the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill—a piece of legislation that extends the trial of electronic monitoring devices for one year to ensure a meaningful and comprehensive evaluation can be conducted. The opposition continue to talk about a one-number change in the bill. What about the one victim or the many victims who support the changes that this LNP government has made? We said we would be putting victims first and we make no apology for that.

The electronic monitoring trial has had a prolonged and complicated history since its two-year trial began in 2021. The initial trial was a total failure, as there were not enough youth offenders to enable a proper evaluation. One would have to ask the question: if the former Labor government went into this as another ad hoc smokescreen to try to fool the people of Queensland, were they taking crime seriously?

In the first year of the trial's operation, only five youth offenders had an electronic monitoring order imposed as a condition of their bail—and three of those were in Townsville. I can assure the House from conversations with the people of Thuringowa that they would expect more than this, considering there would have been more than three cars stolen in one night in Townsville during this time. This is a classic case of forgetting the victims and protecting the offenders by the former Labor government—a government that made detention a last resort, abolished finding guilt while on bail and failed to make meaningful investment in early intervention programs or rehabilitation.

The previous Labor government did not extend the trial so that a proper evaluation of the new conditions of the trial could occur. There was never going to be adequate time to evaluate the data arising from the changes before the trial was set to expire. I must ask the question: will those offenders captured in the newest changes to the trial even finish their bail in this period of time for the study so that those results can be used in the analysis? I want to reiterate that this is not about providing justification for the use of EMDs; rather, the focus is on the need for the extension of the trial to identify whether they are relevant crime prevention tools to have an impact on our current crime climate—that is, repeat youth offenders. The trial is currently set to end in April 2025, and a lack of meaningful data is relevant when there is no clear understanding of the parameters of this trial—what the trial has been measuring and how, if at all, they are measuring the data. What is a study without clear objectives?

The use of EMDs could be substantiated by the classical deterrence theory—that is, certainty of detection, swiftness of detection and related penalties, and severity of punishment acting as a deterrent to criminal activity. Severity of punishment is not enough of a deterrent for these repeat youth offenders because punishment avoidance and swiftness of detection are downplayed through the perceived uncertainty of detection due to the thinly spread resources of our police. Therefore, we must look to solutions such as EMDs as preventive tools to target spaces where the classical deterrence theory is not being upheld, particularly when resources have been limited and police are constantly having to

have reactive, rather than proactive, responses to repeat youth offenders. Classical criminology theory is relevant and can be used to our advantage here in the use of EMDs, influencing choice and behaviour by making repeat offending less attractive by increasing the risk of certain detection.

During the public hearing we heard different views and outcomes for the juveniles who wore monitoring devices, and one story really stuck with me. One offender who was wearing a monitoring device really wanted to change. He suffered peer pressure in the past which caused him to reoffend, and on this occasion he was being encouraged by his mates to get into a stolen car. He was relieved that he could tell them he would be tracked, so he had better not get into the vehicle because the police could identify his whereabouts. This acted as a deterrent to him in relation to committing further criminal activity. This is proof that in some cases EMDs work effectively to enable better choices and act as a nudge towards bettering youth offenders' behaviour.

The use of EMDs aims to reduce crime by increasing the presence or capability of guardians to deter potential offenders. The goal is to protect our community through making them less vulnerable targets by increasing the likelihood of guardianship and intervention. By monitoring the whereabouts of serious repeat offenders, electronic devices aim to deter criminal activity and provide assurances to the community regarding the whereabouts of these individuals during their bail period. The use of monitoring devices offers an alternative to detention, potentially decreasing the number of young people in custody. This approach aligns with the goal of keeping children out of unsuitable environments such as watch houses whenever safely possible.

Our commitment to early intervention and rehabilitation plays a crucial role in this as well. Our government has the tools and is committed to having fit-for-purpose resources that work alongside such tools to increase the safety of our community from repeat youth offending if this measure is found to be successful. The Crisafulli government is extending the current trial of electronic monitoring as a bail condition for certain youth offenders for an additional 12 months until 30 April 2026 to allow time for a thorough and comprehensive evaluation. We will ensure this trial extension is not wasted. There will be a comprehensive review to ensure that our decisions are backed by evidence, focused on reducing crime and put victims first. It will be evidence based, consultative and measured. I support the bill.