



Speech By
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YOUTH JUSTICE (ELECTRONIC MONITORING) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HUTTON** (Keppel—LNP) (4.51 pm): The contrast between a government that is putting victims first and an opposition that has spent 20 minutes defending a decade of decline, taking no responsibility and no accountability, is so clear—yet there was no shame. A failed youth justice minister does not really want to support our reforms—yet she still does not get it. This was not about her failed trial, which was very clearly provided for in the report. It is not about her failed government; it is about Queensland victims and what we are going to do to make sure they are better supported so that people do have safety where they live. For Queensland victims youth crime is not a policy argument: it is life-changing lived experiences. It is a night when a home no longer feels like a safe place; it is a moment of terror; it is the vulnerability that follows a person into every ordinary day that comes after; it is the legacy they hold onto of those experiences.

In Townsville the committee heard from Ms Lynette Cullen. She told us of the experience of having a youth enter her home with a knife. He put that knife to her throat and demanded keys. She told the inquiry about running down the street screaming for help and that her security had been taken away. She said—

Until they are found, I do not have any more security. I am locked in my house.

She described how now every time she opens the garage door she has fear and how she has had to change her everyday life and her routine just so she can leave her home safely. That is what victimisation looks like. It is not just the offence; it is the aftermath—the anxiety, the sleeplessness, the changed behaviour and the sense that in their community the world is no longer predictable. Our committee heard how break-ins and violence ripple through families and have effects on many, including children who no longer sleep in their own bedrooms because there had been offenders in their rooms.

When we consider this bill we should begin with victims. The fundamental obligation of government, which is being taken up by this government, is to give victims protection in their homes, in their workplaces and in their communities. For Queenslanders the Crisafulli government is making Queensland safer. The Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill takes a practical, evidence informed step in that direction. It makes electronic monitoring permanent by removing the expiry date. It makes it available statewide unless the court is advised that services are not available in a location. It is calm, it is methodical, and it is about doing the right thing and providing tools to our courts and the justice system. It removes restrictive eligibility barriers, including the age threshold, and it simplifies matters a court must consider when deciding whether an electronic monitoring condition is appropriate. This bill has a clear purpose. This is about accountability for offenders and it is about safety for Queensland victims. This is how we reduce risk, this is how we increase compliance and this is how we prevent more Queensland victims.

The committee report outlines that the independent evaluation found that electronic monitoring resulted in higher bail completion and a 24 per cent reduction in the likelihood of reoffending. It also found a lower proportion of offences involving victims during bail. For victims and their families that is not okay. That matters because less reoffending means fewer people harmed, fewer homes invaded, fewer cars stolen, fewer assaults and fewer Queenslanders who are forced to live in fear. Queensland victims expect honesty. That is why in the minister's introductory speech she spoke about this being a tool that adds to the work we are doing as part of the Making Queensland Safer plan. It works alongside early intervention, rehabilitation programs and family support.

One of the strongest messages from stakeholders is that monitoring works best when it is paired with wraparound supports, and aren't we lucky that the Crisafulli government is investing in those wraparound supports in communities across this state. These supports will help ensure that a young person complies with their bail conditions, give them the opportunity to reconnect with their community, stabilise their family situation, and help give them an opportunity to build a different pathway.

Sometimes when we have these debates, as much as we talk about victims and as much as we talk about perpetrators, for these young people we need to talk about turning their lives around. We are turning these lives around because this stops the creation of the next victim and it stops what could be a lifetime of offending. The committee heard directly that young people had responded positively to electronic monitoring. Ms Katherine Hayes told the Brisbane hearing—

Some young people find that they are an active, dissuading device from committing further crimes. It helps them desist any kinds of attempts from peers to continue to commit crimes. It can help them reconnect with family because they are more prone to comply with their bail conditions ...

That is not a small thing. The pathway out of reoffending begins with a young person staying home at night; a young person keeping a curfew; a young person not being picked up by older peers who are taking advantage of their age and encouraging offending; a young person who is turning up to school or training or one of the programs that we are putting in place one day, then the next day, then the next. Electronic monitoring is a tool that helps create that structure. It allows for accountability. It creates boundaries that families are pleading for, particularly in regional areas. Most importantly, it provides time for interventions with caseworkers and a connection with youth co-responder and bail services. It allows these teams to do hard work with offenders and their families so we can change that behaviour.

We saw examples during this inquiry where that combination has made a real difference: young people who, while subject to electronic monitoring and a curfew, have complied with their conditions, avoided new offending, re-engaged with school and taken up rehabilitation supports. These are not just good news stories. It means fewer victims and a better chance at a lawful, stable future for that young person.

For victims, I repeat, that is the point. Victims do not want more victims—they spoke very clearly about that. They want a justice system that takes risk seriously and that acts before the next family is harmed. Queenslanders want safety where they live. Our responsibility today is to respond with laws that are firm, fair and effective. This bill is a meaningful part of our Making Queensland Safer plan. It strengthens the credibility of bail conditions, it improves accountability, it reduces reoffending and, most importantly, it reduces the number of victims of crime in Queensland.

As I conclude my comments, I would like to acknowledge and thank the committee secretariat and all of the committee members, including those who stepped in when I was unable to attend a hearing due to the flooding in Central Queensland. Most importantly, I acknowledge and thank the witnesses—those who provided submissions, those who shared their lived experiences and stories and those who took the time to attend our hearings on this bill. I commend this bill to the House.