




Speech By
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YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (12.43 pm): I rise to speak to the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill 2025. As we have heard outlined by previous speakers, the aim of this bill is to make a simple amendment to the Youth Justice Act by changing the term '4 years' to '5 years'. On the surface this may seem like a minor change, but it reflects deeper issues within the youth justice system and the government's handling of this important matter. I should add that at this juncture we will be supporting the passing of this legislation.

Electronic monitoring devices, which this bill concerns, are designed to monitor youth offenders in the community by tracking their movements. These devices help authorities ensure compliance with bail conditions, offering an alternative to remand and allowing young people to stay connected to their communities, family and education. They also provide an opportunity for young offenders to break the cycle of criminal behaviour and distance themselves from peer groups that may encourage them to commit further offences.

In Queensland the use of electronic monitoring devices is conditional. The court may impose a monitoring device as a bail condition for young people who reside in a prescribed trial location and have a proven history of committing indictable offences. These devices are fitted by the Queensland Police Service and monitored by Queensland Corrective Services. However, before any young person is required to wear a device a suitable assessment is conducted by youth justice staff to ensure they are capable of understanding the conditions placed on them and that they have a stable environment in which to live. As part of the ongoing trial the program has already been expanded following Labor's 2024 eligibility criteria changes, which led to a rise in participants.

The bill before us is remarkably narrow. The only amendment proposed is the extension of the eligibility period from four to five years. While this may seem like a straightforward change, it raises larger concerns about the government's planning and commitment to meaningful reform. Stakeholders, including the Youth Advisory Centre, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak and the Queensland Family and Child Commission, have expressed strong support for electronic devices as an alternative to remand or being placed in a watch house. They have noted, however, that for these devices to be truly effective they must be accompanied by wraparound support services, as these are critical to addressing the underlying issues of youth offending such as substance abuse, lack of education and exposure to family violence.

Unfortunately, the Crisafulli government's approach to support services remains vague. Programs like Regional Reset and Staying on Track are unlikely to be operational until later this year. While the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support continues to manage existing bail support, prevention and rehabilitation programs, there is a critical need for early intervention and prevention to complement the use of electronic monitoring devices. The absence of a clear time line for the rollout of these programs raises serious concerns. The Crisafulli government must provide the public with concrete plans for Gold Standard Early Intervention to prevent youth from falling deeper into the criminal justice system.

The bill serves as another glaring example of how the Crisafulli LNP government has failed to adequately plan and execute a meaningful legislative program. It is particularly frustrating that, despite the wideranging impacts of this bill, it contains such a narrow focus. In reality, this bill addresses a single issue: the proposed extension of the term from four to five years. As we have heard from previous speakers, this could have easily and seamlessly been incorporated into previous legislation such as the Making Queensland Safer Bill that was introduced by the Premier and led by the Attorney-General.

While much of the legislation within that bill falls under different ministerial portfolios, the issue of term extension was curiously left out. This oversight may have been the result, as we have heard, of the previous bill being rushed through without sufficient consideration, or it could be due to the failure of the minister to bring the matter to attention. Unfortunately, the true reasons behind this oversight may never be fully understood, as the cabinet submission related to the Making Queensland Safer Laws has yet to be released by the LNP government. It raises questions about whether the LNP government is adequately preparing and planning for future reforms in youth justice.

This bill is not the bold step forward that our state needs. We need more than just a minor amendment to existing legislation; we need a comprehensive, long-term strategy that includes support services, early intervention and prevention programs. While it may be easy to look at young offenders and react with punishment, the reality is far more complex and far more concerning. Children who reoffend are often the victims of circumstances that we as a society have failed to effectively address. Research shows that these children are highly likely to have experienced family violence, poverty, neglect and trauma. They may have lived in unstable or unsuitable environments, faced substance abuse and struggled with disengagement from education and employment. These are not isolated issues; they are factors that are deeply intertwined with the children's ability to navigate life and make positive life choices.

That is not all. Many children who end up in the justice system suffer from serious disabilities or health conditions—conditions that are often undiagnosed or ignored. These challenges add layers of difficulty that prevent them from leading fulfilling, productive lives and make it harder for them to integrate into society in a positive way. Yet, despite the depth of these issues, the current approach often relies on reactive, punitive actions. They are quick to blame the child, to impose harsh penalties and to put them into a system that, more often than not, only deepens their involvement with crime. This approach does not reduce repeat offending, it does not address the underlying causes and, most importantly, it does not increase community safety.

If we are truly invested in reducing crime and making our communities safer, we need to shift our focus. We must stop punishing children for the circumstances they did not choose. Instead, we need to invest in the underlying factors that contribute to their offending. We need increased attention and resources directed towards support systems that address family violence, poverty, neglect, trauma and the unmet health needs of these children. We need to provide stable accommodation, better access to education and early interventions for those with disabilities or health conditions. These are the investments that will not only improve the lives of these children but also reduce recidivism in the long term. These are the solutions that will make our communities safer.