



Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
**MEMBER FOR TOOHEY**

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (7.40 pm): I rise to speak to the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025. At face value, this bill proposes a simple amendment to the Youth Justice Act, changing a reference from ‘four years’ to ‘five years’. On the surface, it appears technical and minor, but when examined closely it reflects deeper and more concerning issues about the government’s approach to youth justice, policy planning and accountability.

Electronic monitoring devices are designed to supervise young people in the community by tracking their movements as a condition of bail. Their stated purpose is to support compliance with bail conditions, provide an alternative to remand and allow young people to remain connected to family, education and community while awaiting the outcome of court proceedings. When used appropriately, they can help disrupt negative peer influences and support young people to stabilise their lives.

In Queensland, the use of electronic monitoring has, until now, been conditional and limited. Courts may impose monitoring devices as a bail condition for young people aged 15 years or older, living in prescribed trial locations and with a demonstrated history of serious offending. Devices are fitted by the Queensland Police Service and monitored by Queensland Corrective Services. Before a young person is required to wear a device, youth justice service centre staff conduct a suitability assessment to ensure the child understands the conditions imposed and has a stable environment in which to live. As part of the trial, the program was expanded following Labor’s 2024 eligibility changes, resulting in increased participation.

This debate cannot occur without reference to evidence. The independent Nous Group’s evaluation of the electronic monitoring device trial provides critical insight into when and how these devices can be effective. The evaluation found that 72 per cent of young people in the trial successfully completed their bail conditions. Reoffending outcomes were also lower, with 63 per cent of the trial cohort reoffending compared with 81 per cent in a comparable group. Importantly, there was a 26 per cent reduction in victim-involved offences committed while young people were on bail. However, the evaluation is unequivocal in its conclusions. These outcomes were not achieved through monitoring alone. The success of electronic monitoring depended on the delivery of intensive wraparound support services. The findings cannot be attributed solely to the device itself but to the combination of supervision, case management and support delivered alongside it.

The evaluation also issues a clear warning that must not be ignored. The trial cohort was intentionally narrow, and Nous cautions against generalising the findings to broader or different cohorts. Nous found that 84 per cent of electronic monitoring orders occurred in South-East Queensland, where service availability and mobile connectivity are strongest. Participation by First Nations children was lower due to suitability criteria, and suitability itself depended on reliable mobile coverage—something that cannot be assumed in many regional, rural and remote communities.

Community members and victim-survivors in places such as Townsville and Cairns told the committee they feel let down by a government that sold a four-word slogan as a solution yet has failed to deliver tangible change. Queensland Police Service data reflects these concerns. In the Far Northern Police Region, which includes Cairns, there were more victims of motor vehicle theft in 2025, with a 19 per cent increase on the previous year. In Townsville, unlawful entry offences by young offenders increased by 30.1 per cent over the same period. These communities are not asking for slogans; they are asking for policies that are proven to work, properly resourced and reviewed when expanded.

Electronic monitoring must earn community confidence through evidence, not assumption. Crucially, the evaluation makes clear that the effectiveness of electronic monitoring cannot be separated from the wraparound supports delivered during the trial. Expanding the use of these devices to younger children, to new cohorts or to areas without proven service capacity—without equivalent support in place—risks undermining both the evidence base and community trust.

The bill before the House is remarkably narrow in its drafting. The sole amendment is the extension of the eligibility period from four years to five, yet this narrow amendment sits within a much broader policy context that cannot be ignored. The legislation makes electronic monitoring permanent. It expands eligibility to younger children, removes offence-based restrictions, replaces a court's obligation to consider a child's capacity to understand and comply with conditions with a department provided suitability report, and removes geographic limits so monitoring may occur wherever the department advises services and technology are available. These are not minor changes. They represent a significant expansion of electronic monitoring beyond the cohort tested in the trial, despite clear warnings from the evaluation and from stakeholders about the risks of doing so without proven supports in place.

Stakeholders including the Youth Advocacy Centre, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak and the Queensland Family and Child Commission have expressed qualified support for electronic monitoring as an alternative to remand, but they have been equally clear that these devices are only effective when paired with wraparound services that address the underlying drivers of offending, including trauma, substance misuse, disengagement from education and exposure to family violence.

Unfortunately, the Crisafulli LNP government's approach to support services remains vague. Programs such as Regional Reset and Staying on Track are unlikely to be operational until late this year. While the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support continues to manage existing bail support and rehabilitation programs, there is a clear absence of a credible, funded plan for early intervention and prevention to complement the expanded use of electronic monitoring. The evaluation also makes clear that the trial relied heavily on programs established under the former Labor government. Youth co-responder teams, the intensive bail initiative, intensive case management and existing bail support services formed the backbone of the support delivered during the trial, yet, almost 18 months into government, witnesses and submitters told the committee that many of the Crisafulli LNP government's newly announced services have not commenced. Stakeholders highlighted a growing gap between funding announcements and services actually operating on the ground. Funding certainty for key bail support services beyond 30 June 2026 remains unclear. Queensland is yet to see evidence that Regional Reset programs are up and running. Only a handful of Staying on Track programs have commenced and just one of the six promised youth justice and crime prevention schools is operating.

The bill is another example of a government that has failed to adequately plan and deliver meaningful reform. Despite its wide-reaching policy implementations, it is four pages long and contains only one substantive clause. This amendment could have been incorporated into earlier legislation. Its omission raises serious questions about planning, coordination and transparency. The bill is not the bold step forward Queensland needs. A punitive, reactive approach to youth offending does not reduce reoffending, does not address the underlying causes and does not make communities safer.