




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

Record of Proceedings, 1 April 2025

YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (3.56 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill 2025. I will start by saying this is a pretty small measure to attack such a big problem. I do not suppose anyone is trying to make it much bigger than that. It has been talked about as a significant way to tackle crime, but at the end of the day it is just a tool that is used to contribute to a solution. It is by no means a solution in itself. In the KAP we have often referred to it as 'tinkering at the edges' of this crime issue.

We acknowledge that the trial initially did not have many takers, but fairly regularly in this place instructions are given by the government of the day to the department and others. All of the civil libertarians and bleeding hearts will get their hands all over it and say you can't do this, you can't do that and its effectiveness gets watered down. It would appear that is what has happened initially in respect of this. Again, I am mindful that this is no panacea for solving youth crime, but it does help with monitoring and tracking people—knowing what they are up to and then apprehending them if they are playing up again.

When I am speaking about this, I am immediately applying it to real-life examples and stories that I get constantly in Mount Isa and those I hear about from talking to my colleagues here, particularly in Townsville but also from the member for Hill. We share those stories that we have and relate them to these examples. We picture those kids and the impact it would have on them or otherwise. I feel that when people rush to the kids defence and say it will hurt their self-worth and it reinforces negative things—crikey, if you want to be kind you say they have suffered a lot of trauma to be where they are, but they are way beyond that point in my view. In terms of tools to try to effectively deal with this problem, we are way beyond worrying about being kind and measuring this up in equal amounts of compassion because it is a massive problem. It is so out of control that you have to throw some of the textbook stuff out the window because it is just not practical. It is that big at the moment that these academics and bleeding hearts who come in and block any effective measures you try to put in place are just not operating in the real world.

That is so plain to see in Mount Isa. Government keeps throwing resources, money and things at the problem, but the rubber is not hitting the road. If I play this out in Mount Isa in terms of kids having ankle bracelets for another 12 months, that would help; however, let's not pretend it will fix the problem. Like the member for Hinchinbrook just said, until the kids know—and regarding Adult Crime, Adult Time, we raised that initially before anyone else in the parliament. We agree with it, but do not pretend that is going to solve anything, either. We need a solution. We need the consequence on the back end of that kid committing the offence, the apprehending of the criminal and then giving them a consequence. If they are not provided with an adequate consequence, we just land back at the starting point where we are right now.

Cleveland detention centre is not working. There was 90-something per cent recidivism last time we checked. We have proved that bunching 100 to 150 kids in the one spot does not work. We know it does not work. Government members can talk about Adult Crime, Adult Time, but unless they are coupling that with another sentencing option we will be wasting our time again. They can throw those things on top—

Mrs Gerber: We are. It is called Circuit Breaker Sentencing.

Mr KATTER: I am hearing an interjection that the government are doing it. It is good if they are. We have been suggesting it for eight years. If they are doing it now that they are in government, that is good and we will be the first to compliment them. However, let's see it when it is operating. The things that need to be kept in mind are that they need to be smaller sized units. All the experts will say that it should be 10 to 20 kids with a maximum of 30 kids, not 100 to 150 in one spot. They need to keep it remote so it is a lot easier to manage. They also need to be sentenced and forced to go there. Too many of these programs have been done on an opt-in or voluntary basis or as part of bail conditions for people who are not worried about bail or who are not even worried about going to the Cleveland centre in the first place. All those things were, again, just tinkering at the edges, as this does.

Of course we will support these measures. We need better measures, but let's not pretend that this is really going to punch into that space and be effective. We still have kids doing all sorts of terrible things in Mount Isa at the moment. It is still happening in Townsville and Cairns. It still seems as strong as ever. We need to start really sending a signal to the kids that if they do this there is going to be a consequence. The best thing we could ever do for that kid to turn their life around is to give them a consequence so they can change their ways and have a platform to learn off. I have seen it with my own eyes. I have been out to places like Urandangi, where there were bugger-all people—sorry, unparliamentary language—where there was no-one out there—no services.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Just withdraw it.

Mr KATTER: I withdraw. There were not any services out there. There were just 12 kids, no phone reception, no skate park and no pool. They were running around catching fish and goanna on the weekend and having a great time, and that is how they described it to me. It is cheap to look after kids there. One of the kids there had burnt down the police station in Mount Isa, but out there he was a great kid.

I have seen how reform can happen in a remote place. Everyone says that sending them out there as a consequence is a terrible thing. Yes, we call it consequence, but it is also a gift to these kids because it is a platform they can rise from and improve themselves. What we are saying is tough, and a consequence can also be the enabler for these kids. Until we talk about that—I appreciate there seems to be something in the works in that space from the government. Good on them if that is the case. We have been saying it since—and I was trying to work it out before—at least 2017. I think it might have even been from the election before that, in 2014-15; we were talking about it at that election. Certainly we have been here a long time advocating for the same thing in terms of policy. If that is being taken up coupled with this it can be really good, in which case this trial is effective and it should be supported.