




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (4.35 pm): Today I rise to speak on the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill 2025. I add to the compliments that the member for Nanango passed on to the Minister for Youth Justice. I also congratulate her on five years since her great win in the by-election. She has proven to be a great member in this House. I am sure that she has ahead of her many years of great service to the Gold Coast and to Queensland.

This bill seeks to extend the trial of electronic monitoring devices for youth offenders by an additional 12 months. The bill is not merely an administrative measure; it is a commitment from this government to take decisive and meaningful steps to address youth crime and enhance community safety. It is about giving our police, judiciary and rehabilitation services the tools they need to keep our communities safe. The bill comes at a time when Queenslanders have seen the need for effective tools to curb youth crime. The original trial, introduced in 2021, was a catastrophe. In its first year, only five offenders had an electronic monitoring order imposed as a condition of their bail. This limited scope hindered the ability to fully evaluate the effectiveness of this technology as a deterrent and rehabilitation tool.

From the very beginning, my LNP colleagues advocated for a more robust approach to electronic monitoring and, yes, I am going to mention the member for Glass House. During a committee hearing on 8 March 2021, the member for Glass House rightly predicted that the cohort of offenders would be too small for meaningful data collection and analysis. It was clear then and it remains clear today that a more comprehensive strategy is needed to make electronic monitoring a functional part of our justice system. Following this failure, in 2023 the former Labor government made changes that yet again failed Queenslanders, with only 36 uses of electronic monitoring. This highlights that we need a government that uses common sense and follows a well-planned approach, which is something that our government has proved it is committed to doing.

In 2024, the then police commissioner, Katarina Carroll, publicly acknowledged the potential of electronic monitoring devices and the failures to implement them. The then police commissioner stated that the devices offer continuous monitoring, a capability that far exceeds the intermittent checks police can make on offenders. She stressed that the devices should be more widely used to prevent serious reoffending.

Despite previous limitations, our government is committed to making electronic monitoring a success. Under this bill, the Crisafulli government will extend the trial period by 12 months to 30 April 2026. This extension will allow for a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the program. It will provide time to gather robust data, analyse outcomes and ensure that future decisions are based on evidence.

Currently, for a youth offender to be granted bail with an electronic monitoring condition, they must meet specific criteria. They must be at least 15 years old, be charged with a prescribed indictable offence, have either been previously found guilty of at least one indictable offence or charged with an unrelated prescribed indictable offence in the preceding 12 months, or have consented to wearing the electronic monitoring device.

We want to see a reasonable and comprehensive evaluation, so we will conduct a review because we have seen the potential benefits of these devices. We have already seen promising anecdotal evidence of the benefits that electronic monitoring can offer. In July 2022, a 16-year-old in Logan successfully adhered to conditions, including residential arrangements and locality restrictions, while wearing an electronic monitoring device. They have not reoffended. In January 2025, a 17-year-old in Brisbane who had been granted conditional bail with a monitoring device re-engaged with school and actively participated in rehabilitation services. The evidence shows that when we apply these monitoring devices correctly they are an invaluable tool to reduce reoffending and provide offenders the opportunity to re-engage with society.

Unlike the previous government, we also acknowledge the importance of listening to the views of stakeholders. At the public hearing, Natalie Merlehan, on behalf of Voice for Victims, stated that, had electronic monitoring been in place at the time of her incident, it could have provided crucial real-time information and potentially prevented greater harm. She emphasised the importance of ensuring the trial had enough time to be properly evaluated.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission also made valuable comments, highlighting the need for not just quantitative but also qualitative data evaluation. They rightly pointed out that electronic monitoring should not be viewed as a silver bullet but rather as one tool within a larger framework that supports youth reintegration and prevents reoffending.

We recognise that electronic monitoring alone is not enough, and that is why we are investing \$485 million into a comprehensive plan for early intervention, crime prevention and rehabilitation. This includes \$100 million for Gold Standard Early Intervention; \$50 million for Regional Reset; \$40 million for crime prevention schools; \$40 million for youth justice schools; \$80 million for Circuit Breaker Sentencing; \$175 million for Staying on Track; and \$40 million for our victim advocate service. We are determined to not only monitor youth offenders but also help them turn their lives around and become contributing members of society.

The committee's recommendation that this bill be passed demonstrates the commonsense approach that we are taking. This extension will allow us to gather sufficient evidence and longitudinal data to make informed decisions. It is about doing the job properly—something the previous government struggled to achieve. This government is committed to restoring safety to our communities. We will not stand by and let the mistakes of the past continue. This bill will continue to help ease the pressure on local policing resources, and the extension will provide us with the data and insights necessary to make decisions that will genuinely improve public safety and reduce youth offending. The Crisafulli government are not only doing what is necessary to keep Queenslanders safe; we are delivering a fresh start for Queenslanders, and this bill is part of that commitment.