




Speech By
Hon. Steve Minnikin
MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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YOUTH JUSTICE (MONITORING DEVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business) (7.56 pm): I would also like to make a contribution to the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill. The first thing I did was ask for a copy of the explanatory notes. I note the 'Policy objectives and the reasons for them'. The explanatory notes state—

Section 52AA of the *Youth Justice Act 1992* (the YJ Act) allows a court, in certain circumstances, to impose on a grant of bail to a child who is at least 15 years, is charged with a prescribed indictable offence, and has either been charged with an unrelated prescribed indictable offence in the preceding twelve months or has been previously found guilty of at least one indictable offence, a condition that the child must wear a monitoring device while released on bail.

The next paragraph of the explanatory notes states—

Section 52AA was introduced in 2021 to facilitate a trial of electronic monitoring as a bail condition and included a two-year sunset clause.

Other members have alluded to this. When I was considering talking on this particular bill, a couple of things came to mind. I also take this opportunity to thank the committee for their consideration. It is obvious that this is another tranche of our Making Queensland Safer Laws.

In the lead-up to the last state election, about two years before—and I have mentioned this in the past—I had a series of crime forums with local police men and women. They would go through a whole range of things. One of the things that continually came through was why the then government was soft on crime and, amongst other things, why would they not be serious about looking at electronic monitoring devices. This came through time and time again. I distinctly remember at one of the first meetings I had, which was at the Gumdale Progress Hall, a lady whose name I will not mention here broke down in tears because twice she had been broken into on her acreage property. She was almost pleading with me, with tears running down her cheeks: 'Why won't they do something including putting some kind of bracelet on these juvenile offenders?'

Here we are. We have arrived now at this place where it seems we need to yet again—and it seems to be a recurring theme with every speaker on this side of the chamber with every piece of legislation—fix up the deficiencies of the failed Labor administration, so we have to go back in time.

The trial of electronic monitoring has a long and complicated history. It was first introduced back in 2021. I will just pause and reflect for a moment on the number of speakers we have had from this side of the chamber compared to the opposition benches. I think that sends out a pretty clear message as to which side of the chamber is serious about addressing this issue and those members who sadly seem to still have their heads in the sand. If we look at the history of the initial trial, it was indeed an abysmal failure. In terms of a dataset, it failed to capture enough youth offenders for an evaluation to be meaningfully completed. I will go through some of the stats. Some of them have been mentioned, but I would like to repeat them. In the first year of the trial's operation only five youth offenders had an electronic monitoring order imposed as a condition of their bail. There were literally three in Townsville, one in Brisbane North and one in Logan.

It is not as though the members who are now on this side of the chamber in government—yes, we were five months ago or thereabouts on that side of the chamber—did not warn the then Labor government from the get-go as to what the likely consequences would be. In fact, during the committee hearing back on 8 March 2021 the member for Glass House raised the LNP's concerns. It is certainly worthwhile to go back and repeat what he said. I quote directly the member for Glass House, who said—

My concern, though, is that ... the cohort that will actually have these monitoring devices fitted may be so small that we may not have any meaningful data on which to base further decisions when the sunset clause concludes after two years.

As other members have said, that sunset clause finishes at the end of this month, which is why the youth justice minister has done a cracking job to present this bill. While I am on my feet, I want to acknowledge the great work she has contributed in relation to not only this bill but also the tranche of reforms in relation to youth justice legislation in this state. All of us will have a finite period in this hallowed chamber. You would like to look back at your career and say with your hand on your heart, 'In some small way I played my role. I played a part.' The member for Currumbin, the minister, will be able to do just that. I hope that her sunset clause is many terms away. I hope that she is here for many years to come because this chamber is enlivened by not only her passionate speech delivery but also her intellectual capacity, intellectual rigour and intellectual contribution. Boy oh boy, does she owe me big-time! The fact of the matter is: I believe that the member for Currumbin, with her particular professional background and career, came to join this Assembly to make a tangible difference. Here is the rub, though. In the coming hours, hopefully this week, we will at some stage pass this legislation. This bill will in due course become an act. We need to make sure this is considered just another tranche of reform.

When we look seat by seat at the result of the election in October last year, we can see why there was a change of government. To be fair, it was more than just youth justice. There was a litany of failures by those on the other side of the chamber. You could pretty much pick any portfolio and tear them apart. If I had to bring it down to one critical area, it was specifically youth crime. Indeed, I would put it to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that most of the members on this side, whether they are returning members or candidates who are now privileged to be members of parliament, made absolutely sure—at every pre-poll and on the big dance day on 26 October—that Queenslanders, when they got the lead pencil and ballot paper, knew that one side stood for very little. They have been weighed, they have been measured and they have failed.

The lack of depth at question time and the lack of people on the speaking list for this particular bill says all we need to know. Hopefully, those opposite will be spending many years on that side of the chamber. The reality is that, no matter where I have gone in the last few weeks—in fact, in the last week and a half—I have been overwhelmed by the number of people who have spoken to me about two key areas. One is the great result with at least getting an Olympic plan out there; that is for sure. The other thing that has been a constant since we delivered the first tranche, as was promised before Christmas last year when we brought in the first tranche of reform, is people saying, 'Keep on going.'

I will distil why the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill is of critical importance. It simply comes down to this: no matter which electorate you come here and represent, people on this side of the chamber, to a man and woman, will say that their constituents were absolutely scared. In the lead-up to the last election, grown men of 120 or 130 kilos were literally scared for their families. It was not just them; it was tradies, it was mums and dads—everyone. It did not matter which electorate it was, from the Gold Coast to Far North Queensland to out west, people were outraged. This bill is important. Well done, Minister!