



Speech By  
**Hon. Laura Gerber**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 February 2026

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

**Second Reading**

 **Hon. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.01 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025 is the first step towards delivering stronger bail laws in this state. This bill makes electronic monitoring for youth on bail permanent and statewide, removes age restrictions and simplifies the matters a court must have regard to when ordering an electronic monitoring condition.

I introduced this bill on 10 December 2025 and it was referred to the Education, Arts and Communities Committee for consideration. I thank the committee for their consideration of this bill—in particular, the chair of the committee and member for Keppel—and acknowledge the entire committee for their hard work in deliberating on and reviewing the bill. I also take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all of the stakeholders, organisations, victims and witnesses who took the time to make a submission or appear before the committee to inform the committee's deliberations. The committee has made one recommendation: that the bill be passed.

The Crisafulli government promised to restore safety where you live and reduce the number of victims of crime in this state after a decade of decline under the former Labor government. We are delivering on that promise with some of the strongest youth bail electronic monitoring laws in the country. For a decade, Labor weakened our youth crime laws, made detention a last resort, removed breach of bail as an offence and created a generation of serious hardcore repeat offenders. The decisions Labor made had real-world consequences. They meant courts were constrained, consequences for actions were missing from the youth justice system, and victims and their families were left unseen and unprotected. Year after year under the former Labor government, Queenslanders called for change as youth crime skyrocketed and victim numbers rose.

On Australia Day 2021, a tragedy that we know all too well occurred when Matthew Field, Kate Leadbetter and their unborn son, Miles, were killed by a youth offender who had an extensive rap sheet and was driving a stolen car while high and out on bail. In the weeks and months that followed, Queenslanders called for stronger laws and consequences for actions. Labor's response was two botched electronic monitoring trials that were so narrow and so restrictive that only four youth offenders were ordered to wear a device in the first year.

Labor's first failed trial attempt was in 2021. The policy was poorly designed and even more poorly implemented. The trial was so narrowly constrained that it was designed to fail from the outset. The eligibility criteria were overly restrictive, it was limited to just five locations in Queensland and the court's ability to impose electronic monitoring was confined to a small cohort of youth aged 16 and over.

A year later, the consequences of that botched trial were laid bare, with Labor's own interim evaluation labelling the trial 'limited' and 'restrictive'. The number of youths ordered to wear a device was so low that their own review of the trial determined its effectiveness could not be determined.

Rather than addressing the fundamental design flaws, Labor made piecemeal changes to the legislation. In 2023 they extended the trial for another two years, lowering the minimum age from 16 to 15 and adding a further three locations. In August 2024, just months before the trial was set to expire, Labor again tinkered around the edges but notably failed to deal with the sunset clause.

In April 2025 we dealt with the sunset clause by extending the trial of electronic monitoring for 12 months to ensure a meaningful and comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of electronic monitoring of youth on bail. The independent evaluation has found that electronic monitoring for youth on bail works. It is associated with higher bail completion, reduced reoffending and lower victimisation. In fact, a youth ordered to wear a GPS device was 24 per cent less likely to reoffend.

The Crisafulli government will always put victims first, and that is why we are making electronic monitoring permanent and statewide and giving the courts the ability to order a youth who is released on bail to wear one. These new laws, alongside our early intervention and rehabilitation programs, will help break the cycle of repeat youth offending and make Queensland safer. This bill delivers a clear and deliberate shift away from the failed piecemeal approach of the former Labor government's botched trial of electronic monitoring. They never intended to make it permanent because they do not believe in strong youth crime laws.

Queenslanders want these laws. Throughout the committee process, we heard from stakeholders and victims of crime who had been let down by the previous Labor government, time and time again. They told us they want to feel safe and they want their rights prioritised. Sharon Guest from Cairns said—

My daughter was stabbed ... and left for dead ... They told me she might not live. She is a victim but the perpetrator seems to get more rights.

Trudy Reading, the Director and Chief Advocacy Officer for the Voice for Victims Foundation, said—

Too often the impact of legislation changes on victims is overshadowed by concerns about protecting the rights of offenders. While many offenders make a conscious choice to offend and must accept the consequences of that choice, victims suffer harm through no fault of their own and are rarely afforded the same consideration.

The Crisafulli government has listened to the voices of victims and we have acted. Under our government, the rights of victims will always come before the rights of offenders. This bill ensures that youth justice laws meet community expectations. In their submission to the committee, the Voice for Victims Foundation stated—

Electronic monitoring ... could have prevented incidents by enabling earlier intervention and more informed responses by authorities.

They further stated—

For victim-survivors, this measure represents:

- increased confidence in the justice system
- reassurance that serious risks are being actively managed
- a tangible acknowledgment of the harm caused by repeat offending

Natalie Merlehan, a director of the Voice for Victims Foundation, said—

... I was a victim of a violent youth crime incident almost five years ago—

We know her story and that of the member for Capalaba all too well. She said—

... three lives were lost, mine was profoundly changed and he caused long-term damage to a number of people ... I would have welcomed the option of an EMD being used for someone such as that repeat offender because I became a victim through a lack of requirement of meaningful ... rehabilitative supports, as well as monitoring.

I want to thank all of the victims of crime who made their voices heard during the committee process. I reassure them that they have a government that is listening, acting and prioritising their rights.

The evaluation found that a youth ordered to wear a GPS device was 24 per cent less likely to reoffend. By reducing reoffending we will reduce the number of victims of crime. The evaluation also found that electronic monitoring can improve a youth's compliance with their bail conditions and help our frontline workers to detect and respond to breaches. Some youth said that their electronic monitoring device served as a physical reminder of their bail conditions or the surveillance they were under and they feared that if they offended while wearing an EMD they would be caught immediately. When asked about the effects of wearing an electronic monitoring device, one youth said—

Now I think more about what I am doing. I say no to meeting my mates when they are out, and I have complied with all of my conditions.

Recently another youth, a 16-year-old in Cairns, was ordered to wear an electronic monitoring device as part of their bail. They did not reoffend and, in fact, complied with their conditional bail obligations 100 per cent of the time.

The electronic monitoring of youth on bail has shown that it can reduce reoffending. That is why we are expanding our strong youth bail monitoring laws statewide and equipping our courts with the tools they need to impose electronic monitoring on a youth on bail where it is appropriate, to ensure community safety. Of course, an electronic monitoring device needs network coverage to work and that is built into the bill as a necessary requirement in order for it to be a condition of bail. In their submission to the committee, Voice for Victims Foundation stated—

A statewide framework ensures consistency, fairness, and equal protection for communities across Queensland.

The bill also simplifies the eligibility criteria. Under Labor, youth needed to meet a shopping list of eligibility criteria to even be considered for a device. They had to be between 15 and 17 years old, live in one of the few areas prescribed under Labor, be heard by a court in only a handful of locations, charged with only certain prescribed indictable offences and have previously been found guilty of an indictable offence or charged with a prescribed indictable offence in the last 12 months. Those were the restrictions and limitations that Labor put on electronic monitoring in this state. Labor's parameters were so restrictive, only a small cohort were even given a device. Labor set the trial up to fail.

We are removing Labor's restrictive eligibility criteria and simplifying the matters a court must consider in order to impose an electronic monitoring device as a condition of bail. This bill means courts can impose an electronic monitoring device for any youth offender aged 10 to 17 who comes before them, including first-time offenders. But let me be clear: if a youth offender poses an unacceptable risk to community safety, they should be remanded in custody. Where the courts have made the decision to grant a youth offender bail, this bill allows the courts to also order that youth wear an electronic monitoring device.

Whilst there were stakeholders that opposed this strong measure of allowing an electronic monitoring device for any youth offender, including youth offenders aged 10 to 17, victims supported the change. In Townsville, Lynette Cullen wanted us to know that if an offender is out on bail she wants to know they are being monitored because when that offender is on bail her safety is at risk. Lynette went on to say—

... I believe that at any age, even at 10 years old, people know right from wrong. If they are not doing the right thing then they need to be monitored and continue to be monitored.

Another victim of Labor's youth crime crisis, Daryl Griffiths, said—

It is the old adage: 'If you don't want to do the time, don't do the crime.' If you do not want to wear an ankle monitor—and the word will get out really quick to these kids—then do not do the crime. Do not break into my house. Do not steal my cars.

Well said, Daryl.

For too long, Queenslanders have been at the mercy of Labor's weak laws and suffered through the revolving door of youth crime time and time again. The Crisafulli government is taking action and delivering strong laws to turn the tide on Labor's youth crime crisis. By removing the age restrictions, this bill brings electronic monitoring into line with all other bail conditions and removes the constraints Labor put in place on judicial discretion.

Under Labor, the courts had to consider a range of matters including: the youth's capacity to understand the bail condition; whether they were likely to comply with the condition; if anyone has indicated a willingness to support the youth and notify the court of any changes in circumstances or breaches of the conditions; and whether the youth consented to wearing the device. This bill removes these requirements so that the courts will only have to consider the suitability assessment.

In addition, the bill prescribes key safeguards so that a court can only impose an electronic monitoring device if the Youth Justice chief executive advises the court that all of the following services are available in the area in which the child lives: services necessary to support the effective operation of a monitoring device—that is, suitable network coverage where the youth lives; services suitable to support the youth's compliance with the condition—that is, bail support services; and services suitable to support the monitoring of the youth, which is QCS. These protections are enshrined in the legislation to ensure a youth on bail has the necessary support services to comply with their bail conditions and that community safety can be upheld.

As Queenslanders know, network coverage across the state varies. The availability and maintenance of network coverage is a matter for the federal government. Electronic monitoring devices require coverage to work. We know that, and that is why this bill makes it explicit that a court can only

order an electronic monitoring device as a condition of bail where there is network coverage for it to work. Yes, we are making electronic monitoring statewide, in that any court is able to consider it and order it. We have enshrined in legislation that if there is no coverage it cannot be ordered.

Some stakeholders also raised concerns that during severe weather events there is often network coverage issues where entire communities can experience network outages. Where these disruptions occur, the department employs workarounds to maintain contact and monitor compliance. A youth with a GPS device will also have intensive support services in their area to help ensure bail conditions are adhered to.

Contrary to the scare campaign Labor is peddling in their statement of reservation, the Crisafulli government's has invested \$44.3 million in bail supports over the next four years to ensure services are available statewide. As Katherine Hayes, the CEO of the Youth Advocacy Centre, said—

... every child who receives an EMD does need to have access to the bail support services ... that is in the legislation.

Luke Twyford, the Queensland Family and Child Commissioner, also commented on how important wraparound supports are for youth on bail and noted—

Queensland is one of a small number of Australian jurisdictions to embed bail supports, reflecting evidence that electronic monitoring is more effective when combined with case management, family support and therapeutic interventions.

Wraparound supports for every youth offender out on bail with an electronic monitoring device are critical to preventing reoffending. That is why we have embedded it in our tough new laws. Alongside that, we are delivering targeted, intensive intervention and rehabilitation programs to help get these youth back on the right track. We are delivering the strongest investment in bail support services. That is not all, we have also delivered \$75 million over four years to fund our youth co-responder teams and expand them statewide. Under Labor, our co-responders were not funded permanently. The police were on contracts and their positions fell off a cliff. We permanently funded those positions.

We are also delivering \$50 million for four crime prevention schools across the state and \$40 million for two specialised youth justice schools—designed to get disengaged and high-risk youth away from crime and into education, employment or a job. In fact, our youth justice schools, in particular, are targeted at youth on youth justice orders—orders that might mean a youth is wearing an electronic monitoring device. Our youth justice schools directly contribute to the wraparound services that youth ordered to wear electronic monitoring devices can receive. We are not just delivering strong laws; we are ensuring that youth have the supports in place to turn their lives around. Under Labor these youth were on the streets committing more crimes. Now they can be in our schools re-engaging with education and be given the tailored, intensive support they need to head towards a brighter future.

Katherine Hayes from the Youth Advocacy Centre spoke about the importance of education for youth on bail. A 15-year-old boy that she worked with who was ordered to wear an EMD for four months found that he improved his engagement in school—attending five days a week—positively engaged with his caseworker and engaged with youth justice for support.

Our government's funding does not end there. Every youth offender in our detention centres will get Staying on Track—that is, 12 months of intensive rehabilitation to break the cycle of crime and prevent them from reoffending. We know that electronic monitoring is most effective when partnered with wraparound supports, and that is exactly what we are delivering. In fact, we have embedded it in the bill.

I also want to address the concerns raised during the committee process about the operational impacts of electronic monitoring. The independent report uncovered that Labor's trial failed on an operational level. It was rolled out without proper planning which meant our frontline workers were left confused and without the structure they needed to effectively monitor these GPS devices. This meant that at times, under Labor, alerts were missed and at other times our frontline agencies were doubling up on work.

The independent evaluation report found that staff described Labor's rollout of the trial as administratively burdensome, engrained with unclear responsibilities and having poor interagency coordination, poor training, role clarity gaps and inefficient escalation pathways—all of this resulting in significant alert response fatigue. The Crisafulli government is getting on with the job of fixing those Labor failures also.

Under the Crisafulli government, electronic monitoring will operate as a reliable, real-time tool that supports our frontline workers to respond quickly and decisively. These reforms deliver some of the strongest youth bail monitoring laws in the country and, alongside early intervention and rehabilitation, they will make Queensland safer after a decade of Labor's weak laws which created a youth crime crisis. These reforms are all part of our plan to put the rights of victims first, deliver consequences for action and reduce reoffending, returning safety to Queensland communities. I commend the bill to the House.