

***Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill 2025 –  
Sandy Bolton, MP for Noosa***

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

This bill, only three clauses long, amends the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Act, to extend for an additional year the power for courts to require the use of electronic monitoring for young people charged with a prescribed indictable offence and released on bail, thus extending the Government's trial of these devices.

The trial itself was introduced in 2021 however the effectiveness of electronic monitoring has never been determined, at least partly because of the initial small number of participants, and while this has increased, there now isn't enough time to complete the review before the trial expires, which would have resulted in electronic monitoring ending without an adequate assessment of its effectiveness.

Effective evaluation of Youth Justice interventions, including electronic monitoring devices, was recommendation 38 of the Youth Justice Select Committee Report, and it is vital that going forward a concise assessment is undertaken on these before the extension of time ends.

Despite the bills short length, it received detailed submissions, although more about the overall trial and use of electronic monitoring, rather than the extension itself.

Some stakeholders opposed the use of electronic monitoring, with the Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC) submitting that children should not be electronically monitored as it impacts many rights protected under the Human Rights Act.

The Justice Reform Initiative (JRI) points to research that concluded that the use of electric monitoring does not have a statistically significant effect on crime, except when used for tracking sex offenders post-trial.

The department's response was that much of the current research is not useful, as it comes from the US where electronic monitoring is used very broadly and indiscriminately. Queensland usage is different and more targeted, hence the need for our own trial and evaluation. Regarding human rights the department believes the usage of electronic monitoring is compatible, as set out in the Statement of Compatibility.

There was also support, including from Voices For Victims, as it will allow a comprehensive review of the electronic monitoring program to inform future government decision making.

In addition that it should not be seen as a solely punitive measure, rather as a form of supervision allowing better management of offenders, in conjunction with other services and interventions.

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) said that if implemented effectively, electronic monitoring has the potential to enhance safety while reducing the need for children to be detained.

Effective implementation though, involved using them in conjunction with intensive, culturally safe, community support.

The Youth Advocacy Centre (TAC) argued that even though they have concerns with the use of electronic monitoring, they have listened to the young people they work with that it is a preferable alternative to detention, given the mistreatment of those in state custody. As well, they can help youth resist pressure to reoffend, and a ‘physical reminder’ of their bail conditions, helping to deter reoffending.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission also were supportive of the trial extension; however they emphasised that it must be part of broader, more comprehensive strategy for reforming the youth justice system.

Given these supports and that it is in line with the Youth Justice Select Committee Report recommendation the trial should continue.

However we must remember the long list of what remains to be done to break the cycles of offending, with the Justice Reform Initiative (JRI) reiterating the importance of moving beyond ‘quick fixes’ to the needed expansion of services and supports regarding bail compliances, and the Queensland Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies (QNADA) increased investment needed for diversions. As we saw during the Youth Justice Inquiry, reform requires a comprehensive approach and the Youth Justice Select Committee Report and recommendations from last year provides the blueprint, and must be progressed.

Tax payers funded those endeavours, and communities across Queensland were very clear. They want greater safety now and into the future, and this can only be achieved by moving beyond the politics, into evidence-based actions.

Thank you to the Committee and secretariat for your work, and to submitters who put such an effort into providing detailed responses to the bill.