



## **EDUCATION, ARTS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

### **Members present:**

Mr JM Krause MP—Acting Chair  
Ms W Bourne MP  
Hon. DE Farmer MP  
Miss AS Doolan MP  
Ms KJ Morton MP  
Ms CP McMillan MP

### **Staff present:**

Ms L Pretty—Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE YOUTH JUSTICE (ELECTRONIC MONITORING) AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Wednesday, 21 January 2026**

**Cairns**

## WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2026

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**The committee met at 10.30 am.**

**ACTING CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land in Cairns. My name is Jon Krause, member for Scenic Rim and the acting chair of the committee for this morning's proceedings. Nigel Hutton, the member for Keppel and chair of the committee is unavailable to be with us today, so you have me all the way from Scenic Rim. With me today are: Corrine McMillan, deputy chair and member for Mansfield; Wendy Bourne, member for Ipswich West; Ariana Doolan, member for Pumicestone; Kendall Morton, member for Caloundra; and Di Farmer, member for Bulimba, who is substituting today for Mick de Brenni, the member for Springwood.

The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee with its inquiry into the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill. We are here today in Cairns to hear your views. You will have opportunities to come forward, even if you are not on the program at the moment. Please take the opportunity to share with us.

The committee is a committee of the Queensland parliament and its hearings are subject to the rules of the parliament. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and will be published on the parliament's website in due course. If you have any concerns about this, please talk to our committee secretary, who is Lynda, here sitting next to me. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's directions at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during these proceedings, and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please turn off your mobile phones or onto silent mode.

We will first hear from those listed on today's program, but before I get into the program, I would like to acknowledge: the member for Barron River, Bree James, sitting up the back there—thank you for joining us; the member for Mulgrave, Terry James—thank you for joining us; and also the member for Cairns, Michael Healy—thank you for joining us at this hearing today. Most of all, welcome to all of you here to contribute to the committee's inquiry. We will first hear from those listed on the program and then I will invite anyone who has indicated their wish to speak to the table to give us a brief opening statement, after which committee members may have questions for you. If you wish to speak and have not already let Lynda or someone on the committee know, please take the opportunity at some stage when there is a slight intermission to come and let us know. With all of that said and done, I will invite our first witness to the table which is Mr Aaron McLeod.

**Ms McMILLAN:** Chair, can I interrupt?

**ACTING CHAIR:** Do you have a point of order?

**Ms McMILLAN:** Normally if we have our local members present, we usually hear from our local members—a little welcome to their communities. Can I suggest that we give them a couple of moments just to welcome us?

**ACTING CHAIR:** No worries. I will call forward first Bree James, member for Barron River.

**Ms JAMES:** Thank you all for being here today. There are a lot of familiar faces in the room—a lot of people have spoken to me about the crime crisis we have in our great city. There is a lot of work to do. As you know, we have done a lot of work in the first 12 months of government, but we have a long way to go, and this is another step forward in creating stronger laws. We know that we have a revolving door of kids who will be out on bail and they are committing crimes again. This is one step forward, and one more thing that we can do, to try to reverse this crime crisis in our city, to lower the impact that it is having on our city. Thank you for being here and sharing your stories. It is really important. Thank you for your time today.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I call on the member for Cairns, Michael Healy, and then we will get the member for Mulgrave, Terry, to wrap things up.

**Mr HEALY:** Good morning, everybody. Firstly, I would like to welcome you all to my electorate. It is nice to have you all. Hopefully you will get out and enjoy some of our restaurants and goodies. This is vitally important. For 15 months we have had a new government in. We had more cars stolen

in the last 12 months than the 12 months previous. We are seeing no impact. I know when you look at what is happening out particularly in the Barron River—I know there have been issues out there—we need to come up with solutions. This is a committee that is formulated to be able to extract from the community ideas. You can contribute and this is vitally important. This is a collective. We are all involved in this. It is a significant issue and it has been for a very long time, so your input is much appreciated. I want to say thank you very much and I look forward to each and every one of you having your say. Thank you.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Cairns. Member for Mulgrave?

**Mr JAMES:** Thank you, Acting Chair. Welcome, everybody, to this hearing in Cairns. This is one of a number of hearings we have held in Cairns, and the government will continue to have these hearings in Cairns, as long as we get people like yourselves who are happy to front up and have your say. It is very important that the government listens to you, and they are listening to us, all our members, so thank you very much for coming. Please keep a watch out for the future hearings that are coming to Cairns as well and come along.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Mulgrave. We appreciate all of those introductions.

**McLEOD, Mr Aaron, President, Community Justice Action Group**

**ACTING CHAIR:** Good morning, Mr McLeod. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. I invite you to make a brief opening statement, if you have one, after which I am sure committee members will have questions for you.

**Mr McLeod:** Thank you very much, Acting Chair. I want to check on a point of procedure, I guess—the request for leave to table the report. Can I do that now or do it after?

**ACTING CHAIR:** Are you seeking leave to table a submission?

**Mr McLeod:** That is correct.

**ACTING CHAIR:** If you have copies for other members, that would be handy, but if not, we can take the one.

**Mr McLeod:** There is that one and then there was an electronic copy sent last night.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I move that the document submitted by Mr McLeod be tabled and that he speak to his submission that has been tabled. All those in favour? That is carried.

**Mr McLeod:** Good morning, esteemed Acting Chairman and honourable members of the committee. My name is Aaron McLeod. I am the President of the Community Justice Action Group Incorporated. It is a privilege to address you today on behalf of CJAG's management committee and our members. I extend our gratitude to the government for their courageous decision to adopt adult penalties for adult crimes within the youth justice framework. This bold step acknowledges our advocacy over the last five years and therefore the complexities of serious offending happening to our neighbours and loved ones.

Firstly, I want to pay my heartfelt condolences to the family and loved ones of Richarna Clarke, remembered by her friends as a beautiful angel who was tragically killed in an alleged family violence murder in Gordonvale by an individual who was the beneficiary of a court-ordered five-year community-based sentence of early release parole after 21 months on remand for serious violent offences using blunt weapons some four years earlier.

For those unfamiliar, CJAG is a dedicated organisation focused on advocating for victim-survivors, early prevention community development initiatives and think tank research across Queensland. We were founded and remain based in Cairns and the regional north. We are staunchly independent and outside the political and government stakeholder cohort. We work tirelessly to foster safer communities by promoting policies that prioritise justice for victims, rehabilitation of the afflicted and proper accountability of offenders and presumed authorities that collectively contribute to tens of billions in victim impact costs and material losses per annum across Queensland. Evidently, such data and modelling has been denied to this committee's evaluation of the EMDs by the youth justice minister who has the resources of Queensland Treasury and the Government Statistician's Office. That data has been denied to the committee; it is not available.

CJAG is proud to represent a growing community of hundreds of members, united in our pursuit of community safety and a fairer and more effective justice system. Beyond our hundreds of ordinary memberships and supporters, we engage with a broader 46,000 social media followers achieving a Cairns

record three million media views monthly in 2025. This significant reach underscores the public trust in CJAG as a leading voice in community justice advocacy, authentic peer-to-peer support of victim-survivors, and it reflects the urgency of the issues we champion.

Among our key policy proposals so far in the Making Queensland Safer laws is the introduction of a novel, legal reform called sentence bargaining within the youth justice system. Parliament has our white paper. This approach, carefully structured, could streamline court processes, reduce remand periods and encourage early guilty pleas, thereby minimising victim trauma and ensuring swifter justice outcomes, while embedding sustainable reductions in the recidivism threshold below 50 per cent for youth and 60 per cent for adult inmate populations. We believe sentence bargaining, when paired with structured evidence-based responsibilities set at rehabilitation measures, can strike the advantage—the advantage—for community safety and the opportunity for young offenders to reform.

We also urge the committee to consider the Little Scandinavia prison program as a model for transforming youth detention facilities into a hybrid custody environment, accommodating intensive case management and social normalisation infrastructure, inspired by a Scandinavian correction system boasting 30 per cent recidivism rates. This program emphasises rehabilitation over punishment, creating environments that foster personal responsibility in growth, learning, education, skill building and reintegration. By adopting elements of this proposal, Queensland could reduce recidivism rates to below 50 per cent, which currently stands at 60 to 80 per cent within 12 months of release, and provide young offenders with the tools to rebuild their lives.

With respect to the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill specifically, normally a benefit of the doubt could be afforded on this type of amendment, but serious concerns exist in that the government is ring fencing information about its modelling, adopting excessive scope of administrative appropriation and integrity risk in the advice, assessment and framing of matters to courts, and the evaluation evidence clearly suggests reductions in reoffending are attributable to intensive use of wraparound services. Furthermore, North Queensland has zero episodes of EMD application for trial assessment here today. Not one person in North Queensland participated in the trial. A simple analysis of the expansion perimeters compared to the Nous evaluation's 63 per cent reoffending rate change would conclude that victimisation growth will be assured and, therefore, the community safety risk and management strategy of this department is unfavourable.

In closing, CJAG is committed to collaborating with this committee to advance policies that create safer communities, support victim-survivors and rehabilitate young offenders. We believe that through innovative reforms and a shared commitment to community justice, Queensland can lead the nation in building a fairer, more effective youth justice system, pragmatic and purposeful in protecting the innocent, supporting victim-survivors and driving down the victim offender nexus to reduce the state's incarcerated populations safely. I welcome any questions you may have and forge constructive dialogue on how we can work together to achieve these shared goals. Thank you for your consideration.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr McLeod, for your submission and for your opening statement. We will have a short time for questions. I wanted to go to your point about recidivism rates. The minister has made it very clear in the introductory statement for this bill that where a youth poses an unacceptable risk to community safety bail should not be granted, and so the electronic monitoring would only take place if the decision was made to grant bail. Do you have any further comments to add around that structure—you were raising concerns about recidivism rates and the application of bail and application of monitoring in that context—given that it is quite clear the intent is for monitoring only to occur once a decision has been made to grant bail?

**Mr McLeod:** Firstly, there is, of course, the separation of powers that apply. The justice system works on its own accord, as does the executive of government. While the 63 per cent defined in the report is a favourable response, it still does not meet the minimum threshold for reoffending rates to be sustainable within the population. What the government is essentially saying is that the definition of 'unacceptable risk' from an enterprise risk management approach, which is the methodology used by the government to assess these matters, is inconsistent with the definition of 'community safety' as it applies to the community. There is an inconsistency in definition and, therefore, expectation. The point that we are making is that while it is explicitly suggested that it is not intended for the judiciary to expand its assessment of who is and is not eligible for bail, we see that bail creep will occur absolutely within the judicial system because of the evidence that has occurred certainly since 2019 when there was a significant rehabilitation focus in the youth justice system reform. What we are afraid of and what the community should be concerned about is that the judiciary will take advantage of the supervisory capability of the monitoring system. The EMD system is absolutely a supervisory

mechanism which the courts can take into consideration at their discretion. That will create a push factor, but a pull factor by the judiciary to expand rehabilitation programs in the community and, therefore, make community safety an unacceptable risk to us.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Sure. Thank you for your submission.

**Ms McMILLAN:** Before I hand to the shadow minister, I make a point of order, Chair, around the preamble of the question and the length of that preamble. I will hand to the shadow minister, the Hon. Di Farmer.

**Ms FARMER:** Mr McLeod, it is lovely to see you again. Thank you for the work that you do running a community group like that which would mean you are going all hours of the day and night—it is huge—and your presentation was extremely thoughtful. I have a number of points I would like to ask you about. The last point you made was about the fact that there were zero episodes of the EMD in Cairns, as per the evaluation report. The committee has asked the department if they could be clear to us about where there will be coverage for the EMDs and what wraparound services will be available. As you know, as per the legislation, they will not apply if that is not there. The department has declined to tell us the locations where it is available and also, in terms of wraparound services, to ‘just look up the website’. Would you like that information to be really clear to Cairns people so you can be sure EMDs will work and apply here?

**Mr McLeod:** Absolutely we would like to get access to that information. The report suggests, and it certainly implies, because of the scope of the data that was collected—it makes it very clear—that the South-East and west South-East were the districts that had episodes of EMD being applied. Seemingly, if Rockhampton, or wherever the North Queensland definition starts, there is not any trial data, there is no increased intelligence for the populations north of Rockhampton to understand that this technology and the framework, by and large, is actually going to work. It is very unfair for the government to adopt a statewide application for this when they do not have any data on the locations up here. I would suggest that there would be a limitation to the locations and focus it continually in the South-East, if you like, where there is, of course, a higher density of wraparound services available. Up here in Cairns, we just do not have the same resources, unfortunately, and therefore the risk analysis by this process will mean that there is a bail creep scenario, that there would be some other adjustment needed in order to deliver a political message to say that this is all community safety working, but people are dying and people are being injured on the street. We do not want to have that happen. Absolutely, I would say yes to your question.

**Miss DOOLAN:** Thank you for your advocacy. The independent evaluation found that EMDs could reduce the likelihood of reoffending by 22 per cent. Do you believe this is a step in the right direction, particularly in a community like Cairns?

**Mr McLeod:** Certainly, the benefit of the doubt is there on those numbers within the exclusive sample group. Unfortunately, the sample group is not Queensland, and the sample group does not control the judiciary who will take into consideration the minister’s declaration in the compatibility statement in order to comply with United Nations standards and our own Human Rights Act. These EMDs are actually a form of supervision and they have to be a form of supervision in order to justify the Human Rights Act being breached effectively because there is a clear argument here that the Human Rights Act, by this program, is being breached. The government are appropriating—and I use this word and I use ‘misappropriation’ very clearly here when we talk about misinformation and disinformation that applies to the community—but we have a greater risk, unfortunately, of governments misappropriating information for their own political benefit, and there is a substantial risk that that is what is going on here.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr McLeod, for your evidence and for your submission to the committee. We will move onto our next witness now. Thank you very much for your time.

### **STOKES, Mr Graham, Private capacity**

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Stokes, for appearing before the committee today. I invite you to make an opening statement, if you have one, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

**Mr Stokes:** Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Graham Stokes. I am a resident of the Cairns region in Far North Queensland and I appear today in support of the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025. For communities like Cairns, youth crime is no longer an abstract policy discussion; it is a lived, daily reality. Across Cairns and the surrounding suburbs, residents are experiencing repeated property offences, stolen vehicles, dangerous driving and home invasions, often committed by the same small cohorts of young offenders cycling rapidly through arrest, bail and reoffending. For many people in our community, the core issue is no longer whether bail should exist; it is whether bail conditions have real meaning, enforceability or credibility.

I have to say there is strong respect in our community for the work that Queensland police do on the ground. Many residents recognise their professionalism, their restraints and their persistence, but at the same time there is growing community perception that police efforts are too often undermined by bail outcomes that appear disconnected from local risk and lived experience. Whether that perception is always fair or not, it is real, and it is eroding confidence in the system as a whole. In Cairns and the surrounding suburbs, many victims no longer report offences because they believe offenders will be immediately released, bail conditions will not be enforced and their safety concerns will not be prioritised.

Electronic monitoring, when used appropriately, restores confidence by demonstrating that bail conditions are real, compliance is monitored and repeat breaches have consequences. This is essential not only for victims but also for public trust in the youth justice system as a whole. I support making electronic monitoring permanent because trial extensions undermine certainty and confidence. Permanence does not mandate use; it preserves judicial discretion whilst ensuring the option is genuinely available.

I also support statewide deployments. Cairns is a regional city experiencing metropolitan-scale impacts, and victims should not receive different protections simply because of geography.

Finally, I support removing the rigid eligibility criteria. Individual risk assessment is more effective than blanket exclusions. Electronic monitoring is not punitive, it is not detention and it is not a substitute for rehabilitation; it is a measured accountability tool. For those reasons, I support the bill and thank the committee for the opportunity to contribute.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Stokes.

**Ms FARMER:** Thank you, Mr Stokes, for your very thoughtful presentation. There have been a number of submitters who have said to the committee that there is a high chance that the laws will not be effective in the way it has been suggested. In a place like Cairns—you have already talked about the experience of increased offences here—would you like to see a review of the legislation in a year or two to make sure that it actually is working the way it is promised, given the misgivings a number of people have?

**Mr Stokes:** I think to introduce anything without having an effective review within a reasonable timeframe is taking you down the road to hell, to be honest with you; it makes the whole bill ineffective. I think a review is essential.

**Miss DOOLAN:** Mr Stokes, thank you for your submission and appearing today. Do you believe the safety of the community and the rights of victims should be the most important consideration when it comes to amendments to electronic monitoring laws?

**Mr Stokes:** Absolutely, yes.

**Ms FARMER:** You will be aware, Mr Stokes, that the bill talks about the EMDs will apply essentially where there is coverage and suitable services. Given the fact that the trial had no EMDs operating in the Cairns area, would you like the government to be really clear on what locations in the Cairns area there is coverage for EMDs and wraparound services?

**Mr Stokes:** Yes, I would. Respectfully, I would like the government to stop looking at excuses for not introducing the EMDs in certain areas and find solutions to where coverage might be an issue.

**Ms MORTON:** Thank you for your time today. The independent evaluation that helped inform this bill found that youth with EMDs had higher bail completion rates—74 per cent versus 50 per cent for those not on EMDs—and lower reoffending rates—62 versus 80. Do you accept that this is a step in the right direction to ultimately reduce reoffending?

**Mr Stokes:** Yes, I do. I think it is a good place to start, but, in my view, it is just a start.

**Ms FARMER:** Mr Stokes, I want to go back to what I asked previously. We have been advised by the department that they will not reveal the locations where there is coverage for EMDs, and that if we want to know about wraparound services, which the evaluation report says is critical to the success, then we should just look up the website; they are not providing that information directly to the committee. Do you believe, once this bill is passed, that the government has a responsibility to provide that information?

**Mr Stokes:** It is all about trust and credibility. If you make it easy for us to go and find the information or give us the information, we are more likely to have that trust. If we are told simply, 'Go and have a look on the website,' then many people just will not bother, but a lot more people might think, 'What are they trying to hide?' and I do not think for a minute they are trying to hide anything; there will be a reason for it. So, be open and honest with it. If there is a reason it cannot be shared, tell us why.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Mr Stokes, we have received an answer to a question on notice from the department which relates to coverage for electronic monitors which indicates that where there is 4G coverage, they are able to be effective in the community. The evaluation also found that EMDs were most effective when combined with wraparound supports, which you have heard about. The government has put in place a \$560 million investment into a new program. Does that go some way to assuaging your concerns that you expressed previously around the effectiveness in the coverage of EMDs?

**Mr Stokes:** It does. I want to be realistic: 300 kilometres west of here when you are in the middle of nowhere, you can barely get a Telstra signal, so I understand the issues. However, I think certainly in Cairns as a city and in all of the surrounding suburbs, we have 4G, we have 5G, we have electricity and everything, so there is no reason it should not work. If 4G and 5G coverage is the bar that has been set, then that is really good news. I am happy with that.

**Miss DOOLAN:** Mr Stokes, do you agree that strengthening compliance with bail allows youth a greater chance of rehabilitation to turn their lives around?

**Mr Stokes:** I do. I think it does, yes.

**Ms FARMER:** Mr Stokes, one of the programs which the evaluation report says is really critical is the bail support program. One submitter has said to us that there is no provider providing bail support programs that has a contract past June this year. The government has declined to confirm or deny that. Does that concern you, that we do not have that transparency about whether the programs will be in place?

**Mr Stokes:** It does. I would be very concerned if there is no support available because without that support you are setting this new system up to fail.

**Ms McMILLAN:** Point of order, Acting Chair. The government had two questions in a row prior to the shadow minister, so I would defer to the shadow minister for the next question.

**ACTING CHAIR:** You cannot defer to anyone because you are not the chair. Does the shadow minister have another question?

**Ms FARMER:** I will if I am given the opportunity, thank you.

**ACTING CHAIR:** We are running hard up against time, but I will allow you to ask another question.

**Ms FARMER:** Mr Stokes, the current bill is very clear; it actually says in the bill what the courts have to consider if they are going to order an EMD. The new bill gives that decision to the CEO of Youth Justice, but no-one will be able to see what those considerations are. Would you like those matters that the CEO considers to be really clear to the public?

**Mr Stokes:** Yes, I would.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Stokes, for your evidence here today, for your submission and for answering the questions of the committee. You may stand down.

### **DRABBLE, Mr Paul, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** I welcome Mr Paul Drabble. Thank you for appearing. If you would like to make a brief opening statement, you may, and then I am sure the committee will have questions for you.

**Mr Drabble:** I live in White Rock. This is where most of our recidivist youth criminals live. I have been fighting and advocating against youth crime for 15 years. I worked in retail. I have been attacked in my own shops. I have been robbed. I have been broken into. I have been in front of politicians who have all said they cared, and nothing has happened. Yet here we are and we want to give the judges another tool—we want to give them monitoring—but the judges do not use the tools they have now. We do not get convictions. The reason we do not get convictions is because the law says that if they give a conviction, they will have to give the victim reimbursement and restitution under the victim act and that will cost our state millions. That is the bottom line of that.

Both parties agreed five years ago that breach of bail was going to be the be-all and end-all and change this. We had four years of the LNP saying, 'Breach of bail, breach of bail, breach of bail.' We now have breach of bail. We have kids in this city with 50, 60, 70 breaches of bail on their records. You say by putting monitoring on them, it will change it by 10 per cent. So, instead of having 50, we are going to have maybe 15, 20. We still have them in our community.

I am not about custodial sentences anymore. Everybody says I am about locking them up. I am about rehabilitation, but we are not doing rehabilitation properly. We do not want to rehabilitate these kids because if we are successful in rehabilitating them, we have a whole industry that no longer gets bread on its table from youth crime. We have a whole group: 30,000 Queenslanders are fed by the system of youth crime, are fed because they work in the system—youth justice, lawyers, and the system itself, the judiciary, is the one that is failing us.

We hear both governments say, 'We are resourcing police. We are resourcing police.' I worked with police in my shops. We arrested over 20 'customers' who busted into my shops, stole \$40,000 to \$50,000 worth of cigarettes, cutting open things. We got them arrested. As a victim, I was not allowed near the court. I was not informed by police when they were going to court. I did not get informed what the outcomes were. I deserve that right as a victim to know what these criminals are serving, based on them robbing me, but we never have that. We never have that.

We are going to put ankle monitors on them and we are going to ask our police to do another job. Essentially that is what we are saying. Youth Justice cannot even monitor the people we have; they do not have enough staff. We feed the system with money. All we are doing in putting monitoring on is creating another dust collector in the judicial system. When we put an ankle bracelet on a kid, we are going to get it challenged, we are going to get it appealed, we are going to have multiple lawyers doing their job to have it not on them because it will impede their rights. They have more rights than me. Our youth criminals have more rights in this community than we do as victims. I went to the last victim hearings and I listened to the people.

Again we hear that victims are paying the price to put bread on the tables of the youth justice system, on the judiciary system and on the police department as thousands of people working in these industries. Resicare, a billion-dollar industry, is fed off the back of youth criminals. We have 278 recidivist criminals, seriously, in this city who are holding this city to ransom. They are stealing multiple cars—1,500 cars. Yes, Mr Healy spoke on that. Now he cares about youth crime. Why? Because he is not in government. That is the only reason Mr Healy has spoken up for the last few days about youth crime—because he now cares about it. No, he did not. He did not care about it when he sat in parliament. As an MP, he did not care about meeting me when I wanted a meeting. At the end of the day, I leave you with this: everybody is fed off the cost of the pain and suffering of our victims. I would be happy to answer any questions.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Mr Drabble, thank you for your submissions.

**Miss DOOLAN:** Mr Drabble, thank you for your opening statement. I am so sorry for your experiences with youth crime. The independent evaluation of the EMD trial found that EMDs were associated with higher bail compliance rates, reduced reoffending and lower victimisation. Do you accept that improving bail compliance is in itself a crime prevention measure that reduces victimisation?

**Mr Drabble:** It is proven that bail compliance is a failure at the present time because we have kids with 50 or 60 breaches in front of court and the judge does not recognise it, does not even care about it. So, if you are asking me to say, yes—no. Our community no longer believes that you will fix the problem. That is the simple thing. The community no longer believes in our government, in it being able to protect us and keep us safe. You can put another bandaid on the bail system, but at the end

of the day these kids are going to walk around the streets with their monitors on as a badge of honour, just like breach of bail is a badge of honour, just like stealing cars is a badge of honour, just like home invasion. What has changed is now we have a home invasion with three offenders, not one. We used to have cars stolen with one; now we have multiple offenders. So, no.

**Ms FARMER:** Thank you very much, Mr Drabble, for going to the trouble of appearing before us today. I am so sorry to hear about your own experiences as a victim. You have raised a number of points, and you are obviously concerned about the level of crime now. We know crime has gone up this year compared to 12 months ago. You want reassurances that whatever the government does, it is actually going to work. Given the fact that there were not any EMDs in Cairns for the trial—and there is some question about whether or not they will work—what reassurances do you need from the government if this bill passes that they will do everything they can to make it work for Cairns?

**Mr Drabble:** There can be no reassurance because all of you, both sides of the House, have failed us. The simple response is you are all failing us. It is not failing us because you do not care; it's failing us because the system fails us. Judges are failing our community by not giving the right sentences, but on the other side, all governments have not resourced our corrective services properly, and they are full. Cleveland is full. Cleveland is a holiday camp. It is so understaffed now, it is changing from a holiday camp so that they are locked up for 12 hours and they do not like that. Ten years ago, in this city, when we sent our recidivist criminals to Brisbane for detention, they came back and they were different. They generally did not have a recidivist mindset when they returned because they had gone into a big pond where they are little. Cleveland is a small pond with a small knowledgeable, known criminal cohort that just gets better and better. But that has now even changed because we do not send our kids often to Brisbane.

I have been through multiple failures from government when it comes to being a victim, as many in this city have. There have been 6,940 charges laid in the last quarter. Those are the charges reported on the site. It is down a couple—312—but this Christmas it has gone up as we see offenders back on the street. Where is the deterrent for when they are back on the street to stop them robbing us? There is none. There is just the watch house.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Drabble, for your answers to those questions. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We very much appreciate your contribution and your submission that you have made without a written submission, but you spoke eloquently to your issues of concern. Thank you very much. You may stand down.

**CUTHBERT, Mr Shane, Private capacity**

**ACTING CHAIR:** I now welcome Mr Shane Cuthbert.

**Mr Cuthbert:** It is good to see some familiar faces here. Unfortunately, I have an apology from Councillor Pyne who was due to be here today.

**ACTING CHAIR:** That is okay, Mr Cuthbert. Would you like to make an opening statement? Then we will have some questions for you.

**Mr Cuthbert:** Yes, I will. Obviously you have received my submission and maybe had some time to have a look at that, so I do not want to waste time rehashing that. Firstly, I would like to thank the current Speaker of the House who has lifted my ban to allow me to speak to you all today, but I would like to really get to the numbers now. There seems to be a bit of a pattern here, I am seeing with the LNP government, where these sorts of committees are not really being given adequate time to hear from us. The time allowed to make a submission has been very short, basically. Of those who have made a submission to this inquiry—I checked this morning, there are 27 submissions in total—there are six submissions made by members of the public in support. I will say there are 21 submissions made from Queensland Law Society to organisations across Queensland that actually do not support this in its current form. I am one of those submitters.

I have heard you speak a little about statistics of this trial. The trial did find that there was a 24 per cent reduction in reoffending whilst young people were on bail with the ankle monitors on, but when you compare that with the statistics of children who are reoffending on bail anyway, which is 84 per cent, there is only an eight per cent difference. We are throwing a lot of money at this. I really just want to make the point that, yes, the trial did find, according to my numbers, that there is a reduction of eight per cent of children. One less victim in the community, I think we can all say, is great—hats off to you for that. I want to make this point because I do not think it is as nice and shiny as you guys are making it out to be when you compare it with the data that we already have.

The cost of these things has not been disclosed. When Annastacia was in, we had a trial where 500 of these were proposed at a cost then of \$2.3 million. I have just done the maths on that—that is \$4,600 a device. Quite frankly, I think that is a waste of money. If I were one of these young people, I would just cut it off. If I were a young person breaking into your home and stealing your cars, I would not have any issues with cutting off a bracelet. I would probably have to front the magistrate a week later after you have spent time and resources trying to locate me. I would be given another one and I would cut that off too. It is a lot of money being spent where it does not need to be.

My submission talks about strict but therapeutic bail conditions. They are the wraparound services. Currently, we have kids who are on bail and we say, 'Hey, little Johnny, see you later. We'll see you next month. Come in for a report with Youth Justice,' or whoever is monitoring them at the time. That is not good enough. What we really need to do is get around these children and make sure they are going to school, have the support to do so and are re-engaging. If not, they need to go to counselling, to go to their psychologist and to have the AOD support. That is what really works here. That costs a lot of money—I get it—but it works.

I have spoken to you guys before about former magistrate Pat O'Shane, who trialled that in New South Wales. She sentenced me. I was subjected to some of those bail conditions when I was a young person. I do not see a lot of people who have this lived experience in that space speaking to this community. I think I am one of the only ones. My friend Deb Kilroy is another, whom you all know very well. It is important to have that voice.

The difficulty for you guys is always going to be balancing the expectations of the community. They say, 'Yes, let's put ankle monitors on everybody. Let's lock them all up.' What works? You have 26 submissions from learned professionals, professors and people who are educated in that space. They have references and statistics that are supported by the facts and the information. You also have some victims who are unhappy that their home was broken into. You have to balance that. It is a difficult task, I know. The government need to stand strong because they are responsible. You need to educate the public if you want to change some of those narratives around offending.

I said this a lot during the last election: the Queensland Law Society are against this. They represent all of the lawyers, magistrates and judges. You cannot expect to bring in legislation that sounds nice, that makes the victims happy and that has good slogans. In reality, the Queensland Law Society, which encompasses the legal profession, do not support it. Some of what the people spoke about today is not going to be supported in the courts.

My only insight is that you need to work closer with the magistrates and judges. If you are not getting the outcomes that you want, you really need to listen to what they are saying and what they are suggesting. Obviously, I will take some questions. I just wanted to touch on a couple of things that were not in my submission.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Cuthbert. I thought you were going to do that just then. We will go to questions. I might start with a quick one. You mentioned the prospect of monitors being cut off by the people they are attached to. Can you point to any evidence in the trial or in any other reviews that have been done into this program where that has occurred?

**Mr Cuthbert:** Unfortunately, the trial took place somewhere where I am not familiar with those kids. I have spent a lot of time in Cairns walking the streets with the kids we have here. I am pretty sure there are a few of them who would be cutting it off. From personal experience—

**ACTING CHAIR:** You cannot point to anything in that review?

**Mr Cuthbert:** No, I cannot. There was nothing in the material provided by the committee that showed that.

**Ms FARMER:** Mr Cuthbert, thank you for your submission and your very thoughtful presentation. It is very good to hear from someone with lived experience. It is not a perspective that the committee has had.

I want to talk about wraparound support programs. Obviously, the bill says EMDs cannot be applied where there is no wraparound support. The evaluation report states that, pretty much, the EMDs will not work if you do not have wraparound support. We asked the department if they could tell us what wraparound support was available for Queensland and where. They have told us and Queenslanders to just go to the website. Do you believe it is imperative that we all know where those wraparound support services are if this bill is passed?

**Mr Cuthbert:** One hundred per cent. I am sceptical anyway, but nothing works without the wraparound services. We have the evidence for that, we have the data, we have the statistics and we have the experts, but we are going against what they are saying in order to appease the public. It is an important balance.

One thing that is critical—and it is a point that I made in my submission—is what do you think will happen to these kids in the community when you put an ankle monitor on them? They will be pointed out and shamed in the shopping centre. There might not be a lot of sympathy for those kids. Imagine a kid walking into the shopping centre. They are going to have things thrown at them. They are going to be abused and yelled at and things like that. Again, if I were one of those young criminals and someone was doing that to me, I would turn around and say, 'Eff you!' and I would break into their house that night. That is the kind of thing that is happening. We have the potential to increase crime because of this.

I know that a lot of the young people I have worked with have that attitude and have those attitudes against government, police—those figures. We are not turning them around by slapping ankle bracelets on them; we are actually contributing to their hatred, you know, towards government services, programs and things like that. I have found that working directly with the youth—buying them food, taking the time to listen to them, caring about them—helps. They call me sir. I am a criminal who has lived on the streets and been to prison. The amount of respect these young people have for me is incredible. It is purposeful for me in my own journey of changing my own life. If you take the time and work directly with these kids, if you hear them out and give them a little bit of respect, they will respect you. I am often asked, 'What can we do to reduce crime?' I say, 'Put a picture of my face on your front door. Some of the kids will recognise it and they will not break into your home.'

**Ms FARMER:** Acting Chair, I move that the committee instruct the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support to provide it with an explicit and detailed list of locations of the wraparound services available to support young people with EMDs.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Mr Cuthbert, the member has moved a motion. The committee will need to suspend this public hearing in order to consider that motion in private.

**Proceedings suspended from 11.23 am to 11.30 am.**

**ACTING CHAIR:** I will resume the public hearing. Mr Cuthbert had just wrapped up his statement. Mr Cuthbert, there is a question from the member for Pumicestone.

**Miss DOOLAN:** The evaluation found that EMDs were most effective when combined with wraparound supports. The Crisafulli government has invested \$560 million into new programs. Do you agree with this investment?

**Mr Cuthbert:** I have not seen it, certainly not here in Cairns.

**Ms FARMER:** As somebody with lived experience, are there other wraparound support services that you believe should be introduced in Cairns in order to ensure effectiveness? If EMDs go through, and this bill no doubt will, do you believe that and what do you think they should be?

**Mr Cuthbert:** For me, I guess it is common sense. You slap an ankle monitor on someone but what does that look like? Many of the services that we have shut at five. Is anyone monitoring them after five? Who is it? Is it the police? Are the police only following them when they are wanted for a crime or something and they want to find out where they are? There is no doubt in my mind that we need services and we need them especially during the peak times, which is between 12 and 2 am. I have been saying this for years. That is bail support. It is the psychology and the mental health issues. It might just be getting to school and getting education and getting re-engaged with work. There are AOD problems. A lot of these kids have FASD. There is a lot going on for them.

I think it is all good to slap an ankle monitor on and think, 'Hey, job well done. Little Billy is fine now.' He is still going home with an ankle monitor on. He still has those issues. He is still not going to school. He is not engaging with AOD. He is not addressing those issues. I think if we talk about actually solving crime as a whole, we do have to throw a lot more at this. Yes, it costs money. Cairns is somewhere that I think is really lacking in some of those services.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Cuthbert, for your time and your contributions here today. I appreciate that. We had a slight interruption and we thank you for your time.

**Mr Cuthbert:** Thank you.

**ACTING CHAIR:** In relation to the timetable that we have published, it is time for Ms Laverty to come forward please.

### **LAVERTY, Ms Samara, Declan's Voice**

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you for attending today. As with the other witnesses, you have the opportunity to make an opening statement, after which members may have questions for you.

**Ms Laverty:** Good morning. My name is Samara. I am the owner/director of a new business called Declan's Voice. I provide early intervention knife-crime programs for youth, young adults, corrections, education and sporting groups. Declan's Voice came about as a result of my 20-year-old son being stabbed to death by another youth who was out on bail. This happened in the Northern Territory. In the Northern Territory, I have worked with what is now the incumbent government, the CLP. We now have bail laws that have been changed and they are known as Declan's Law. It is essentially presumption against bail for any serious violence offence and there are around 21 serious violence offences prescribed under that. We have just had the first full year and the statistics have been quite impressive. There is a 22 per cent increase in people being refused bail and that equates to 1,036 people last year. This equates to a drop of 8.6 per cent in crime rates in the Northern Territory.

Under the banner of Declan's Law, we also have wanding, similar to Jack's Law here. In the last 12 months, approximately 200,000 people were wanded, with 296 weapons seized and 36 people charged. When you consider that the Northern Territory population is only around 250,000, those are quite significant numbers across the board.

With regard to EMDs here in Cairns or in Queensland, instead of going emotional, which I think has been covered—it is a very emotive topic. People are being impacted day in, day out by not just youth crime but crime in general. However, given that this is the youth justice amendment bill, I will stick to that. We know that the age of 10 is the legal threshold of responsibility but we also know through research that children typically start to understand right from wrong from about the age of 19 months. It is between the ages of seven and 15 that they really begin to develop that moral compass and understand the difference between right and wrong. However, it does develop gradually and it does develop significantly differently in individual children, cultures, environments and all of that sort of thing. If we break that down a little more, we look at youth offender numbers. Children aged 10 to 11 account for only around one per cent of actual crime. The number of those who would then meet the criteria of requiring an ankle monitor is going to be much lower. Therefore, children of the age of 10 being laced with ankle monitors is almost going to be unheard of.

Ages to 12 to 13 equates to approximately 15 per cent of youth offences, with the majority being from the ages of 14 to 17. In the year 2023-24, there were 1,544 offenders aged between 10 and 17, which is 13 per cent of total offenders in Queensland. In 2024, there were over 50,000 youth related incidents that may not have gone on to be charged but it shows the number of youth related incidents that occur. The Far North region, in the same time, had 6,829 reported juvenile offences, with 78 recidivist offenders. The fact that there are only around 78 is a pretty good indication that something somewhere is working. It is not perfect.

The context around this is that previous trials have been held on youths aged 15 and over. Therefore, to assess the efficacy of EMDs in younger children there is really only one way to approach that, which is to have a trial where we can monitor and see. Over and above that, one of the things I noticed was 'remove parental consent'. I had a teenage boy. He was a [redacted]. He was a [redacted] for a couple of years. If he had put himself into a position where he required an ankle monitor, I would have gone, 'Yep, okay, that is the consequence for your behaviour so you deal with it.' We would have gone down that path. That would have required wraparound services for him. However, we do see in a lot of youth that there is a lot of lackadaisical parenting approaches. Sometimes you need to have that decision taken out of your hands and these consequences applied across the board rather than going, little Johnny here gets it but little Johnny there doesn't because mum says yes and mum thinks this one is an angel when they are not.

I use the example of a 10-year-old in Cairns. In May 2024, a 10-year-old was arrested over the alleged sexual assault of a 24-year-old Italian woman in the Cairns CBD. He was part of a group of juveniles. He was charged with sexual assault, common assault, assault occasioning bodily harm whilst in company and he was released and dealt with via the restorative justice system.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Ms Laverty, that is not before the courts anymore, to your knowledge?

**Ms Laverty:** That is why it is alleged.

**ACTING CHAIR:** To your knowledge, it is not still before the courts?

**Ms Laverty:** I am unsure. I have not seen or heard anything and I did not dig into that while I was doing research.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I just want to caution you: if you could refrain from referring to things that are still before trial or that could be potentially before trial. There are rules in parliament about that.

**Ms Laverty:** Given that he has been released and dealt via restorative justice, that would be an indication that it has reached its conclusion, I would think.

**Ms FARMER:** Excuse me, Chair.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Do you have a point of order, member for Bulimba?

**Ms FARMER:** Just that the member for Cairns seems to know.

**Mr Healy:** I think it is a matter that has been dealt with.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I can hear the member for Cairns and I understand. I have also received an assurance from Ms Laverty that she considers it has been dealt with. Please continue. I am sorry, but I did need to give you that caution.

**Ms Laverty:** That's all good. My question around that was, how did this restorative justice affect that child? Did they go on to reoffend? If they did and they became a recidivist offender, the fact that the child started at the age of 10, and probably before that, is pretty significant. Sometimes the reality is that kids need more than what we can give them.

Support for EMDs: it can reduce reoffending, it will track location in real time and it will allow things like curfew. If a child is meant to be at a particular address at 6 pm, we can make sure that that is occurring. If they are not allowed to be in a certain location, we can track that. Deterrence: knowing their movement can be tracked may discourage them. There are consequences for breaking rules and sometimes it is a little bit more embarrassing having to wear a monitor. There is the psychological deterrence that they cannot get away with it. It is out there and it is hidden.

Going back to Shane's argument, I fully agree that there are kids who are going to see it as a badge of honour and there are kids who are not going to respect it, but having those locations and being able to track those kids is also going to allow for things like early intervention. If the monitor shows that a youth is in an area or a position or doing something they should not be, there is early intervention and contact with the family. Let them step in and try to help case workers and use police as a last resort.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Ms Laverty, are you approaching the end of your opening statement?

**Ms Laverty:** Yes. It also works as an alternative to custody. There is a lot of evidence showing both for and against. Coming back to Aaron's argument about human rights and victims' rights, we have human rights under the United Nations but we also have victims' rights. It does not seem to be, given the funding disparity, that victims are being remembered. There is a lot of funding for offenders and prevention of crime—again, data nuance, numbers versus perception—and the perception is that there is a lot of youth crime. Sometimes the community needs to see that something is being done. If that comes in the form of wearing a bracelet then sometimes that is what it needs to be.

Overall, it is shown to reduce offending and reoffending. It provides accountability and it provides further connection to structured support systems as long as the wraparound services are provided, along with the monitoring. Every single person has a basic right to be safe in their home, when shopping, doing sport and other activities and to live their lives without fear. As such, I do support a trial when combined with appropriate funding and wraparound services.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Laverty, for your very comprehensive statement.

**Miss DOOLAN:** Ms Laverty, do you believe the government should take all measures to reduce the number of victims of crime, in this case allowing the courts the ability, where suitable, to order a youth on bail to wear an EMD whilst also being supported by youth justice programs?

**Ms Laverty:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms FARMER:** Thank you very much, Ms Laverty. I am so sorry for what has happened to you. I cannot even imagine what that must be like for you. I commend you for your courage to continue to fight to make sure it counts. That takes a massive effort. Thank you for your extremely interesting and thoughtful presentation today.

You have made a number of points about there not being any data available around 10- to 14-year-olds. A number of submitters have questioned whether it is actually going to work as suggested. What would you like to see happen? Would you like to see a review in about a year's time after this bill passes to make sure all of those things which are being claimed will be achieved by this bill actually are being achieved so people can actually feel confident that the laws are working?

**Ms Laverty:** Yes, very much so. We need to be able to sit back and say, 'Okay, this has been done. Has that worked? Has that not worked? This has worked, so let's aim for this. This has not worked, so let's try to work out what will work.'

**ACTING CHAIR:** Ms Laverty, you have covered a lot of material and made a comprehensive submission on the bill. Thank you for your time. I know it takes some courage and endurance to come and appear before this committee, so thank you for doing that.

**Ms Laverty:** Thank you.

**ACTING CHAIR:** We have a number of other members of the public who have put their hand up to speak. Is there a Mr Hinchliffe present? No. Is there a Ms McLeish? No. Is there a Mr Musa? No. Is there a Ms Conti? Ms Conti, please come forward.

## CONTI, Ms Perri, Private capacity

**ACTING CHAIR:** Welcome to the committee hearing, Ms Conti. Would you like to make a statement, after which members may have some questions for you?

**Ms Conti:** Thank you for allowing me to speak today. This bill seeks to expand electronic monitoring to reduce reoffending, improve compliance with bail and court orders, increase community safety and provide an alternative to detention. These are reasonable objectives, but whether they are achieved depends entirely on how monitoring is enforced and whom it is applied to.

Technically, if a person removes an electronic monitoring device a timestamped tamper alert is recorded and reattaching the device does not cancel the breach. The problem is what happens next in practice. Alerts are often logged immediately, but the follow-up could be hours or days later or addressed at the next court appearance, if at all. Young offenders quickly learn this. Once this happens, the monitor loses its deterrence effect. Deterrence relies on certainty and timely consequences, not severity.

Breaches may carry little or no immediate response. Curfews are treated as optional. Monitors are removed to commit offences and put back on. Devices are tested to see how long it takes anyone to respond. Many serious youth offences, including unlawful use of motor vehicles, break-ins and group offending, occur outside curfew hours. Monitoring often records crime after it occurs rather than prevent it.

Victims are often told that the offender is being monitored and that there are strict conditions in place. When offences continue and breaches appear subsequently, public confidence in the justice system is eroded. Fear increases not because people are punitive but because they feel unprotected. A justice system that appears unable to enforce its own orders risks losing legitimacy.

Electronic monitoring is not low cost. There are technology contracts, monitoring centres and police and youth justice resources that have to respond to alerts. When repeat offenders continue to reoffend at high rates, the cost-effectiveness of electronic monitoring as an alternative to detention must be seriously questioned. Monitoring is most effective where the young person is low- to medium-risk, housing and adult supervision are stable, monitoring is short term and breaches trigger swift and certain responses. It is least effective for chronic repeat offenders, serious vehicle and property offenders and group-based offenders and for young people disengaged from family, school and services. A blanket approach will fail without: intensive family support; trauma informed casework; in-home supervision and mediation; stable schooling and mentoring; and culturally appropriate community programs.

Electronic monitoring assumes a child can understand complex rules, regulate emotions, remember technical requirements and predict consequences. Many young people on monitors have disabilities, have unstable homes or lack routine. Policy that ignores this is punitive, not rehabilitative. Many cannot comprehend what the device is, why it matters and how to respond to alerts. Most do not have stable homes and many lack a reliable sense of day, time or routine. Expecting them to comply under these conditions is simply unrealistic.

Policy that ignores this is not evidence-based; it is punitive. Ankle monitoring does not protect, rehabilitate or support these children; it punishes them for their circumstances and the systemic failures around them. Many young people on monitors also have disabilities or are disengaged from family, school and services. Most cannot fully understand the device's purposes, why it matters and how to respond to alerts.

The battery life of a monitor is 12 to 48 hours. Devices must be charged daily. Failing to charge can trigger alerts, which are treated as breaches. Evidence shows that better outcomes occur with intensive family support, trauma informed casework, in-home supervision, stable schooling and culturally appropriate programs.

I observed a young boy on electronic monitoring leave home after an argument with his mother. He received a phone call instructing him to return home and he explained the situation. Police then arrested him and returned him to detention. In my view, a more appropriate response would have been for the police to return the child home and mediate with his mother. This could have de-escalated the incident and achieved a better outcome for the child, for the family and for the justice system.

We know that it will not reduce offending. Personally, I believe the judicial practices and the court system are where we can make the greatest difference. Currently, 99 per cent of young offenders receive probation, regardless of their criminal record. Putting ankle monitors on these children does little to change behaviour. When they breach, they know there will be no real consequences. The government hides behind judicial independence while pretending this policy will

protect the community. It will not. Electronic monitoring without mandatory penalties is no more than a taxpayer funded tracking bracelet—a prop designed to look tough while doing absolutely nothing to stop repeat offenders.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Are you nearing the end of your statement, Ms Conti?

**Ms Conti:** Yes. We need immediate responses. It will not protect the community. The saying in the community is that the children are the victims and the community are the criminals. That is how it has become. When I talk about this, I talk about Cairns and our community. We get nothing up here. We get promises. That is all we get—promises.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Conti, for your statement. I wanted to ask you a question about what you have been speaking about. The independent evaluation of this, which was undertaken over the last period, found that the application of the devices was associated with higher bail compliance, reduced reoffending and lower victimisation. How do you respond to that in terms of where a study and research have been undertaken?

**Ms Conti:** The government spent \$3.8 million doing a trial on six kids. It was an absolute failure. All we are doing is wasting taxpayers' money when there are better alternatives out there. We need fresh ideas and thinking outside the box, not this. This will never work. You do not realise that kids do not care. They do not care that if they steal someone's car they will get locked up and go to court because they know that the judges will let them out. I had four kids break into my home. One has a criminal history from here to Brisbane and all four of them got probation. Until you bring in mandatory minimum sentencing and the judges start protecting us, nothing is going to change. You can just keep throwing money here, there and everywhere.

**Ms FARMER:** Thank you, Ms Conti. It is lovely to see you again before a committee. I acknowledge the passion you have shown for this topic for a number of years now. It is to be commended.

**Ms Conti:** Thank you.

**Ms FARMER:** I want to ask you about wraparound services. You have articulated a number. We know that there were no young people from Cairns in the EMD trial. I want to ask about Cairns services. What programs do you believe need to be introduced in Cairns? There are zero offenders with EMDs at the moment, but presumably there will be more in the future. In your view, what needs to be introduced here?

**Ms Conti:** First of all, we need intensive, not early, intervention. That is where we are now. We are being intensive with these kids. I believe crime starts in the home due to single mothers who probably have up to nine kids and who are stressed. We know that mothers need me time. We do an in-home family support program where we go into the home to educate the mother. We teach them to get their kids up for school, pack their lunches, walk them to the bus stop and then come home and do their housework. They pick the kids up from school, they do the homework and then the kids get involved with preparing dinner, washing up, putting the dishes away and having downtime before they go to bed. We go in.

My saying is if you are surrounded by sheep your life is █. It is that simple. I have been into many of these homes. If I had the money, I would buy the kid a new bed, new curtains and a new pillow. I would clean the house up, get skips in, get rid of all of the rubbish and get their life normal. I would give the mother free day care two days a week if she has little ones. They can go into day care and she can have me time to de-stress. We do that Monday to Friday. We have two shifts. On the weekend they implement what they have learned. We give them psychologists, doctors and dentists. None of these kids has been to a dentist. None of these kids has had their eyes tested. They have Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. They have this problem. They have that problem. They are not getting the supports the kids need to understand what their issues are and how to deal with those issues. That is how you change it.

We also wanted to do a program called Never Settle for Less, You are Worth More. We know we have a huge DV problem in Cairns. We were running a girls program and then a boys program to teach them to never settle for less because they are worth more. That is about domestic violence. These girls settle for less. They think that no-one loves them, that no-one wants them. You tell your mum and dad, 'I love you, Mum. I love you, Dad,' or you get a cuddle or you get a hug. They have come from a family where they got none of that. They are so giving. They are so loving. This is why we have youth crime. This is why we need to put it into the homes.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Conti, for appearing today. I can tell you are passionate. I do appreciate your time. We have some other members of the public who want to contribute, so thank you very much.

**Ms Conti:** Thank you.

**RAYE, Ms Anna, Private capacity**

**ACTING CHAIR:** Welcome, Ms Raye. Thank you for indicating you would like to say a few words.

**Ms Raye:** I have not prepared anything. I had no intention to speak.

**ACTING CHAIR:** If you would like to make a statement and then perhaps members will have some questions for you.

**Ms Raye:** I am a Kuranda person, so I want to speak for that community because I keep on hearing 'Cairns, Cairns.' Kuranda is up in the rainforest, as you probably all know. I am a newcomer there. I have only been there 20 months. I actually live in the village itself. I have come in with fresh eyes really. I see the problems of our youth there. They are children. The word 'youth' keeps on being used, but they are children. Some of their experiences have probably made them seem older than they should be. They have a lot against them.

What I see is youth addiction. I see drug and alcohol addiction. I see generational addiction when it comes to behaviour. We are talking about EMDs as a justice response, but I am looking at it more from a prevention perspective within community. I think the costs could be the same. People say there is a lot of money going into prevention, but there is a lot of money being spent on law and order and the justice side of it as well.

Someone talked about changing the thinking—thinking anew and afresh. As a government, it is not about just one department but about all departments. In housing, we have a terrible problem with Queensland housing. The Ngonbi houses are all very well cared for. They do not have anyone living there who is alcohol or drug addicted. They are very firm about that, but Queensland housing is problematic. I live three doors down from one. It is a hotspot. It is known as anti-social. There is one behind me as well.

I will not have a bad word said about the police. They are working very hard with very few resources over a huge area. Mareeba shire is a huge area. We have a police station but it is not manned 24/7, which is what the community is asking for. That is what we need. We need night patrols for this community because these kids are roaming and getting into all sorts of mischief. Businesses are being vandalised and there is theft from houses. I am a 71-year-old woman living by myself. I was here for three months and I woke up with a 17-year-old in my bedroom and another one running around the house.

There are no boundaries. There is no social cohesion with this small group. Generally the youth in the town are fantastic. This is a small group. I really do believe that we need to spend more on youth drug and alcohol services in that town.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Ms Raye, was that the conclusion of your statement?

**Ms Raye:** I will conclude. I know you are under the pump.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I was just wondering if you had anything to say in particular about the specific proposal before us. Otherwise we can go to questions because that might bring out some of that anyway.

**Ms FARMER:** Thank you, Ms Raye, for taking the trouble to come down from Kuranda. I am pleased you have come up to the table to speak to us. I am really sorry. The experience you had sounded absolutely horrifying. When referring specifically to EMDs, the evaluation report is absolutely clear that you must have wraparound services for them to work. You have referred to needing more of a police presence in Kuranda and drug and alcohol programs. You have referred to housing, and that is a factor in these programs, and other wraparound supports. You do not believe those services are sufficient. If this bill passes, would you like a commitment from the government that they are going to introduce those services to make sure the EMDs work in a place like Kuranda?

**Ms Raye:** Yes, there definitely need to be more wraparound services, as you call them, and specialised training for the people who come into town. School holidays are just crazy. The kids are bored. There are all of these problems. They are drinking day and night. Ice comes into town. We need a 24/7 station. We need night patrols as well. If they are going to bring in the ankle bracelets, there have to be more wraparound services for these children—and I do emphasise 'children'.

The drug and alcohol area is specialised. I am into prevention and finding ways that you can divert this behaviour. It has been generational behaviour. They do get into trouble and they go into detention, but they are surrounded by people including adults who have gone through the same thing. There is a lot of despair. The cycle needs to be broken.

I think ankle bracelets are humiliating. They are still children. Even though they are acting out in bad ways, I think it is very humiliating for them. I think they should be used in only very severe situations with severe offenders, not willy-nilly—say in circumstances where a child has been bailed five times or whatever. It depends on the crime too. I just hope the magistrates or judges have some wisdom and education around this too. It is not perfect.

**Miss DOOLAN:** Do you believe the safety of the community and the rights of victims should be the most important consideration when it comes to amendments to electronic monitoring laws?

**Ms Raye:** They are not the most important. I think there has to be a balanced view. I think these children are often punished enough from the circumstances they find themselves in really. Yes, for me personally, I think it is an important consideration. That is why I am writing to the housing minister, to the police minister and to the youth minister so we can take a holistic approach, a multifaceted approach, to it. There is mental health too. Working together in government, I think, is the only way we are going to have a big impact on children and reduce crime.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Raye, for your time and for your submissions.

**GUEST, Ms Sharon, Private capacity**

**ACTING CHAIR:** I invite Ms Guest to come forward.

**Ms Guest:** I have no idea how to make a submission but I do want to say something.

**ACTING CHAIR:** That is okay. Ms Guest, you have the floor. If you would like to make a statement and then we may have some questions.

**Ms Guest:** My name is Sharon Guest. I have experience in a lot of areas. All I keep hearing is how to make sure children are not affected et cetera. My No. 1 priority is safety. I pay taxes and I want to be kept safe. I should not not feel safe. I lived in Redfern in Sydney in the heart of where all the Aboriginals, the drug addicts, the actors and the musicians lived—it was a very eclectic society—and I never felt unsafe. I moved here five years ago and I have never felt less safe.

Very briefly I will go into some of my background, so you have an idea. I am listening and I know a lot of the faces of the people here, which is actually a little dispiriting because I do not think anyone knows what to do. I think everyone is trying their best but they do not know what to do. I basically think that the public should be kept safe. The children, if they have been, for want of a better word, stuffed up because of their family life or whatever, come second. My daughter was stabbed at school and left for dead when I was overseas. They told me she might not live. She is a victim but the perpetrator seems to get more rights. My other daughter—both were adopted from overseas—was held up and robbed by Aboriginal girls. They took her watch and she is traumatised. She has already come from a traumatised background.

I am very familiar with all the money that is spent on rehabilitation. I think the root of the cause is something that no-one will ever address. No-one will address it. The root of the cause is this: family life. When you have a child who is born into a dysfunctional family you will never have a child, mostly, that will survive that dysfunction. I know this because I have adopted three children from overseas who in various stages were never attacked or never had alcoholic abuse around them or violence. They just had deprivation. Their physiology changed. They are not the same as you and me. They changed physiologically. All the rehabilitation in the world will not help them. The family—the beginning of that child's life—is paramount. Because of that I have also fostered many children and it is absolutely horrific to see these little kids. They are never going to actually be right. Some of them become sociopathic. They are never the same.

I have also worked in TAFE in Sydney for many years running programs for disadvantaged children and Aboriginals. Of all of the statistics that I saw—and I wrote statistics, and you can actually work statistics too; I think we all know that—out of 15 of those courses, and I ran many, maybe two people went on to graduate. Sometimes it was none. The amount of money that was spent was actually a scandal. Everyone is trying to do their best, but I do not see an answer to it.

I would like to see first of all the rehabilitation outcomes because it seems that they are not easy to find. If you are going to do rehabilitation, let me see it. I think the moment a child is born, even before I have been told, they are going to suffer problems. You can have all of these programs but are they successful? I would love to see the outcomes.

The only thing that I have seen that possibly could work from some of the things I have seen and heard is the Geoff Guest program—he is no relation of mine—where they took the kids out bush. They took them away and made them work in rural areas. Maybe that works because it breaks the cycle. Leaving them here wearing ankle bracelets—I do not really care. I do not care if it hurts them. I truly do not. I care that two of my friends, young women, have been broken into twice. I care that my daughter was held up and robbed—the repercussions on my family. My daughter being stabbed—we are all absolutely traumatised. So do I care about those young kids? In a way yes but not really. I think that I am representative of the entire community that I talk to. All I keep seeing, with all due respects to everyone here trying to do their best—I think you are just failing.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Guest. If it is okay, we might have some questions.

**Miss DOOLAN:** I am really sorry to hear about the experiences that your family has had with crime.

**Ms Guest:** That is okay. We are over it. I am more into solutions and to feel safe in my home which I do not.

**Miss DOOLAN:** Where a youth offender poses an unacceptable risk to the community, do you agree that the youth should be remanded and not in the community?

**Ms Guest:** Definitely. Remove them. Honestly, once the damage has been done, believe me, from what I have seen—and I have seen hundreds of people who have adopted, and they are very good families, by the way. We are talking really good families adopting children from overseas and also fostering them. Remove them and do it well. Take them off into the bush. Let them be back in nature because nature, we know, is very therapeutic. That is my solution.

**Ms FARMER:** Thank you, Ms Guest, for taking the trouble to speak to us. I am also very sorry to hear about what has happened to your family. As you say, it has long-term consequences. I will just say that you are obviously a very generous person to be taking so many children into your home, so thank you for that work. A lot of what you are saying does seem to centre around whatever we do we just have to know it works. This bill in particular proposes one solution, one tool, amidst many other possible ones. Would you like to see after a year or so an evaluation of the effectiveness of EMDs and the wraparound services and that any member of the community can see the results of that review to be confident that it does work or that something that is not working can be addressed? Would you like to see that so that we are all confident that it works?

**Ms Guest:** I do appreciate your question. I know that you are not going to like my answer.

**Ms FARMER:** That is fine.

**Ms Guest:** I do not want to wait a year. I do not want to be broken into. I want them removed from the streets and I do not think I am alone. I have recently been told that there is a survey for an 18-month period into whether victims are impacted—that perpetrators get more care than victims. That is money spent. For 18 months I believe that is going to go on. My husband and I despaired. It is obvious.

In answer to your question, I really appreciate that people are trying to do something. No. I would like them removed. Until the laws are changed and the judges do not have to follow laws that tell them to let these children come back out on to the streets, remove them but remove them to a place where it can do something. What is wrong with the Geoff Guest program? I do not understand it. I know we have had some scandal, whether that was based on any premise of truth. But isn't it better to take them out, let them work with animals and get them away from their environment? If they are wearing an ankle bracelet—I take what Anna was saying—that it can be very traumatic. They are victims too but until we are safe get them off the street.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Guest. I hear what you are saying. Thank you for giving us your insights into how you are feeling in your community. I just want to ask you a question and this might trigger another question from non-government members as well. Given how you are perceiving the impacts on you and your community, do you agree that it is good for frontline officers in police and Corrective Services perhaps to have greater oversight of young people who are on bail through this tracking mechanism?

**Ms Guest:** I am very closely related to some of the police. I believe that they are demoralised. I think you are losing the police. They do not want to stay because they have no power. It is disgusting what is happening. Yes, give the police more power and get them off the street. Put them into places that will really work until you can figure out what does. But let me tell you from my experience, and it is vast, that rehabilitation—the child is rearranged from the beginning and you might get one child out of how many would we say?

**Mr Cuthbert:** Rehabilitated?

**Ms Guest:** Yes.

**Mr Cuthbert:** It is very low.

**Ms Guest:** Thank you. It is very low. Why spend the money?

**ACTING CHAIR:** One out of how many did you say?

**Ms Guest:** It is low. I know it is low because I have seen it when I was working in TAFE. The gentleman here I know and he is a victim—he has come from a system himself with firsthand knowledge.

**Ms FARMER:** I think that you have been really clear on your thoughts, Ms Guest, so I do not actually have any more questions.

**Ms Guest:** I am very forthright, I think, is the word.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing today and for giving evidence. Is there anyone else who would like to speak if they have not done so already? A lot of you here have already spoken. I appreciate that. There is no double-dipping today, Shane.

**Mr Cuthbert:** I just want it on the record that [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I just wanted to make that very clear.

**Ms Guest:** That was alleged though.

**Unidentified Speaker:** No, it was not.

**Ms Guest:** That should not negate the program or a program.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Order, please!

**SCOTT, Mr Steve, Private capacity**

**ACTING CHAIR:** I invite Steve to come to the table. If you do not mind me saying, as chair of the committee, I did speak with Steve before the hearing. He wanted to pose a question to the committee. Obviously these processes work in the sense that people give evidence, so we will take his question on the record. The committee is not in a position to respond right now, but we are happy to take your evidence.

**Mr Scott:** You can take this as a comment if you like. We talk about monitoring devices. I would suggest that the people who are being fitted with those monitoring devices should not be free to have them fitted in the first place. I am taking this to both sides of parliament—both parties: when are they going to get serious about magistrates? They seem to be living in a castle where they are not answerable to anyone. If a police officer stuffs up, the Police Commissioner fronts the cameras and answers questions. It is the same with the health department. It is the same with parliamentarians. If you do something wrong, you get voted out, so you are answerable to the public. Magistrates are not.

When I grew up there used to be a slogan 'catch and release'. Has anyone heard of that? It is to do with fishing—not anymore it is not. It is to do with the legal system: police catch and magistrates release. Have a think about it. Why are these magistrates sacrosanct and protected? Some of them are very good but some of them are absolutely awful.

I grew up in New South Wales. I actually grew up one street away from Bondi. Forget about what happened six weeks ago, but we certainly know about youth crime and crime in Bondi because there is plenty of it. The state government down there changed the laws. Have you all heard of the lockout laws in New South Wales? It worked. Some of the magistrates are answerable to some of their actions, and one of them was named in here just a little while ago. I am not going to repeat her name. I think you all know who I am talking about—not a great magistrate and no longer a magistrate. Just have a look at some of the people who are in that seat and what they are doing. Maybe they should answer the questions.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Scott. Members of the public, thank you very much for being here today. That concludes our program for the public hearing. I would like to thank our Hansard reporter. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. For those of you who have given evidence, if there is anything on the record that you think needs to be corrected, please contact the committee and we will endeavour to do that, if appropriate. I declare this public hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 12.25 pm.**