



EDUCATION, ARTS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present:

Ms ND Marr 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

Tuesday, 20 January 2026

Townsville

TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2026

The committee met at 3.00 pm.

ACTING CHAIR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Youth Justice (Electoral Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2025. My name is Natalie Marr. I am the member for Thuringowa and I welcome you to our city of Townsville. I am the acting chair of the committee for this morning's proceedings. Nigel Hutton, the member for Keppel and the chair of the committee, is unable to join us today. With me are: Corrine McMillan, the deputy chair and member for Mansfield; Wendy Bourne, the member for Ipswich West; Ariana Doolan, the member for Pumicestone; Kendall Morton, the member for Caloundra; and the Hon. Di Farmer, the member for Bulimba, who is substituting today for the Hon. Mick de Brenni, the member for Springwood. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee with its inquiry into electronic monitoring devices. Today we are here in Townsville to hear your views. Please take this opportunity to share your experiences with us.

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

We will first hear from those listed on today's program and then I will invite to the table anyone who has indicated that they wish to speak. I will invite you to make a brief opening statement after which committee members may have questions for you. If you wish to speak today and have not already registered, please let Lynda, our committee secretary, know.

I would like to welcome Mayor Nick Dametto, who is in attendance and will be speaking. I also acknowledge my fellow members: Adam Baillie, the member for Townsville, and Janelle Poole, the member for Mundingburra.

DAMETTO, Mr Nick, Mayor, Townsville City Council

ACTING CHAIR: I welcome Mayor Nick Dametto from Townsville City Council. I want to thank you for appearing before the committee today. I invite you to make a brief opening statement, if you have one, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Mr Dametto: Thank you, Ms Marr. I welcome the committee. I note that this was my previous committee when I was a member of state parliament. It is good to see some familiar faces in front of me and it is great to welcome you all to the great city of Townsville. We appreciate the committee being here to get my community's views and your community's views on the bill.

Firstly, as Mayor of Townsville, I want to make it clear that I am going to be giving today's presentation or opening statement on the views of the Townsville City Council and some will be my personal views as well. It is clear, though, that youth crime is still a problem in our city. There has been no magic wand and we continue to find ways to chip away at the problem. We have seen some incremental changes but we all need to know that we need to do more. I know that when combatting youth crime, and it does not matter what side of the political realm you are on, people have been trying to fix this for some time. I truly believe that the people in front of me right now really want to hear from our community to best understand how we think that tweaks can be made.

Although crime does not fall completely under the jurisdiction of the Townsville City Council or local government—predominantly it sits with the state government—there are things that the Townsville City Council is trying to do to work in conjunction with our state agencies like QPS. We have done things around the city like installing boulders and rocks. We continue to work with the state government for funding in relation to those hard infrastructure items to try to remove some of the youth offenders from areas that they destroy. Townsville City Council has approximately 600 CCTV cameras placed around the city. We have quite a piece of infrastructure there that we can draw on to create and, I guess, document the evidence necessary for the police to make arrests and for the DPP to make prosecutions stick.

This piece of legislation is very familiar to me. We have seen different iterations over the years. In my time as a member of parliament, I have seen the state Labor government bring similar legislation into the House and the incoming LNP government made its own tweaks. I am pleased to see that electronic monitoring devices will be extended. I think enough time has gone by where we have seen the benefits of electronic monitoring devices. The idea of now extending this to the whole state and not just trial areas and making sure that it is an option for magistrates to be able to apply this as a bail condition across the board for youth offenders has my support.

We want to make sure that this piece of legislation is not just seen as a silver bullet. We all know that you need to have multiple incremental changes to have great change. We still want to see further legislative changes made to the Youth Justice Act to make it harder for youth offenders not only to give them a reason not to offend in the first place but also to act as a deterrent for offending. If kids are a threat to our society, we do want them either in a detention centre or somewhere where they cannot cause harm. I do not want to see monitoring devices used as a way of alleviating our youth justice incarceration system.

I want to make a couple of comments around North Queensland—and I am sure other people across regional Queensland will concur. We have service issues when it comes to mobile phone servicing. We also have issues where young people might not be in housing where they can be charging these devices. Home might not be a safe place for them. We want to make sure that, in conjunction with the extension of this program with monitoring devices, those sorts of things are thought of as well.

I am not sure what the total cost of this will be. I am sure that will be in the next state budget. I am sure there will be some costs incurred. I know that, along with other regional mayors, I still want to see remote sentencing included as part of the recipe for bringing down youth offending and giving youth offenders a reason not to reoffend and also a reason to reform. Monitoring devices are a good way of protecting our community so that we better understand where our youth offenders or repeat recidivist youth offenders are in the community. Once again, it must be in conjunction with other efforts. I am more than happy to take any questions.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I point to one of the comments you made about the availability of services for the devices. That is obviously one of the considerations that the courts need to take into account when implementing this with our youth. When the trial commenced in 2021, you raised concerns about the rollout. Could you please talk to the committee about the concerns you had for the region?

Mr Dametto: Back then, we wanted to make sure that it was being rolled out in such a way where it was being applied to as many youth offenders who needed these devices applied as possible. Across the state, during that trial, only a small number of offenders were actually fitted with a monitoring device, almost to the point where you could consider that it was too small a pool to get a real read on whether or not the devices and the program were actually working.

ACTING CHAIR: That is why that was extended so thank you for that.

Ms McMILLAN: Point of order, Chair. I am conscious that twice now we have had some commentary after the mayor or the witness has spoken.

ACTING CHAIR: I thank you for your point of order and note it. Are there any questions from the member?

Ms McMILLAN: I will be deferring to the member for Bulimba, Chair.

Ms FARMER: Thank you, Mayor, and congratulations on your new position and congratulations on the initiatives that Townsville City Council is putting in place.

Mr Dametto: Thank you.

Ms FARMER: The evaluation report on the trial—and most of it was rolled out under the LNP government—showed very clearly that most of the EMDs were operating in the south-east corner and not many in regional Queensland. What commitments would you like to see the government make, should this legislation pass, to ensure that it is actually occurring in regional Queensland?

Mr Dametto: That is a really good question. What we want to see is the trial, as it is intended to be, rolled out across the state. Once again, it is difficult without legislative requirements to make judges or magistrates apply these during sentencing—whether or not you had magistrates down south who felt it more necessary to push this in the south-east corner or whether or not it had something to do with the limited service here in North Queensland and it not being seen as a fit-for-purpose device to be used here. Without getting too far into it, we want to see this policy or this

piece of legislation applied equitably across the state so that we can see the most benefit. We want to see a benefit in regional Queensland and we also want to see a benefit in the south-east corner. We want to make sure that the whole of Queensland is a safer place, right?

CHAIR: We will now go to the member for Pumicestone.

Mr Dametto: I have been looking forward to this all day.

Miss DOOLAN: Mr Mayor, it is good to see you again and congratulations on your appointment. When a youth offender poses an unacceptable risk to the community, do you agree that that youth should be reprimanded and not in the community?

Mr Dametto: It does not matter if they are a youth or an adult offender: if they pose a risk to the community then I do not believe they should be out in the community. I think you will find that most people across Queensland would concur. Incarceration is for people who pose a risk and if it is unacceptable then they should not be out on the streets. It does not matter if they have a monitoring device on them or not; if they pose a higher risk of reoffending then I think they should be held in remand until they see their trial date.

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Mansfield?

Ms McMILLAN: Chair, I am going to defer to the member for Bulimba, the honourable shadow minister.

Ms FARMER: Mayor, probably one of the strongest points that the evaluation report makes is that EMDs must be accompanied by wrap-around services and, in fact, that is the measure of success. Do you believe there are enough wrap-around services in the Townsville city area at the moment?

Mr Dametto: I truly believe when it comes to wraparound services you need to make sure that they are available 24/7. If you do not have a wraparound service or a guiding adult in these young people's lives, just monitoring them and knowing where they are while they are up to no good is not going to change their behaviour. We have seen in the past where monitoring devices have always been a bit of a rite of passage or a trophy for some of these kids. It does not mean they should not be used but it needs to be done in conjunction with other services.

Ms MORTON: Congratulations, Mr Mayor, on your appointment. Where the courts make a determination to release a youth on bail, do you believe that frontline officers and workers should be entitled to use all tools available to them to help make Townsville safe?

Mr Dametto: In short, absolutely. Those officers who are out there working around the clock to keep not only Townsville safe but also the whole of Queensland safe deserve and need all the tools available to them. It does not matter if it is the Polar helicopter in the air or the monitoring device and the data and information that that displays; everything at their disposal should be available so that they can: 1, keep an eye on offenders; 2, track offenders; and, 3, apprehend offenders if need be.

Ms FARMER: Mayor, the legislation makes it really clear that EMDs will be rolled out where there is the technology, the coverage available and wraparound services. We are not sure yet if we are going to know where those locations are. Do you believe that, if the legislation passes, it is important that people across Queensland know where they will and will not apply, and that is in terms of coverage and wraparound services being available?

Mr Dametto: I think whenever you are using a piece of technology, we need to understand its full limitations. We need to understand how to use it properly and also understand that you can have technical difficulties or a breakdown of the equipment. There needs to be a contingency plan in place. I will use as an example the monitoring devices that were used with our commercial fishing industry. That was a system that was rolled out and it was clunky to start with. There were only one or two providers. At the start, there was not a real backup plan if that piece of electronic monitoring equipment or GPS device was not available.

In this case, we are not monitoring fishermen; we are monitoring young people who could be out there breaking into someone's house causing a theft, riding around in a stolen motor vehicle which is unlawful use of a motor vehicle or even a more heinous crime. If we are going to roll out something, we need to make sure that the equipment has been robustly tested and we need to know where it works and where it does not work. We need to make sure that, if a magistrate is taking all that into consideration when applying that during sentencing as part of the bail options, that information is available to them so that they can make the best decision possible.

ACTING CHAIR: The independent evaluation found that electronic monitoring 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 Townsville?

Mr Dametto: Yes. What I alluded to earlier, member, was the fact that you need to chip away at this. If you can take a 20 per cent reduction here, five per cent there and 10 per cent there in reoffending, you can get to a point where you have youth offenders who have decided that offending is no longer what they want to do. They have had the wraparound services that have convinced them that there is a life away from crime. Maybe they have been through a harsh incarceration method or a harsher incarceration method that makes them second guess. Every person is a little bit different. Every child is a little bit different. I think what reaches them ultimately could be completely different to the child who is sitting next to them, potentially in a youth justice cell. If this works to stop some children from reoffending, I think it is a good thing.

Ms FARMER: Mayor, thank you for your previous answer. During your introduction, you referred to the fact that you know coverage could be an issue in Townsville. When this legislation passes, it is possible there are many areas across Queensland where there simply is not coverage. Would you like to know whether there will be coverage or there will not be coverage in the Townsville City Council area when the legislation passes so that the people of Townsville will know—

ACTING CHAIR: Member for Bulimba, I am sorry for interrupting, but your preamble is getting a little lengthy. I am conscious of time.

Ms FARMER: Thanks, Chair. I probably can finish there.

Mr Dametto: I can answer that question, thank you, member. I think what we do have across the whole of Queensland particularly and maybe even the whole of Australia is a mobile phone network that is not up to scratch. There needs to be a lot of work done in that space and at this point in time it sits under federal jurisdiction. It does not matter if you are in Townsville and you have three or four bars of 5G service all day and all night. You can have situations such as played out just a couple of weeks ago when we had what was supposed to be a copper theft that ended up being a fibre optic line and seven kilometres had to be replaced.

ACTING CHAIR: I am sorry, but I will have to bring you back to the bill.

Mr Dametto: My point is that we could have service today and no service tomorrow. We are in a situation where we have natural disasters and we have disruptions to the network so it is a very fluid situation when it comes to telecommunication services in Queensland.

Miss DOOLAN: Do you agree that our frontline officers should have greater oversight of youth on bail so that if those youth commit an offence the authorities know where they are and where they have been, to keep the community safer?

Mr Dametto: Miss Doolan, I think the community expects that. The community expects that if a child has been arrested for a crime and they are out on bail then the police know where they are or Child Services know where they are or Youth Justice know where they are. I think that is a good point that needs to be made around wraparound services. If a child is not in a cell on remand, they have committed a crime and there is enough evidence to charge them as such, they need to be monitored quite closely.

Ms FARMER: The evaluation report also showed that with the reduction in offending among youth offenders there was a lower rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with mental health issues. What would you like to see the government doing about that, particularly with the population in North Queensland?

Mr Dametto: Once again, I would like to see the law applied equitably across the board. For me, it does not matter what background a child has. If they are breaking the law, they should be held to the same standard as the next person and it does not matter their ethnicity, their background, their race, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous to this country. If a child is breaking the law, they should be held to account.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you believe that electronic monitoring devices will give families a tool for stronger supervision to help keep their children compliant and safe?

Mr Dametto: That is a really good question. I would almost suggest that if you have a child who is offending and getting out late at night then the parents have lost control at some stage. Will having a monitoring device help them? I do not know if they are going to be able to access the data or understand exactly where their child is because I know the limitations of the device. I will say that they will be able to call the police at some stage to let them know that their young person has left the house and they can alert them that they are out without supervision.

Ms FARMER: Mayor, you referred to compliance before and we have heard from other submitters that often they would make applications for EMDs under the existing laws and police would oppose them because they did not think the young people could manage them. Would you like the legislation to be really clear on what grounds EMDs could be opposed by police, by others or by the courts?

Mr Dametto: That is a good point. I guess that is why magistrates take information from all parties when it comes to applying an EMD. Making sure that police also have the resources to monitor the devices I think is probably paramount to them being applied in any instance. There is no use having 20 kids in the middle of Western Queensland in a remote Indigenous community wearing these devices if, for example, there are not the resources to chase 20 kids at night. It might be an area that is small enough that they will know where most of those kids are anyway. I think taking the local advice is always a good stance.

Ms MORTON: We have touched on this already, somewhat: the evaluation found that electronic monitoring devices are most effective when combined with wraparound supports. The Crisafulli government has invested \$560 million into new programs. Do you agree with this investment?

Mr Dametto: I think anyone who works with youth wants to see an investment in making sure that they are being reformed or they are diverted from any type of crime. I think it has been shown in the past that it is good if you can divert children away from crime before they get to that point. There will always be kids who are a harder nut to crack. That is why in the past personally I have called for bush sentencing or something in a similar setting. We want to see an investment in wraparound services and all that sort of thing, but a lot of these kids—and I have met some of these kids—are quite hardened by the time they are on their fifth or sixth stolen vehicle. It is going to take more than just wraparound services sometimes to correct that.

Ms FARMER: Mayor, we have had in material before us reports that there have been over 5,000 pings, for want of a better term, of the EMDs in the current trial population. Only 30 of those ended up being real but police and Corrective Services had to attend to each of those over 5,000. Would you like to see the government committing publicly to more police and more Corrective Services officers under the new legislation, to ensure it is managed properly?

Mr Dametto: We need to ensure that whatever system the government implements is a robust system that works. As part of this committee, I had an opportunity to travel to Tasmania to see how their electronic monitoring devices were working on sex offenders, violent offenders and domestic violence offenders. It seemed like quite a robust system where they could actually track the people wearing them in real time. I am not sure what system they will be using once implemented here in Queensland, but if you have good technology that works then I think it makes the police's job easier.

ACTING CHAIR: You answered that quickly and we still have one minute to go so I will ask you one more question. Do you believe that electronic monitoring is an important tool to reduce reoffending and denying courts access to this limits their ability to tailor bail conditions for individual risk?

Mr Dametto: As I said before, different things work on different children. Maybe the shame of having a monitoring device on their ankle would be enough for some of those kids not to reoffend. Maybe the shame of wearing that around their family and friends is something that would be enough to turn them around. For some, it may be the case that at least the police know where they are when they are out on bail if they are reoffending. Will it help reduce reoffending rates? I would agree that it will.

ACTING CHAIR: Mr Mayor, thank you very much for your time today.

Mr Dametto: Thank you very much. I appreciate the time of the committee.

RICHARDSON, Mr Reuben, Private capacity

ACTING CHAIR: Good afternoon, Reuben, and thank you for appearing before the committee today. I invite you to make a brief opening statement if you have one, after which committee members might have some questions for you.

Mr Richardson: Thank you, committee and Acting Chair, for the opportunity to come and speak to you today. I have a number of issues from reviewing the bill. This is going to focus on the bill specifically and a few of the gaps that I think I have found. The rest of the submission I was hoping to table, if that is okay? I have also emailed it through.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Reuben. Do you seek leave of the committee to table your submission?

Mr Richardson: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you have a hard copy for us today?

Mr Richardson: Yes, I have a hard copy.

ACTING CHAIR: Is the committee happy for that to be tabled? I am advised that it is procedurally correct. Thank you. You may commence, thanks, Reuben.

Mr Richardson: I support measures to keep our community safe and to help young people turn their lives around, but there are a few things that I noted in the bill that I thought were gaps that would be good to be addressed prior to it becoming law. Firstly, the trial that I saw only tested ankle monitors for teenagers 15 and above yet the bill removes that age limit completely. I have seen zero evidence about the impact for 10- to 14-year-olds currently. With putting a visible tracking device on primary school children, there are some risks of stigma, bullying and long-term harm associated with the rehabilitation.

Secondly, I have not seen any data cited on if the kids actually attended school during the period that they were wearing the monitors. Anecdotal reports from the trial and earlier reviews point to children staying home because of the embarrassment or device issues. If we are serious about breaking the cycle of offending, I do not think we can ignore education.

Thirdly, the trial results look positive overall but they did seem to be skewed. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who make up 60 to 65 per cent of those in detention, had lower participation, poorer compliance and smaller reductions in reoffending. The bill expands on the program dramatically without addressing this.

Finally, most concerning was there seemed to be a disproportionate burden on families compared to the state. The program appeared to be designed for stable family homes. Families must enforce curfews, manage charging, cope with alerts and police visits yet children in state care, from what I can tell, do not seem to have that placed on them. Children in state care commit a higher proportion of the serious repeat offences. My understanding is that about 100 of Queensland's 388 serious repeat offenders live in residential care. They seem to be effectively excluded currently because the infrastructure and supervision does not seem to fit. The bill does nothing to adapt monitoring for those placements or hold state care providers properly accountable when preventable offending occurs under their watch. This is creating a two-tier system. Families get monitored kids and all the stress associated with that where state care gets a pass while kids cycle through detention.

I would recommend retaining a minimum age of 15 plus initially; a pilot for under 15s reviewed yearly; providing and/or mandating data collection on schooling and state care impacts; reviewing the disconnect in the application of this legislation between state and family care; and inserting a five-year independent review. I am happy to take questions.

CHAIR: Thank you for being here today. I know that you have previously advocated for your community when it comes to crime. Do you accept that denying courts access to EMDs limits their ability to tailor bail conditions to individual risk?

Mr Richardson: Yes. At the end of the day I think data needs to be backing up any decisions that are made. We completed a trial—I think it was in order of about 100 to 200 kids over five years who were part of the trial. That is quite a low proportion as part of that trial. I would like to see more data. Education is not working. Why isn't state care included? State care seems to be not held at the same standard.

Ms FARMER: Thank you, Mr Richardson, for your really thoughtful presentation. It is highly likely that this bill will be passed as it is. Given your concerns around suitability to the younger age group, the impact on primary school children and compliance, what do you want to see the government putting in place to mitigate some of those factors?

Mr Richardson: Data. I would like to see a trial of some description for the younger kids. No-one has done it for 10- to 14-year-olds, so why wouldn't we at least be trying to see how it is working? Anecdotally, one child I know who had one—and he was 17 years old—talked about some of his experiences. There was a buzzing associated with it when charging. With having it charging while sleeping there is a concern about getting electrocuted in an electrical storm. There are a lot of things. I have not seen data on it. That is just one example. It is only anecdotal. There seem to be some concerns.

At the end of the day what does the community want? They want to feel safe in their homes. We want to get away from kids stealing cars and for the kids to have a future that they can see in Townsville where they become a valued member of the community.

Miss DOOLAN: 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 itself is a crime prevention measure that will reduce victimisation?

Mr Richardson: I agree. The concern that I would raise is: was it an even distribution of the criminals across the system or were they selectively chosen as part of the trial? What will change when it is an even distribution of youth offenders?

Ms FARMER: The evaluation report makes an extremely strong point about the need for wraparound services for this to be effective. Do you believe that there are sufficient wraparound services in Townsville?

Mr Richardson: I think wraparound services need to be held to a standard in terms of KPIs. At the end of the day, are they actually making an impact in addressing the issues? One of the big ones is mentors for the youth. Are they actually being effective and addressing that gap? One example of wraparound services would be state care. Is state care functioning and where is the accountability around state care?

ACTING CHAIR: I will bring you back to the bill. State care is out of the scope of the bill. I will bring you back to the bill.

Mr Richardson: Is there accountability for the services that are in place? Are there KPIs around funding and the number of children who are being diverted? Is it actually working effectively?

Ms McMILLAN: Point of order, Acting Chair, on a matter that you raised: are you suggesting that children who live in the child safety sector are exempt from the device?

ACTING CHAIR: I do not think that is a point of order. I think you are questioning my opinion. I asked the witness if he could stay within the scope of the bill.

Ms McMILLAN: By saying that you are suggesting that children in care do not access—

ACTING CHAIR: No, I am not suggesting that at all. I am asking the witness to stay within the scope of the bill.

Ms MORTON: Do you believe that frontline officers and workers should be entitled to use all tools available to them to help support a safer community with less offending?

Mr Richardson: Yes. Tools are tools. You can use them poorly. You can use them well. It is about ensuring they are working effectively. It would be great to see some efficiency. Is it actually working? For example, helicopters are great, but they are not going to help if they are just following the offenders around who are still stealing cars at ground level and you are not going to stop them from doing that.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you so much for your time. Thank you for coming today.

CULLEN, Ms Lynette, Private capacity

ACTING CHAIR: Welcome. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. I invite you to make a brief opening statement, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Ms Cullen: Thank you for having me here today. I am sitting here as a victim of crime. It is very raw and it only happened two weeks ago, so please excuse my nervousness.

ACTING CHAIR: Before you go any further, is this currently going through the courts? Is it with the police?

Ms Cullen: It is with the police.

ACTING CHAIR: I just need to warn you before you speak any further to make sure that you speak in general terms. If it is with the police currently, we want to make sure that you do not say anything that is inappropriate for you to take it further. We can give you guidance along the way. Do not worry.

Ms Cullen: Thank you because I am not sure how that is going to go.

ACTING CHAIR: Please start. Feel comfortable to chat and we will let you know.

Ms Cullen: Two weeks ago I had a youth enter my home with a knife and he put it to my throat asking me for keys. At that point I was really just thinking about the knife and not the keys. I did have the keys to my car in my gym shorts. I was just going out. When he started looking on the bench in the laundry at other keys I had there, I took off out of my house only to run out the front door to find another three out there with knives. Then I ran down my entire street screaming out, 'I'm your neighbour. Help me! Help me!' I got down to nearly the end of my street and I was knocking on doors when a gentleman opened his door and pulled me in. He then asked me what had happened and he rang the police. Nobody has been caught yet. My camera on my front door got some good photos. I am just wanting the laws in Townsville to tighten so that we do not have to go through things like this. I am a 70-year-old woman living on my own and my security has been taken away from me.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much for being here today. Before I forget, I would like to let you know and anybody else in the room that there is a list of providers who can help you if you feel you need some help speaking today or after today. Please feel free to grab one of those. Thank you very much for telling us about that. I know it is very raw, so thank you for coming today. I know how difficult that may have been for you. Do you support the bill for the electronic monitoring devices and why do you think it will be effective for bail conditions?

Ms Cullen: I do not know a lot about what goes on inside, but it seems to me that the youth of Townsville are getting out of jail or out on bail and they are just reoffending. One of the people in my incident is known but still has not been caught.

Ms FARMER: Ms Cullen, I am so sorry to hear what has happened to you. Our hearts are all going out to you. You are very brave for appearing before us today.

Ms Cullen: Thank you.

Ms FARMER: I think everyone wants to make sure that any laws that we put in place are effective. There have been quite a few people appearing before this panel who are suggesting these laws may not work as effectively for various reasons. Would you like to see that in a year or two there is a review to make sure they are working the way they should so that someone like you can feel confident?

Ms Cullen: Absolutely. I think any mechanism that is put in place that is going to assure us safety and so we feel secure in our homes is absolutely needed.

Miss DOOLAN: Ms Cullen, I am so sorry to hear about your experience. Do you believe that frontline officers and workers should be entitled to use all tools available to them to help support a safer community with less reoffending?

Ms Cullen: Absolutely. This incident happened to me two weeks ago. There is an arrest warrant for one of the youths but they have not found him. Absolutely they should have everything in their hands to be able to assist with getting them off the streets. Until they are found, I do not have any more security. I am locked in my house.

Ms FARMER: Again, I am absolutely about ensuring all the laws work. We know this is very intensive for police and Corrective Services to make it work. Would you like to see the government ensuring that if they pass this bill they are committing to more police and Corrective Services as well to ensure it works properly?

ACTING CHAIR: I think you are leading the witness there, member for Bulimba. Could you rephrase that question?

Ms FARMER: Would you be willing to express your views on that, Ms Cullen?

Ms Cullen: I know that since the Crisafulli government has come in—and we wanted that here in Townsville more than anything—that there are extra police on the ground. At the moment it does not seem to be covering things. If an offender that held a knife to my throat is out there at the moment and still has not been picked up after two weeks then we do not have enough on the ground to be able to catch these thieves.

Ms MORTON: I am so sorry to hear what has happened to you. Location-based monitoring is already part of modern parenting for 10- to 17-year-olds particularly where families have safety concerns. Do you agree that electronic monitoring can be used as a practical tool to reduce reoffending?

Ms Cullen: Absolutely, because 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.

Ms FARMER: Ms Cullen, there was a big evaluation of the trial that had been happening which gave quite a lot of observations. One of the things they said was that for these ankle bracelets to work you must have these wraparound services to make sure the kids are complying with it. Do you know of any services in Townsville? Are you aware of those for young people in Townsville?

Ms Cullen: Sorry, I cannot comment on that because I do not know what services are available for them at all.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. That was a difficult question to answer. I really feel for what you are going through. I want to say thank you for being here today. This bill is about making sure there are options for our courts to be able to have children monitored while they are out on bail. Do you feel this is positive way forward to ensure that our communities start to feel safer?

Ms Cullen: Absolutely. If they are out on bail we need to know that they are being monitored. When they are out on bail then our safety is at risk, so absolutely.

ACTING CHAIR: We have time for one more question.

Ms FARMER: Thank you, Ms Cullen. I think you have answered the questions really well. Your taking part today is again much appreciated. It is very brave.

Ms Cullen: Thank you. Can I end with one thing?

ACTING CHAIR: Sure.

Ms Cullen: My house was securely locked up. The only thing I did wrong was open my garage door to go out. Now I fear doing that. I have to get in my car first, start the car, as soon as I get in it locks and then I let my roller door up. That is what I am doing right now.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you so much for being here today. Please take one of those lists.

Ms Cullen: Thank you. I have been given one of those.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you very much.

McKENZIE, Mr Karl, Chair, Townsville Justice Group

ACTING CHAIR: I welcome Karl McKenzie. Thank you for appearing before the committee. I invite you to make a brief opening statement, if you have one, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Mr McKenzie: Thank you all for coming. It is an important issue here in Townsville. The Townsville Justice Group works across the High Risk Youth Court, Childrens Court, DV court and Murri Court. We also have programs out at Cleveland and Stuart. I also sit on the Queensland Parole Board.

Electronic monitoring has been around for quite a while and it works really well when resourced well. It worked well with adults. Under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act it is spot on. They are on top of those guys. It is about resourcing. For children it is different. Adults can look after the charging of the device and those sorts of things. For children their families need wraparound support.

I think the magistrates need an alternative. They need to have the right to tailor what is needed to each person. Remember that these kids are not first time offenders; they are repeat offenders. If they are a risk to the community there are levels of risk. Are they a serious, unacceptable risk? If they are they should remain inside; they should remain incarcerated. There is the grey area where they need support and wraparound services.

I think electronic monitoring works well when it is resourced well. This has come in and we have tried it. It is evolving. We are looking at it, reviewing it and it is evolving. It started out as a bit hit and miss, but it is getting better. There are issues around, for example, when they fit these devices to young people. I believe at the moment they are fitting them at watch houses. That is not a conducive environment. I think it would be far better—and I think the people fitting them would agree—to fit them onsite at a child's home so they can ensure that everyone in the home knows what is going on and how it hooks up. Everyone would be familiar with it—even the other people in their families. I think things like that need to be tweaked.

Magistrates have a pre-sentencing report for children in terms of what is going on. I think a pre-bail report would be very useful. That way they would understand the child's situation. At the Justice Group we do cultural reports which are not only about their culture but also about what is going on in the home, where they are living, who they are living with, their background and those sorts of things. That would be useful at the bail hearing. I am all for giving magistrates the ability to tailor the bail or the sentence to the person, whether they are an adult or child. The more we can tailor it to the person, the more effective it is going to be.

Wraparound services are critical. I have been asked a few times whether I know of services. This is a real issue in our space. Services come and go. There are always services. I could not tell you half of them. We are in that space. There needs to be ongoing and constant mapping of the services in the area. Someone will have a service for three years and they get funding and then it drops away and we do not know it has gone. Someone else moves in and we are not aware they are there. We really need mapping in this space because I doubt anyone in this room could tell you the youth services and adult services in that space. It is critical to know what the services are so we can recommend them to families.

We support ongoing electronic monitoring because I have seen it work with adults. It works well when resourced well. What we are doing today is important—that is, reviewing it, looking at it, tweaking it, evolving it and making it better as we go along. I thank you for being here today.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McKenzie. Thank you for your example about adult services, but that is out of the scope of this bill. I want to ensure that everyone in the room is aware that this relates to youth justice. You did speak about ensuring these devices are placed on youth the right way. We are talking about wraparound services. Can you talk a little further about the whole process around where they are put on and when and why you think that would be more effective?

Mr McKenzie: Everyone in the family is then familiar with how the system works and it is not just mum there when it is being attached to the child at the watch house. Often these kids do not come from stable families. They come from broken families. We know the families. Often it can be grandma with six kids who is trying to look after the monitoring of a 14- or 15-year-old who is a bit of a handful. She needs support as well.

We are looking at a program that is in remote areas called My Place Dry Place. It has been around for a while. I can hand that up later. It is similar to the old safety houses program. The lessee signs an agreement which goes to QPS, the courts and the justice group so that it is known that there is no alcohol or drugs in that space so it is a safe home to start with. We think it needs to be a safe home if you are going to have these things in place.

ACTING CHAIR: I will have to bring you back to the scope of the bill. This is about the wraparound services that we need for these monitoring services.

Ms McMILLAN: Point of order, Acting Chair. The witness is providing information about the wraparound services. It is not just about the wraparound services to apply to the devices. The bill is about the wraparound services that will also be provided to enhance the success of the young person.

ACTING CHAIR: What was your point of order?

Ms McMILLAN: My point of order is that I believe the witness should be heard.

ACTING CHAIR: I am asking him to bring his comments back to the scope of the bill. This is a program—

Ms McMILLAN: The witness was being entirely relevant.

ACTING CHAIR: I ask you to bring your comments back to wraparound services appropriate for monitoring devices. I believe this is not about monitoring devices it is about another service regarding safe places where there is no alcohol use. The reason I have asked you to bring it back to the bill is that the program you are talking about is not about monitoring devices. If you could be more specific about that it would be appreciated.

Mr McKenzie: Absolutely. I think at the moment only Youth Justice are attaching the devices. I am not sure that the police and other services that are involved are aware of exactly how they are attached. I think they should be so that everyone is aware of it. There needs to be more education around that.

Ms FARMER: Thank you, Mr McKenzie, for appearing today but also for your many years of commitment in this space. We talked a lot about wraparound services. You have made some statements about those which show that they are imperative to the success of EMDs. If this bill is passed, would you like to see the government make a clear commitment to wraparound services in Townsville?

Mr McKenzie: They go hand in hand. I think everyone understands that. They cannot sit alone. Leaving electronic monitoring up to a mother to administer is not right. Wraparound services are a part of it and they have to be. I think everyone understands that.

Miss DOOLAN: Thank you for the service that you provide here in Townsville. Do you believe that electronic monitoring devices will give families a tool for stronger supervision to help keep their child compliant and safe?

Mr McKenzie: Absolutely, yes. It is working. It needs to do better and it can do better and things like this will make it do better. It is another tool that the magistrates have at their disposal.

Ms FARMER: Some submitters have told us that when they have applied for the EMDs under the existing laws that in fact the police have opposed them. Have you seen this? Can you comment on the reasons police do that? I appreciate that this might be outside of your work?

Mr McKenzie: I have not seen that at all. I cannot imagine why they would have an issue with it.

Ms MORTON: The independent evaluation of electronic monitoring found that the EMDs were associated with higher bail compliance, reduced reoffending and lower victimisation. Do you believe that these outcomes support the use of electronic monitoring devices?

Mr McKenzie: Yes, absolutely. There is some anecdotal evidence. If kids have tracking devices on when their mates come to pick them up their mates often realise they have them on and do not want them with them because they can be tracked everywhere. Anecdotally there are positive outcomes. It is quite funny that some of the kids say, 'It's real now.' They are taking it seriously that they have this monitor on. These kids have been in front of the courts several times before this happens. This is not their first offence. It is not their first rodeo. They have normally been through cautioning, sometimes restorative justice and then they get into the court space. It is all a lot of fun and games until it gets serious.

The electronic monitoring sorts out the kids who are there just running along with their mates and the ones who are a serious risk to the community. Those who pose a serious risk of harm to the community need to be locked up. We all understand that. We keep hearing, 'It was all a lot of fun and games and now I am under threat of serious things happening.' It seems to be a bit of a circuit-breaker when I have spoken to them. That is only anecdotal. I cannot tell you that that is the case across the board but it seems to be a bit of a game changer that things are serious.

ACTING CHAIR: Our time is up. Thank you so much for your time today.

BROWN, Ms Pania, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Youth Services

ACTING CHAIR: I welcome Pania Brown. Thank you for being here today. I invite you to make a brief opening statement, if you have one, after which committee members may have some questions for you.

Ms Brown: I will be reading so please forgive the top of my head for a moment. Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to speak today. I am the CEO of Queensland Youth Services based here in Townsville but also supporting Mount Isa.

For nearly 50 years, Queensland Youth Services has worked with young people in the youth justice system. Guided by our vision of the power to transform and our mission of empowering youth we deliver programs addressing the root causes of offending—trauma, homelessness, family conflict, school disengagement, substance use and mental health challenges. Everything we do is guided by our values of professionalism, respect, dedication, evolution and inclusivity.

I want to start by recognising the real impact of youth crime on victims and the community. I think today we have seen that firsthand. Fear and frustration are valid and people rightly expect decisive government action. Queensland Youth Services understand that the Youth Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Amendment Bill aims to strengthen bail compliance and, most importantly, to reassure our community.

Queensland Youth Services supports the goal of improving safety. Our role is to provide practical insight into how electronic monitoring can be effective, proportionate and sustainable. I think those three points—effective, proportionate and sustainable—cannot be laboured enough. Electronic monitoring can be useful for some young people, particularly those involved in serious or repeat offending, but it should not become a routine condition because it is highly intrusive, especially for children who have experienced trauma, cognitive challenges or unstable family environments—not everyone starts from an equal playing field. Noncompliance often reflects those challenges not just wilful defiance and can lead to deeper justice system involvement. I think we all agree it is a very slippery slope once you start.

We urge the committee to prioritise proportionality, focusing restrictive measures on those who truly need them most. Evidenced shows that surveillance alone does not reduce reoffending and the best outcomes come when monitoring is paired with supports and wraparound services like stable housing, education, mental health supports and consistent adult guidance. We need to do those parts better, and strong role models are key.

Equity is also crucial. Children in regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities often have less access to services. Expanding electronic monitoring without local support risks unintended harm. Having personally worked in the lower gulf communities of Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Normanton and closer to home Palm Island, I can only imagine what it would be like to have an EMD put in place with no other supports or wraparounds for that family and that young person.

From our experience, electronic monitoring works best when it is used as a last resort—sometimes a last resort is actually the first resort which is an irony; when it matches the seriousness of the offence and the assessed risk to the community; when it is applied only where support exists alongside; when it is regularly and independently reviewed; and when it is complemented by investment in housing, education, mental health and culturally safe services. Queensland Youth Services has programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work and our specialised alternative learning programs that take people who have connected with the youth justice service and try to get them back into school or into employment or anything meaningful. These programs are currently Monday to Friday 8 am to 4 pm. I am so sorry if you need help at 4.30 on a Friday afternoon or on the weekend or, God forbid, the school holidays.

We offer these views in a spirit of absolute collaboration and shared responsibility, guided by our commitment to empowering our young people. We want reforms that strengthen community safety today and reduce reoffending for tomorrow. Responses that feel tough but do not reduce offending ultimately fail victims and the community. What we do not want is a false sense of security. Community safety comes from intervention, not just surveillance and monitoring.

In a small number of high-risk cases, when it is time limited, reviewed, supported and stabilisation goes beyond just monitoring—judicial discretion is essential—clear guardrails will ensure that it is used proportionately, consistently and only where it genuinely manages risk. Collectively I believe as a community we all want the same thing—a brighter future for our young people and safety for all of us. Notably in the Netherlands they are closing prisons. Their offending rates have reduced

by 40 per cent. A colleague went to Singapore last week and left her wallet and phone on a table when she went to order. Notably I think that is what we all want too. I thank you for the opportunity to speak today and I welcome your questions.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Brown. I do want to acknowledge what you do for our community and the hard work that your team provides. Thank you for your time today. I will go to the member for Pumicestone for the first question.

Miss DOOLAN: Thank you, Ms Brown, for appearing today and for the important work you do for our young people in Townsville. Do you believe that 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 being supported by youth justice programs?

Ms Brown: Yes, absolutely. In the context of my role and as a community member, as a mother and a grandmother, yes.

Ms FARMER: Thank you, Ms Brown. It is lovely to see you again. Thank you for your excellent presentation but also for the work you have done over many, many years. I have a couple of things I want to ask you but I will ask one question at a time. The laws at the moment make it really clear what the courts need to consider in terms of suitability. As you know, this new legislation removes that and gives it to the CEO but it is not clear what criteria she will consider. Do you believe it would be important for her criteria to be transparent for us all to know?

Ms Brown: Yes. Knowledge is power and wherever we have as much information as possible we make the best decisions. Transparency means to me that people have confidence in a system, in a process and in change. If we can explain the why and the how, then I think that generally it sits more palatably for people.

Ms MORTON: Do you believe that frontline officers and workers should be entitled to use all tools available to them to help support a safer community with less reoffending?

Ms Brown: I have never seen a good carpenter without a hammer. I think we should equip people with a variety of tools and a variety of options that allow them to respond most appropriately at the time.

Ms FARMER: Ms Brown, you talked about the need for a review before. You also used these words that laws should 'reassure our community'. Why do you think it is really important that these laws are reviewed? What would you like to see being reviewed so that the community could be reassured?

Ms Brown: I think people want to see results. We heard earlier: where is the data? Where are the figures? Where are the numbers? There is scepticism when people claim that there has been success in a program and people say we are comparing apples and oranges. What dataset were we using in the first instance? Yes, we can say we have had a 20 per cent increase but were we measuring against the same things? I think any review gives people confidence that there is a robustness in a new process but I think the word 'reassurance' is really important.

I think the community is tired. The community is exhausted. The community is hurting and they are fearful. I had to ring my daughter-in-law with a baby in the car the other day and say, 'Just be really careful backing out of your garage,' and then to hear that story—it is really raw. People are experiencing firsthand the fear that comes with what happens when the garage door goes up and someone is standing there with a knife and I am in a car with my baby, or I am on my own, or I am a woman of 70 or I am a woman of 50. I think the word 'reassurance' is really important. What people want to see is that there is some notable action being taken and that there are measurable improvements.

ACTING CHAIR: You did say during your opening statement that the community have had enough and they expect more. You are around youth a lot and you have seen programs that work because you have wraparound services for them. In relation to the EMDs, if they go through the court appropriately and we know that it is the right thing for a particular youth, do you feel that this is—sorry, I should not ask 'do you feel'. Community expectation is that we do everything we can and use every tool we have. Do you think this is one thing you would like to see in our community to give another tool to the courts to keep our streets safer?

Ms Brown: As well as, not instead of.

ACTING CHAIR: As well as?

Ms Brown: As well as wraparound services, not instead of.

ACTING CHAIR: Can you elaborate on those wraparound services that you would expect, in your expertise of doing what you do with youth?

Ms Brown: As an example, we have a specialised alternative learning program that we have commenced in partnership with Education Queensland recently. It is specifically intended to take young people who have intersected with YJ as a diversionary program. Basically we want to get them in—literacy and numeracy, wellbeing, mental health, what is their pathway, where are they going, getting them back into school. Programs like that are all focused on their history, their background, their trauma, their experiences, whether or not they have family supports and all of those things that do not just tell us where they are in the community. The limitations of a monitoring device is that it tells us where a person is. It is like having 100 phone lines but only one person is answering the phone. There is no point having that many phone lines if you only have one person answering.

Providing that they are resourced and that there are people on the ground, whether they be police or police liaison officers—PLOs can have a really amazing role to play in terms of diversionary programs. It is about just having a presence in the community. There was a program on Palm Island where members of the community got sick of graffiti. There was damage—windows being broken. A bunch of locals jumped in a ute and drove around all night and basically said, 'What are you doing? What are you up to? What's happening?' The kids went home or they loaded them in the ute and took them home. It was no fun anymore because there was a presence around that meant they could not get away with doing what they were doing. I think that collectively we want to see that there is enough of a police presence or a police liaison style—they do not have to be uniformed officers but they can be people who are skilled and equipped to provide a diversionary alternative.

ACTING CHAIR: I have let you go over time because you were so passionate. Thank you so much, Ms Brown, for your time today.

Ms FARMER: That was a great analogy. I think a few of us will be using it again. That was very good.

GRIFFITHS, Mr Daryl, Private capacity

ACTING CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Griffiths. You have registered today to speak. Did you have a submission that you want to put through or you just want to speak freely today?

Mr Griffiths: I would just like to speak freely today. I have heard what everyone has said. It has been interesting.

ACTING CHAIR: I will give you some time just to have a conversation and if we have some questions we can ask after that.

Mr Griffiths: I would like to point out something that happened to my family, the bureaucracy in dealing with it and how you get frustrated with what goes on. I live at Annandale. I got up at 1.30 in the morning. It was just a normal night.

ACTING CHAIR: Sorry, Mr Griffiths. Is this in the courts or with the police currently?

Mr Griffiths: No. The matter is finalised. It happened on 24 May 2024. I got up at 1.30. The house was locked. I could not sleep. I went back to bed with air conditioning and that sort of thing. My wife was with me. Our children have left home. I got up at six o'clock in the morning as normal and went out and both cars had gone. My wife's Mercedes and my new four-wheel drive were both gone. I called the police immediately. To their credit they came around. For three days we did not see our cars. These particular kids were posting on Facebook doing burnouts with my cars. One of them, I would say, would be about 12 years old. They were captured on CCTV at the back of my house, so I knew who they were. We gave the CCTV to the police. I think the police knew who they were.

ACTING CHAIR: Mr Griffiths, sorry, I do not want to interrupt you because I want you to have your time. I just need you to be very careful that you do not identify anybody.

Mr Griffiths: No. I will not identify them. I can show you the photo. I do not know their names even. That is the point of what I am saying. Three days later my cars were found totally graffitied inside, completely ripped out—an absolute mess. This is happening every day here in Townsville at the moment. The town has had an absolute gutful of it.

The police eventually caught these kids. I rang the Childrens Court and said, 'The police have arrested these children. They tell me they have charged them. When are they appearing in the Childrens Court?' They said, 'This Saturday.' I said, 'Good. I'll be there.' I wanted to see what the magistrate was going to do with these kids. They said, 'No, I'm sorry. You cannot be there. You're not entitled to go.' I said, 'What? They have just stolen \$160,000 worth of my property and I'm not entitled to go to the court to see what happens to these kids! I will ring on Monday and you can advise me what happened.' They said, 'You are not entitled to know that.' I said, 'You've got to be joking!'

This is the system. This is the frustration that people in Townsville are up against. It may have changed under the new government. I hope it has. In fact, I am sure it probably has. These kids are repeat offenders. I worked in that area for a period of time. I have been to the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. I have also been to Stuart. I can tell you that the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre have music rooms, they have state-of-the-art equipment there and they have people every day who are employed to sit with them at night-time and have meals. It is not being incarcerated in the way that you would think that happens at Stuart. It is very different. I am not saying that is right or wrong. I do not know.

All I am saying is that this town has had a gutful of what is going on and it needs to change. You have the power as the government to do it. I hear what some of the people have said here today. They are obviously passionate and they want to see kids looked after. I do too. I have three girls, but my girls would not be out where I did not know where they were. I understand that these kids come from different groups than what my kids have grown up in and they have had tough times. The ankle monitors are a great idea and it needs to be done. 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. Thank you for your time.

ACTING CHAIR: Mr Griffiths, do you mind if we ask you some questions?

Mr Griffiths: Sure, go ahead.

ACTING CHAIR: Are you in favour of the ankle monitors and monitoring devices?

Mr Griffiths: Absolutely and if you were to do a survey of this town, I would say 80 per cent of people are in favour because the town is over the way it is at the moment. It is wars.

Ms FARMER: Firstly, Mr Griffiths, I want to thank you for appearing before us today. It is really important that we are here. I am so sorry for what has happened to you and that kind of ongoing process.

Mr Griffiths: It is minuscule to what is happening to other people around this town.

Ms FARMER: Whatever laws get through parliament, we want to know that they are working. A number of people today in Townsville have said that there is scepticism, they are tired, they want to know, they do not feel the laws are working now. Given a number of people have said to us that there are reasons these laws may not actually work, would you like to see the government review this in another year or two to ensure it is working?

Mr Griffiths: Absolutely and your statistics will show that. The reason I am here today is because everybody pays for those cars. That \$160,000, every person in this room with insurance pays for that. You pay for it. We should not have to do it and it needs to stop.

Miss DOOLAN: Mr Griffiths, thank you for sharing your story. I am so sorry to hear what happened to you. Do you believe that frontline officers and workers should be entitled to use all tools available to them to help support a safer community with less reoffending?

Mr Griffiths: Absolutely and they should be resourced by the government to be able to do that. These people are trying hard and need to be resourced. They are our frontline people.

Ms FARMER: They did a big evaluation of the way that the laws are working at the moment. They said you have to have these wraparound programs such as some of the things that we have heard about today. Would you like to see the government openly committing to enough wraparound programs in Townsville to ensure that the laws do work?

Mr Griffiths: Absolutely. One of the problems that we are having is the magistrates, and I know the government politically cannot be involved with the magistrates. However, there is a feeling in the town that the magistrates have lost support. The bottom line is that you have a kid who has a rap sheet as long as that and he gets bail again or he is out at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre again. We really need to look at the process because whatever we are doing at the moment is not working.

ACTING CHAIR: And that is what today is about. Thank you very much for your time

SHAVE, Mrs Linda, Private capacity

ACTING CHAIR: Mrs Shave, thank you very much for appearing in front of the committee today. I will invite you to make a brief opening statement and, if you are happy, after that we may have some questions for you.

Mrs Shave: Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity. I had not actually planned for this, but, having listened to the other speakers, I have some observations that I feel are complementary to the amendment bill. I am totally in support of the bill but I think there were some very valuable comments made by Reuben Richardson and Karl McKenzie on the data that supports it going forward. As just mentioned, there may be a review in a year's time so that we can look at the algorithms and the data integration.

When we talk about wraparound services, we have the bail support services, intensive family partnerships, the youth co-responder team, supported accommodation and targeted interventions. All of those services are already integrated into the youth justice system. What I fail to observe from this committee meeting is that, if these already have integrated interoperability with the justice system, then the interoperability between those data sets should be already available for some data analysis to be undertaken. Maybe it just has not been taken but has been siloed rather than saying, 'Okay, a lot of this data is already available in this one system.' Maybe it also has links to the Queensland youth services and child services, because a lot of these already look after children in need. If they come from violent homes, they cannot go back to the home just for monitoring.

Also, the reviews were done between 2021 and 2025. Technology is rapidly changing and new trends are now available. There are wrist worn watches and tags. For the smaller children aged 10, we could use lighter devices that provide the same capability and just look like a watch on their wrist. Maybe from a stigma point of view that helps that image because they just think that they are cool as they have a smart watch.

To me, it needs to be fully standardised between each area. The rural areas of Queensland are lucky if they can get any signal. We are supposed to have 5G and 6G coming. I do not know about other people but I know at the retirement village I cannot get a signal on my phone. I have to go out to the shopping centre. I think it was Karl McKenzie who mentioned about rural areas and the Telstra connections or tracking. To me, these are all very important observations that they have made. Collectively, it is not that there is a problem with the monitoring amendment act. It is more about the behind-the-scenes technology and integration between rural areas. There was Project Loon up in northern Queensland at one time, which was disbanded in 2025. Sometimes they have no signal, especially in storms. If we are serious about tracking, if there is no signal or GPS signal then they will not be able to track them.

However, there are other ways of doing that. There is drone technology now that could still use the intellectual location tracker in the ankle, even if it is not working and even if it is flat. That could actually still track that signal from that bracelet. It is like the black box of an aircraft but in an ankle bracelet. There are still many ways that these youth could be tracked. One of the criticisms of it was that the batteries go flat and things like that. The new technologies are also incorporating in some of them the ability to recharge, just like a battery, on a solar system so they can solar charge them—some of those worries and the angst that might be there for them.

I am sorry if I am out of line, but Karl McKenzie made some very good comments. When we are talking about large families and the time needed for these individuals who are a bit out of line, one of the things is: why aren't we using technology to help them? They are using their mobile phones still. A lot of these kids have mobile phones. We have plenty of apps. If services are only available from 8.30 to 4.30—and I think it was Rebekah Buxton who mentioned that—why not send them to a chatbox? We have drones and avatars and chats. Kids relate to avatars. They are quite happy to be told by a chatbox or an avatar, 'You need to do this and this.' They are most likely to adhere to that more so than to a human being because they do not feel intimidated. There are so many incredible ideas that could be used in great support of this and they do not have to be expensive because we have the technologies, such as ChatGPT, used in the right way. But like anything with technology, you cannot have a black-box approach; it has to be focused on the law.

Finally, I think it was Reuben Richardson who mentioned data. For me, one of the most important things about the technology we have is that we can integrate a lot of this information from the device. It is stored so why aren't we using that to ascertain, for example, what is their normal activity from, say, nine in the morning when they are having their cornflakes before going somewhere? There is so much that can be achieved. I think this should be totally supported, but there should also be some—I have not really read it. I only read it since I got here. When I look at that I think we need

to maybe put in there future technologies to ensure that it is not just this old 4G because the current bracelets only work on 4G. We have 5G due in 2027 and we have 6G coming in 2030. The relay stations are mostly going to do the same as they did for the 3G and say they do not work anymore. It is about planning for upgrades, obsolete and new technology. That is basically all I have to say.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Mrs Shave. Do you mind if we ask you some questions?

Mrs Shave: Please go ahead.

ACTING CHAIR: Some committee members have personal experience with youth crime and others have interests because of broad community concern. Would you be comfortable sharing with us what has shaped your views on electronic monitoring?

Mrs Shave: I am all for it. To me, anybody who commits a crime and is on bail should have this type of monitoring. One lady talked about children attacking her and another lady about a person in a car with a child. I agree with the comment made that at 10 they know right from wrong. What we are trying to do is protect the community by putting into place something that can give the community, especially here in Townsville, trust and hope that we can get to the end of this and get it under control.

Some of that comes back to what somebody else mentioned about reading, writing and learning. If we could take advantage of them being on bail and maybe give them special lessons on reading, writing and arithmetic, they can leave that environment or at least raise above that environment to think, 'Actually, I could do something better.' I think that monitoring is important but it is also something that could be used as an advantage tool for ensuring that these people have a future going forward.

ACTING CHAIR: Deputy Chair, do you have any questions?

Ms McMILLAN: The member for Bulimba, the shadow minister, has a question.

Ms FARMER: Thank you, Mrs Shave. You are incredibly well informed about a range of things. I think we are all in great admiration of your thoughts and also for appearing today. It is so important that we hear from the community. I do not even know where to start asking you about all of those things. I was taken with a statement that you made about coverage. You talked a lot about coverage. You said that at your retirement village you cannot get a signal and you have to go to the shopping centre. Does that mean if someone were wearing an ankle bracelet in your vicinity that they would not have coverage as there would be no signal?

Mrs Shave: It comes and goes, even though the tower is just behind us. It is also very weak with one or two bars at the maximum. We do not have people with ankles bracelets but they do have the emergency alarms. The community hall we have has a bit of wi-fi because the office workers are there so we can go into there or we go to the shopping centre if we are trying to do internet banking.

I would say with confidence that if they have an ankle bracelet there then it would not work or it would work intermittently. You have to think about whether that is setting off alarms for the police who then have to respond to something that they did not need to respond to. Somebody else said something about 'resource hungry'. We need to ensure that the resources for monitoring this and the costs of keeping the technology updated are factored into the solution. What we really need then is maybe for the communications officer to look at the Telstra network signal. I think somebody else made a comment earlier about the network signal.

Miss DOOLAN: Thank you so much for all of those wonderful ideas. The independent evaluation that supported this bill found that youths with EMDs had higher completion rates—74 per cent versus 50 per cent of those not on EMDs; and lower reoffending rates—62 per cent versus 80 per cent. Do you accept that this a step in the right direction to reduce reoffending?

Mrs Shave: I do. Also, it said there was a 24 per cent reduction in offending among young offenders. As somebody else pointed out, that was from 14 years upwards and not from 10 years. To be honest, I do not think that would make much difference even if it is from 10 years. It is enhancing community safety. Yes, there are some technology issues. I do not think the electronic monitoring bill is the problem. I think that is sound, other than maybe adding that little bit about keeping up with technology.

What we do need to do in order to get valuable data from these devices is there needs to be integration and interoperability between the different agencies so that we can share data and maybe share resources. If we know there is something happening and we have the targeted intervention group working, can we use their resources? Caring is sharing and working together. Without having reviewed this in more depth, I 100 per cent think that the electronic monitoring amendment bill should go ahead. However, I do agree with the request that maybe in a year's time we look at it in more

detail—collect the data, have the algorithms written for the integration of these devices. We need to be assured that the governance and the accountability of that data is authentic because we want to ensure that any decisions made going forward in terms of further amendments or upgrades are justifiable.

This statistic was based on only 80 juveniles on bail. As somebody else mentioned, there has not been any description as to how that data was collected, who collected it and how it was then used. Qualitative and quantitative statistics can do lots of different things. I am a technologist. I am a research analyst.

Ms FARMER: I think we can tell.

Mrs Shave: This is my passion. Also, my passion is Townsville and the safety of the community.

ACTING CHAIR: Mrs Shave, thank you so very much. You have given us so much to think about today. I really do appreciate your contribution.

Mrs Shave: Thank you. I was a bit rushed putting it together.

ACTING CHAIR: No. You did very well for someone who was not prepared.

AMBROSE, Ms Wendy, Secretary, Townsville Crime Committee

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Ambrose, for being here today and for coming up to the table. I know sometimes it is quite daunting, so thank you very much. If you would like to start with your background and what you want to speak about today and then we will ask you any questions after that.

Ms Ambrose: Since 2017 I have been secretary of the Townsville Crime Committee. I 100 per cent back the trackers and I will back any program that can help with what we are all suffering. The one thing I want to say from listening to everything today is that we hear about the rights of these children who are committing the crimes all the time but there is never a lot of thought about the victims. I understand that these kids come from traumatic backgrounds. The problem we have though is that they are creating problems for other children who become victims. They are suffering PTSD and requiring counselling after their homes have been broken into. I know personally of one little boy whose father was attacked with a knife. He is now terrified of policemen because he associates policemen with bad things happening. He goes into absolute meltdown and trauma over it. I know of another family where the offenders were in the children's room and the children woke up. The children will no longer sleep in their own bedrooms. They want to sleep with their parents.

There is a lot of financial stress for the victims. Nobody ever thinks about that. When their cars are stolen they cannot get to work. Often a lot of people now do not insure their cars, because of the cost of insurance going up like it is because of the thefts. When two cars are stolen from a family, that straightaway creates financial stress. They cannot get to work, they cannot get the kids to school and the family starts falling apart. We need to consider the victims more than we do. We are all about the kids and wraparound services for them and what they get and what is better for them, but what about the victims?

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you so much, Mrs Ambrose, for being here today. I want to thank you for your advocacy for our community over a long time. I know that you are very involved with your community. I want to go back to what you said at the beginning. You are in favour of us having monitoring devices so the judges do have that option when they are talking about bail conditions.

Ms Ambrose: Yes, definitely. If they are wearing a tracker and they have committed an offence then you are going to know where they are. They are not going to be out in the community for another three, four, five or six weeks. The police are going to be able to go directly to them and apprehend them. That is one of the benefits of the trackers.

Ms FARMER: Thank you, Ms Ambrose, for taking on the responsibility of a committee like that. I am sure you work a lot of hours, and during the night as well. I absolutely agree with you that getting a reduction in offending means that there are fewer victims, and I think we all want to see that. There has been quite a bit of talk today about people are feeling tired, sceptical and fatigued with crime in Townsville, so they want to ensure the laws are working. A lot of people have suggested that these laws might not work if X, Y and Z does not happen. Would you like to see a review in maybe a year or two to be able to reassure the community that they are working, but if they are not then we have to do X, Y and Z to them?

Ms Ambrose: Shouldn't that be done with any program?

Ms FARMER: It should be, yes.

Ms Ambrose: That should be done with any programs that are put in place to help the kids. There are a lot of on-country programs. As part of the crime committee we have liaised a lot with people who run those programs. Often there is no accountability as to where that money goes. They are getting \$500,000, \$600,000 or \$1 million for on-country programs, but where is the accountability? They do not have to show where that money is going. Therefore, everything—I do not care what it is, whether it is government or an outside organisation—should be accountable and everything should be reviewed every two or three years to ensure it is actually working.

There is no point throwing money into things that do not work. We saw that with the bail houses. The Townsville Crime Committee wrote to the then attorney-general Yvette D'Ath. We told her that they would not work, that they would never work and that putting them within the city limits was a bad idea. What happened? The first week they were open a woman who lived three doors down from the female bail house was accosted by them. She had her car stolen. She was carjacked and so it went on. Tens of millions of dollars was spent on that program that was just wasted that could have gone into programs that actually did something for these kids.

ACTING CHAIR: We will come back to the bill at hand.

Miss DOOLAN: If we see a reduction in reoffending, would you support that EMDs are actually working?

Ms Ambrose: Yes, of course.

Miss DOOLAN: Would you support that? If there is a reduction in reoffending of those wearing monitors, would you say that the program is working?

Ms Ambrose: I know that we, including other members of the committee, would support absolutely anything that saw a reduction. We realise it is not something that will happen overnight. This is a generational change. We are talking 20, 30 or 40 years before we can deal with the family crisis and get through all the generations to get everybody back on track. Yes, we support anything that will help.

Ms FARMER: There has been mention today about coverage. We have heard about 5G and 6G. I am not aware how it all works across Townsville. When the bill is passed, would you like to have clear information from the government about where the EMDs will work in Townsville and where they will not in terms of coverage so you are really clear who is protected and who is not?

Ms Ambrose: Yes. I think that is important for everybody to know so that people do not have a false sense of security that they are covered when they are actually not. That would be a good idea. No system is 100 per cent perfect. We can only do the best we can with what we have, basically.

ACTING CHAIR: We only have time for one more question. You have worked with the community over a very long period of time. When it comes to youth crime, if judges have one more tool to use such as monitoring devices, do you think the community will feel that that is a positive thing for community safety moving forward?

Ms Ambrose: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you so much for your time today. I know you were not going to speak, so I am glad you came to the table. Member for Townsville, did you want to say something before the end of the day?

Mr BAILLIE: Thank you, Acting Chair. Thank you, committee, for coming to Townsville. As you can see, our community is very engaged in everything we do as a government and even more so when it comes to youth crime. I would like to thank the committee for coming, as well as Parliamentary Services—the secretariat and Hansard.

Most importantly, I would like to thank all of our community members, those with lived experience in this space who have taken the time to join us here today and participate in this very important process and share their experiences—some of them quite raw and very difficult to listen to, let alone imagine what it would have been like to go through. Thank you to all of our community members here who have joined us today and, again, thank you to the committee for taking the time to visit us in Townsville in this lovely humid weather we are experiencing at the moment.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you for your thanks, member for Townsville.

Ms McMILLAN: Acting Chair, I just wondered whether we could have some time to ask the member for Townsville some questions given he has appeared before the committee.

ACTING CHAIR: I will get advice on that. That was just a courtesy to say thank you. The member has not asked for leave or registered as a witness today, so we will not be asking any questions of the member for Townsville.

Thank you everybody for being here today. That concludes the public hearing. I want to thank everybody who participated today. I want to thank our Hansard reporter. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I want to thank the members of the committee as well for being here today and for their contribution. I declare this public hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 4.45 pm.