




Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

---

Record of Proceedings, 1 April 2025

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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.36 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution on the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill 2025. We have heard a lot of debate about why this should exist. It is really simple. We want to have evidence-based data to inform where we can potentially put people so they can be rehabilitated, rather than incarcerated, but we need to know if that is going to work because we do not want to keep putting victims at risk. I can give you an example. In the last three years in Toowoomba, prior to the change of government, there were 3,150 crimes committed by youth offenders, and those youth offenders, depending on the year, numbered 33 or 39. For example, one offender was charged with 114 different offences. Imagine what that has done to someone's concept of security in their own home, security of their possessions and security of their family. Imagine what it has done to victims' insurance costs. Imagine what it has done to how victims conduct their life potentially without a vehicle for an extended period of time, including simply trying to go to the shops. If the judiciary had have had the option and we had the evidence to back it, many of these offenders may well have been given one of these monitors.

The added bonus of that is, the police resources would be much more efficiently used in preventing crime rather than going and checking up and seeing if someone who has already been charged is where they are supposed to be at the time they are supposed to be there. Every evening, depending on the time of year, police are attempting to monitor up to 39 juveniles in our community in Toowoomba. That is 39 visits for the local police. That is 39 times they have to check—and they literally check—and then who knows what happens in the 10 minutes after? The fact that the offenders managed to commit 3,150 crimes between them over a three-year period indicates that not all of them were following their bail conditions.

Extending this trial so we can gather this evidence in a meaningful way and being able to provide the evidence to allow judges to use their discretion where there might be an opportunity for rehabilitation and to allow the police to use their resources more efficiently and effectively in crime prevention, rather than monitoring someone who has already been charged, would be good outcomes. Of course, we do not know the outcome. Why do we not know the outcome? It is because the first trial of this was a complete failure. The Labor government brought in a trial and certainly in my patch in Toowoomba, in the first opportunity, there were none issued out of the five that were issued across the state that year. Based on lots of people's insurance bills, I would suggest it would have been useful if more had been issued by the judiciary.

We know that later on there were 36 monitoring conditions issued for 30 distinct offenders, four of whom were in Toowoomba. I wonder if those four were in the group of the 39 who managed to commit 3,150 crimes over the three-year period. Imagine the number of victims who have been created because bail conditions were not being followed. We do not even necessarily know that they were not being followed until they were arrested again and then put out on bail, and then arrested again and put out on bail. If time permitted I would go through the 114 times that happened, but time does not permit.

I believe that this trial is very important because these are young people who have committed crimes. We want to try to put them back on track. We have some great programs where if the judge has seen a glimmer of hope and suggested the monitor and they meet the terms and conditions that are laid out in the bill they may well be able to get onto one of the intervention programs. They may well be able to start rehabilitating their life. At the same time, after they have done whatever the program has in store for them that day, if their conditions mean they are not allowed out at night or they have to be in a certain place across the weekend, the police can see that without having to send someone out in a police vehicle to knock on the door and check they are there and then not know what is happening for the next 24 hours—24 hours in which, clearly, people are out committing more crimes. The judiciary know it, the police know it and the victims certainly know it. The only people who seem not to have known it were those in the government. When they came up to Toowoomba in February 2023, the then premier was a bit too busy to come and talk to people. This is one of the ideas that was discussed at that forum.

**Ms GRACE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the point of order that you raised earlier when the shadow minister was sat down by the Deputy Speaker in his ruling. I believe that the member is not addressing the long title of the bill and I ask that he be brought back to being relevant.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): I actually think the member for Toowoomba North was being relevant. I was listening closely to what he said. He is discussing youth crime, the implications of monitoring devices, the history around that and why he is adopting his stance in this House. You may continue, member for Toowoomba North.

**Mr WATTS:** For the benefit of the shadow minister, at that crime forum the former police minister, the member for Morayfield, failed to listen to the community, who were asking about bail conditions. They were trying to work out why people—39 of them—were able to commit over 3,000 crimes and keep getting out on bail.

**Ms GRACE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. At the time that the shadow minister was sat down, she was speaking in relation to statistics about crime rates. That was raised as a point of order by yourself.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for McConnel, please take your seat.

**Ms GRACE:** I am seeking a ruling on relevance.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for McConnel, I am not going to be unduly constrained by what you say may have gone before or the circumstances of an earlier ruling by the Speaker. The member had only recommenced speaking and I find it disorderly that you should rise on the same point of order within a minute. I am listening to what the member has to say, and if he becomes irrelevant I will deal with the matter. Thank you.

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. If the shadow minister has some concerns as Acting Manager of Opposition Business, there is a process to write to you about that.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That is noted, thank you.

**Mr WATTS:** I can assure the House and you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the people of Toowoomba think I am very relevant.

The former police minister, the member for Morayfield, failed to listen to the community. In answer to one of the questions it was stated that, in most instances, people who are on bail do not reoffend. I find that difficult to believe when 39 people have committed 3,150 crimes across three years. Obviously, somebody is reoffending. It is clear that when the former government introduced this legislation they were looking for a political fix to try to create the image that they were doing something. What they were doing, albeit very poorly, was giving a judicial option, but we need to know if that judicial option has an evidence base. That requires a trial and that requires data. Obviously, to get that data, we will need the judiciary to use this over a period of time and we will need to measure the outcomes, in conjunction with rehabilitation programs that are part of other bills that this House will see. It is relevant to this because if you are wearing the monitor you can attend those rehabilitation programs. That is why the judiciary may use their discretion to order a monitor.

If you do not have the monitor on and you are being held behind bars in a watch house, it is because of lack of provision by the previous government for adequate accommodation, particularly for youth offenders—a watch house is not a place for a youth offender. I have been making that point in this House for well over half a decade. If they meet all the criteria and they have a monitor on, they can access other rehabilitative programs. That data will go into the trial outcomes and all of a sudden the judiciary will have more confidence in suggesting to other offenders that the monitor is a good idea.

At the end of the day, we want people who commit crimes not to be described as young criminals but to be described as young people who have committed crimes. We need to turn that around and make them young people who contribute to their community. If they need some structure, some support and some evidence-based programs to help them do that, gathering that data and presenting that data to the judiciary so they understand what is working is critically important to reducing crime in this state. I do not expect the Labor Party to do anything about it at all because if they had any genuine interest they would have been listening to us over the last decade as this crime crisis they created was getting worse.