



CLIENT CASE STUDY - INCOME MANAGEMENT

A case study

Each year the Commission includes in its Annual Report at least one client case study as a means of relaying in real terms the experience of individuals in the CYWR communities: a measure of the quality of their lives; why change was needed; how change was initiated; and what outcomes were achieved. The social value created by the reforms is difficult to quantify. Asking the beneficiaries of the reforms, however, “What has changed for you?” can provide valuable qualitative data which the Commission and Government can use to inform its service delivery model.

The following article by Patricia Karvelas was published in The Australian on 21 December 2013 and captures a tangible beneficial outcome.

Since this article was published the Australian Government has passed legislation enabling the Commission to extend income management in the CYWR communities to 31 December 2015.

ABORIGINAL ‘RECIDIVISTS’ TO BE 90PC MANAGED

INDIGENOUS people in Cape York who repeatedly come before the Family Responsibilities Commission and refuse to address drug, alcohol and other problems will have 90 per cent of their welfare payments managed.

The Abbott government has agreed to calls by the Cape York Institute to increase the maximum rate for income management from the current 75 percent to 90 per cent for Aborigines who refuse to improve their behaviour.

The Cape York model of income management, operating in the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, provides the Family Responsibilities Commission with the ability to refer individuals to income management over issues such as failing to ensure children attend school, or drug and alcohol problems.

The Commission currently directs the Department of Human Services to income manage either 60 per cent or 75 per cent of an individual’s welfare payments.

The institute, led by Noel Pearson, wanted 90 per cent income management as an additional tool to encourage more recalcitrant individuals, who have met with the Commission between 16 and 30 times with no demonstrable improvement in their behaviour.

Local Commissioners and the Aurukun Mayor have told departmental staff of their support for the move. The government has agreed to the income-managing of individuals at 90 per cent from January 1.

Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews said the Abbott government had been unable to pass legislation to continue the Cape York reform trial so he had signed an instrument to keep it going until the legislation was passed.

“There are a few difficult cases where people have been income-managed for a year or two and there are still difficulties in relation to them,” Mr Andrews said.

“In some cases, the 90 per cent will give (the Commission) the ability to try and get a better outcome for them and their families.”

CLIENT CASE STUDY - INCOME MANAGEMENT



“It’s a combination of alcohol and drug issues and only quarantining 75 per cent still allows those issues to occur.”

Mossman Gorge single mother Katrina Gibson has two children and says the Family Responsibilities Commission and income management had transformed her family’s lives. Ms Gibson is now no longer on income management. She says she has taken control of her life and has spent the past year ensuring her 12-year-old son, Xion, has gone to school consistently.

She said her bank account used always to be overdrawn and attracted lots of fees. She had also established a Student Education Trust for Xion, boosted by regular payments. “I’ve got my son attending school every day: he has only missed nine days the entire year,” Ms Gibson said.

“I’ve done everything to make sure my children have better health and a better education.”

“I knew that I had to improve my lifestyle and make sure that my children were well looked-after, and make sure that as a single mum I was looking after myself too.”

Ms Gibson said having her income managed helped her to spend a lot more money on her children. She said that, although she was a stay-at-home mother to six-month-old daughter Zaina, she planned to work in tourism when her children were older.

Mr Andrews said Ms Gibson was an example of someone who has used the system to her advantage and turned around her life.

“It really shows that if we can get the right mechanism there’s great hope,” the Minister said.

He said he had been told there were other communities in Queensland that had looked at the Cape York project and wanted the same scheme. “If others can see the advantage of it then they call for it themselves, so it is from the ground up, not top-down from government,” he said.

Last year’s Cape York Welfare Reform evaluation report found income management had positive effects on individuals and families by helping to ensure basic needs were met. The trial has had about \$100 million from the federal and state governments.

Under section 147 of the Act, the Commission preserves the confidentiality of information gained through involvement in the administration of the Act. Katrina Gibson, named in the above article, consented and authorised the publication of the data to The Australian newspaper.

“This work has been licensed by Copyright Agency Limited (CAL). Except as permitted by the Copyright Act, you must not re-use this work without the permission of the copyright owner or CAL.”