

COMMISSIONER GLASGOW'S MESSAGE



From the Commissioner

This year completes ten years of operations for the FRC in the welfare reform communities of Aurukun (AU), Coen (CO), Hope Vale (HV) and Mossman Gorge (MG), and four years of operations in the community of Doomadgee (DM).

Established in 2008 by the Queensland Bligh Government, we embarked upon a trial which was set originally to conclude on 31 December 2011.

In introducing the Bill to Parliament, then Premier Anna Bligh AC said:

"This is a ground-breaking trial, unique in the world. It will be a significant departure from the policies that have been tried in the past. The bill establishes the Family Responsibilities Commission as the driving force in changing local social norms and behaviour. It will directly link improved care for children to welfare and other government payments".

What followed was the creation of a genuine partnership of equals between the Queensland Government, the Australian Government and the Cape York Institute (the Institute) led by the courageous and insightful Anna Bligh AC, Jenny Macklin MP and Noel Pearson.

The Family Responsibilities Board was led in its early years by Ken Smith, Director-General of the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Dr Jeff Harmer, Secretary of the Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; and Noel Pearson, Director of the Institute.

Reflecting on the past ten years, former Queensland Premier Anna Bligh AC (now CEO of The Australian Banking Association) records:

"More than a decade ago the Family Responsibilities Commission was charged with an historic challenge. The intervening years have seen a team of committed and dedicated people rise to this challenge in ways that have made a remarkable difference to the lives of many families and, most importantly, to many children. The strong and ethical leadership of David Glasgow has contributed immeasurably to the achievements of the Commission. David and his trusted team of Local Commissioners have more than lived up to my expectations in establishing the FRC in 2008, and the lives of many families are the better for their pioneering work."

Professor Ken Smith (now CEO and Dean of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government) records:

"In 2008, when the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) was formed, I was working as the Director-General of the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Noel Pearson had convinced the State and Australian Governments that there was a need to reform passive welfare delivery and build the capacity of families in Cape York to take greater responsibility for their own futures, and particularly their children's well-being. After extensive policy discussions the FRC was formed in 2008 following the passage of landmark legislation by then Premier Bligh through the Queensland Parliament, with the full support of the Australian Government, and the four communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. The initial Commissioner appointed to lead the FRC was a highly experienced Queensland Magistrate, David Glasgow. He commenced the task of setting up the Commission and appointing the Local Commissioners in these four diverse and wonderful Cape York communities."



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Over the last 10 years, the FRC has worked closely with individual families, community leaders, and government and non-government service providers to really make a difference to the welfare of children and strengthened the important family networks and bonds which are at the core of improving social, educational and health outcomes. It was a great honour to be the inaugural chair of the Board for the FRC in 2008 until I left the Queensland Public Service in mid-2011. I thank my fellow inaugural directors, Dr Jeff Harmer and Noel Pearson for their support and vision in seeking ways of achieving positive change. I also thank the Commissioner and all the dedicated Local Commissioners for staying the distance on what has been, at times, a difficult reform agenda. The experiences of the last 10 years will be important not just for the four Cape York communities, but the FRC evidentiary base will be important for demonstrating that local control of local programs is the only way that real long term change can occur in remote communities."

The Commission's work in strengthening Indigenous local authority, building and maintaining respect for Indigenous decision-making, and encouraging local community members to take responsibility for their lives and behaviours speaks for itself.

In each community there has been significant and lasting improvement to the wellbeing, safety and education of their children.

Conditional income management

There was some concern expressed when the Commission commenced as to whether the Local Commissioners should have the authority to income manage clients. Unlike other trials, the FRC was never part of a blanket income management program.

Commissioners have always considered each client on a case by case basis with Conditional Income Management (CIM) issued as a last resort, and it is informative to consider how that power was exercised over this ten year period by the Commissioners.

Table 1: Percentage of clients who were placed on conditional income management for each financial year 2008 to 2018.

Financial Year	Number of CIM Orders Made	Number of Unique Clients Placed on CIM	Total Number of FRC Clients at 30 June	Percentage of Clients Placed on CIM as at 30 June
2008-2009	89	84	N/A	N/A
2009-2010	232	217	1,047	20.7%
2010-2011	223	205	1,191	17.2%
2011-2012	218	208	1,344	15.5%
2012-2013	304	268	1,467	18.3%
2013-2014	304	239	1,566	15.3%
2014-2015	238	194	1,856	10.5%
2015-2016	249	202	2,000	10.1%
2016-2017	265	212	2,164	9.8%
2017-2018	233	179	2,312	7.7%

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As at 30 June 2018 141 clients were subject to a current CIM order, although as can be seen from the table opposite, a total of 179 unique clients were placed on a CIM order throughout the entire 2017-18 year. A breakdown by community is presented below:

Table 2: Present number of clients subject to conditional income management orders at 30/06/2018.

Actively Managed CIM Clients	AU	CO	DM	HV	MG	Total
Income Management	54	2	43	11	7	117
Income Management Alteration	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	54	2	43	11	8	118

Remaining CIM Clients	AU	CO	DM	HV	MG	Total
Not Receiving Centrelink or CDEP	7	1	5	3	2	18
Pending Centrelink Action	4	0	1	0	0	5
Total	11	1	6	3	2	23

Grand Total of Clients subject to CIM Orders	65	3	49	14	10	141
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Local Commissioners

The women and men who accepted their roles as Local Commissioners are leaders of outstanding capability who are now as comfortable negotiating with bureaucrats and Ministers, as they are meeting with and helping their fellow community members.

Over the past ten years, during which time Indigenous Affairs in our State has been in the hands of seven Ministers and seven permanent Director-Generals, the Commissioners have performed their functions with care, compassion, firmness, determination and resilience.

In the current year Local Commissioners in the original four welfare reform communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge have, without my assistance or that of the Deputy Commissioner, presided in the majority of conferences. These statistics, including a breakdown by community, are set out in the Challenges and Outlook section on page 74.

The Local Commissioners' eligibility for appointment, in considering history and past conduct, is more restrictive than that required for the appointment of many other public officers in Queensland. They are not only outstanding Indigenous leaders, but they are great Australians who, by accepting their appointments, live everyday with the responsibility of, and reaction to, their decisions.



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Commission staff

This year's operations have seen a surplus of \$180,294 after accounting for the return of \$165,000 to the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) to meet specific unfunded departmental expenditure in Aurukun.

I acknowledge the skills of Registrar Maxine McLeod and Finance Manager Tracey Paterson in the management of the Commission's operations.

Our small dedicated staff in Cairns and our community based Local Coordinators deserve special recognition for their dedication and commitment, particularly over the past twelve months when working under the ever present possibility of closure.

The Commission's future

In late 2016 the State Government commenced a review of Welfare Reform and the FRC. Consultations with the five communities commenced on 21 March 2018 with a day visit to Mossman Gorge.

The team, which included representatives from the Queensland and Australian Governments and the Institute, visited each of the four welfare reform communities, with the Queensland Government only visiting Doomadgee.

It is expected a decision on the future will be forthcoming later this year.

David Glasgow, AM
Family Responsibilities Commissioner



Local Commissioners from Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge with Commissioner Glasgow and Deputy Commissioner Curtin at the Local Commissioner Development Week May 2018