



PREAMBLE - NOEL PEARSON



July 1 2018 marks ten years since the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) was created through a bipartisan partnership of Australian and Queensland Governments to support the courageous leaders of Aurukun, Hope Vale, Coen and Mossman Gorge, and almost four years since Doomadgee also committed itself to membership in August 2014.

The FRC is a shining light of the structural reform needed to support Indigenous agency to take and use power. It has been instrumental in rebuilding and empowering local authority to support families to take control of their lives and build their future.

At the heart of the FRC are the Local Commissioners who work so tirelessly and with great love to motivate and support their people to take up and manage their most fundamental responsibilities to themselves and to their families.

The Local Commissioners supported by Commissioner Glasgow have been resolute in their vision and determination to improve the lives of the families they support and serve. The same bipartisan support that led to the establishment of the FRC must now be recalled and applied with full effect to build on the success of the past ten years.

The ongoing uncertainty over the future funding by government of the FRC is very disappointing and must end. The FRC has spent six of its short ten year life under a cloud of funding uncertainty yet I have lost count of the conversations I have had with local families in support of the FRC and with local leaders asking about how they can get this support for their people.

The focus for all partners must be firmly on the future and making the FRC the strongest and most effective vehicle of Indigenous agency and authority that it can possibly be. This means by necessity that the FRC must become a permanent entity and that clear thinking is applied to the grass roots collaboration between the FRC and Justice Groups, and extending the network of FRC support across Cape York and other regions in Queensland.

The ongoing lack of connection between Queensland's referrals and service delivery system and the Australian Government's income support payments also needs to be addressed as a matter of utmost urgency.

Conditional Income Management is a tool that has been used to great effect through the authority of the FRC as an instrument of support rather than punishment. But the FRC's use of Conditional Income Management has been constrained by the overall lack of tools that it has in its armoury to wrap around families. Conditional Income Management on its own will never be sufficient to encourage people to get the supports that they need to build their capabilities, or oblige them to meet their most basic obligations.

The great strength of the FRC is the agency and authority of the Local Commissioners and the FRC support structure and conference system that they lead. This is a most precious thing to be celebrated and supported.

Noel Pearson