



# Commissioner Williams' Message

***In 2021-22 the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) continued to demonstrate why it is Queensland's leading model of shared decision-making and self-determination, that is responsive to the evolving needs of individuals and their families.***

The financial year was defined by extraordinary challenges caused by widespread community transmission of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in Far North Queensland. The vulnerability of community members living in the FRC communities of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge was exacerbated by the decision of many organisations and government agencies to suspend all face-to-face support services for several months. The systemic disruption of widespread service delivery caused unintended consequences, increasing the risk of harm to the most vulnerable members of community.

The FRC recognised full suspension of its own community-based operations was not an acceptable option. The Executive Management Team on advice of the Local Commissioners unanimously resolved *'It is at times like this, when there is great hardship and disadvantage felt by our community members, that the FRC must find a way to work to protect the interests, rights and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable persons'*.

Although compliance with health guidelines necessitated the postponement of conferencing from January to March 2022, the FRC devised a new 'Intensive Case Management' (ICM) framework and used other agile methods to engage with clients. These approaches utilised existing provisions under the FRC Act, to work intensively with clients outside of the formal conference environment and in a COVID-safe manner.

Notwithstanding disruption to operations for at least a quarter of the year, the FRC saw a tremendous demand for its services which resulted in the 2021-22 financial year recording the second highest number of clients referred to attend support services under either an FRA or order in the Commission's 14-year history.

The FRC also reports continued growth in the number of community members who self-refer and engage with the Commission on an entirely voluntary basis: an increase of 71 percent in the number of referrals under a voluntary case plan, and a 49 percent increase in voluntary income management agreements.

The year was also impacted by a four-month FRC Future Directions Review commissioned by the Queensland Government to inform a 'modernisation' of the Commission. The Commission provided a submission to the review titled *'The FRC: A Model of Self-Determination, An operational analysis of the Family Responsibilities Commission from 2008 to 2022'*. The 160-page document included evidence-based data to inform the review process so the FRC's performance throughout the life of the Commission could more readily be assessed. It found that the FRC provides good value for money. Evidence of the FRC's workload performance shows it is a lean and agile, yet highly efficient and cost-effective organisation. A copy can be downloaded from the FRC's website.

The submission further concluded that the FRC's model of self-determination is entirely consistent with the approaches envisaged under the Queensland Government's *Statement of Commitment*, ongoing development of the *Path to Treaty*, and the *Local Thriving Communities* reforms. Most importantly the FRC achieves practical and real outcomes including helping the Queensland Government to reach the National Closing the Gap targets.

I am delighted to report that many of the positive trends identified in the FRC's operational analysis have maintained trajectory throughout the 2021-22 year. This is a remarkable feat considering the disruption to the FRC's core operations caused by COVID-19. Such outcomes would not have been possible without the enduring work of my fellow Commissioners and registry colleagues, and their unwavering commitment to achieving exceptional customer service outcomes in partnership with our clients and stakeholders.

I am pleased to present the Family Responsibilities Commission Annual Report for 2021-2022.

**Tammy Williams**  
**Family Responsibilities Commissioner**