



# Commissioner Williams' Message

**This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of when the Queensland Parliament passed the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 (FRC Act)* with bipartisan support. The then Queensland Premier Anna Bligh, described it as a “groundbreaking trial, unique in the world.”**

Since then, the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) continues to demonstrate why it is arguably Queensland's leading model of shared decision-making and self-determination.

The FRC was born out of a rare mix of policy innovation and genuine co-design with First Nations communities, political goodwill with courageous leadership on both sides of the political spectrum, and unflinching honesty and truth from senior public servants, politicians, and Aboriginal community members alike. The FRC was the centrepiece of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial in 2008 agreed to in a historic tripartite relationship between the Australian and Queensland Governments, and the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership.

It should not then come as a surprise to learn that it was also in this same era, that a similarly fertile environment for policy development birthed another key reform, 'Closing the Gap'. It was in December 2008 that the Australian, state and territory governments reached their own historic agreement, that as part of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a concerted national effort was needed to address Indigenous disadvantage in six key areas. Since then both reforms set off on their own, but with an inter-related journey towards achieving intended outcomes.

For fifteen years the FRC's Local Commissioners and registry staff, together with our partners have worked tirelessly on the frontlines alongside some of the nation's most disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens to support individual self-determination and agency, through personal responsibility and opportunity.

Change takes time.

The Local Commissioners and I are starting to see the seeds of that change for a small, yet growing cohort of clients – those who self-refer and engage with the support of the FRC on an entirely voluntary basis. In the 2022-23 reporting period there were a total of 170 voluntary engagements by community members, comprising of 118 Voluntary Income Management (VIM) agreements and 52 Voluntary Case Plans (VCPs) for referrals to support services. It was merely four years ago, that the FRC reported in its annual report that only 20 VIMs and nil VCPs were entered into by community members.

The increase in voluntary engagements in recent years is consistent with a broader, and well-established trend identified by the Commission of an increased willingness by clients to take steps towards personal accountability. This is best illustrated by clients entering into Family Responsibilities Agreements (FRAs) for a case plan and who are willing to accept a referral to a community support service for a period of between 3 to 12 months, as opposed to being ordered to do so, by the FRC. In the 2022-23 financial year, there were 265 agreements entered into by clients for referrals from FRAs compared to 147 orders made by the Commission for referrals.

It has been four years since my initial appointment as Commissioner. It remains a privilege to work alongside the Deputy Commissioner, Rod Curtin and 37 of our Local Commissioner colleagues, who represent a diverse range in age, gender, clan affiliation, knowledge and experience. In this our fifteenth anniversary year I acknowledge the contribution of all who have been a part of the broader 'FRC-family' – from past Commissioners, registry staff, members of the Family Responsibilities Board, partner agencies and especially, our clients and their children. We continue your work so that 'the Elders not yet born will inherit the legacy of our efforts'.

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