

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW



Our Vision

Vibrant Cape York Welfare Reform communities that are responsible, healthy, safe and sustainable.

Our Purpose

Supporting Cape York Welfare Reform community members to restore socially responsible standards of behaviour, local authority and wellbeing for themselves and their families.

Our Objectives

- Provide effective and efficient client services and influence the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour at the individual, family and community level.
- Strengthen collaborative cross agency partnerships to support local Indigenous authority and influence the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour at the individual, family and community level.
- Enhance community engagement and promote understanding of our role to support local Indigenous authority and promote the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour so that each Cape York Welfare Reform community is a more caring and safer place to live.

Service Charter Statement

The Family Responsibilities Commission knows that you value good customer service. Our aim is to give you the best service we can. We will work with clients and stakeholders to deliver outputs for the Queensland and Australian Governments that achieve the outcomes sought for the Cape York Welfare Reform trial communities. In doing so, the Commission nurtures a spirit of inquiry and innovation. We will take up the challenge of unconventional or creative thinking that may be needed to address the complex problems that confront our communities.

The creation of the Family Responsibilities Commission

In early 2006 the Australian Government agreed to fund the development phase of the CYWR trial proposed by the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership (the Institute). The Queensland Government also agreed to participate in the development and provided in kind support and assistance throughout the development period.

The Institute subsequently released an interim report titled "From Hand Out To Hand Up" in May 2007 and a two volume final report with the same title in November 2007. The report outlined the Institute's proposal for the CYWR trial to be implemented in the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. The objectives of the CYWR trial are the restoration of social norms and local Indigenous authority. In addition, the program aims to facilitate and support a positive change in social norms and community behaviours that have developed in response to chronic levels of welfare dependency, social dysfunction and economic exclusion within these communities.

In December 2007, the Queensland Government agreed to contribute \$40 million and the Australian Government \$48 million to finance the implementation of the CYWR trial over four years.



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The broad objectives of the CYWR trial agenda as stated by the Cape York Institute are to:

- rebuild social norms and restore Indigenous authority
- address the welfare pedestal through changing incentives
- support engagement in the real economy
- move from welfare housing to home ownership
- enable children to make full use of their talents and creativity and to enjoy the best of both worlds.

The CYWR trial is designed with a strong emphasis on partnership, capacity building, respect and use of local authority, and the enhancement of services and appropriate service delivery mechanisms. The trial is implementing a range of policy, program and service delivery reforms and practical on-the-ground initiatives to help reduce welfare dependency, promote social responsibility, provide pathways to participation in the real economy, improve school attendance and enhance educational opportunities.

These include:

- increased and comprehensive responses to alcohol and drug misuse, gambling, addictive behaviours and violence
- improved services to promote child, individual and family wellbeing including support services which assist expectant parents, encourage positive behaviour, optimise learning by improving school attendance, prepare students for secondary school and assist in maximising the transition to boarding school
- interventions which target employment assistance, sponsor individual enterprise, increase educational opportunities and encourage private home ownership
- increased investment in community capacity building through social capital building programs, the Community Action Fund to provide independent financial assistance, social and physical infrastructure and, 'village hubs' that provide a central location for opportunity products to assist the community, commercial, social and civic activities as well as service co-location
- money management services to promote financial literacy and capability, build assets and establish educational savings trusts to enable the continuing education of children and
- income management of individuals where appropriate to assist them to manage their finances.

The CYWR trial also has an emphasis on early intervention in order to address issues and behaviours before they escalate. A key feature of the CYWR trial is the creation of the Family Responsibilities Commission as an independent statutory authority. The Commission is regarded as a critical mechanism to facilitate the rebuilding of intra-community social norms and to encourage behavioural change through attaching reciprocity and communal obligations to welfare and other government payments. The intention of the trial and of this Commission is to enhance and complement the existing responsibilities of Queensland and Australian Government agencies and service delivery and community organisations.

This philosophy is grounded in the Institute's view that historically policies have created a welfare dependency in Indigenous communities and that people in receipt of welfare payments, or who are participating in the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program, not only have an obligation to their community not to behave in ways which are detrimental, but must reciprocate with economic engagement and the active support of their community.

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Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living in the four communities receiving welfare or CDEP payments are subject to the Commission's jurisdiction. Jurisdiction continues if the individual relocates from the community.

The *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* was passed in the Queensland Parliament with bipartisan support on 13 March 2008. The Commission commenced operating on 1 July 2008 and conferencing began on 12 August 2008, with the first sitting being held in Coen. As regulated by the Act the Commission was to cease operations on 1 January 2012. On 19 August 2011 the then Queensland Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, the Honourable Curtis Pitt MP, together with the Honourable Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced the extension of the CYWR trial until 31 December 2012.

Following further extensive stakeholder and community consultation regarding the future of the Commission and the CYWR trial, an extension was granted until 1 January 2014. A further extension of the CYWR trial and the Commission to 31 December 2014 was announced on 28 March 2013 by both the Honourable Jenny Macklin MP Minister for Families Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Queensland Premier Campbell Newman.

About Us

As part of the broader Cape York Welfare Reforms, the Commission has the lead role in this unique trial aimed at restoring local authority and socially responsible standards of behaviour in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

Local Commissioners are Elders or respected community members who encourage individuals appearing before the Commission to take the necessary steps to make lasting changes which will benefit their health, wellbeing, home and community life.

The Commissioner and Local Commissioners meet regularly to conference clients and make referrals to community support services, or in certain circumstances, to the Department of Human Services, Centrelink for income management.

Policy context

Our activities support the Cape York Welfare Reforms and the Statement of Objectives for the Community published by the Queensland Government. The Commission contributes specifically to the Government objectives for the community of:

- "Revitalise frontline services" - by providing effective and efficient client services for families
- "Restore accountability in government" - by strengthening collaborative cross-agency partnerships to support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authorities and to influence the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour.

The fundamental principles of the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct are strictly adhered to and the principles of natural justice, conflict of interest and confidentiality are established and strongly reinforced with employees and Local Commissioners through the Commission's Workplace Policy and Local Commissioner's Handbook.



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Our activities also specifically support the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs goal of leading the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) “Closing the Gap” agenda and the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA):

- Safe communities – addressing the problem of violence, alcohol, criminal and anti-social behaviours
- Health – closing the gap in health and longevity
- Schooling - supporting the improvement of literacy and numeracy levels and Year 12 or equivalent attainment of children in our communities by providing guidance, encouragement and information to families on the requirement for children to attend school and by providing better access to educational services in relation to boarding schools
- Economic participation – closing the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
- Healthy homes – addressing the problem of overcrowding in Indigenous households and providing infrastructure and other essential services
- Governance and leadership – enhancing government policies and systems to improve engagement mechanisms, developing and supporting community capacity and leadership and supporting the development of leadership for women and young people
- Supporting Queensland’s children and families at risk of entering the child protection system through early intervention and better access to a range of services
- Ensuring people with complex care needs can access comprehensive, integrated and coordinated services
- Land and culture – promoting and affirming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Our challenge

The Commission delivers services to communities which are culturally unique and geographically remote. Each community is different, however, each can be characterised by the entrenched disadvantage of Indigenous community members. Over-crowded housing, high rates of Indigenous welfare dependency and multi-generational poverty has resulted in communities with high numbers of individuals and families with complex needs.

Our challenge is to work collaboratively with partner agencies, as part of a linked service system to engage, empower and enable individuals, families and the wider community to make positive and lasting change.

Strategic objectives

The objectives of the Commission, the practical means of implementing each objective and the key performance indicators by which the Commission can introspectively assess performance and be independently evaluated are:

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Objective One

Provide effective and efficient client services and influence the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour at the individual, family and community level.

Strategies

- Support Local Commissioners in their role.
- Continually improve performance through strong governance and management of resources.
- Develop and support staff.
- Process agency notices, conduct client conferences and undertake case planning, monitoring and Show Cause as required.

Performance Indicators

Local Commissioners report increased respect for their authority from community members and positive social norms make each community a more caring and safer place to live and:

- School attendance increases – notices from the Department of Education, Training and Employment decrease.
- Criminal offending decreases – notices from the Magistrates Court decrease.
- Children at risk of harm and/or actually harmed decreases – notices from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services decrease.
- Breach of tenancy decreases – notices from housing providers decrease.

Objective Two

Strengthen collaborative cross agency partnerships to support local Indigenous authority and influence the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour at the individual, family and community level.

Strategies

- Build and maintain partnerships with partner agencies and community support services based on a mutual understanding of agency mandates and the importance of cooperative, collaborative and coordinated service provision.
- Staff of the Commission, partner agencies and community support services recognise the importance of timely and lawful information sharing to enable quality case management.
- The Commission's service delivery is aligned with the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* and wider Cape York Welfare Reform objectives.

Performance Indicators

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- Children at risk of harm and/ or actually harmed decreases - notices from Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services decrease.
- Breach of tenancy decreases - notices from housing providers decrease.

Objective Three

Enhance community engagement and promote understanding of our role to support local Indigenous authority and promote the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour so that each Welfare Reform community is a more caring and safer place to live.

Strategies

- Promote understanding of our mandate to deal with matters in a way which supports local Indigenous authority, encourages positive social norms and which promotes the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable persons of the community.
- Promote understanding of the Commission as part of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial and as part of a wider service network aimed at enabling individuals and families to improve the quality of their life.

Performance Indicators

- Number and percentage of clients subject to more than one agency notice decreases.
- Number and percentage of clients attending conferences increases.
- Community respect for Local Commissioner authority increases.
- Number of engagement activities undertaken by the Commission in the community and regionally increases.