



PREAMBLE - NOEL PEARSON

"It has been six years since we commenced the Cape York Welfare Reform (CYWR) trial and, as I have said on numerous occasions, it is impossible to overstate the role of the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) in the improvements we are seeing in the welfare reform communities.

The FRC is doing important work. They have their shoulders to the wheel turning around big problems that have been with us for too long.

Bringing about change in our small and remote Indigenous towns is underpinned by the establishment of social norms. The Commissioners are at the very heart of this ambition because they are part of the community. It should always be remembered that the people that they deal with are not strangers. They are people the Commissioners will see later in the street, in the shop, at the school, and at the clinic. This is a heavy duty that the Commissioners do but we can be sure that the efforts are bearing good fruit.

In the past year, the FRC has doubled the effort on getting the kids to school. This is not easy work but it is vital. Each year that passes the closer the communities are to reaching their potential. Each cohort of students that pass through our schools becomes an integral part of the change we want to see.

And the quality of our kids' achievement is improving every year and this year has seen us reach a new level. Make no mistake, we are creating the future leaders in these towns and the future is bright. The FRC is to be thanked for being the engine room for this change.

Standing up for change is not easy. Those addicted to grog and gambling, those threatened by change and those unable to see that life could be better often direct their hostility, resentment and anger at Local Commissioners.

But, as I said last year, the FRC has succeeded where many have failed. It is now common for us to hear from community members who were hostile, or at least ambivalent, toward the FRC and the wider CYWR trial, making positive changes and acknowledging the role of the FRC in this.

This is heartening and adds to the wonderful results we are seeing in school attendance and the quality of the student cohort across our schools.

I remain immensely proud of what the Local Commissioners are doing and achieving with the unfailing support of Commissioner Glasgow and his team. They continue to show that change can occur when local leaders are properly empowered to ask those around them to step up and take responsibility for their own lives and the lives of their children."

Noel Pearson

