



FRC
FAMILY
RESPONSIBILITIES
COMMISSION

The FRC: A Model of Self-Determination

Summary of Findings and Update to 30 June 2022



What is the FRC?

The Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) is a statutory body conceived by First Nations people and driven by community members. The FRC's purpose is to support welfare reform community members to restore socially responsible standards of behaviour, local authority and wellbeing.

Our vision is to see vibrant communities that are responsible, healthy, safe and sustainable.



Local Commissioners

Aurukun Commissioners



**EDGAR
KERINDUN**



**VERA
KOOMEETA**



**DORIS
POONKAMELYA**



**DOROTHY
POOTCHEMUNKA**



**KERI
TAMWOY**



**ADA
WOOLLA**

***Not pictured:**

- ♦ **KEMUEL TAMWOY**
- ♦ **DERECK WALPO**
- ♦ **WAYNEAD WOLMBY**

* Local Commissioners not pictured were appointed after the publication of 'The FRC: A Model of Self-Determination' report in May 2022.

Coen Commissioners



**MAY
KEPPLE**



**ALISON
LIDDY**



**ELAINE
LIDDY**



**MAUREEN
LIDDY**

Doomadgee Commissioners



**DAWN
APLIN**



**ELAINE
CAIRNS**



**GUY
DOUGLAS**



**CHRISTOPHER
LOGAN**



**ELEANOR
LOGAN**



**KAYLENE
O'KEEFE**



**ISABEL
TOBY**

***Not pictured:**

- ♦ **LILA CAIRNS**
- ♦ **VIRGINIA COLLINS**
- ♦ **WENDY TAYLOR**

* Local Commissioners not pictured were appointed after the publication of 'The FRC: A Model of Self-Determination' report in May 2022.

Mossman Gorge Commissioners



**GEORGE
ROSS-KELLY**



**LORETTA
SPRATT**

***Not pictured:**

- ♦ **DAPHNE CREEK**
- ♦ **HELENIA CREEK**
- ♦ **JARROD KULKA**
- ♦ **ZARA RYAN**
- ♦ **JULIE WILLIAMS**

* Local Commissioners not pictured were appointed after the publication of 'The FRC: A Model of Self-Determination' report in May 2022.

Hope Vale Commissioners



**CHERYL
CANNON**



**ERICA
DEERAL**



**PRISCILLA
GIBSON**



**ROBERT
GIBSON**



**DOREEN
HART**



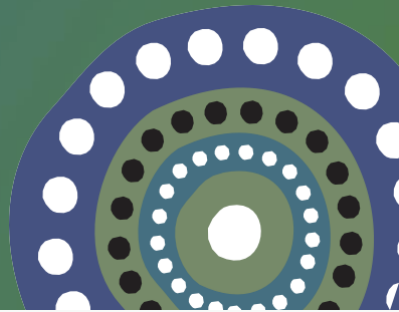
**SELINA
KERR-BOWEN**

***Not pictured:**

- ◆ **DORA GIBSON**

* Local Commissioner not pictured was appointed after the publication of 'The FRC: A Model of Self-Determination' report in May 2022.

The FRC restores local authority.



How the FRC works

The FRC works with the most disadvantaged people in some of the most disadvantaged places

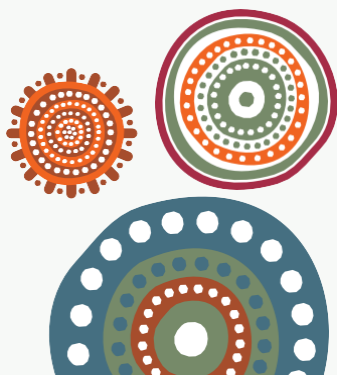


These people and places also have many strengths and great potential.

Most matters dealt with by the FRC are very complex, for example, involving poverty, addiction, violence, and poor social and emotional wellbeing.

Who designed the FRC?

The FRC was designed by First Nations people and the communities involved—not government.

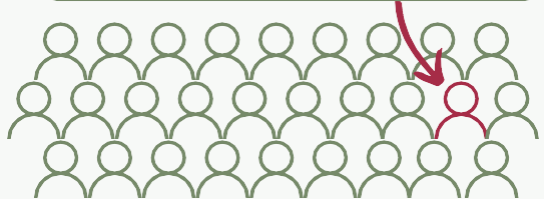


The FRC is Indigenous-led and locally-led

Elders and respected persons are FRC decision-makers for their own people and community.

Local Commissioners are supported by the FRC Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

Among the 28 FRC decision-makers, all but one are Indigenous



■ Indigenous decision maker ■ Non-Indigenous decision maker

80% of FRC conferences were conducted by Local Commissioners sitting alone in 2021 - 22



Local Commissioner Development Week, June 2021

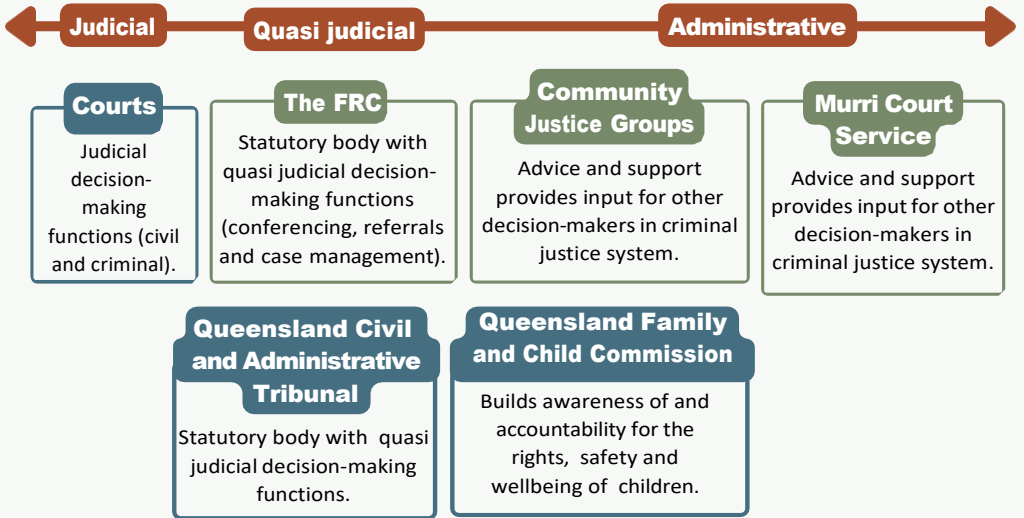
Back row from left to right: Edgar Kerindun, Robert Gibson, Kaylene O'Keefe, Selina Kerr-Bowen, Eleanor Logan, Alison Liddy, Elaine Liddy, Dawn Aplin, Karen Shuan, Maureen Liddy, George Ross-Kelly, Christopher Logan

Front row from left to right: Priscilla Gibson, Doris Poonkamelya, Vera Koomeeta, Ada Woolla, Dorothy Pootchemunka, Cheryl Cannon, Erica Deeral, May Kepple, Loretta Spratt

The FRC empowers Indigenous people with real decision-making powers

Indigenous decision-makers can make legally binding decisions

Indigenous advisers do not make legally binding decisions



The FRC provides Queensland's best example of shared decision-making.



FRC communities have opted-in to a higher standard

The FRC provides community-based intervention, preferably before other interventions which may be taken by the State through the Child Protection, Education, Housing or Criminal Justice Systems.



Community-based intervention



The FRC facilitates “early intervention”

Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 (Qld) (s. 5)



State interventions which are potentially more serious



Police



Courts



Corrections



Education



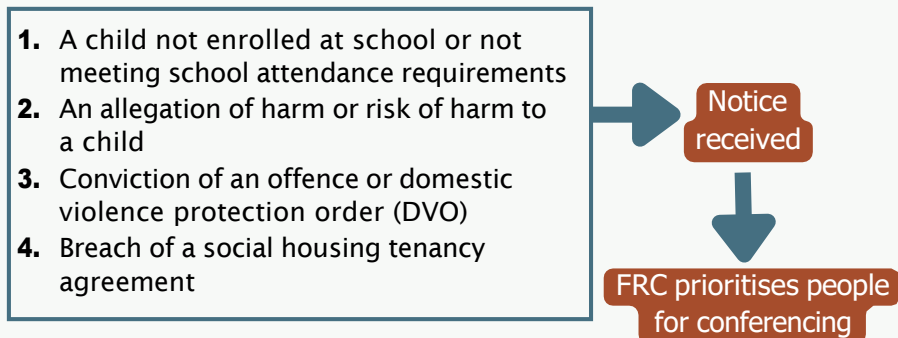
Housing



Child Protection

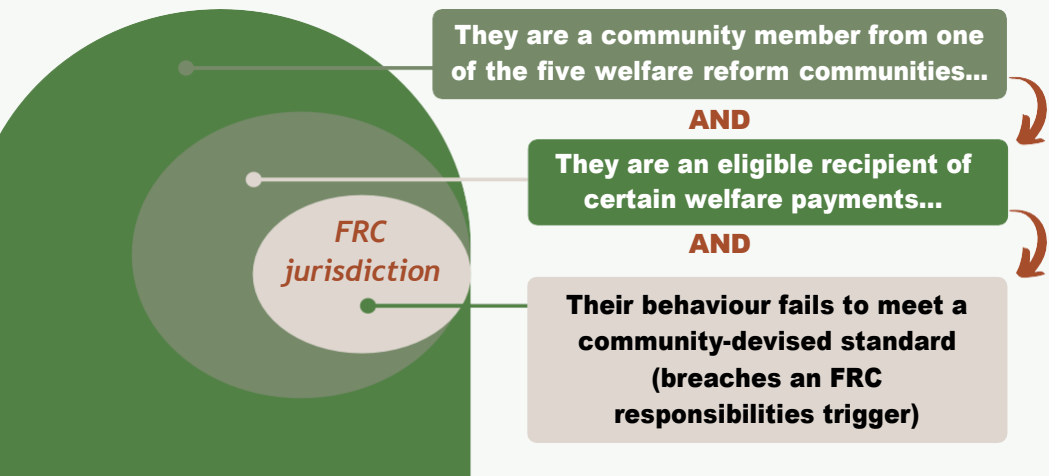
Four community-devised triggers for FRC intervention

The FRC must be notified when individuals are not meeting their basic responsibilities.



The FRC does not have jurisdiction to intervene for all people in FRC communities

A person is in the FRC's jurisdiction if:



The FRC puts clients at the centre of culturally relevant decision-making

Panels of Local Commissioners make decisions to support individuals and families to change.



The FRC uses a range of tools to support change

- Conferencing
- Agreement making
- Referrals
- Income management
- Culture and language
- Local knowledge and relationships
- Information sharing
- Case management and monitoring
- Legally binding decisions (case plans, referrals and/or income management)
- Hearings

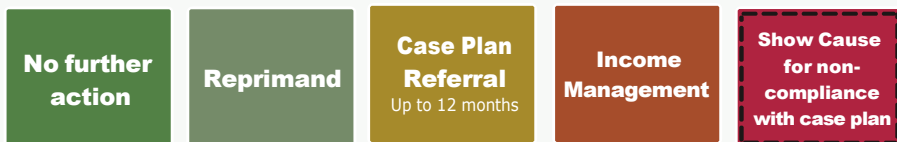
These mechanisms are used to hold clients and support services to account

Aboriginal tradition and Island custom must be taken into account.

FRC clients have varying levels of motivation



FRC decisions are tailored according to client's circumstances



Encourages people to access support services to build capability

Not all FRC clients are income managed. In 2021-22, only 17% of finalised conferenced clients were CIM'd.

Income management is used to protect income support payments from being withdrawn as cash and spent on alcohol, gambling and drugs.



FRC income management is unique

FRC income management is NOT

- ✗ A blanket approach applied to all
- ✗ One size fits all
- ✗ Externally imposed by government
- ✗ Never ending
- ✗ Difficult to remove

✗ A silver bullet

FRC income management IS

- ✓ **Individually tailored to client circumstances and risk**
- ✓ **Flexible**
 - can be Voluntary (VIM) or Conditional (CIM by agreement or without agreement)
 - 60%, 75% or 90% of a person's payments can be protected
- ✓ **CIM used as a matter of last resort**, always with Local Commissioners as decision makers
- ✓ **Always time limited** - 3-12 months
- ✓ **Easily removed where appropriate**
 - applications to remove income management were dealt with on average within 3 days (VIM) and 12 days (CIM).

- ✓ Basic protection and stabilisation of income for households
- ✓ Basic protection for the rights of children and other vulnerable people
- ✓ A lever to encourage people to access support services
- ✓ Tool for personal and household income management

Fundamental purposes of income management

Under FRC income management a card is used to protect income

From March 2021, the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) replaced the BasicsCard as the operational mechanism for FRC income management.

The superior functionality of the new card has meant many more people have taken up Voluntary Income Management (VIM).

As at 30 June 2022:

- only 31% of FRC clients on income management were on CIM
- 69% were on VIM.



Nearly half of those taking up VIM, have previously been on CIM, showing that personal responsibility is building.

A further new card will replace the CDC from 6 March 2023.

While the FRC exercises significant power, there are extensive checks and balances

The FRC Act ensures:

- natural justice
- avenues for review and appeal
- oversight by Board and Parliamentary Committees.

There has never been any suggestion the FRC has acted outside of its powers. Nor has there ever been an appeal of an FRC decision.

Voluntary Income Management

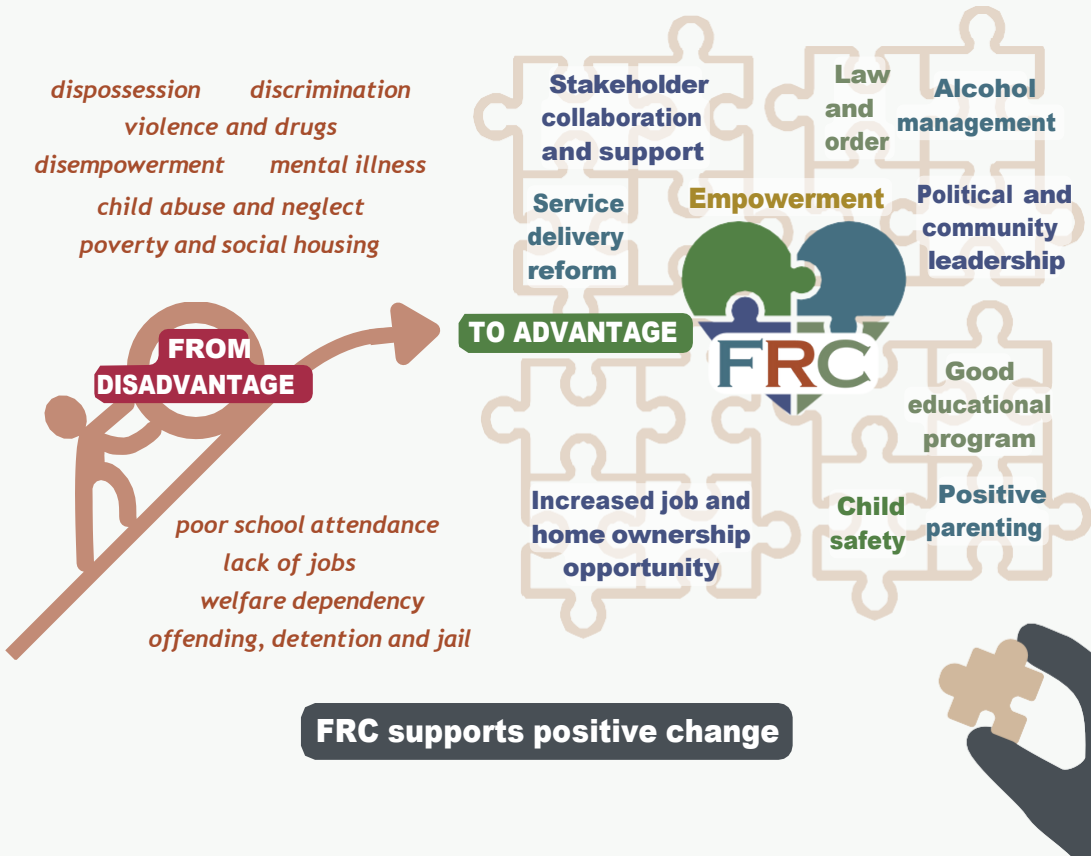
The most common reasons for seeking a VIM is so that life's most basic needs can be met—i.e., to buy food and to pay bills.



Many parents use VIM so they can support their children.

Women have found VIM helpful in protecting their income in relationships involving domestic violence and coercive control.

The FRC is one central aspect of a holistic, broader reform approach needed for transformational change



FRC THEORY OF CHANGE



ASSUMPTIONS

- 1 FRC partnership provides certainty, aligned reform leadership and forward momentum
- 2 Service delivery ecosystem is reformed including to ensure FRC client needs supported and effective engagement
- 3 Incentives shift, including through increased opportunity through home ownership and jobs
- 4 FRC efforts to build personal responsibility and change social norms are reinforced by other initiatives
- 5 Agency compliance to fulfil obligations under legislation

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Indigenous empowerment / self-determination

Rights of children and vulnerable people are paramount

Early community-based intervention

Culturally relevant

ROLES

Enable local and cultural leaders to act as original decision-makers



Support individuals and families to change through conferencing, case plans, referrals and income management

Protect children and the vulnerable, including through compulsion and income management where necessary



Hold community members and service providers to account

- ✓ Right panel for the client (e.g., selection of Local Commissioners including for cultural and other reasons)
- ✓ Right information considered by panel (e.g., through collaboration, involvement of others)
- ✓ Right decision made given the individual's circumstances (agreements and orders)
- ✓ Service provider collaboration and partnership, coordination and accountability

STRATEGIES

OUTPUTS

HIGH LEVEL AND HIGH QUALITY



FRC conferencing & decision-making



Timely review of decisions



Service provider information and partnerships, MOUs



Ongoing Case Management & Monitoring of Case Plans

- Agreements
- Orders
- Case Plans and Referrals to relevant support services
- IM decisions - VIM and CIM – made as appropriate in the circumstances

- Reporting back from services in accordance with case plan

Periods of respite increased

- Families/households income stabilised to ensure basic household functioning (food, bills and rent)

Local authority restored

OUTCOMES

Increased personal responsibility

- Increased motivation to change – voluntary engagement, attendance, agreements
- Strength of mandated interventions decrease as levels of personal responsibility rise
- Increased engagement with support services to build capability

IMPACTS

Capabilities

capabilities build so people can take up opportunities, including for learning and work

Leadership

builds a pervasive and strong local and cultural reform leadership

Behaviour

people have taken up responsibility for their own communities, and the individuals and families of the community

GOAL

Highly self-reliant, culturally strong, happy, healthy and safe communities

VISION

Self-determination, socially responsible behaviour and parity of outcomes are the norm.

What FRC clients say

At first, I wasn't sure, but after talking with the FRC I felt good. I understand they want the best for me and my family.

The Local Commissioners asked my partner if I had hit her hard in the stomach while she was nursing the baby... I was shamed when she said yes, and then she said I did it other times as well... They looked me in the eye and said I didn't have the right to hit her. Then they told my partner she did not deserve to have it happen to her, no matter what I said.

Since that day I have tried to make myself better. I attended the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Service (ATODs) program and still go when I need to. I went to the Wellbeing Centre to do some anger control programs and to understand why I get frustrated and angry. We have gone back to the Local Commissioners a few more times and although they have to address the issues, they always praise me and tell me I am a good father for giving up the drinking.

I went to the Commission and my partner came too. The Local Commissioners used strong words and the message was clear we must send our kids to school. I know now that I have to tell the school if my kids are not going. We agreed to go to the Wellbeing Centre and from talking to them everything is settling down. They told us that kids see everything and when they see violence this is no good.

FRC performance

Four independent evaluative exercises assess performance:

1. KPMG Implementation Review of the FRC (2010)
2. *Cape York Welfare Reform Evaluation* (2012)
3. Health Outcomes International (HOI) *Evaluation of Cape York Wellbeing Centres* (2014)
4. Queensland University of Technology (QUT) *Strategic Review of Cape York Income Management* (2018).

...a level of progress that has rarely been evident in the reform programs previously attempted in Queensland's remote Indigenous communities...

- Finding from the *Cape York Welfare Reform Evaluation 2012*

On the whole, the review finds that the CYIM [Cape York Income Management] model ... may offer useful lessons when considering any future rollout of the model, or similar models, in Cape York and elsewhere.

- Finding from the *QUT Strategic Review of Cape York Income Management 2018*



FRC self-determination and local authority works



FRC income management works



FRC conferencing works



FRC referral works

Local authority works

It is **universally agreed the FRC helps restore local authority** of Elders and respected persons.

Most community members and other stakeholders believe that the FRC has strengthened leadership, particularly through the Local Commissioners' listening, guiding and supporting role ...

- Finding from the *Cape York Welfare Reform Evaluation 2012*

FRC conferencing works

The FRC conferencing process resonates with traditional Aboriginal dispute resolution practices and is consistent with restorative justice principles...

- Finding from the *Cape York Welfare Reform Evaluation 2012*



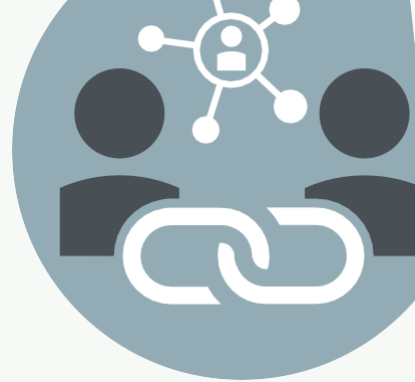
School attendance increased

for children of those conferenced by the FRC, as shown in Education Queensland's data.

- Finding from the *Analysis of students at the Aurukun campus of CYAAA 2009 – 2010*

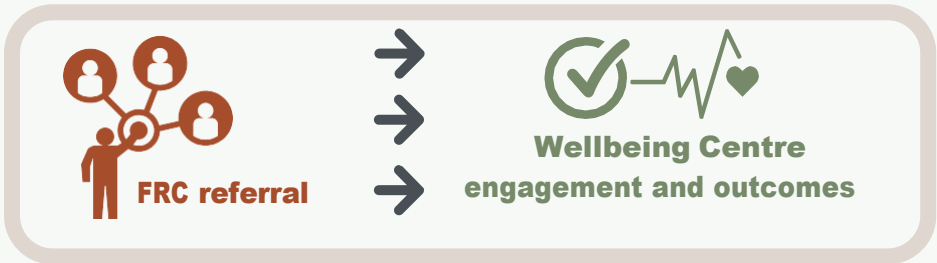


FRC referral works



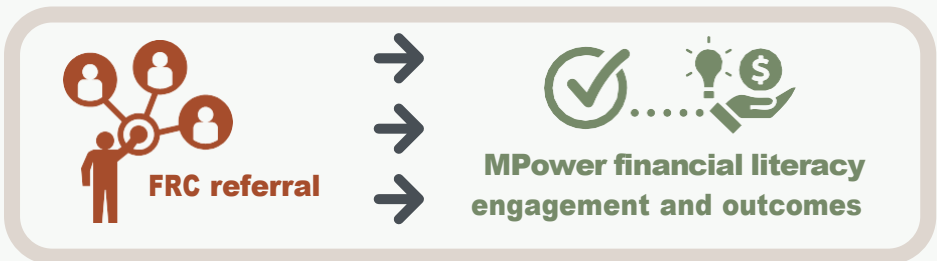
1. Wellbeing Centres provide social and emotional wellbeing services in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

The Wellbeing Centre Evaluation showed statistically significant positive changes held true for FRC referrals, demonstrating the ‘mandatory’ FRC referral pathway is effective in leading to positive change.



2. MPower is a money management, financial literacy, and banking support available in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. MPower data shows:

- FRC clients are more likely to engage in budgeting and financial coaching activities than other MPower members.
- Strong MPower participation from FRC referred clients.
- A very high retention rate of FRC clients following the completion of their case plan.



FRC income management works

Income management effectively protects \$

More than \$31.1M has been protected under CIM
across the five communities since the FRC's establishment.



More than \$1.85M across 30,307 transactions was spent on Cashless Debit Cards.



More than \$1.25M of those transactions were at grocery stores and supermarkets.

from March 2021 to April 2022 under the FRC model

The FRC was introduced as part of Cape York Welfare Reform, arguably Australia's most successful holistic approach to tackle entrenched disadvantage.



Income management provides basic protection for children and other vulnerable people

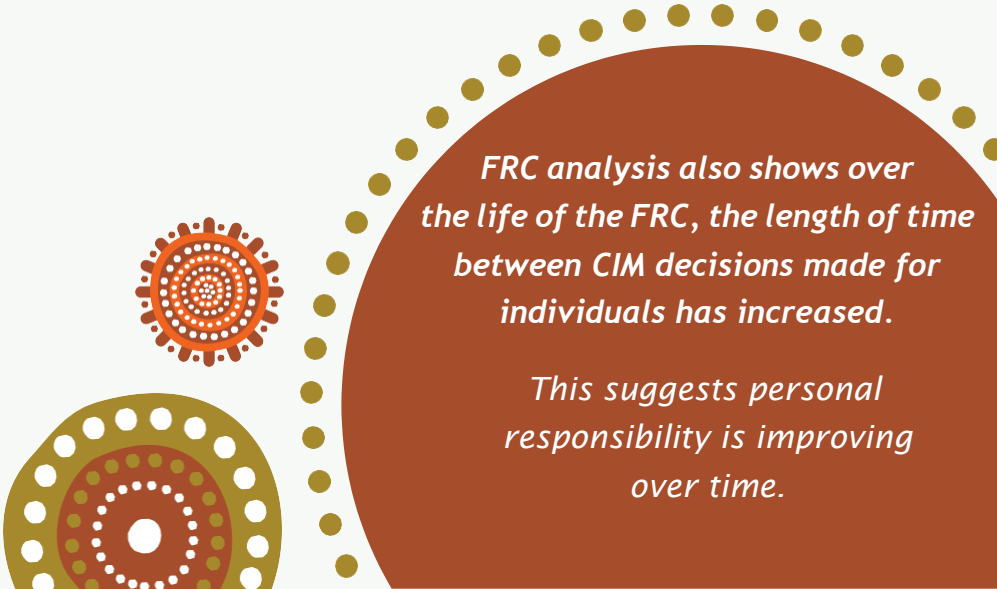
As at 30 June 2022, the 108 FRC clients on income management were responsible for 114 children, of whom 80 were of school age.

As at 30 June 2022, it can be calculated over the life of the FRC **there have been around 1596 times when children have received some basic protection from FRC income management.**

Income management builds personal responsibility over time

Overall, the results of these individual longitudinal analyses indicate that whilst [the FRC's model of income management] does not necessarily eliminate repeat breach notifications, its use does appear to increase the time between breaches.

- Finding from the QUT Strategic Review of Cape York Income Management 2018



FRC analysis also shows over the life of the FRC, the length of time between CIM decisions made for individuals has increased.

This suggests personal responsibility is improving over time.

FRC longitudinal data show substantial change

Comparing the first six years of the FRC's operation, to the second six years of operation, FRC communities also show:



69% decrease
in child safety investigation notices



32% decrease
in residential tenancy breach notices

Comparing the first three years since the introduction of the District and Supreme Court notices to the following three years of operations, in FRC communities:



23% decrease
in notices for convictions in District and Supreme Court

The FRC provides good value for money

71% of expenditure directly supports frontline service delivery in the five FRC communities.

The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) is similar to the FRC in that both have quasi-judicial functions. It uses cost per matter as an efficiency measure.

Over the five-year period from 2016-17 to 2020-21:

- the average FRC cost per notice was \$426*
- the average QCATs cost per matter was \$807.

* We have applied what appears to be the QCAT formula of total revenue divided by number of matters.

The cost must be compared to the high cost of ongoing failure to Close the Gap

For example:

- children must complete secondary school to get on the “success ladder” and close the gap on employment—where they do not, they are likely to end up accruing lifetime costs associated with unemployment
- in 2013 the Carmody Inquiry reported the cost to the Queensland Government of every child in out of home care was approximately \$250,000 p.a.
- every prisoner costs \$111,000 in direct costs each year, with another \$48,000 per year in indirect costs. These small communities may have upwards of 100 residents in prison at any one time.

In a year, if the FRC prevents only 10 children from going into out of home care, or prevents 22 people from returning to prison across the five FRC communities, it will more than recoup the Queensland Government’s annual investment.

If the FRC impacts even a small proportion of its clients each year, it is worthwhile and value for money.



Future directions

1

The FRC should expand to new locations, in accordance with self-determination, where communities and leaders are wanting to take responsibility for community-based, locally-led intervention.

2

Adding Opportunity to Responsibility

The FRC has delivered a *responsibilities* agenda but *opportunity* is also needed for *empowerment*. For example, increased job and home ownership opportunities are required for transformative change.



There is an opportunity now to work with Governments to embed opportunity into the FRC model, including to increase access to real job opportunities.



3

Use the FRC to drive improvements in the service system

For example, through FRC input into the decision-making of Courts, Queensland Corrective Service and Education Queensland, to ensure these different parts of the system are working together to incentivise and support positive behavioural change and benefit children (e.g., FRC ‘certification’ as to whether a person is engaging with the FRC).

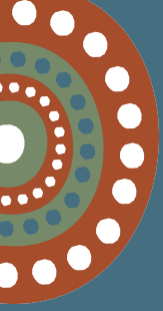


4

Enabling the FRC to administer VIM more broadly

Expand the availability of Voluntary Income Management (VIM) to enable more people to take personal responsibility and protect income, which is especially important for women, parents and children.





FRC

FAMILY
RESPONSIBILITIES
COMMISSION

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