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**QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO  
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE  
REPORT NO. 56 ON THE  
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL 2014**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

On 5 August 2014, the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2014 (the Bill) was introduced to Parliament.

The Bill was subsequently referred to the Health and Community Services Parliamentary Committee (the committee) with a report back date of 1 October 2014.

On 1 October 2014, the committee tabled its report no. 56 in relation to the Bill.

The Queensland Government response to recommendations made and clarification on points raised by the committee are provided below.

## **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1**

The committee recommended that the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2014 be passed.

#### **Government Response**

The Government thanks the committee for this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 2**

The committee recommends that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs clarify, during the second reading debate, whether the policy intent is that only those communities which request to be included in welfare reform will be prescribed as a welfare reform community area.

#### **Government Response**

The Government thanks the committee for this recommendation.

The Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier will clarify during the second reading debate that Government actions will remain consistent with the objectives of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (the Act) to support the restoration of socially responsible standards of behaviour and local authority in welfare reform community areas, and to help people in welfare reform community areas resume primary responsibility for the wellbeing of their community and the

individuals and families of the community only where this is assessed as necessary. Social dysfunction would need to be of critical magnitude for the Government to act.

### **Recommendation 3**

The committee recommends that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs ensure that information about the indicators and assessment methods to be used when considering whether to prescribe a community as a welfare reform community area is made available to community leaders and the public.

The committee recommends that this information include examples of the circumstances where a community may be considered for inclusion, for example, by reference to school attendance levels.

### **Government Response**

The Government does not accept that this recommendation is necessary. Information about indicators and assessment methods is already made available to all discrete Indigenous communities on an ongoing basis.

Additional specific information regarding indicators crucial to an assessment for possible inclusion of a particular community as a welfare reform community area would be included as may be necessary.

### **Recommendation 4**

The committee recommends that the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2014 be amended to require that consultation, aimed at obtaining informed consent from community leaders, be undertaken with any proposed welfare reform community area prior to a decision being taken to prescribe the community as a welfare reform community area.

### **Government Response**

The Government thanks the committee for its recommendation but does not accept the recommendation because it could conflict with the objectives of the Act. It is also not necessary.

Community consultation is central to any issues facing Indigenous communities, and the Government is committed to working with local communities to improve outcomes. While informed consent for the introduction of welfare reform is not a requirement of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1973* (Cth) or the Act, community consent would always be actively pursued.

The provisions of the Act allow the Government to intervene by declaring a welfare reform community area with the objectives of:

- supporting the restoration of socially responsible standards of behaviour;
- supporting the restoration of local authority;
- helping people to resume primary responsibility for the wellbeing of their community; and
- helping people to resume primary responsibility for the wellbeing of individuals and families of the community.

### **Recommendation 5**

The committee recommends that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs require the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs to:

- develop and publish guidelines for consultation with proposed new welfare reform community areas
- publish the outcomes of consultation with proposed new welfare reform community areas.

### **Government Response**

The Government thanks the committee for its recommendation.

The first part of the recommendation is not accepted. The department follows consultation protocols for each community, but a cover-all guideline is not feasible.

The second part of the recommendation that the outcomes of consultation with proposed new welfare reform community areas be published will be considered in terms of the impact of publication on community members.

### **Recommendation 6**

The committee recommends that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs ensure that information about the indicators and assessment methods to be used when considering whether a welfare reform community area is ready to leave welfare reform is made available to community leaders and the public.

### **Government Response**

The Government does not accept that this recommendation is necessary. Information about indicators and assessment methods is already made available to all discrete Indigenous communities on an ongoing basis.

### **Recommendation 7**

The committee recommends that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs provide the Legislative Assembly, during the second reading debate, with details about the:

- arrangements that will be put in place to ensure a smooth transition for communities out of welfare reform
- measures that will be put in place to ensure that a former welfare reform community area continues to improve.

### **Government Response**

The Government thanks the committee for this recommendation.

The Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier will clarify during the second reading debate that, in recognition of the different economic and social conditions and opportunities across communities, there is no intention to prescribe a mandatory process for transition out of welfare reform or for

subsequent continuing improvement. The Minister will, however, indicate the intended approach to transition during the second reading debate.

### **Recommendation 8**

The committee recommends that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs continue to work with local communities and stakeholders to monitor the effectiveness of the Family Responsibilities Commission to ensure that the current model of welfare reform meets the needs of those communities.

### **Government Response**

The Government thanks the committee for this recommendation but does not accept that it is necessary. Changes proposed in the Bill to reduce the number of formal board meetings legislated in the Act will enable a focus on community-specific meetings to increase local decision-making and accountability. These meetings will be in addition to monitoring and engagement which occurs on an ongoing basis.

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Paper No.: SHLT 6243.

Date: 14-10-14

Member: ELMS



Tabled

Tabled, by leave

Incorporated,  
by leave

Remainder incorporated,  
by leave

Clerk at the Table: