



# QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT **COMMITTEES**

## **Report on visit to Hope Vale and Cooktown with the Family Responsibilities Commission**

Education, Arts and Communities Committee



**Report No. 3**

**58th Parliament, May 2025**

## **Education, Arts and Communities Committee**

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All references and webpages are current at the time of publishing.

## **Acknowledgements**

The committee acknowledges the assistance provided by the Family Responsibilities Commissioner, Tammy Williams, the Deputy Commissioners of Hope Vale, and staff of the Family Responsibilities Commission. The committee also thanks staff of the Cooktown State School and the Hope Vale Campus of the Cape York Australian Aboriginal Academy for welcoming the committee to their schools.

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## **Chair's Foreword**

The Education, Arts and Communities Committee is tasked with providing oversight to the Family Responsibilities Commission. For new parliamentary members, and new committee members, it was considered beneficial for the EACC to respond affirmatively to an invitation from the FRC Commissioner to see firsthand the work of the Commission in five communities across FNQ.

Our committee is grateful for the willingness of the communities of Hope Vale and Cook Town to welcome us, and to provide valuable information to inform the understanding of process, procedures and outcomes.

This investment lays the foundation for the work of the committee throughout the term of this parliament and helps strengthen bipartisan relationships and between the FRC and the Queensland Parliament.



Nigel Hutton MP

**Chair**

## **Executive Summary**

This report presents a summary of the Education, Arts and Communities Committee's visit to Hope Vale and Cooktown with the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC), accompanied by the Family Responsibilities Commissioner, Tammy Williams. The purpose of the visit was for the committee to meet with Local Commissioners in Hope Vale, and to learn and observe the work of the FRC in community.

The committee met Hope Vale Local Commissioners, observed a number of Client Conferences and spoke to key stakeholders within the community.

The committee visited services within Hope Vale and state schools in Hope Vale and Cooktown.

The committee made one recommendation, that the Legislative Assembly note this report.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1 ..... 5**

The committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly notes this report.

## **1. Overview of the Family Responsibilities Commission and the committee's oversight role**

The committee resolved in January 2025 to visit Hope Vale and Cooktown, at the invitation of the Family Responsibilities Commissioner, Tammy Williams. The committee agreed that the learnings to be garnered from the visit would inform the committee's understanding of the unique role of the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) and would provide a foundation for the committee's oversight of the FRC.

### **1.1. About the Family Responsibilities Commission**

The FRC was established in 2008 as a partnership between the Australian and Queensland Governments and the Cape York Institute.<sup>1</sup> Its primary objective, as set out in the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (FRC Act), is to hold conferences with community members to encourage individuals and their families to engage in socially responsible standards of behaviour, whilst promoting the interests, rights and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable persons living in the community.<sup>2</sup>

Operating in the five 'welfare reform communities' of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, the FRC's conference activities are triggered by its receipt of certain agency notifications, which provide advice that a person is not meeting pre-determined obligations. This includes notifications for:

- a failure to enrol or send a child to school
- convictions in the Magistrates, District and Supreme Courts
- child safety and welfare issues
- breaches of housing tenancy agreements, and
- domestic and family violence incidents (except in Doomadgee, as the community did not support the implementation of this trigger).

Under the FRC Act, the FRC comprises the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners, and Local Commissioners. These roles are appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister, for the term stated in the commissioner's instrument of appointment.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.2. Committee oversight responsibility**

The committee has been assigned oversight responsibility for the FRC by Schedule 6 of the Standing Orders, and has responsibilities pursuant to Standing Order 194A to:

- monitor and review the FRC's performance of its functions
- report to the Legislative Assembly on any matter concerning the FRC, its functions or the performance of its functions the committee considers should be drawn to the Legislative Assembly's attention
- examine the FRC's annual report and, if appropriate, to comment on any aspect of the report

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<sup>1</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC), Annual Report 2018-19, p 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Family Responsibilities Act 2008* (FRC Act), s 4.

<sup>3</sup> FRC Act, ss 12-15.

- report to the Legislative Assembly any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the FRC the committee considers desirable for the more effective operation of the FRC or its Act.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.3. Hope Vale

Hope Vale is an Indigenous community situated approximately 370 km north of Cairns and 50 km north of Cooktown. Road access from Cairns to Cooktown is via the Peninsula Development Road.

Hope Vale is geographically bounded to the north and south by the Cook Shire and has a population of approximately 1,500 residents. The community encompasses 110,000 hectares and comes under the trusteeship of the Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council.

The Thubi Warra People are recognised as the Traditional Owners of Hope Vale and Guugu Yimidhirr is the main language spoken. The diverse community of Hope Vale is comprised of traditional owners and a mix of people who were relocated from surrounding areas and have now lived there for generations.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.4. Cooktown

Cooktown is a coastal town and locality in the Shire of Cook, situated at the mouth of the Endeavour River. The first documented contact between the Guugu Yimidhirr people and Europeans occurred in 1770 when they encountered Captain Cook and his crew who anchored in the river to repair their ship. The river was subsequently named by Cook after his ship the *Endeavour*.<sup>6</sup>

The Cooktown locality had a population of 2,746 people at the 2021 Census.<sup>7</sup>

The committee visited the site of Cook's landing with Local Commissioner Erica Deeral.

## 2. Visit to Hope Vale and Cooktown

Commissioner Tammy Williams extended an invitation to the committee to join her on a visit to Hope Vale and Cooktown, as part of the committee's oversight responsibilities of the FRC, as set out in Schedule 6 of the Standing Orders.

The Commissioner invited the committee to meet with Local Commissioners in Hope Vale and observe key FRC activities including FRC Client Conferences and Client Engagement (CE) sessions. The Commissioner suggested the committee join a Justice Reinvestment roundtable discussion with the FRC and staff of the Cape York Institute.

While in Hope Vale members of the committee visited the Hope Vale Opportunity Hub (O-Hub), a referral centre to support clients with tools to take responsibility for their personal

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<sup>4</sup> Standing Orders, SO 194A, sch 6.

<sup>5</sup> Queensland Government, *Hope Vale*, [www.qld.gov.au/firstnations/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/community-histories/community-histories-e-i/community-histories-hope-vale](http://www.qld.gov.au/firstnations/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/community-histories/community-histories-e-i/community-histories-hope-vale).

<sup>6</sup> Cook Shire Council, *Cooktown*, [www.cooktownandcapeyork.com/go/cooktown](http://www.cooktownandcapeyork.com/go/cooktown).

<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Cooktown*, [www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/UCL315024](http://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/UCL315024).



finances, health and family expenses. The committee also visited the Hope Vale Wellbeing Centre to learn of its support programs.

The committee visited two state schools in Hope Vale and Cooktown to meet with students and teachers: Cooktown State School (P – 12) and the Hope Vale Campus of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy (P – 6).

A list of meetings and site visits is included in Appendix A of this Report.

## **2.1. Meetings**

### ***FRC Hope Vale Local Commissioners and staff***

The committee met with Commissioner Williams, Local Commissioners Erica Deeral, Priscilla Gibson, and Selina Kerr-Bowen at the Hope Vale Business Precinct. The committee also met with FRC staff, including Hope Vale Local Registry Coordinator Kate Gooding.

Topics of discussion included:

- the role of Local Commissioners
- Client Conferences
- Client Engagement processes, to better empower members of the community in decision-making
- Voluntary Income Management, trends and outcomes
- recent changes to the FRC Act on 22 August 2024 in relation to the issuing of court notices about young offenders.

The group was joined by a local Queensland Police Service liaison officer. Discussion topics included:

- the challenges of staff retention and housing
- employment and training opportunities for community members, especially local tradespersons on the construction of state housing in the local area for police and teachers
- trends in domestic and family violence and the FRC response, including intervention to refer clients to appropriate services
- school attendance of local children.

Members of the committee were fortunate, with the permission of FRC Local Commissioners and members of the community participating, to observe a small number of FRC Client Conferences.

### ***FRC and Cape York Institute***

The committee joined a Justice Reinvestment roundtable discussion with staff from the FRC and representatives from the Cape York Institute.

Topics discussed included:

- community projects
- service delivery challenges
- skilling workers and employee screening
- education outcomes for young people
- over-representation of community members in the criminal justice system and ways to mitigate the imbalance
- strategies to 'Close the Gap' for members of the Hope Vale community
- rehabilitation programs for young people and programs to support people newly released from custodial sentences.

## **2.2. Site visits**

### ***Hope Vale O-Hub***

The committee visited the Hope Vale Opportunity Hub, or O-Hub, one of four O-Hubs operated by Cape York Partnerships in North Queensland communities. The committee met with a number of staff and inspected the Hub's facilities.

During the site visit the committee was informed about:

- O-Hub's services and supports for members of the community
- O-Hub's funding and service delivery
- building financial capabilities and life skills
- the provision of opportunity products including the Pama Platform, a web-based app providing community updates and job-seeking support
- measuring the success of the O-Hub's services.

### ***Hope Vale Wellbeing Centre***

The committee met with staff at the centre and discussed:

- the range of services available to members of the community
- referrals from Queensland Health services
- mental health programs
- care and support for vulnerable people including Elders.

### ***Cooktown State School***

The committee met with the Acting Principal and teachers at the Cooktown State School. The committee toured parts of the school and met with some primary students.

Topics of discussion included:

- the local catchment and students travelling from Hope Vale to Cooktown to attend the school
- student support services
- student attendance
- curriculum.

### ***Hope Vale Campus, Cape York Australian Aboriginal Academy***

The committee toured the school facilities and joined a number of classes to meet with teachers and students. After the tour of the school, the committee met with the Principal and staff. Topics of discussion included:

- curriculum
- student attendance
- the ratio of Indigenous teachers and students
- student case managers and support services.

### **2.3. Additional information following the visit to Hope Vale**

Commissioner Williams provided additional advice upon request, following the committee's visit to Hope Vale in regard to:

- the barriers preventing qualified tradespersons within the communities under the FRC's remit from being employed by QBuild to work on the construction of government employee housing
- the FRC's role in supporting community members and their families following their release from correctional custody. This included discussion of limitations in the FRC's scope that prevent it from adequately supporting the reintegration process.

This additional advice is provided at Appendix B, and available on the committee webpage.



#### **Recommendation 1**

The committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly notes this report.

## Appendix A – Itinerary for Hope Vale and Cooktown

The following detailed itinerary of the visit to Hope Vale and Cooktown was provided to the committee by the Family Responsibilities Commission, 21 February 2025.

### Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February

TIME	ACTIVITY	PERSONNEL
8:30am	Arrive for check in – Hinterland Aviation (Tom McDonald Drive, Aeroglen, Cairns)	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities).
9:30am	Depart Cairns – Hinterland Aviation on Flight #OI153	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities).
10:15am	Arrive Cooktown Airport on Hinterland Aviation on Flight #OI53 and collect bags and hire cars.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities) to be met by FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams & Local Commissioners at Cooktown Airport.
10.30am	Drive to Hope Vale	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities) to drive to Hope Vale with FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams & Local Commissioners.
11:15am	FRC Office, Hope Vale Business Precinct, Muni Street, for security briefing by police.	Officer-in-Charge, QPS Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities) Commissioner Tammy Williams, FRC staff including – HV Local Registry Coordinator Kate Gooding and Local Commissioners.
11:35am	Hope Vale Shire Council, Hope Vale Business Precinct, Muni Street.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities) will be introduced to Council representatives by Local Commissioners and/or FRC Local Registry Coordinator Kate Gooding.
12:05 pm to 1.00pm	Lunch discussion with FRC at FRC Office, Hope Vale Business Precinct, Muni Street.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams; HV Local Commissioners and FRC staff
1.05pm to 2.25pm	Justice Reinvestment roundtable discussion with Cape York Institute and FRC, Hope Vale Business Precinct, Muni Street.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); Cape York Institute Kirsty Davis; FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams, HV Local Commissioners, and FRC staff

	Discussion will focus on the community co-design process to identify local strategies to address the over-representation of HV community members in the criminal justice system.	including Sandi Rye and Cadie Fitzgerald.
2.30pm to 3.30pm	<p>Visit to the Hope Vale Opportunity Hub (O-Hub), Business Hub Precinct, Muni Street.</p> <p>The O-Hub is one of the FRC's largest referral pathways to support clients with tools to take responsibility for their own finances, health and children's costs.</p>	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities) will be introduced to the O-Hub personnel Stacey Ketchell and Jo Bowen.
4:00pm to 4:30pm	Driving tour of Hope Vale community (subject to the observance of any Sorry Business or other cultural protocols that may apply at the time).	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities) with FRC Local Registry Coordinator and Local Commissioners
4:30pm to 5.10pm	Drive to Cooktown	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams and FRC staff.
5.15pm	Check in at the Sovereign Resort, 128 Charlotte Street, Cooktown.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams and FRC staff.
6:30pm	Free time. However, a table is reserved for dinner should Committee members wish to eat at the Sovereign Resort, Cooktown.	Dinner with FRC Commissioner and staff

### Wednesday 26th February

TIME	ACTIVITY	PERSONNEL
7:45am	Check out of the Sovereign Resort Hotel, 128 Charlotte Street, Cooktown.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities).

8:00am to 9:00am	Visit to Cooktown State School, 10 Charles Street, Cooktown.	<p>Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities).</p> <p>Principal, Leanne Rayner and other members of the leadership team.</p> <p>[Note: The FRC will escort the Committee to the school and introduce. However, the meeting will be an opportunity for the Committee to meet in private with school to discuss education matters].</p>
9:05am to 9:45am	Travel to Hope Vale	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities)
9.45am to 10.15am	Pre-Conference and Client Engagement (CE) briefing by FRC at FRC office, Hope Vale Business Precinct, Muni Street.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams, Local Commissioners and FRC Coordination Manager, Sandi Rye.
10:15am to 12:00pm	<p>Observe in small groups FRC Conference and/or Client Engagement (CE) subject to client consent.</p> <p>Or in the alternative an opportunity to meet with service providers who are in attendance to support de-identified clients at conference and discuss with the FRC systemic issues impacting on vulnerable deidentified clients.</p>	<p>Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams; Local Commissioners, FRC Local Registry Coordinator Kate Gooding.</p> <p>Opportunity to meet with staff from service providers in attendance to support clients at Conference. FRC Coordinator Manager, Sandi Rye can assist with discussions outside of the Conference room.</p>
12:00pm to 1:00pm	Visit to the Hope Vale Campus, Cape York Australian Aboriginal Academy (CYAAA), 13 Poland Street.	<p>Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities).</p> <p>Principal, Sandra Ambler, Head of Campus, Mark Rickard and other members of the leadership team.</p> <p>[Note: The FRC will escort the Committee to the school and introduce. However, the meeting will be an opportunity for the Committee to meet in private with school to discuss education matters].</p>
1.00pm to 1.25pm	Wrap up over lunch (while Local Commissioners return to Conference).	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); FRC Commissioner Tammy Williams.

1:05pm to 1:40pm	Drive to Cooktown Airport.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); FRC staff (TBC) subject to requirement to assist with Conference and/or Client Engagement.
1.45pm	Check in Hinterland Aviation, for flight #OI156 and debrief by FRC Commissioner.	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities); FRC Commissioner (TBC) subject to requirement to assist with Conference and/or Client Engagement.
2:45pm	Depart Cooktown – Hinterland Aviation on flight #OI156	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities).
3:30pm	Arrive Cairns – Hinterland Aviation (Tom McDonald Drive, Aeroglen)	Parliamentary Committee (Education, Arts and Communities).

## **Appendix B - Additional advice provided after committee visit to Hope Vale and Cooktown**



28 March 2025

Mr Nigel Hutton MP  
Chair, Education, Arts and Communities Committee  
Queensland Parliament

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Dear Chair

## RE: Questions on Notice

The Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) appreciates the opportunity to appear before the Education, Arts and Communities Committee at a public hearing on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025. To support the Committee's preparation for the hearing, the FRC submits its response to the Questions on Notice.

1. **The barriers preventing qualified tradespersons within the communities under your remit from being employed by QBuild on construction of government employee housing.**

### Response:

- i. **Instability of policy settings and program longevity is a barrier to achieving sustainable employment in remote communities.**

Cape York Welfare Reform ('CYWR' or 'Welfare Reform') was established in 2008 as a tri-partite arrangement between the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, the Queensland Government and the Australian Government. The objective was to support a positive change in social norms and community behaviours in response to chronic levels of passive welfare, social dysfunction and economic exclusion.<sup>1</sup>

The reform proposed 'pathways for Indigenous people to participate in economic activity in and beyond the communities... and [was] designed with an emphasis on partnership, capacity building, local authority and service enhancement.'<sup>2</sup> A key feature of the welfare reforms was the creation of the Family Responsibilities Commission (the 'FRC' or 'Commission'), an independent statutory authority established by the Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 (FRC Act). The Explanatory Notes to the FRC Act describe the underlying policy rationale for the reforms and the Commission as:

*'a range of policy, program and service reforms and practical on-the-ground initiatives to help reduce dependency and dysfunction and provide pathways to participation in the real economy including ... interventions in employment [and], enterprise...'*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission 2023-24 Annual Report, page 10

<sup>2</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 Explanatory Note, page 3

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

However, those early interventions or government economic development initiatives intended to be delivered as part of the tri-partite reforms have waned over the years or key components were arguably not delivered.<sup>4</sup> The Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, a partner of the Queensland and Australian Governments to the reforms makes the following assessment.<sup>5</sup>

*“The design of [Cape York Welfare Reform] CYWR emphasised economic development and employment including through reforms to the Community Development Employment Program (‘CDEP’, which was the employment services program at the time), ‘Lighthouse Projects’ in each community, increasing ‘Local Jobs for Local People’, as well as activating ‘Orbiting’ so that people could take up employment opportunity elsewhere. Largely, however, the essential welfare to work dimensions were not delivered.”*

This is contrasted with the National Agreement on ‘Closing the Gap’ reform, where it is acknowledged, a generational approach to policy intent and commitment is needed, if there is to be any hope of achieving targets or desired outcomes. The FRC, instead, has operated since its inception, with limitations, in so far as it does not have a full suite of employment and training referral pathways and complementary wellbeing services to support the continuum of behavioural change of community members, as originally intended in the Cape York Welfare Reform’s program logic. This gap has stymied progress towards real improvements being made to the life outcomes of FRC client’s and their families.

The FRC notes the Premier’s Charter Letter, dated 8 November 2025, addressed to the Honourable Fiona Simpson MP, Minister for Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multicultural Affairs. Of relevance is the Premier’s direction to ‘form an Economic Security team to drive positive outcomes for Queenslanders across all economic portfolios.’ As a Queensland public sector entity, the FRC remains committed to working as part of a whole-of-government strategy and welcomes the opportunity to ‘work closely with other agencies to improve health, educational and employment outcomes’<sup>6</sup> to overcome the entrenched and generational disadvantage of community members in Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

## **ii. Limited visibility and accessibility to employment pathways.**

The FRC notes QBuild is a business area within the Department of Housing and Public Works. QBuild is described on the department’s website as ‘the Queensland Government’s trusted builder’ and ‘plays a vital role in supporting our state’s \$59 billion building and construction sector.’<sup>7</sup> The website explains QBuild is currently seeking qualified tradespeople to ‘help deliver a massive pipeline of works for Queensland with a variety of career options at QBuild across 20 offices, 35 depots and 3 Rapid Accommodation and Apprenticeship Centres located throughout the state.” Doomadgee is the only location, out of the five communities the FRC operates, listed as having a QBuild facility (a depot). See QBuild regional map for details.<sup>8</sup>

A recent search of the ‘Visit QBuild Careers’ page showed no current vacancies or apprenticeships.<sup>9</sup> The department’s website also states QBuild partners with Registered

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<sup>4</sup> Cape York Institute: *Overcoming Entrenched Disadvantage by Building Family Responsibility*, July 2022, page 20

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Premier’s Charter Letter to Minister Simpson

<sup>7</sup> [www.housing.qld.gov.au/about/department/business-areas/public-works/qbuild/about-qbuild](http://www.housing.qld.gov.au/about/department/business-areas/public-works/qbuild/about-qbuild)

<sup>8</sup> [www.housing.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/64329/qbuild-regional-map.pdf](http://www.housing.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/64329/qbuild-regional-map.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> When the link to the listed jobs is clicked the following message is displayed: “Sorry, the requested job cannot be displayed as it has most likely closed or been removed.”

Training Organisations (RTOs), yet the location of those entities could not be found on the webpage.

The FRC does not believe information about QBuild's career opportunities is widely known in the five welfare reform communities within the Commission's jurisdiction. Accessibility issues may also arise if dissemination of this information, or the application process itself, is limited to online.

The Department of Housing and Public Works has already identified the need to establish career pathways for community members, albeit in regional areas. It is unknown whether the strategy extends to remote communities. One of the department's goals in its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan is to advance opportunities for career development for diversity groups and regions, enabling career pathways and progression, regardless of background, occupational group or workplace location. A focus area for achieving this goal is to undertake actions throughout 2024-2026<sup>10</sup> across three phases. This will require mapping of 'potential career pathways to improve opportunities for regional career progression through a deep dive into regional experiences relating to job progression, and for the department to 'consult and engage stakeholders to address inequities.' The FRC would be pleased to provide feedback and identify other community-based entities suitable to join the department's stakeholder group.

**2. The role of the FRC in supporting people, and their families after release from correctional custody and return to the community, and any limitations in the scope of the FRC's responsibilities to adequately support the reintegration process.**

**Response:**

**i. The FRC can better support young people released from detention, and their families if legislative amendments are made to permit information exchange.**

Section 93 of the FRC Act allows the Commissioner to ask a prescribed entity<sup>11</sup> for relevant information<sup>12</sup> in the entity's possession or control. Currently, the list of prescribed entities in section 90 of the FRC Act includes the department responsible for **adult corrective services**, but **not for youth corrective services**. Including a new prescribed entity to encompass youth corrective services in section 90 of the FRC Act would allow the FRC to request information from youth corrective services such as details of release dates, supervision orders, and programs or interventions the young person has completed in detention.

The ability to request this information, where appropriate, would serve to improve outcomes for young people and their families by enabling the FRC to work collaboratively with youth corrective services following a young person's release back into their community. This will provide opportunity for appropriate and effective early intervention and rehabilitation programs to be put in place, using referrals to community-based service providers, as part of a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach to support the young person, and their family (if appropriate). The FRC can then provide ongoing case management to clients and their family for up to a period of 12 months (at a time), with the aim of reducing recidivism.

**ii. There is an opportunity for a stronger formal partnership with Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) to support prisoner reintegration into the community.**

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<sup>10</sup> Page 7

<sup>11</sup> *Prescribed entity* is defined in s90 of the FRC Act.

<sup>12</sup> *Relevant information* is defined in s91 of the FRC Act.

In May 2022, the FRC undertook an operational analysis and made a submission to the former Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. Community concerns about rates of re-offending and disruption caused by people returning from custody, and the need for coordinated case management approaches for these individuals, were raised. Consequently, the FRC identified the need for a partnership with QCS to be formalised, which would enable Local Commissioners to conference a client upon their return to the community at the first available opportunity. Unfortunately, the department did not, at the time, act upon the Commission's advice. The FRC nonetheless continues to see merit in this proposal and briefly sets out its reasoning below.

The FRC, pursuant to section 43 FRC Act, already receives agency notification from the Courts when an adult community member is convicted of an offence. The Act also permits information sharing between the FRC and QCS<sup>13</sup>. In practice, however, the provision of this information by the Courts and QCS to the FRC is not provided in a coordinated manner. For example, while the FRC receives a notice from the Court for adults within days of conviction<sup>14</sup>, the FRC is not always aware of sentencing and release details, or the details of programs undertaken while in custody. This can make it difficult for the FRC to schedule timely conference hearings following the prisoner's release, or coordinate case management in a meaningful and holistic way with community-based service providers, and other government agencies that complement the programs undertaken whilst in custody.

Previously Local Commissioners had visited Lotus Glen Correctional Centre near Mareeba, where many (but not all) men from Cape York are imprisoned. While COVID-19 disrupted prison visits over a long period, the FRC would like to embed these visits as a regular practice, as part of a strengthened partnership with QCS. Such visits provide the opportunity for Local Commissioners to talk to members of the FRC communities about kinship connections, and shared community values and expectations of personal responsibility, and to begin the process of reintegration even during the incarceration period. The FRC believes this foundational engagement is a necessary precursor for an impactful conference with Local Commissioners upon the prisoners' return to their community and increase the chances of a successful reintegration.

I look forward to expanding on these responses at the public hearing. Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



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

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<sup>13</sup> Sections 92 and 93.

<sup>14</sup> Section 43.