

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL 2023

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**A vital response to the youth
crime crisis:
Parliament must enable the
community-led and community-
based Family Responsibilities
Commission response**

Cape York Institute

**submission to the Economics and Governance Committee
on the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023**

February 2023



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C/- Committee Secretary
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Yurra wanhtharra and Yalada Committee Members,

The Cape York Institute (CYI) welcomes the opportunity to inform the Parliament's deliberations on the need to improve community safety by enabling more effective responses to youth crime.

Parliament must enable community-led solutions to effectively address the youth crime crisis

Although the Queensland Government purports to be “listening to the community”, in fact for a long period it has been tone deaf to the pleas of local Indigenous people for support of locally led solutions so that the ongoing youth crime crisis can be addressed where change is most required. To solve the problem of Indigenous youth crime, Indigenous people on-the-ground where these problems are most concentrated must be supported to take up greater responsibility, so we can play an active role ourselves in changing outcomes at the local level for our most disadvantaged families and communities.

The current crisis in youth crime and community safety has not arisen overnight. In fact, the crisis has been a long time in the making and is ongoing for many of our most disadvantaged families and communities, including remote Indigenous communities. The youth crime crisis is a result of the longstanding failure of ‘business-as-usual’ efforts to address complex, entrenched and multigenerational disadvantage. The youth crime crisis reflects the failures of our welfare and service delivery systems in areas as diverse as education, child protection and family support.

No child should be born into a situation where their poor outcomes later in life—including their likely involvement in the youth justice system can be so accurately predicted—yet this is the case for many children born into highly disadvantaged circumstances.

The overrepresentation of Indigenous young people in the youth justice crisis is undisputable, tragic, and shameful. Yet the Queensland Government has done nothing to support local communities to develop and implement new and holistic approaches that are needed to close the devastating gap on the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in crime and in juvenile detention.



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Evidence over a long period demonstrates that new community-led solutions¹ are required and must be actively supported by government if the upward spiral of youth crime, detention and incarceration is to be halted, and then reversed.

Effective law-and-order solutions are only one part of the solution. Law-and-order approaches alone cannot be relied on to end this crisis. Indeed, in the absence of other necessary community-led solutions, such reliance is likely to only worsen the youth justice crisis.

Government has, in effect, undermined Indigenous-led community-based approaches it purports to support

Queensland's Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) is one of few examples in Australia of a structural reform embedded in legislation, genuinely empowering Indigenous people. The Crown has vested powers in Indigenous people to act as decision makers about the lives of their own people.

This kind of empowerment of Indigenous people—of individuals, families, leaders, Elders, and respected persons at the local level in Queensland's Indigenous communities—is not a 'nice to have'. It is necessary. It is vital if we are to address the complex, entrenched and multigeneration disadvantage of the kind that is driving the youth crime crisis.

The communities involved have opted into a higher standard to allow early community-based intervention by the FRC. This enables their own Elders and respected persons to act where community members are not meeting their basic responsibilities to their families and children, and where otherwise no such community-led action would or could be taken.

Evidence of individual and family outcomes for FRC clients shows the FRC's success in building personal and family responsibility. The FRC provides an ideal mechanism, one which is already well established, which can help ensure the delivery of a holistic integrated, locally led effective response to youth crime.

The FRC has been extensively scrutinised over a long period, and aspects of its performance have been considered in four independent reviews since its establishment. There is now a substantial evidence base showing the FRC is effective. See **Attachment A** which provides a summary and includes recent data.*

There are many avenues remaining through which it could become even more effective, including through operationalising its youth justice trigger, as the communities involved and other FRC partners have long intended.

*Including data available to CYI as a statutory member of the Family Responsibilities Board under the FRC Act.

¹ The importance of these kinds of approaches has been highlighted in many publications, see e.g., Queensland Treasury, 2021, [Wise practice for designing and implementing criminal justice programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#), Research report

About the Family Responsibilities Commission

The FRC operates in Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. It was first established in 2008 by the Queensland Parliament and has continued to enjoy bipartisan support. It remains a precedent setting model of local community empowerment and self-determination.

The FRC was designed by Indigenous people themselves and is supported by a unique partnership between the communities involved, the Queensland Government, the Australian Government and the Cape York Institute (CYI).

Through the FRC power and responsibility is shared with Elders and leaders of Indigenous communities, where otherwise these powers and responsibilities are held only by the Crown. The FRC provides community-based, community-led intervention and support—outside of and preferably before—potentially more serious (and damaging) state interventions that may be taken by the justice, child protection, education, or housing systems.

The FRC Act sets out the community determined triggers for notification which allows FRC intervention in the following circumstances:

1. A child of the person is either not enrolled at school, or not meeting designated school attendance requirements— an agency notice must be received from the Education department.
2. There is a child safety intake involving the person, in relation to alleged harm or risk of harm to a child—an agency notice must be received from the Child Safety Department.
3. A court convicts the person of an offence or makes a domestic violence protection order (DVO) against the person—an agency notice must be received from the Courts.
4. The person, as a tenant, is in breach of a social housing tenancy agreement—an agency notice must be received from the Housing department.

The FRC applies a locally based and culturally relevant conferencing-style process delivered by a panel of Elders and respected community leaders appointed as Local Commissioners. Conferences are held in a manner which facilitates early intervention, encourages community members to take personal responsibility for their actions and implement strategies to address inappropriate behaviour before it escalates.

The FRC joins the Commonwealth's welfare system and State's service support system, and places Indigenous people as formal decision makers at the centre. It blends, culture, law, lore, restorative justice style conferencing, referral, and case management—all in a model that restores local authority and gives it a place at the heart of a capability building system. While the FRC is about more than income management, the benefits of the FRC's income management model are very clear and have been acknowledged by all sides of politics.

After repeated and ongoing community calls for expansion of the FRC's jurisdiction, which emphatically included calls to enable FRC Local Commissioners to take action with respect to youth crime, in 2014 amendments to the FRC Act introduced a new trigger in section 43 for Children's Court convictions (referred to as the youth justice trigger).²

Community demand for FRC action on youth crime

Community demands for the FRC's youth justice trigger have been repeatedly communicated and documented, including in a series of annual community consultations led by the Queensland Government and reported to the Cabinet in the lead up to the introduction of the youth justice trigger in 2014. More recently the Alliance of the Gugu Yimithirr People provided a resolution again seeking the youth justice trigger be activated.

Community demands for the FRC's youth justice trigger reflect the widespread community view that:

1. The FRC's model of local authority and self-determination provides an effective community-based strategy to enable Indigenous people to better respond locally to serious, complex, entrenched challenges such as youth crime.
2. Community-led and community-based action is vital given the chaos and devastation caused by the ongoing youth crime and detention crisis afflicting each of the communities involved.
3. Community-led and community-based action is vital given recidivism rates for Indigenous juvenile offenders in these communities are extraordinarily high, and the 'business-as-usual' government-led and justice-agency-led approaches show no sign of being able to effectively break the cycle and prevent such high levels of reoffending.

The FRC's youth justice trigger is intended to be used so that community-led and community-based action can be taken when a young person is convicted of an offence by the Children's Court. The trigger is meant to allow FRC Local Commissioners to conference and make decisions in relation to such youth justice matters.

The trigger is intended to operate in conjunction with the FRC's ability under sections 47 and 49 of the FRC Act to exercise its powers with respect to 'relevant persons'. That is, the FRC would ensure parents or carers of a child subject to a Children's Court notice were conferenced and supported wherever appropriate in response to an agency notice being received. If operationalised, the FRC's youth justice trigger would allow income management orders or mandatory referrals and case plans to be made for the parent where such action was deemed appropriate. The explanatory notes accompanying the amending Bill state:

The inclusion of the youth justice trigger aims to ensure greater parental/carer responsibility for the young person's offending behaviour and reduce the current trajectory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from youth detention into the adult criminal justice system. A court would be required to notify

² The youth justice trigger was added to complement the existing Magistrate Court trigger, and a District and Supreme Court conviction trigger was also added at this time in 2014.



the FRC when a child is convicted, to enable the FRC to request conferencing with the community members who are the parents or carers of the child.

The benefits of the FRC's youth justice trigger include not only the opportunity to facilitate greater parental/carer responsibility for the young person's offending, but also its ability to support the child within a legislative framework which can mandate the provision of support services to assist the family and divert the child from a future of court interactions and juvenile detention.

Since 2014 it has been the intention of the FRC partners (including the Queensland Government who enacted the legislative amendment and who have not made any move to repeal it), that the FRC be actively engaged in responding to youth crime. Unfortunately, however, these intentions have been thwarted.

The Queensland Government has proven unable to effectively operationalise the FRC's youth justice trigger.³ Despite the existence of the FRC's youth justice trigger in the FRC Act, and the ongoing youth crime crisis, the FRC has not received a single youth justice notice to enable FRC commissioners to conference and make decisions in relation to youth justice offending since 30 June 2016. This means that the FRC and its Local Commissioners cannot act to conference parents and/or their children in relation to convictions in a Children's Court.

While the precise details of the roadblock for community-based action remain unclear, CYI understands this is due to issues of statutory interpretation arising after amendments were made in 2016 to the *Youth Justice Act 1992* (Qld) affecting the general prohibition on publication of identifying information about a child in section 301 of that Act. These amendments were not specifically related to the FRC, and the FRC, CYI and the communities involved were not consulted when the amendments were made and have not been consulted subsequently in order to resolve the issue.

Urgent and immediate action required to support FRC response

Whatever the problem standing in the way of operationalising the desire of FRC communities to implement community-led and self-determined action to respond to this crisis, should be immediately and urgently addressed. Administrative or legislative changes must be made as required so that the intentions of the communities involved can be realised by getting the existing FRC youth justice trigger working. It is extraordinary that given the serious youth crime crisis afoot, and the willingness and desire of communities to step up and take responsibility for more effective responses and action, the Queensland Government has remained moribund and has not acted to enable this locally led response in some of the state's most disadvantaged places so local leaders and Elders can play an active role in helping to address the youth crime crisis.

The Parliament should urgently make any clarifying legislative amendment necessary to operationalise the FRC's youth justice trigger, as has been long desired and intended by the communities involved. This would be consistent with

³ The FRC received youth justice trigger notifications as intended and as required under the FRC Act, only for a short period since the trigger was introduced in 2014.

the Queensland Government's high-level policy commitment to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through reframing its relationship and through shared decision-making. Such local empowerment will lead to improvements that can ultimately be far more successful than reliance on law-and-order responses to crack down on serious, repeat young offenders, and will be more effective than pouring more money into service solutions that have already proven they cannot effectively address this complex challenge.

The current inability of the FRC to exercise its legislative powers with respect to youth crime is frustrating, especially for the community members who suffer as a result of youth crime, the young people involved whose potential continues to be wasted, and for the FRC's Local Commissioners and other key stakeholders who want to see action taken at the local level. The FRC has repeatedly highlighted this issue, including in their Annual Reports and to the Parliamentary Committee that provides oversight of the FRC Act.

CYI looks forward to continuing to partner with highly disadvantaged communities and with government so that Queenslanders do not continue to suffer from the ongoing failure of the business-as-usual approaches to address complex and entrenched disadvantage, which is the key driver of the youth crime crisis.

Yurraan thawunh,

Noel Pearson
Founder and Director

Yalada,

Fiona Jose
Chief Executive Officer



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Attachment A

‘What works’ evidence suggests the FRC has had an unusual level of success

There is rigorous evidence suggesting the FRC model ‘works’ in promoting critical change for individuals and families included in four relevant independent evaluative exercises:

1. 2010 KPMG *Implementation Review of the Family Responsibilities Commission*
2. 2012 *Cape York Welfare Reform Evaluation*
3. 2018 Queensland University of Technology (QUT) *Strategic Evaluation of Cape York Income Management*
4. 2014 Health Outcomes International (HOI) *Evaluation of Cape York Wellbeing Centres* provides some valuable evidence regarding outcomes for FRC referred clients.

Firstly, there is rigorous, consistent, and overwhelming evidence the FRC has strengthened local and cultural authority as intended.

The KPMG implementation review found the involvement of Elders and Respected Persons as Local Commissioners (and their legislative mandate and decision-making powers) contributed to their authority in the community being strengthened and legitimised. These findings are reinforced in the Cape York Welfare Reform (CYWR) evaluation which found that the FRC was successfully restoring local and cultural authority.⁴ The evaluation states,

*Most community members and other stakeholders believe that the FRC has strengthened leadership, particularly through the Local Commissioners’ listening, guiding and supporting role. The FRC conferencing process resonates with traditional Aboriginal dispute resolution practices and is consistent with restorative justice principles... Residents believe...that the FRC can strengthen leadership and encourage people to take responsibility for their behaviour.*⁵

Secondly, there is rigorous evidence showing the FRC together with CYWR during the trial achieved a level of positive change not seen in other approaches.

The CYWR evaluation states:

*There can be no quick fix to rectify challenges that have been decades in the making. However, the evaluation **after only three years of the trial of welfare reform points to a level of progress that has rarely been evident in the reform programs previously attempted in Queensland’s remote Indigenous communities...***

***What is most promising is that some of the progress to date relates to subtle but fundamental shifts in behaviour that, if sustained and built upon, can be expected to yield significant longer term results.** For example, improvements in school attendance and educational attainment will have life-changing implications for a new generation of children, while improved money management and a greater willingness to proactively take responsibility for addressing life challenges offers immediate hope for incremental improvements to adults’ quality of life.*

⁴ At p. 37.

⁵ At p. 6.

These changes provide a foundation to launch residents of the communities on a pathway to greater engagement in the economy, although the current lack of opportunities in this regard remains the most significant challenge for the transition from welfare dependence to economic self-reliance and ongoing social stability.⁶

It also found:

*In survey responses and qualitative feedback, improved money management is seen as an important outcome of the trial, with community members reporting a greater capacity to meet the needs of their families and children through the BasicsCard (issued under Conditional Income Management), the MPower financial management assistance service and SETs.*⁷

Thirdly, there is rigorous evidence that FRC interventions work, including conferencing, Income Management, and referrals and case management.

Conferencing works ✓

The FRC's conferencing model was highly praised in the CYWR evaluation report and a key message is that conferencing by Local Commissioners changes behaviour in communities.⁸ Conferencing between the FRC Local Commissioners and members of the CYWR trial communities was credited with encouraging individuals to comply with behavioural obligations,⁹ driving attitudinal change,¹⁰ helping individuals to confront their problems,¹¹ restoring Indigenous authority¹², and driving a key conceptual shift so that people could see the future ownership of problems at a local level.¹³

Linked data analysis of individual unit record files was included in the Cape York Welfare Reform evaluation. This analysis shows the FRC's conferencing interventions were followed by an increase in school attendance for the children of those conferenced, as recorded in Education Queensland's data.¹⁴ This linked data analysis is important, as it tends to suggest a direct or causal link between FRC conferences and subsequent improvements in client's behaviour. As was stated in the evaluation report, "These types of analysis, while costly and time consuming, provide an excellent basis for evaluating the efficacy of specific measures".¹⁵

Income Management works ✓

Income Management under the FRC model serves two purposes:

1. By effectively quarantining money, Income Management can help to prevent some of the most tragic outcomes of parental dysfunction and neglect, it can stabilise a person's and a household's finances to ensure basic obligations are met such as payment of regular bills

⁶ At p. 64.

⁷ At p. 4.

⁸ See Chapter 5 Authority Leadership and Social Norms.

⁹ At p. 34.

¹⁰ At p. 37.

¹¹ At p. 38.

¹² At p. 49.

¹³ See John Von Sturmer's Summary Report, at p. 6.

¹⁴ Analysis was conducted for Aurukun, where numbers were large enough. The significant positive effect of conferences did appear to diminish over time, suggesting a need for ongoing adaptation and evolution of the model.

¹⁵ At p. 10.

and rent, and so food is on the table. This helps protect the rights of children and other vulnerable household members.

FRC data as of 5 November 2021, shows 187 children and young people were in the care of Income Managed clients at this point in time, 124 (66%) of whom were school-aged:

- 71 FRC clients on CIM were caring for 94 children and young people, 60 of whom are less than 16 years old
- 118 current clients on VIM were known to be caring for 93 children and young people, 64 of whom are less than 16 years old.

	Number income management clients as at 5/11/2021¹¹⁴	Total unique children	School age children (<16yro)
CIM	71	94	60
VIM	118	93	64
Total	189	187	124

The available data show that Income Management through the BasicCard and then Cashless Debt Card (CDC) mechanism, has been highly successful at quarantining income to be spent for the intended purposes of bills, rent, and food etc

- Since the introduction of the FRC it is estimated the total amount of income protected under CIM across the five communities is in the order of \$31,132,400 (i.e., more than \$31.1M). (Data available as at August 2022)
- After the introduction of the CDC from March 2021 to April 2022, Department of Social Services (DSS) data show the total value of the 30,307 transactions conducted on the CDC under the FRC model is \$1,855,500 (i.e., more than \$1.85M). Of this total amount, most has been spent at grocery stores and supermarkets (\$1,251,800) (i.e., more than \$1.25M).

2. Income Management also can be used to incentivise people to take up supports that will lead to improved health and wellbeing. Income Management is situated within a suite of mechanisms through FRC conferencing, case planning and referral and using graduated Income Management levels to encourage people to take up supports.

The Strategic Evaluation of Cape York Income Management assessed outcomes for Income Managed FRC clients by conducting an event history analysis to assess the relationship between spells on Income Management and future breach notifications for that individual made to the FRC. The report concludes, “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.”¹⁶

¹⁶ QUT (2018) at p. 63.

This evidence, together with the evidence regarding FRC referrals (see below), suggests that over time FRC clients who are Income Managed are seeking support and making behavioural change.

Key points about Income Management:

1. There is a difference between achieving welfare to work results and meeting basic need results.
 - Evaluating CDC or similar measures according to whether it gets people from welfare to work will score a fail.
 - If you evaluate it according to whether it addresses basic needs such as rent, food, clothing (i.e., for its intended purpose under CYWR), then it is almost a 100% success because every dollar on the card goes towards basic family needs (see text box above).
2. There is criticism Income Management/CDC unfairly targets welfare recipients/vulnerable people.
 - It is important to remember it is actually targeting the grog and drug dealers—the people profiting from the misery of alcohol and drugs in our communities.
 - It also provides some basic protection for the most vulnerable—including children and young people in the care of people who may be suffering from addiction.
3. The key question for the future of Income Management beyond the FRC is: do you have a blanket system or a more individualised model?
 - We would like to work with government to expand the FRC model so Elders and leaders in other communities make the decisions about how best to support community members.

Feedback after the transition to the CDC indicates that its technology for operationalising Income Management had many advantages to the BasicsCard including:

- ease of use and increased functionality on the ground
- less stigma associated with the card.

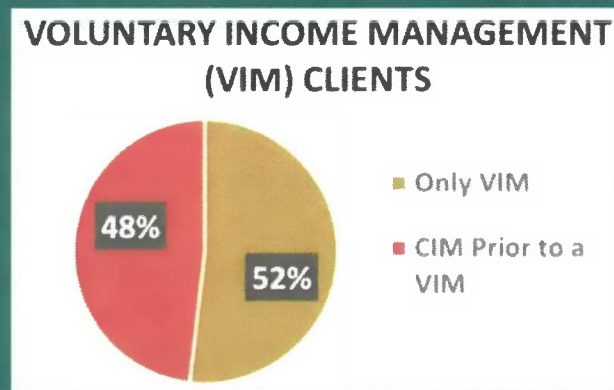
These advantages led to the large uptake of Voluntary Income Management (VIM) since the introduction CDC.

Even at what some may consider the most 'draconian' end of the potential FRC interventions—Income Management—substantial numbers of people are self-electing to put in place a VIM. This reinforces other existing evidence showing Income Management can be one useful tool for those struggling with complex and entrenched forms of disadvantage and can be an important tool to assist people to take up the most basic level of responsibility.

Further, FRC data show almost half of FRC clients on VIM were previously on CIM, showing it is a useful tool to increase personal responsibility. These FRC clients recognise things improve for them and/or their loved ones with Income Management, and they have taken steps to continue this improvement through putting in place a VIM.

Data since the introduction of the CDC, from 17 March 2021 until 30 April 2022, show of the 164 VIM clients:

- 79 or 48% had a prior CIM order in place
- 85 or 52% have only had VIM.



The FRC records the voices and views of those who have sought a VIM since the introduction of the CDC. The most common reason for seeking a VIM is so that life's most basic needs can be met—to buy food and to pay bills. This is exactly what Income Management is designed to do.

Women in FRC communities have found VIM helpful in protecting their income in domestic violence relationships and relationships of coercive control. Many of those 45 years and under are parents who use VIM so they can support their children.

People are using VIM both proactively (such as because a person has a particular savings goal in mind), and reactively (such as to help protect their income from 'humbugging' of other relatives or families to whom they feel a sense of obligation, or to protect it from those who they find to be coercive and abusive), particularly among older age groups.

FRC referrals work ✓

Comparing voluntary to ‘involuntary’ or ‘pressured’ service engagement such as those made through FRC processes isn’t an apples-to-apples comparison. Two different groups are being compared: those who admit they have a problem and have proactively sought help, and those who are more resistant to change. Everyone would prefer 100% voluntary engagement. But even the fact that involuntary or pressured engagement may be less effective than voluntary engagement is not an argument against it, since it might be a better alternative than incarceration or crime, or poor child protection outcomes.

Despite the received wisdom that pressured engagement will be less effective as it is not apples-to-apples, evidence in the case of the FRC suggests that FRC referral is as effective, or perhaps even more effective in some cases, than entirely voluntary engagement with services. The Wellbeing Centre Evaluation (WBC), for example, showed statistically significant positive changes held true for FRC referrals, demonstrating the ‘mandatory’ FRC referral pathway is effective in leading to positive change:

*The findings indicate that the WBCs are having significant success in helping some individuals through immediate crises and in dealing with their immediate problems and that sustained positive behaviour change is occurring in some clients in relation to alcohol use and cannabis dependency and other social behaviours. **This includes those clients referred by the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC), the single largest referrer to the WBCs.**¹⁷ [emphasis added]*

Cape York Partnership has also considered its MPower data, a money management, financial literacy, and banking support available in the four original CYWR communities. In summary, these MPower data show:

- FRC clients are more likely to engage in budgeting and financial coaching activities than other MPower members.
- Strong MPower participation from FRC referred clients, including those subject to mandatory referrals while on a case plan.
- A very high retention rate of FRC clients who remain engaged with MPower following the completion of their case plan.

The FRC provides a good return on investment

The costs associated with the service delivery and welfare systems responding to complex and entrenched disadvantage are high and continuing to grow, and this is disproportionately the case when it comes to remote Indigenous communities (due to the high level of need, and the extra costs associated with remote service delivery). This means finding more effective approaches in these communities, can also deliver disproportionate benefits.

To provide some indication of the scale of the financial costs of the service and welfare support systems, for example:

- [Queensland’s annual child protection service budget is \\$1.3 billion](#). Every child in out of home care costs the state approximately \$250,000 per year.
- Queensland’s annual corrections service budget is more than \$1 billion. Every prisoner costs the state \$111,000 in direct costs p.a., with another \$48,000 p.a. in indirect costs.¹⁸

¹⁷ HOI (2018) at p. 7.

¹⁸ See QPC (2019) *Inquiry into Imprisonment and Recidivism*, QPC: Brisbane; Carmody (2013).

Queensland's child protection and corrections systems are in crisis, for reasons including rapidly escalating demand and costs. The current approach cannot be sustained into the future, in either human or financial terms.¹⁹ If reforms were implemented today which were effective at reducing the demand on these ballooning service systems, there can be enormous costs savings even over the medium term. For example, the QPC estimated that reforms to reduce Queensland's prison population so it is 20 to 30% lower in 2025 than it otherwise would be, would save between \$165 and \$270 million in annual prison costs and avoid up to \$2.1 billion in prison investments.

Failings across the two levels of government are interdependent and have flow on impacts for each other and for the people involved.

For example, children in out of home care are less likely to close the gap on educational achievement, which in turn means they are unlikely to close the gap on employment and are at high risk of involvement in the youth justice system and adult incarceration. An individual's experience in state government health and education systems will also likely impact their future need for income support. The failure of the welfare system to effectively enable people to exit entrenched disadvantage in turn creates exponential demand for service delivery expansion and improvement.

The lifetime costs associated with the service and welfare system response to a single person on such a trajectory of poor outcomes will be well over \$1 million.

Costs associated with servicing the level of need in remote Indigenous communities are very high, including cost associated with social housing, courts and policing. For example:

- At 2011 prices, social housing costs associated with a single social housing dwelling (capital costs and 30 year whole of life costs) in Queensland and the Northern Territory remote communities were found to range from \$1.5 million to almost \$2.2 million.²⁰
- A 2017 Australian Government commissioned report on [Efficient System Costs of Remote Indigenous Housing](#) notes:

On average, 84 per cent of the costs of ongoing property maintenance of housing stock are not covered by rental income. This shortfall is consistent across all participating jurisdictions, with rent collected only covering between 11 and 21 per cent of total costs. While this data is based on a limited sample of communities, and largely from 2017-18 budget projections, it gives a good indication of the quantum of the government subsidy required for the ongoing management of remote Indigenous housing.²¹

- In 2017 the Queensland Minister for Housing and Public Works announced [a new \\$33.5 million housing project for Aurukun](#). Of 44 new dwellings to be built as part of this project, 17 were for social housing for residents and 27 are to house 'frontline' government employees, in particular, police and education staff. This announcement is indicative of the scale of the difficulty in the system ever 'getting ahead of the problem' and escalating costs.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Towart, R., Griew, R, Murphy, S., & Pascoe, F. (2017) *A review of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the Remote Housing Strategy (2008-2018)*.

²¹ Nous (2017) *Efficient System Costs of Remote Indigenous Housing* at p. 4.

- Policing costs include the costs of the very high number of police per head of population stationed in these high crime communities, the cost of police residences in Indigenous communities which in 2009 were said to typically cost \$500,000 per residence in the Far Northern Region (with at least \$2 million of repairs to QPS property in this region also said to be outstanding at that time), costs of watchhouse infrastructure, CCTV, offender transport by QPS Air Wing commercial or charter flights.²²

There are extraordinarily high human and financial burdens associated with drugs and alcohol abuse, child protection, social housing, crime, violence, policing, prisons, poor educational outcomes, joblessness and long-term welfare dependency in our most disadvantaged communities. In this context, the costs of an effective FRC model are negligible.

In any year, if the FRC prevents only 10 children from going into out of home care, or prevents 22 people from returning to prison for a year across the five FRC communities, it will have more than recouped the government's annual investment. Further, if the FRC changes the trajectory a child's life so they become a regular school attender and complete secondary school—putting them on the “success ladder” that closes the gap on employment—a lifetime's costs associated with unemployment are likely to be avoided.

From CYI's direct contact with families and children positively impacted by the FRC, we have no doubt the FRC is meeting these kinds of cost benefit thresholds.

Any view that the problem can be solved through more money for service delivery, is misguided.

When you look at the amount of money being spent on service delivery (under a model that allows little influence, learning and iterative improvement to be driven by the First Nations people involved themselves), and then you hear the argument that more money is needed, you have to ask how much more?

Oftentimes, the system means you'll be throwing good money after bad.

²² CMC (2009).