




Speech By
Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (4.10 pm): I rise to address the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2015. I note the policy objective of the bill is to make amendments to the Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 to increase the effectiveness of the Family Responsibilities Commission, the FRC.

The FRC is an independent statutory authority established under the act to support the program known as the welfare reform program where it operates in designated communities. It currently operates in five communities: Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. The main objects of the act are 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 to resume primary responsibility for the wellbeing of their community and the individuals and families of those communities.

The FRC works with members of welfare reform communities who come to its attention through notices from government agencies. The act requires the issue of an agency notice where a resident: fails to enrol their children in or send them to school; comes to the notice of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services on account of alleged harm or alleged risk of harm to their child; is convicted of an offence before a court, including the Children's Court; or fails to remedy a breach of a tenancy agreement or uses premises for an illegal purpose.

The FRC works with relevant community members through a combination of case conferencing and referrals to services either by voluntary agreement or through an order of the FRC. If a person does not comply with an order of the FRC, the FRC can recommend to Centrelink that the person's welfare income is managed through a conditional income management order.

The bill seeks to enhance the operation of the act and the FRC through: adding a domestic violence trigger; expanding the scope for delegation of the FRC commissioner's powers and responsibilities; broadening suitability requirements for the FRC register; removing redundant provisions from the act; and clarifying the process for generating agency notices under the existing youth justice trigger.

This bill seeks to address issues that are important to various communities but particularly remote communities, and the principles contained also apply to other communities that are not so much remote but are impacted by isolation. One such community that has to deal with a level of isolation and some similar dynamics is that of the community of Minjerribah, or North Stradbroke Island. Minjerribah is a well-functioning community that has had comparatively high and good standards of education, health and aged-care services, amongst other services, historically.

In terms of education, the Dunwich State School has provided a good education standard for Indigenous Quandamooka people as well as non-Indigenous people for a long time. I certainly commend the principal and staff of the school for the work they do in supporting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. I look forward to being with them on Monday morning at the awards morning.

My time in Townsville in the area of Indigenous education was very useful in understanding the issues with regard to Indigenous families and communities and their responsibilities in terms of education and the importance of it. Even though Townsville is obviously not a remote community and not even an isolated community, it is certainly a regional community. I saw a number of factors at work within Indigenous families as a tutor and a TAFE lecturer working with Indigenous students and their families. I saw the incredible value of a consistent education and continuity. We picked up children in their high school years and tutored them in their homes and through homework programs in schools. We certainly saw the importance of students being there and the families encouraging them to attend school and the subsequent homework programs. We certainly saw the impact of that investment in the families in terms of the jobs, opportunities and wellbeing of those students. Numbers of those students are now adults and they are doing a great job in their communities and doing a great job in terms of the opportunities they have had through education. They have made the most of those. It has been fantastic to see that over the years.

The Nareeba Moopi Moopi Pa Aged Care Hostel is based in Dunwich. It has provided aged-care services for seniors on Minjerribah for many years. The expansion plans that Sibelco has proposed would see that capacity almost doubled. This is a generous offer and would be—

Mr BROWN: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This relates to the mining bill that the member for Dalrymple has brought before the House.

Dr ROBINSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that there has been no mention of the date when mining closes, which is the subject of the bill before the House. I have kept away from that topic. I am talking about Indigenous issues in an isolated community. I believe that is consistent with the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Member for Capalaba, with respect to your point of order, I did not particularly hear where the member for Cleveland spoke specifically with respect to the member for Dalrymple's bill. However, I remind the member for Cleveland that there is a bill before the House related to mining and it would not be appropriate for him to make reference to the bill before the House.

Dr ROBINSON: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Yulu-Burri-Ba Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health that operates in Dunwich and Capalaba provides a medical centre, a women's health service, a diabetes program, emergency relief counselling, a naturopath, a drug and alcohol counsellor and dental and eye clinics. These are very important services in the community. They are part of creating strong and robust Indigenous communities.

In terms of other community services, the Minjerribah Moorgumpin Elders in Council do a great job in supporting the Indigenous community. I want to commend Aunty Margaret Iselin and many of the aunts who do a fantastic job in supporting those members of their community in need. Aunty Margaret is most well known for her care for Indigenous youth and seeing young offenders gainfully employed and not caught up in the juvenile justice system. That is one of the reasons she has been a big supporter of creating local jobs on North Stradbroke Island. Jubbin is a new organisation that has formed to create jobs and economic and employment opportunities amongst the Indigenous people of the island. QYAC is the native title organisation.

It was an honour to recently host the visit of LNP Senator Joanna Lindgren to North Stradbroke Island. Senator Lindgren is the niece of the late Neville Bonner and is proud of her political and cultural heritage. She visited the island to meet with Indigenous women and families and female workers to talk about women's business and opportunities on Straddie. What she found was a community that was very concerned—concerned that they have not been properly consulted about recent state government decisions, and they expressed their hope that the Premier would visit soon, as she committed to do so in the parliament.

I thank Senator Jo for her interest and her insights into Indigenous need and things that governments, both state and federal, can do to better the circumstances and to close the gap that in some communities unfortunately is not closing. Despite some good efforts and despite sometimes some very poor decisions of government, the gap is not closing.

Provision of a range of government services in isolated Indigenous communities is vital. That is one of the reasons that I have joined the community in Dunwich to fight the closure of the QGAP office there. The QGAP office offers transport and other government departmental services that are vital to the community. Again, being on an island in the south-east does create isolation factors in providing services. I will continue to fight against the current government's attempts to close that office.

The provision of services to families and assistance to families in remote and isolated communities is vital to closing the gap. Providing good solid jobs is also important to the future welfare of Indigenous communities. It has been a privilege to serve the Quandamooka people of North

Stradbroke Island over the last 6½ years as their local member, and I will continue to do all that I can to support the families. Today I stand with them, the Indigenous community, against the current Labor government's plans to sack 50 Indigenous workers on North Stradbroke Island. I am very concerned about that and it is a great shame.