




Speech By  
**Nikki Boyd**

**MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS**

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### **FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Miss BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (3.40 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2015. The Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 is a central feature of the welfare reform program centred on communities in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale, Mossman Gorge and Doomadgee. The welfare reform program is aimed at restoring social norms and social responsibilities while re-establishing local leadership and increasing economic participation. The act does this by creating the Family Responsibilities Commission as a central pillar of welfare reform in these communities. Welfare reform is a joint initiative of the Queensland and Australian governments and the Cape York institute.

The FRC, through its ability to conference community members, aims to change and rebuild social norms and behaviours, including those attached to violence, and support improved parenting practices. That is done through the delivery of conferencing and referral services to community members who have either requested its service or have been subject to an agency notification to the FRC. Currently, the FRC receives agency notices if a child in the community is not attending school without a reasonable excuse; when a child safety and welfare notice has been issued; when a person, including a child, is convicted of a criminal offence; or a social housing tenancy agreement has been breached. In those circumstances, the FRC will direct parents of the children in question, the convicted individual or the social housing tenant to attend a conference. The FRC conference is aimed at focusing on the substance of the agency notice and then helping the person to address the issues that led to them being conferenced.

As the FRC is aimed at helping the person explore the relevant factors and issues that gave rise to the offending behaviour, the conference will also explore any issues, problems or concerns that the person may wish to raise. This holistic and collaborative approach enables the FRC to work with the person to determine the most appropriate course of action and help restore socially responsible behaviour. That may include developing a case management plan, involving referral to appropriate support services, further conferencing and, if the FRC considers it necessary, income management. Income management involves a portion of the person's welfare payment to be put on a basics card.

Having outlined the role and the purpose of the FRC, I would like to address two key elements of the bill, namely, the introduction of the domestic and family violence trigger, which means that when a protection order is made the FRC will receive an agency notification, and, secondly, amending the act to allow that the commissioner can delegate functions to an appropriate, clearly qualified and appointed local commissioner.

In February 2015, the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland delivered to the Premier its final report, the *Not now, not ever: putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*. The task force undertook a thorough investigation and review of the issues surrounding the rates and occurrences of domestic and family violence in Queensland. As part of the findings of the *Not now, not ever* report, it was noted that there is an urgent need to develop sustainable

and culturally appropriate services for women, children and men affected by domestic and family violence in discrete Indigenous communities. Recommendation 93 of the *Not now, not ever* report recommended that the act be amended to require a court to notify the FRC when a protection order under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 naming a welfare reform community resident as a respondent is made.

Given the focus of the FRC and its ability to order conferencing and refer a person to relevant support services, it is very apt that the bill directly answers the *Not now, not ever* report's recommendation and includes a proposed amendment. In practice, it will mean that the person will be directed to the FRC, which can then work with them to help them address their offending behaviour. In turn, that will help the community enforce its standards and expectations. Moreover, as local commissioners are drawn from the local community, the proposed amendment will strengthen local authority, which is a central objective of the act.

The second key element of the bill that I want to address is the proposal to allow the delegation of the commissioner's functions to a duly appointed local commissioner to sit as a chairperson of a commission conference. That will occur after the commissioner has directed that the particular FRC hearing will be constituted by three local commissioners appointed for the particular welfare reform community area in which the person, the subject of the conference, lives or has lived. If accepted, that amendment will create cost savings in terms of travel for the commissioner and improved flexibility of the FRC model. More significantly than the expected savings, the amendment will increase the recognition of the authority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local commissioners. It will also allow the local commissioners who are community members to assert responsible and appropriate community standards. That will achieve a central aim of the welfare reform program. I commend the bill to the House.