

## Schedule 4—Extending Cape York welfare reform trial

### Amendment proposed

- 1.82 Schedule 4 of the Family Assistance and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 proposes to amend the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* to enable a proposed 12 month extension of the Cape York welfare reform trial (the Trial). The Trial represents a partnership between the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale, and Mossman Gorge, the Commonwealth Government, the Queensland government and the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership. A key element of the Trial is the Families Responsibilities Commission (FRC), which was established under Queensland Government legislation.
- 1.83 The FRC involves local Family Responsibility Commissioners, who hold conferences with community members, refer people to support services and, where appropriate, arrange income management.
- 1.84 Currently, a person can only be subject to income management under the Trial after a decision by the FRC made before 1 January 2012. Schedule 4 proposes to extend this date to 1 January 2013 to enable income management to continue in Cape York for a further 12 months.

### Issues and impacts

- 1.85 The Queensland Government is currently leading a process of consultation with Cape York communities about extending the Trial. The Queensland Government legislation also needs to be changed in order for the Trial to be extended.
- 1.86 The extension of the Cape York welfare reform trial, at a cost of \$16.1 million over two years from 2011–12 to 2012–13, will build on the gains already made in education and social responsibility and allow further work on home ownership, in partnership with the Queensland Government, regional organisations and local Indigenous communities. In addition, the measures in the Trial contribute to a number of Closing the Gap Building Blocks, including Schooling, Healthy Homes and Safe Communities.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Budget Statement, the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, 10 May 2011, p. 27.

- 1.87 The purpose of the FRC is:
- ... to support the restoration of socially responsible standards of behaviour and to assist community members to resume and maintain primary responsibility for the wellbeing of their community and the individuals and families within their community'.<sup>20</sup>
- 1.88 A 2010 independent evaluation of the FRC found indications of positive community-level change around school attendance, alcohol and violence in the two communities of Aurukun and Mossman Gorge.<sup>21</sup>
- 1.89 The evaluation also found the FRC appeared to be contributing to restoring Indigenous authority by supporting local and emerging leaders in Local Commissioner roles to make decisions and model positive behaviour.
- 1.90 It was noted in the evaluation that although the FRC had been operating for 18 months only, it is strengthening its role within participating communities.

## Committee comment

- 1.91 The Committee notes the preliminary positive evaluations of the FRC and recognises the value of community-based, holistic and cross-agency approaches to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. The consultations that the Queensland Government is currently leading with Cape York communities about extending the Trial are an important component in determining the future value of the Trial.
- 1.92 The Committee also notes the long period of time that has been invested in establishing this Trial and building community engagement and fostering leadership through the Trial. In order to more adequately assess the impacts and possible successes of the Trial, a 24-month extension could be considered.
- 1.93 The Committee is aware that the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (ATSIA) is completing an inquiry into the high levels of involvement of Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system. In the course of that inquiry the

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20 Families Responsibilities Commission, 'About the Commission', <[www.frcq.org.au](http://www.frcq.org.au)> viewed 7 June 2011.

21 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Implementation Review of the Family Responsibilities Commission – Final Report, September 2010, pp. 6-8.

ATSIA Committee received over 110 submissions and spoke at length with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner, Mr David Glasgow.

- 1.94 The ATSIA Committee also undertook to consider coordinated models of service delivery and increasing positive community engagement.
- 1.95 This Committee refers the House of Representatives to the more detailed findings of the ATSIA Committee in relation to the FRC and the effectiveness of the Cape York welfare reform trial in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage and building positive social norms. The ATSIA report is expected to be tabled in June 2011.
- 1.96 The Committee is of the view that Schedule 4 provides opportunity for Indigenous communities in Cape York to drive social change through an extension of the Trial. Future evaluations on the continuation of the Trial should include consultation with the Indigenous communities who have been engaged in the process. The Committee recommends that the House of Representatives agree to pass Schedule 4 of the Family Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 without amendment.

#### **Recommendation 4**

- 1.97 **The Committee recommends that Schedule 4 – Extending Cape York welfare reform trial of the Family Assistance and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 be passed by the House of Representatives without amendment.**

### **Schedule 5—Public Works Act exemption**

#### **Amendment proposed**

- 1.98 Schedule 5 of the Family Assistance and Other legislation Amendment Bill 2011 proposes to amend the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* to stipulate that the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (PWC Act) does not apply to Aboriginal Land Trusts.
- 1.99 The substance of this proposed amendment is to remove the requirement for works carried out by Aboriginal Land Trusts to be subject to the scrutiny of the Public Works Committee (the PWC).