

NEWS



Qld backflips on Cape York welfare reform

By Eric Tlozek

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PHOTO: The trial has been run in the Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge communities. (ABC)

The Queensland Government has changed its mind on funding for a welfare reform trial on Cape York.

The scheme, which is jointly funded by the Commonwealth, links welfare payments to school attendance and seeks to reduce violence and improve social conditions in four Aboriginal communities - Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

The State Government yesterday said it would not be funding the program next year, citing high costs without significant gains.

The program has cost more than \$100 million since 2008.

Indigenous leaders slammed the decision, saying the program has been valuable in reducing crime and boosting school attendance.

But the Cabinet Budget Review Committee today buckled and reversed its decision.

It has committed a further \$5.65 million for another year of the trial.

Cape York Indigenous leader Noel Pearson says that would build on the success of the past five years.

He says the trial's main element - a Families Responsibilities Commission - should be expanded.

"That can really apply to more communities than these four," he said.

"We're building a franchise model that can be tailored for a range of different communities and what we've done here is kind of hammered out the shape of our first McDonalds restaurant."

The Federal Government says it will now discuss future trial funding with Queensland.