



LOCAL COMMISSIONERS' YEAR IN REVIEW

Hope Vale Local Commissioners' Report

“The love of our people is what led us to become Local Commissioners. We know that sometimes we need to take a tough love approach, and other times we give an open and helping hand. Together, with our clients and community, we have experienced rewards and positive changes, but there are still those who need our tough love and helping hand. Only when we are all moving forward together, will our job be done.”

Our year as Local Commissioners has been full of hard work and the need for ongoing resilience for all who face the challenges of living and working in a remote Indigenous community. Whilst there have been some hard days for us, the rewards of having strong families, good school attendance and our people dealing with their demons has been worthwhile. We are very proud of those that have taken steps to improve themselves and their lives. We know that it is not a short term or easy fix to get on and stay on track. Just as we are Local Commissioners every day in our community, even when we are not in uniform we know that social responsibility for our clients is something they need to work on every day.

One of the greatest roadblocks to achieving unity is the ongoing need for service providers, agencies and the Local Government to work together, support each other and listen to what the community's needs are, not just what their books and manuals tell them, or what they perceive as what someone needs. This year we found the blueprint on how to work with a community in the staff from the JobFind Centre. We commend them on their professionalism and their ability to source practical solutions and engage effectively with community. We hope that many other service providers and agencies will look to them as the example to follow. We wish for all of our service providers to quickly gather full operations to support the work we do as Local Commissioners. We ask that the agencies who fund the providers monitor the work to ensure that suitable services are being provided to meet the needs of our people. We will support service providers, but ask that they fully understand the principles of CYWR and work with us to ensure these principles are being met.

As the functions of the Commission have evolved and we as Local Commissioners assist our clients, there has been a broadening of our interactions with agencies and services. We continue to walk the line between the clients and the agencies, such as Child Safety Services, to ensure there are sufficient carers in our community and those carers are supported and monitored to ensure the child is in a better situation. We are amazed at times at the processes that do not support the carer, do not adequately communicate the needs of the child, or which provide the child with placement options that greatly disadvantage the carer. We encourage Commissioner Carmody and the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry to find the middle line.



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This year we have been disappointed to learn that a high number of our young people are not attending secondary education on a regular basis, or not behaving appropriately in the classroom. It troubles us and our Elders that some behaviour is so bad that other students are missing out on opportunities to learn, and some of our young people are not welcome back at school. Both the students and parents must take responsibility for this and we call upon both to take a stand and seek solutions. As Local Commissioners we know school can be tough and teasing is a real issue, but we also know that school is the answer for a better future. Parents, do not be afraid of tough love. Students, take the opportunity for a future and grab it with both hands.

Those students in primary and secondary school who attend every day and do their homework are to be congratulated. They are the role models of our community. The Local Commissioners were proud to be asked to be the year 7 'Adopt a Class' agency in 2013 and look forward to many birthday cakes.

At the Local Commissioner Development Week in Cairns in May 2013, we were the guests of the AFL Cape York House and all the Commissioners were very impressed at the dedication and commitment of the staff and the students attending. We saw what can be achieved if everyone carries their load and fulfills expectations. The day was rounded off with a visit to the Cairns Botanical Gardens and we extend our thanks to the volunteers who listened to us and asked questions about traditional use of plants and trees. The ability to share our common respect of nature was enlightening.

In May 2013 we were advised the Commission would extend one or perhaps two more years. In the past the stop and start nature of the extensions has held us back in looking at longer term improvements. We would like to work on improving our working relationship with other community agencies such as the Justice Group and the Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council in the next two years. We see that prevention is far better than having our community members become clients, especially when it comes to Magistrates Court matters. We would like to build up support for those people released on parole, or returning from imprisonment or rehabilitation. We would like to see more support for our children and their parents and care givers in preparing for boarding school and university. We want to provide the tools and confidence to our children and their parents and care givers to resist cyber bullying and all other forms of bullying. Bullying is a corruption of our children's minds and prevents them from having a positive childhood.

Most of all we, the Commissioners of Hope Vale, want to remind all our people that they are the decision-makers of their future and the possibilities are unlimited if they commit and work hard. In the future we want to be proud Elders surrounded by doctors, lawyers, teachers and managers who are our people, our kin, our family.

Hope Vale Commissioners Brian Cobus, Victor Gibson, Doreen Hart, Ivan Deemal and Erica Deeral

