



REGISTRAR'S YEAR IN REVIEW

From the desk of the Registrar

The Commission has now completed its fifth year of operation in the four welfare reform trial communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. As we reflect upon reaching this milestone we marvel at the achievements gained through the tenacity and hard work of the Local Commissioners and Commission staff. The Commission has been a relatively stable environment with regard to its staffing establishment and the retention of its Local Commissioners. This in itself, in my opinion, reflects the value that the people who make up the Commission put on the role we all play in the CYWR trial.

The Cape York Welfare Reform Evaluation Report 2012 (the Evaluation) was released in early 2013. The evaluation was conducted by a number of expert evaluators and encompasses the implementation of the CYWR trial, community views about social change, service delivery, the Family Responsibilities Commission and the outcomes of the trial. The Evaluation concluded that the CYWR trial has been implemented largely as agreed by the three partners, that is, the Australian Government, Queensland Government and the Institute. The Commission has been heartened by the results of the Evaluation. The Evaluation acknowledges the challenging role the Commission has in administering its charter - *"With relatively few resources, the Commission has developed sophisticated mechanisms for administering notices, conferences, decisions, referrals and service provision"*.

Consistent with prior years the Commission's workload was significant throughout the year, conducting regular conferencing in each of the four welfare reform trial communities. A total of 3,356 notices within jurisdiction were received for the financial year, the outcome of which was 1,686 conferences held, resulting in 339 referrals to service providers and 12.5 percent of clients on case plans as at 30 June 2013. A total of 304 Conditional Income Management orders were issued throughout the same period.

In fulfilling its legislated responsibilities the Commission undertakes progressive reviews of its processes and policies to ensure that it provides a transparent, effective, efficient, healthy and safe working environment. In January 2013 the Commission transitioned its accounting, human resource and payroll functions to 'in house'. The transfer of these processes has resulted in a significant reduction in expenditure from the previous outsourcing arrangement. The committed and diligent work of the Executive Officer (Management), Alison Kollmorgen and her team should be acknowledged in the resultant smooth transition. It indicates the maturity of the Commission and its increased capacity and expertise to successfully manage these functions on its own behalf. The Commission will continue to progressively review and identify areas for operational improvements into the future.

During the latter half of 2012 the Commission continued its partnership with Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) to provide the Ending Family Violence (EFV) Program to the CYWR communities. Subsequent to approval by the FR Board, effective from February 2013 the Commission commenced the delivery of the EFV program utilising its own staff currently servicing the communities, who were appropriately trained to deliver the curriculum. The Commission identifies this as a strategic move to initiate the delivery of community programs by those resident in community, or who have direct links to the community. To date the Commission has conducted programs in Hope Vale and Aurukun with programs scheduled to be delivered in the smaller communities of Coen and Mossman Gorge.

The Commission continues to both seek advice from, and provide support to, a number of core agencies and organisations. It has assisted a number of agencies with the induction of new

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employees entering the CYWR trial communities for the first time. It is vital that both Government and non-Government employees have an understanding and appreciation of the Commission - what it does, and just as importantly, what it does not do. Employees are provided with an overview of the Commission and the role of the Local Commissioners and Local Coordinators. I would like to acknowledge the support provided by our tripartite partners in the Australian and Queensland Governments and the Institute. Without their valued advice and guidance the successes of the Commission would have been more difficult to achieve.

The Commission welcomed a number of visitors to its Cairns Registry during the year. Most were parties involved in, or interested in, Indigenous welfare reform who shared their own experiences, and more importantly wished to take away the lessons learned by the Commission over the past five years. Visitors included: the Honourable Glen Elmes, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs; the Honourable Jack Dempsey, Minister for Police and Community Safety; the Honourable Anne Tolley, the New Zealand Minister for Police and Community Safety; representatives from the NPYWC Aboriginal Corporation; and Mark Miller and Andrew Alderdice of Health Outcomes International.

Our Local Commissioners are regularly asked to meet with a wide variety of high profile people and groups including Government Ministers and departmental Directors, the Crime and Misconduct Commission, Queensland Police Service, CYWR trial consultation team members, local advisory groups and many other parties interested in the welfare reform initiatives. The requests to meet with our Local Commissioners reflect the esteem in which they are held.

In May the Local Commissioners convened in Cairns for a week of training and development. The Commission considers this week crucial to the ongoing commitment to establish leadership and authority in the CYWR trial communities. The Local Commissioners participated in presentations from the Queensland Police Service and in particular from Far North Queensland Drug Squad Detective Sergeant Kevin Goan. The presentation centred on the 'Weed it Out' campaign, a crime prevention initiative run in partnership with James Cook University (JCU) which tackles the issue of cannabis use. The discussion was complemented with presentations from Dr. Ernest Hunter and Associate Professor Alan Clough from JCU, both considered experts in this field. The week also included on-site visits to the newly opened AFL boarding house, Gindaja Rehabilitation Centre, the Indigenous plant section of the Botanical Gardens and the JCU Indigenous Support Services. The Local Commissioners and Commission staff were all traditionally welcomed with a smoking ceremony at the Mossman Gorge Gateway Centre. The welcome was given in the language of the local Kuku Yalangi people. Mossman Gorge Local Commissioner Karen Gibson summed the week up by stating in the farewell, *"We are all here because we have a passion for what we do. It is not just a job"*.

The Local Commissioners have always shown a healthy respect for the Registry staff. The respect is reciprocated with the Registry staff acknowledging the often difficult circumstances the Local Commissioners work within. I can again state that I have always felt welcomed and safe whenever I have been in the communities. This is largely due to the respect the Commission has within communities and to the position our Local Commissioners hold there. They are at the forefront of the CYWR trial, the drivers for social change and have truly demonstrated the appropriate authority and leadership expected in their roles.

In my second year as Registrar of the Commission I continue to consider it a privilege to play a part in Indigenous welfare reform. The Commission is a central plank in the CYWR trial and the Evaluation acknowledges and endorses the strong role the Commission plays. Integral to the Commission and its operations is its valuable staff. Each and every one of the Commission's



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staff display a passion and commitment which is exemplary, and their enthusiasm to assist the Local Commissioners in the work they undertake is outstanding. The hard work of my executive team, Sharon Newcomb and Alison Kollmorgen, cannot be understated. Sharon has provided exceptional service to the Commission in the area of case management and stakeholder engagement, whilst Alison has diligently led the financial and operational arm of the Commission. Some staff may move on to other roles outside of the Commission. That is inevitable, and I am confident the experience they have gained from their time with us will stand them in good stead. One year on, and their dedication has not waned. I thank them all sincerely for their endorsement of me personally and professionally.

I wish to acknowledge the support shown by Deputy Commissioner Rod Curtin. I thank him for not only his enthusiasm and commitment to welfare reform, but also for the respect shown to myself, the Local Commissioners and the Commission staff.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge the invaluable leadership provided by Commissioner David Glasgow. His inspiration is pivotal to the success of the Commission and his passion and dedication to welfare reform is immeasurable. I wish to thank him personally for his encouragement and guidance throughout the year and I look forward to continuing our professional relationship into the future.

I look forward to the Commission continuing its important role in social change in Indigenous communities. With a commitment into 2014 it is vital that the Commission builds on its strengths and continues to lead the way with social reform.

Rob White
Registrar



Commissioner Glasgow, Deputy Commissioner Curtin, Local Coordinators for Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge and Cairns based Registry staff