



# LOCAL COMMISSIONERS' YEAR IN REVIEW

## Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners' report

Over the past year we have found ourselves playing with fire. We know that at times there is still heat in the community, and we have tried to cool it down. The fire has been fueled this past year from internal influences which are close, and also from external influences which are far and wide. These sparks have been truly challenging for us, and we have found ourselves pushing to dampen them. Thankfully at the beginning of 2014 we were granted a new stick, 90 percent income management. We have started to use this stick to gain the attention of our clients who are failing to engage with us at conference. We have found that by gaining their attention we have been able to communicate to these clients the requirement for them to satisfy their obligations under their case plans. Only with their compliance can they have a reduction in their income management percentage. Unfortunately the far and wide external influences are unable to be put out by this bigger stick, and they continue to cause problems for us

One of the external challenges in the past 12 months has come from individuals outside of our community who are engaging with our community and causing behaviours that we, as Local Commissioners, call the "old norm". We have needed the support and assistance from all community members to influence

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these non-community members and visiting individuals about our "new norms"; what we now consider is acceptable behaviour in our community. Out of this challenge we have seen some positive change in our young teenagers. Having been young before, we can see that the youth of today are approaching these situations differently. Some of them are coming to the Elders of the community and seeking advice on how to best approach fights

and arguments that arise. They are also voicing some expectations to others of what they consider is the right thing to do for the whole community.

Another challenge we faced at the beginning of 2014 was returning to conference after the Christmas break. We found it was a very tense time with many issues and conflicts to deal with. Mediation was organised through service providers in community with our assistance.

We have found the greatest challenge for the community throughout the past year has been the use of social media. This new way of communicating through electronic devices has added much fuel to the fire. This is one "new norm" that we'd like to shape and revert back to our "old norm". Our "old norm" was talking to each



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other face-to-face and one-on-one. We know though that we cannot be rid of this “new norm” so we have taken to educating our community about a safe way of using social media. We have also sought to influence the service providers to educate the young ones about social media through their group work.

Maintaining a strong mind frame of endurance and commitment has truly been our success with overcoming these issues. Having the endurance to be committed to challenges coming in all shapes and forms, from within and outside of the community, has continued to inspire us to make our community a more peaceful place.

Our relationship with stakeholders has had its ups and downs, however, overall there have been improvements. Mossman police have been working very well alongside the community when addressing social issues.

As this year draws to an end we ask ourselves, as Local Commissioners, what opportunities have we created for our community and for ourselves. As a group of Local Commissioners we have continued to develop a strong bond with each other. We have supported each other to take a step further in bettering ourselves. For our community we have encouraged them to walk alongside us in seeking to improve the situation for themselves and their families. We have now embraced the opportunity, and more importantly the responsibility, of conferencing in our community as three Local Commissioners. Although we were nervous about this change at the start, we have found that with change comes the opportunity to grow, to learn and to be a role model to our fellow community members. We are taking ownership of this opportunity to be strong Local Commissioners and leaders for our community. We have also, in this process of grabbing opportunities, voiced to our community that we need more strong leaders. We need them to stand alongside us, not only as new Local Commissioners, but as every day role models for the community. We need to approach the future hand in hand, to use all of our influence and endurance as a community to make positive changes for the future.

## **Mossman Gorge Commissioners Loretta Spratt, Karen Gibson and Karen Shuan**

*The Governor-General with Mossman Gorge Commissioner Karen Gibson, Mossman Gorge Local Coordinator Sandra Rye, Mossman Gorge Commissioner Loretta Spratt and Mossman Gorge Commissioner Karen Shuan at a community lunch at the Mossman Gorge Centre (14 May 2014). Photograph supplied by Lovegreen Photogtaphy*

