



REGISTRAR'S YEAR IN REVIEW

From the desk of the Registrar

The 2015/16 financial year began with a welcome announcement by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, the Honourable Curtis Pitt, of further funding over four years for the Welfare Reform initiatives to enable, "...the continuation of programs aimed at strengthening Queensland's discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This funding will support the Family Responsibilities Commission to build on gains achieved to date". This annual report outlines the progress we have made in the past 12 months to build upon our achievements, the challenges we have faced in doing so, and how we propose to continue meeting those challenges into the future. It recognises the ongoing work and efforts of our Local Commissioners and strategic partners to meet the objectives of our Act – to restore socially acceptable standards of behaviour and local authority and assist the welfare reform communities, and individuals and families within those communities, to take responsibility for their future.

An operational summary of the past financial year demonstrates that, as with previous years, there has been a consistent and challenging workload with a total of 4,254 notices within jurisdiction received which resulted in 2,347 conferences held, 195 referrals made to service providers and 7.95 percent of clients on case plans as at 30 June 2016. A total of 249 CIM orders were issued throughout the same period.

In striving to continue improving the Commission's ability to meet its objectives, and following community consultations, on 13 October 2015 the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2015 was introduced to Parliament. The Bill proposed to amend the FRC Act to include a domestic violence trigger for notices to the Commission (Recommendation 93 of the 'Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic Violence in Queensland' report). Further amendments were to extend the delegation of the FRC Commissioner's functions to allow Local Commissioners to deliver income management orders when convening a conference independently of Commissioner Glasgow or Deputy Commissioner Curtin, broaden the suitability requirements of the Registrar, remove redundant provisions and clarify the process for the youth justice trigger. The new domestic violence trigger has facilitated the conferencing of community members who are the subject of a domestic violence order. The Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2015 was passed by Parliament with unanimous support on 1 December 2015 and received Royal Assent on 17 December 2015.

The first notices for domestic violence orders (DVOs) were received on 23 February 2016 from DJAG and uploaded to the database with a new database tool created specifically for DVOs. The Commission's database has also been modified by our Database Administrator to capture domestic violence breaches (DVBs) separately from other Magistrate and District Court notices. The Commission commenced reporting to DATSIP on the triggers from January 2016. Monthly reports identify which Courts are providing domestic violence (DV) notices (breaches and orders), the number of conferences held in relation to DV notices per community, outcome actions taken in relation to conferences for DVO and DVB notices, the number of referrals made in relation to these conferences and what circumstances affect the statistical data and outcomes.

Deputy Commissioner Curtin and the Doomadgee Commissioners have continued to build upon their achievements since conferencing began in November 2014. As from April 2016 (term 2 of the school year) we are pleased to advise that the Doomadgee Commissioners have the ability to use income management as a conferencing tool to encourage behavioural change and to ensure that sufficient funds are available for the care of the children of their community. In term 1 2016 the average attendance for the Doomadgee School was 67.8 percent. That compares to 59.8 percent attendance for the same period last year. Although attendance will no doubt fluctuate, it is a very encouraging result for a school with a cohort of 410 students.

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As a result of the addition of the DV trigger and expansion of income management into Doomadgee, the Executive Management Team (EMT) considered it appropriate that the Commission reconsider the management of its organisational activities and reset its priorities in order to focus energy and resources toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes, and adjust the Commission's direction in response to our changing environment. A new Strategic Plan has been drafted (refer to page 15) which better reflects our objectives, the strategies employed to achieve those objectives and what we consider are our key performance indicators. We believe this plan clearly outlines who we are, who we serve, our vision and our values.

Of major significance to the Registry this year has been the upgrade of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Database. Following the launch of the CRM Database Upgrade Project on 27 July 2015, the system was implemented into production on 22 January 2016. Some of the benefits provided by the upgrade are: an extended life span; increased efficiency including global search and code optimisation; assisted coding; new and more efficient form navigation; upgraded SQL server for easy access to the database; calculated fields; and field level security. Our Database Administrator, using the advanced visual capability of CRM 2015 can produce charts to aid conferencing and enhance our ability to assess conference outcomes and the effectiveness of decisions made at conference. We will be judging its capability to determine to what extent the mapping of clients can improve our reporting capability and to what extent these statistics can be relied upon to provide an accurate snapshot of outcomes.

This year we have increased our focus on the case management of clients and encouraged communication between the Commission, stakeholders and service providers to assist in the development of an integrated and coordinated approach to meeting service obligations. Each State Government department, agency and service provider plays a fundamental role in fashioning the future for the welfare reform communities and the commitment displayed to this goal is unquestioned. I acknowledge their support and efforts to deliver significant outcomes for the welfare reform communities. The Commission notes, however, that there remains the need to source practical programs to be made available to provide domestic violence counselling for both perpetrator and aggrieved, sex offender treatment programs, and programs focussing on early childhood development.

The Commission farewelled Client Manager, Amy Barden, who was highly regarded in her work with the Commission. She departed for Sydney in October 2015 to accompany her husband in his employment. Camille Banks subsequently joined the Commission as Client Manager on 2 November 2015. Camille comes to us highly recommended with a Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Arts (International Relations), Graduate Diploma (Legal Practice) and Master of Laws. In regard to another significant staff movement this financial year, Samantha Foster, Administration Officer Case Management, commenced acting in the position of Hope Vale Local Coordinator on 3 August 2015 following the resignation of Francesca Adams. Samantha was subsequently appointed to the position of Hope Vale Local Coordinator on 1 February 2016 with the enthusiastic support of the Hope Vale Local Commissioners.

Following the removal of the sunset clause from the FRC Act on 28 November 2014, and in order to comply with s149 of the Public Service Act 2008 and various other State Government directives, nine Commission employees were transitioned to tenure as permanent public servants. Each of these employees has been on contract with the Commission for an extended period of time, and their transition to tenure has afforded them a permanency of employment which is well deserved. I thank each Commission staff member for their contribution to our operations throughout the year. They have delivered well toward our objectives and remain a dedicated team who work seamlessly together.



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The annual Local Commissioner Development week was held in early May 2016. The week was a resounding success with the Local Commissioners leading the discussions and debate, and progressing issues of relevance from the viewpoint of the Commission as a whole. During the week the Commissioners developed their teamwork skills, explored their capacity in coping with conflict, learnt how to use resilience in their personal and professional lives and expressed their interdependence and accountability. I have greatly enjoyed getting to know each of them better. We shared personal journeys, tears, laughter and insights into life. A camaraderie developed with open communication, mutual trust and support. One of our strategic goals is to create a capable, agile and innovative organisation. With the percentage of conferences held independently by the Local Commissioners continuing to climb, they have proven their strength and authority within and outside their communities.

Commissioner David Glasgow has worked tirelessly this year in what has on occasion been a very challenging environment. His significant contribution as the Commission's CEO is immeasurable. The Commissioner has led us through a range of complex and often difficult situations with his insight, dedication, persistence and thorough understanding of Indigenous issues. Working with him has been a privilege. Deputy Commissioner Rod Curtin has also demonstrated his commitment to the Commission's work throughout the year. He heads the Commission in its Doomadgee operations, travelling a long and tiring journey on a fortnightly basis in order to lead and mentor the Doomadgee Commissioners. Together they have made significant inroads into the work of welfare reform in our communities, and the consistent guidance provided to the role of Registrar has been greatly valued.

Maxine McLeod

Registrar



Cairns based registry staff

LOCAL COMMISSIONER DEVELOPMENT WEEK



The first week in May saw the culmination of months of planning with the commencement of the 2016 Local Commissioners Development Week. The Commission's Development Week is an important annual event for which the Local Commissioners travel from their communities to Cairns to participate in an intensive program of seminars and workshops. The week provides an opportunity for Commissioners to gather together, share experiences, learn from each other and undertake training and development. Agenda items include updates on Commission processes and procedures, information sessions and presentations by expert professionals on particular issues of interest and relevance to the communities as identified by the Commissioners.

On Tuesday 3 May Commissioner David Glasgow opened the proceedings with a welcome and official introduction of the newly appointed Local Commissioners from Hope Vale and Coen. Registrar Maxine McLeod followed with a summation of some of the more significant developments in the Commission's operations for the preceding 12 months including the upgrade of the Commission's database, the commencement of income management in Doomadgee, the addition of DVBs and DVOs as a trigger for conference, and the receipt of the first notifications from the Childrens Court.

Client Manager Camille Banks addressed the group outlining a series of initiatives aimed at improving engagement between Commission clients and community service providers. Camille outlined plans to conduct a review of service provider reporting protocols, and introduce an alternative framework to enable the capture of information on engagement with clients which occurs on a more casual basis.

Detective Senior Constable Mick Dwyer from the State Crime Command Drug Squad addressed the Commissioners with a presentation on the prevalence of crystal methamphetamine, or 'Ice', in the Cape York communities. Detective Dwyer provided insight into the manufacture, supply and distribution of the drug throughout the Cape and Cairns, provided advice on particular behaviours to look out for in users, and encouraged Commissioners to report any activity suspected of being related to drug use or distribution to Crime Stoppers. Commissioners were left reassured that despite the ease of access to methamphetamine the cost of the drug, in comparison to that of cannabis, remains prohibitive.

DCCSDS representatives Deb Hall, Carita Johnsson and Tracy Cerreto discussed the issue of the decline in the number of Child Safety reports notified to the Department and provided an update on reforms in child protection. Additional staff, intensive training and development, early intervention, building partnerships and support for at risk families were listed as measures aimed at ensuring children remained safe in the community.

Dr Ernest Hunter held a captive audience as he walked through a brief history of the problems in Indigenous communities during the 1970's alcohol abuse, 1980's cannabis use and 1990's depression, each of which led to clear and increasing 'waves' in the number of suicides. Dr Hunter spoke of the enormous social changes that had resulted from the decline in jobs, and the urban drift of Indigenous people from outback stations to towns around the same time as the change in laws relating to Indigenous access to alcohol. He pointed to the 15 year intervals between peaks in the number of suicides as the children who grew up in families affected by the changes reached the age of suicide risk. Dr Hunter relayed findings from investigations into the suicides of five children in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, all of which revealed a lack of involvement from parents and a lack of engagement with school. Dr Hunter communicated the important and very clear message that disconnected kids are kids at risk, and that connection to family and school is paramount in the prevention of suicide.

