



# LOCAL COMMISSIONERS' YEAR IN REVIEW

## Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners' report

This year has been one where we have looked back and taken into consideration how far we have come, the hard work we have done, and the changes we have seen since the beginning of the Family Responsibilities Commission in 2008. At times it feels as though we are going around in circles and revisiting the same matters, but we remind ourselves of the substantial improvements that have occurred thus far.

There have been many ongoing challenges year after year, particularly where visitors are staying in our community with an ignorance of the community's chosen future path. Visitors and some community members continue to drink alcohol and play loud music in our community, ignoring the standards that have been set. There have been times when these parties carry on for days, particularly when there is an event occurring such as the 'State of Origin'. We are unable to bring these visitors into conference as they are not within our jurisdiction, however, we bring in the persons responsible for hosting these parties where we can. We will continue to guide and support our mob toward a better future.

There have been many concerns over the past year in relation to underage drinking in our Mossman Gorge community, and youth getting into trouble with the law. We continue to bring those tenants responsible for parties into conference and seek the support of police and ground based services to address these issues. We have raised our concerns with Police Commissioner Ian Stewart, and the Government Champion David Mackie about the high consumption of alcohol in the community, and we asked for their support in the inclusion of limited hours on the sale of wine in the Mossman and Port Douglas Liquor Accords from the local liquor distributors. We feel that restrictions on alcohol sales will limit the consumption of all day drinking that continues through the night and into the following day. Bamanga Bubu Ngadimunku Aboriginal Corporation (BBNAC) and the wider community of Mossman also support reduced hours on wine sales in the Mossman/Port Douglas area. Public intoxication and anti-social behavior has been affecting the wider community.

We often feel disappointed when community members advise us that their calls to police have not been responded to by visits to the community. Our discussions with local police have revealed that this is due to the low number of officers on duty and/or officers who have been called out to higher priority matters.

This year has seen the change-over of contracts at the Wellbeing Centre from the Royal Flying Doctor Service to Apunipima Cape York Health Council. We believe the transition to Apunipima will be a positive step forward for our community, and understand there are challenges to be faced and patience required while the service develops their programs and incorporates a new culture within the Wellbeing Centre. It is disappointing, however, that during these first three months of operation there has been no concerted effort to re-establish the Local Advisory Group (LAG). We would hope to see that the LAG is established in the very near future.

We are proud, but humble, about our work in building relationships with the community, stakeholders and service providers. We have unfortunately found that keeping relationship connections with some stakeholders is still a struggle. We have had difficulty understanding some of the actions of the Department of Housing and Public Works, Housing and Homelessness Services who continue to determine which clients will be breached, seemingly based on their relationship with clients rather than the breach itself. We feel that this department

# LOCAL COMMISSIONERS' YEAR IN REVIEW



does not take our positions and the work we do for our community seriously. We live and work in our community and are on the receiving end of community complaints about the misconduct of tenants. Although we have the power to deal with clients who breach tenancy conduct conditions, we rarely receive notices of breach.

We commenced the 2017 conference year with reduced sittings in response to a reduction of trigger notices received, however, we have gradually returned to fortnightly sittings due to an increase in trigger notices this financial year. We have seen an increase in Magistrate Court notices by 27 (mostly alcohol related notices), District Court matters by five, Domestic Violence Orders by four, Domestic Violence Breaches by five and BBNAC Housing Tenancy Breach notices by eight. Primary school attendance has been consistently good showing a decrease in School Attendance notices by 20 and School Enrolment notices by two.

Conference attendance this year has varied with attendance quite high at times when the community is settled into their daily routines, and quite low at other times despite our efforts. Poor attendance has followed unsettling occasions due to funerals and noteworthy events such as the 'State of Origin' (as previously mentioned).

We believe the majority of community members respect us as Local Commissioners and our vision for the future of our people. We will, however, continue to support and encourage those who have not yet made the decision to walk with us to move forward and improve their lives and the lives of their children.

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

*Artwork by Mossman Gorge Commissioner Karen Shuan, on display at the Mossman Gorge Centre's Art Gallery*

*Artwork from left to right: KurrANJI (Cassowary), Wawu Spirit, Kudi & Yalnganji (Barramundi & Manta Ray) and Ngawiya & Bilngkumu (Seaturtle & Saltwater Crocodile)*

karen shuan julay

