



# REGISTRAR'S YEAR IN REVIEW

## From the desk of the Registrar

### Operations

This annual report outlines the progress we have made in the past 12 months to build upon our achievements, the difficulties we have faced over the period, and how we propose to meet the future needs of the Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge people. It acknowledges the invaluable contribution of the Local Commissioners in driving welfare reform in their respective communities and the ongoing challenges they face.

The operational workload of the Commission for the 2016-17 financial year has continued to grow from last year with the largest number of both conferences held and unique clients conferenced since the commencement of the Commission in 2008. The Commission received a total of 7,781 notices about community members within jurisdiction which resulted in 2,523 conferences held, 235 referrals made to service providers and 8.36 percent of clients on case plans as at 30 June 2017. A total of 265 CIM orders were issued throughout the same period.

The Commission has been closely monitoring client attendance at conference to more accurately identify explained absences from conference. Commencing in October 2016 attendance statistics were provided to the Local Commissioners whilst in conference to focus on and develop future strategies to encourage attendance and re-engage with clients where necessary. This extra focus has resulted in increased attendances in the last six months of this financial year in all communities, ranging from a 6.3 percentage increase to a 16.3 percentage increase. Best attendances were achieved in the two largest welfare reform communities of Aurukun and Doomadgee of 81.4 and 73.6 percent respectively. Of those not attending, approximately 19 percent were for explained reasons.

The first quarter of the 2016-17 year began quietly with school attendance in Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge remaining within the acceptable to good range. School attendance in both Aurukun and Doomadgee continued to present a challenge during the past 12 months, but did show some improvement from term 4 in 2016 to term 2 in 2017. Commissioners and Local Coordinators in each of the welfare reform communities have placed priority on improving school attendance, and have been committed to maximising client attendance at conference, recognising the level of client attendance as a measure of Commission performance. The Commissioners believe that the long term success of the Commission depends on meaningful interaction with clients and the community, maintaining conversations, asking questions and adding value to client relationships. The Commissioners have affirmed that building upon the sense of community is pivotal to their success.

This year saw major changes for the Aurukun State School. Following the Minister for Education, Kate Jones, ordering a departmental review of the then CYAAA Aurukun campus (the finding of which endorsed Good to Great Schools Australia's (GGSA) ongoing role at Aurukun, but with greater departmental oversight and limited direct instruction curriculum) negotiations commenced between Education Queensland (EQ) and GGSA for the joint running of the school. In November 2016 a new Executive Principal was appointed to the school after an extensive recruitment process undertaken by EQ, prior to which Noel Pearson had written to the Queensland Government advising that GGSA would withdraw its support to the school from 2017 as negotiations had reached an impasse.

Much work has been done since January 2017 by Brendon McMahon, the Queensland Government Senior Coordinator in Aurukun and the Queensland Government in uniting service providers and other agencies in Aurukun toward a communal resolution of issues (including

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the schooling) carried forward from the 2015-16 financial year. There has been significant improvement in the mediation program and its effectiveness in community to bring about an understanding of joint interests and goals for personal reconciliation.

Of particular note in the second quarter of this year was the announcement from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) of the transition of wellbeing services from the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Apunipima) effective from 31 March 2017. Comprehensive client summaries were provided to the Commission by the RFDS to facilitate continuing support services through Apunipima. Apunipima representatives advised that as part of the consultation process conducted for the transition of wellbeing services, community members were asked which programs they would like to see offered to their community members. The first round of three monthly reports on the progress of clients with case plans transferred to Apunipima were delivered in June. The reports provided information in relation to engagement strategies and assessment, and contained details of intervention plans where appropriate.

The Local Commissioners have continued to grow in local authority since 2008 with the majority of conferences now being conducted in Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge without the presence of the Commissioner or his Deputy Commissioner. Doomadgee Commissioners will commence conferencing as three Local Commissioners in the 2017-18 year.

## Policy

Due largely to the unrest in Aurukun in the 2015-16 financial year, the Commission reassessed its responsibilities for those employees living and working in Indigenous communities who face safety issues through their work and in their daily lives which are not encountered in suburban settings. A 'Guide to living and working in Indigenous communities' was created and released to staff to assist in the identification, assessment and control of risks associated with remote or isolated work, and a guideline was also created to assist employees who find themselves having to deal with a traumatic event or critical incident in or out of community. A further eight human resource policies were reviewed and released in the reporting period.

## Significant events

In February 2017 the Honourable Mark Furner MP for Ferny Grove was appointed as Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. Subsequently on 14 February the Legislative Assembly resolved to amend schedule 6 of the Standing Orders which reflect recent Ministerial appointments and associated administrative arrangements. As a result, the Commission's oversight committee transitioned from the Finance and Administration Committee to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee. In late May the Committee visited our Cairns office and flew to Aurukun to witness firsthand the role the Commission plays in the communities, and in particular the work its Local Commissioners perform, and the conditions under which they perform it. The Committee, whilst visiting Aurukun, met with the Aurukun Shire Council, the local police, had lunch and discussions with the Local Commissioners and visited the Arts Centre and the Aurukun State School.

The Commission's annual school awards ceremonies were conducted in December in each of the five communities. Prizes were awarded for attendance achievements and included certificates, medals and vouchers. Each year the Commission provides student awards to the welfare reform community schools to positively recognise and support those students (and their families) who regularly attend school, and also to provide an incentive for those students who wish to improve their school attendance.



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The Commission held its annual Local Coordinator conference commencing on 17 January. Each year Local Coordinators travel to Cairns prior to the new school year for training and workshop purposes. For the first time the conference was expanded by the attendance of one Local Commissioner from each community. The theme for this year's conference was 'increasing school attendance'. Two reports were delivered from each community, one reflecting identified local issues along with recommended solutions and one from the school principal detailing issues affecting their school, priorities set for the 2017 school year, and how they wished the FRC to interact with them to increase the educational experience for their children. Common issues affecting school attendance were discussed as well as building relationships with strategic partners, parents, school staff and the community generally. The support and transition to boarding schools was a common subject of concern across all communities. Reflection was had on the 2016 goals and what was achieved/not achieved during the past year and why.

In May the annual Local Commissioner Development Week was held with 22 Local Commissioners, Local Coordinators and registry staff attending. From Local Commissioner reports, the week was a great success and provided opportunities for collaborative learning, consolidation of relationships and opportunities for discussion and interactive dialogue on the future of the Commission. A full report on the Local Commissioner Development Week can be found on page 44.

In the 2017-18 Australian Government budget, funding for income management was extended for the welfare reform communities until 30 June 2019. The Australian Government legislative instrument, *Social Security (Administration) - Queensland Commission (Family Responsibilities Commission) Specification 2015* which enables the implementation of income management orders under the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*, however, was due to expire on 30 June 2017. On 13 June 2017, the Australian Senate referred the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Queensland Commission Income Management Regime) Bill 2017 to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report. The Bill was passed through the Australian Senate on 20 June 2017, extending income management for a further two years until 30 June 2019. The Commission considers this extension vital to enable and support its future operations.

## Information and Communication Technology

Significant information and communication technology work has been carried out throughout the year with the introduction of more robust unique identifiers for individuals dealt with by the Commission. The adoption of new unique identifiers is an essential component of good administrative practice which has provided clarity in regard to our record systems and also has increased our capacity to meet privacy obligations.

The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database was modified to allow for the manual entry of service provider updates by Local Coordinators in community and a report created to provide a summary of case-management activity.

In order to substantially reduce the consumption of existing data centre infrastructure and simultaneously improve the efficiency of administration, maintenance and support, the Commission migrated its exchange server from on premise to online. The migration of the exchange server infrastructure to Microsoft Office 365 exchange online, realised benefits which come from moving an email service to the cloud such as increased mailbox capacity, the provision of integrated online archiving for enhanced recordkeeping compliance and improved disaster recovery capabilities.



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As reported in last year's annual report the Commission's CRM database was upgraded from version 4 to version 2015 in January 2016. This upgrade provided the capability to build an external web portal to link directly to the database. Work commenced in early 2017 to source a supplier and develop a scope of works to design and build a public facing web portal providing a connection to the Commission's on premise CRM database to facilitate the updating of client case plans by service providers. The benefit of this project is timely reporting from service providers, with comprehensive client reports on attendance and engagement.

## Staffing

The Commission is proud of the people who form our organisation and we pride ourselves on our culture which is inclusive and encourages individual input into our strategic planning at every level. We have a Service Charter which states our commitment to work with clients and stakeholders to deliver outputs that achieve the outcomes sought for the welfare reform communities by nurturing a spirit of inquiry and innovation, and embracing the challenges we face on an everyday basis. Each and every staff member contributes their skills and expertise in delivering this charter, led capably by Commissioner Glasgow who espouses in his every day leadership our values of community safety, respect for wellbeing, ownership of the present and future, cultural diversity, Indigenous empowerment and innovation to build potential. Deputy Commissioner Curtin likewise contributes his leadership skills to guide us in the way we work in Doomadgee, the way the Local Commissioners make decisions there and how we interact with the community.

Going into the next financial year, we will strive to engender trust and confidence in the potential of welfare reform to transform Indigenous communities, and will do so whilst providing fair, empathetic and efficient services.

**Maxine McLeod**  
**Registrar**



*Commissioner Glasgow with the registry staff*