

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER



DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODNEY (ROD) CURTIN (APPOINTED JULY 2010 - 31 DECEMBER 2018)

Rod Curtin was born and raised in Cairns and completed his secondary education at St Augustine's College. He attained a Bachelor of Law degree through the Queensland University of Technology and was appointed a Barrister-at-Law to the Supreme Court of Queensland and the High Court of Australia in 1987. His experience involved the conduct of circuits in the Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait regions for more than 25 years.

Rod crossed paths with the Family Responsibilities Commission when he was appointed to the role of Deputy Commissioner in July 2010. He assisted Commissioner David Glasgow in performing the Commissioner's functions as required in the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. His knowledge of the cultural and social issues of people within the communities of the Cape and Gulf was of great benefit to the Commission.

In 2015 Rod took on the responsibilities for the Commission's work in Doomadgee. Doing so meant fortnightly trips to Doomadgee, each leg of which (to and from) took most of a day in travel. He would then lead and mentor the Doomadgee Local Commissioners in their conferencing processes for three days before returning to Cairns and his family. The work was demanding with the required travel in a small plane in all seasons of the year, living out of a suitcase for a week, and without the support of his family.

Rod describes his work in Doomadgee as a defining experience. Four years of assisting the Doomadgee Local Commissioners led to close friendships. Local Commissioner Chris Logan stated:

"There is no colour division in our community... for us, it is those who identify with us who become part of our community and the Deputy Commissioner was all that and more. In fact we adopted him as family. He understood our struggles and our hurt. He connected with our clients. We always looked forward to seeing him. It has been a great loss to us in Doomadgee."

With Rod Curtin's guidance Commissioners Christopher Logan, Elaine Cairns, Karen Jupiter, Kaylene O'Keefe, Eleanor Logan and Guy Douglas, have made significant inroads into the work of Welfare Reform in Doomadgee. The best indicator of this has been the Local Commissioners' capacity to conduct conferences in their own right within a very short period of time.

Rod reports that one of his fondest memories was participating in local Doomadgee radio broadcasts with Sai Matainavora from Black Star Radio, promoting the importance of school attendance and transitioning to boarding school to enable further educational opportunities for the children of Doomadgee.

Rod's appointment as Deputy Commissioner ceased on 31 December 2018. As the Deputy Commissioner's appointment was not renewed by the Queensland Government, he did not get the opportunity to say his farewells to the Commissioners in Doomadgee and the other welfare reform communities. Commissioner Glasgow invited the former Deputy Commissioner as an honoured guest to the June Local Commissioner Development Week where he was able to personally greet all the Commissioners and make his official departure.

Rod's farewell to the Commissioners stated: *"I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity to share with and work with the Local Commissioners from all of the communities whose strength, dedication and tireless persistence in striving toward creating better communities and setting a wonderful example for the next generation has been inspirational."*

Rod Curtin has returned to his private practice where he is a passionate advocate for the advancement of programs to provide better resources and achieve better outcomes for Indigenous people who appear before the courts. His advocacy for Juvenile Justice issues and the rehabilitation of young offenders continues to be a paramount focus for him.