

Review of non-financial performance



Policy context – Government objectives and initiatives

Our activities support the welfare reforms and Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities published by the Queensland Government. The Commission contributes specifically to the following government priorities:



CREATE JOBS IN A STRONG ECONOMY

by assisting clients to access support services to achieve the confidence and capability needed to obtain employment, creating purpose and allowing families to fully participate in society, and by initiating a continuous improvement strategy for our organisational capability



GIVE ALL OUR CHILDREN A GREAT START

by supporting expectant mothers and young families in welfare reform communities to access maternal and child health, early childhood education and care services, and to understand the importance of the early years to the long-term health and wellbeing of their children



KEEP QUEENSLANDERS HEALTHY

by working with service providers to support the delivery of effective responses to alcohol and drug misuse, mental illness and violence for our clients in the welfare reform communities and developing self-care and resilience in Local Commissioners



KEEP COMMUNITIES SAFE

by influencing the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour, promoting Indigenous local authority and nurturing a spirit of inquiry and innovation in order to address the complex problems facing the welfare reform communities



BE A RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

by providing effective and efficient client services for families, strengthening collaborative cross-agency partnerships to support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authorities, improving access to relevant service provision in the communities and working to increase school enrolment and attendance

Our activities specifically support the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) which is the department responsible for promoting and monitoring the government's progress in Closing the Gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage. There are seven strategic areas for action established under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement for driving reform which the Commission addresses through its conferencing processes and participation in collaborative cross-agency partnerships:

- Early childhood – improving child and maternal health care, supporting good parenting and strengthening childhood education and care through early intervention
- Schooling – supporting the improvement of literacy and numeracy levels and year 12 or equivalent attainment of children in our communities by providing guidance, encouragement and information to families on the requirement for children to attend school
- Health – linking clients to support services to address their health needs
- Economic participation – enabling clients to challenge complex behaviours presenting barriers to economic participation
- Safe communities – addressing the problem of violence, alcohol, criminal and anti-social behaviours



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- Governance and leadership – enhancing government policies and systems to improve engagement mechanisms, developing and supporting community capacity and leadership and supporting the development of leadership for women and young people
- Land and culture – promoting and affirming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The Commission delivers services to five communities, all of which are culturally unique and some of which are geographically remote. Each community is different, however, each can be characterised by the entrenched disadvantage of Indigenous community members. High rates of welfare dependency and multi-generational poverty have resulted in communities with high numbers of individuals and families with complex needs.

Our challenge is to work collaboratively with partner agencies, as part of a linked service system to engage, empower and enable individuals, families and the wider community to make positive and lasting change. In meeting this challenge the Commission acknowledges and complements several Queensland Government strategies and reforms such as:

- the 'Moving Ahead Strategy', a whole-of-government strategy to improve Indigenous economic participation
- the 'Our Way Strategy', initiated to address the over-representation of Indigenous children in Queensland's child protection system
- the 'Changing Tracks' action plan to build upon existing initiatives to ensure Indigenous children grow up in a safe and nurturing environment
- the 'Tracks to Treaty' commitment aimed at rebuilding the relationship between the Queensland Government and Indigenous peoples structured upon mutual respect, recognition and acknowledging a shared history and the right to self-determination
- the 'Local Thriving Communities' reform – reframing and reforming how the Queensland Government works with Indigenous communities to deliver better outcomes
- the Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy, providing a whole-of-government framework to increase procurement with Indigenous businesses to grow and develop a diverse and sustainable Indigenous business sector and improve employment outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Commission interacts with the above strategies and reforms through local decision-making by referring individuals to public services, assisting community members to gain benefits from available opportunities and improving student transitions to education. Over 70 percent of the Commission's annual budget (refer page 31) is allocated to community operations and conference facilitation, supporting the Moving Ahead Strategy, Queensland's Indigenous Procurement Policy and local and regional economies.

The Commission has adopted a strategic plan which clearly defines the strategic outcomes sought by the Commission together with objectives and strategies it will employ to achieve its objectives. The Commission's strategic plan is consistent with and guided by current whole-of-government priorities. The strategic plan is reviewed on an annual basis and can be found at Appendix A.

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Performance highlights

The following report details our performance for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

The 2019-20 year has been a period of intense growth and development. Having gained some certainty surrounding the immediate future of the Commission with the appointment of Commissioner Tammy Williams as the new FRC Commissioner in September 2019, the reappointment of Local Commissioners until 30 June 2020, and the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in December 2019 committing funding for the operations of the Commission until 30 June 2021, the Local Commissioners and registry staff have redoubled their efforts to support FRC clients and their communities.

A number of strategic and operational changes were implemented which have enabled the Commission to improve operational performance in a number of areas. A quarterly process of internal audit, review and the setting of performance measures has been developed and introduced as a vital tool to provide insight into operational effectiveness, identify risks and maintain accountability as we strive to improve outcomes for Commission clients. Data collection and analysis provided the Commission as a whole, and individual communities, with information on their performance across several key metrics including conferencing and outcomes. The information has been instrumental in allowing Local Commissioners to identify priorities for their communities, training and development requirements and in assisting registry staff and Local Registry Coordinators to better understand how to support Commissioners and clients.

Another new operational strategy was the development of community action plans. Local Registry Coordinators and Local Commissioners have used data dashboards provided by the registry, along with their own knowledge and local priorities, to develop comprehensive strategies to enhance the impact of conferencing and to better support clients through an increased emphasis on referrals to support services. A significant part of the community action plans included a stocktake of stakeholders and service providers in each community. This has been invaluable in identifying service gaps, possible new service providers and in the context of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, having a good understanding of which services were available to clients.

In line with a new focus on timely decision making, in January 2020 new practice directions addressing the use of rescheduled and adjourned conferences were issued. Local Commissioners quickly adopted the new processes which operationalise a more targeted conference timetable. The change has resulted in matters being determined in a timely manner, and lessened the number of times clients are being conferenced in regard to the same issue.

Shortly before the end of the 2019-20 financial year, new practice directions and guidelines for the use of FRAs and show cause conferences were developed. The FRC anticipates data showing the effects of these new practice directions on conference outcomes to be available over the next two quarters.

The registry's standard practice of cross-training employees across a variety of roles proved beneficial as staff resources were stretched to meet the challenge of operating in the COVID-19 environment and during the Aurukun 'crisis'. The workload redistribution provided training opportunities for employees to upskill and evidenced the Commission's commitment to ensuring an agile, high performing and innovative workforce capable of delivering flexible, effective and efficient services, even during times of crisis.



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In June 2020 the Commission was informed by reports from Aurukun that the increase to certain welfare payments coupled with restricted activity and movements due to COVID-19 had resulted in a notable increase in gambling. Of greater concern was information received that children were also attending and engaging in gambling circles, in some cases with adult encouragement, and in others, conducting their own gambling activities with significant sums of money in the 'pot'. Further information was received that the gambling was impacting school attendance and that some children who did turn up to class were struggling with having had very little sleep. Commissioner Williams wrote to the FR Board informing them of the concerns raised. Dr Chris Sarra (Director General of DATSIP and Chair of the FR Board) responded and advised of a working group convened to address the issue and acknowledged the limited ability for the Commission to act due to the disconnect between gambling and the agency notices received by the Commission.

A further significant community issue arose during the reporting period in Doomadgee following the lifting of restrictions on the sale of normal unleaded petrol at the Doomadgee Roadhouse. An increased number of Child Concern Reports relating to petrol sniffing have been received by the Commission in the second half of the financial year. A review of the reports is being undertaken with a view to dedicating a full three-day conference sitting to address the problem.

A key performance indicator supporting the FRC Act's object of restoring local authority is the proportion of conferences that are held with Local Commissioners sitting alone. This fiscal year 94.3 percent of conferences were held with three Local Commissioners presiding. Commissioner Williams performed a significant support role, travelling extensively to FRC communities (prior to imposed COVID-19 travel restrictions) to support and guide the Local Commissioners in their decision-making and in adapting to new processes and priorities.

Whilst the travel restrictions may have provided a barrier to service delivery in some communities, it also provided an opportunity for some providers to catch up on outstanding reports to the Commission on the progress of clients on FRC case plan referrals. Unfortunately, due to the limitations on services available, information on engagement and progress was scant and this lack of reporting has risked the effectiveness of case plan referrals and early intervention support for clients during this period. The Commission looks forward to receiving more detailed reporting from referral partners when the delivery of support services returns to normal.

School attendance

School attendance across the communities was significantly affected this year by the impact of COVID-19. From Term 2 the State Government determined that the physical attendance of staff at school should be minimised and transitioned from the traditional model of schooling to remote learning with a modified curriculum, supplemented where feasible by on-line learning. Teachers and required staff attended school campuses, along with vulnerable students and the children of essential workers. Many families experienced significant personal and social stress during the pandemic and elected not to send their children to school.

Aurukun school attendance was also significantly affected by community unrest which occurred in January 2020, with many families displaced from Aurukun. Approximately 25 percent of the school population was no longer resident in Aurukun, but still present on the roll and reported as absent. A large workload was handled by a range of agencies led by DATSIP to encourage displaced children to be enrolled in local schools, and FRC clients were conferenced in regard to school attendance and enrolment notices received from the Department of Education.

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Student attendance was also affected in Doomadgee and Hope Vale by community unrest, the annual wet season and sorry business. The deficit in school attendance requires a whole of community response. The value that a community places on education as an essential part of childhood development is crucial in determining the level of student attendance, and the approach to education is affected by community cultural norms. For Department of Education published statistical data refer to <https://www.data.qld.gov.au/dataset/state-school-attendance-rate>.

Additional activity data

The following table provides additional activity information not mentioned previously, or without a comparison to the previous financial year.

Table 1: Additional activity data for the financial year.

Activity for the financial year	2018-19	2019-20
Total number of notices received by the Commission ¹	8,031	7,348
Number of within jurisdiction notices received	5,670	4,941
Number of not within jurisdiction notices received	2,361	2,407
Number of clients notified to the Commission from within jurisdiction notices	1,300	1,217
Number of clients served to attend conference	914	811
Conferences conducted	2,682	2,228
Conference attendance percentage	60.6%	59.2%
Conference non-attendance percentage with acceptable (reasonable) excuse ²	27.6%	21.7%
Conditional Income Management (CIM) orders	233	219
Voluntary Income Management (VIM) agreements	20	20
Information as at the last day of the financial year		
Number of clients subject to a current CIM	140	134
Number of clients currently on a VIM	14	17

1. Agency notices are counted on the basis of the number of persons named on the notice. For example a Child Safety and Welfare notice relating to two parents is counted as two notices and if three children from one family have an unexplained absence on one day, it is counted as three individual notices.
2. Calculated by dividing all conferences with an explained reason for non-attendance by the number of conferences where the client did not attend conference.



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Table 2: FRC client population by gender and age 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Information for the financial year	Female count	Male count	Female average age	Male average age
Clients who received a notice during the financial year ³	686	531	36	37
Clients who conferenced during the financial year ⁴	477	334	36	36
Clients referred during the financial year ⁵	181	105	36	35
Clients placed on CIM during the financial year ⁶	132	33	36	36
Clients placed on VIM during the financial year ⁷	8	10	36	57

Performance statement

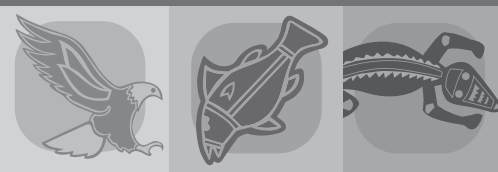
Following are the performance measures used by the Commission to identify workload and operating results.

Table 3: Performance measures 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Performance measures	2018-19 actual result	2019-20 actual result
Percentage of conferences conducted independently by Local Commissioners	96.9%	94.3%
Percentage of CIM clients who have had CIM orders revoked or reduced	34.3%	28.3%
Percentage of conferences attended	60.6%	59.2%

3. Average age of a client who received a notice for the financial year is calculated at the date of the first notice received for the client during the financial year.
4. Average age of a conferenced client for the financial year is calculated at the date of the first conference held for the client during the financial year.
5. Average age of a referred client for the financial year is calculated at the first conference date held where the client was placed on a case plan during the financial year.
6. Average age of a CIM'd client for the financial year is calculated at the first conference date held where the client was placed on a CIM for the financial year.
7. Average age of a VIM'd client for the financial year is calculated at the start date of the agreement where the client was placed on a VIM for the financial year.

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Performance measures were generally maintained despite the COVID-19 impact during the reporting period. The variance in conferences conducted independently is largely due to Commissioner Williams sitting in conference to assist Local Commissioners in performing their functions under new practice directions and amended guidelines for conferencing. Commissioner Williams was also required to sit as the FRC Commissioner with two Aurukun Commissioners residing in Cairns to conference displaced Aurukun community members in both Cairns and Coen.

Although the Commission offered telephone conferencing to community members during the pandemic, a slight drop in conference attendance was still experienced.

Notices within jurisdiction

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, the Commission received a total of 7,348 agency notices of which 4,941 relating to 1,217 clients were in jurisdiction, comprising:

Table 4: In jurisdiction notices by type and community 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Type of notice	AU	CO	DM ⁸	HV	MG	Total
Supreme Court	0	0	-	0	0	0
District Court	39	0	-	8	0	47
Magistrates Court	532	31	-	224	110	897
Domestic Violence Breach	44	9	-	20	5	78
Domestic Violence Order	93	10	-	43	27	173
School Attendance	1,144	123	1,560	505	84	3,416
School Enrolment	21	0	0	5	2	28
Child Safety and Welfare	75	14	135	37	15	276
Housing Tenancy	7	5	-	8	6	26
Total	1,955	192	1,695	850	249	4,941

Further details of notices within jurisdiction for each community are set out below:

- Aurukun received 1,955 notices relating to 472 clients (240 female and 232 male)
- Coen received 192 notices relating to 70 clients (42 female and 28 male)
- Doomadgee received 1,695 notices relating to 315 clients (227 female and 88 male)
- Hope Vale received 850 notices relating to 280 clients (139 female and 141 male)
- Mossman Gorge received 249 notices relating to 80 clients (38 female and 42 male).

8. Agency notices for the community of Doomadgee are presently received from the Department of Education and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women only



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Table 5: In jurisdiction notices by type and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Type of notice	Qtr 45	Qtr 46	Qtr 47	Qtr 48	Total
Supreme Court	0	0	0	0	0
District Court	13	11	13	10	47
Magistrates Court	266	371	252	8	897
Domestic Violence Breach	27	31	15	5	78
Domestic Violence Order	66	60	41	6	173
School Attendance	1,003	877	808	728	3,416
School Enrolment	4	4	20	0	28
Child Safety and Welfare	64	64	68	80	276
Housing Tenancy	14	8	4	0	26
Total	1,457	1,426	1,221	837	4,941

Table 6: In jurisdiction notices by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Number of notices	Qtr 45	Qtr 46	Qtr 47	Qtr 48	Total
Aurukun	608	652	460	235	1,955
Coen	67	54	37	34	192
Doomadgee	443	391	467	394	1,695
Hope Vale	270	269	172	139	850
Mossman Gorge	69	60	85	35	249
Total	1,457	1,426	1,221	837	4,941

Notices overview

Of particular note in the above table is the drop in Magistrates Court notices. This drop is a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General ceased court sittings during quarter 48 leading to a 96.8 percent decrease in notices. Decreases are likewise reflected in Domestic Violence Orders and Breaches.

Similarly, following an Australian Government directive that penalty action for breaches of tenancy agreements were not to be actioned during the COVID-19 pandemic period, nil housing tenancy notices were received by the Commission in quarter 48.

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From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, 74.7 percent of clients have received more than one notice with 23.2 percent of clients receiving more than five notices. Conversely, 25.3 percent of clients have received only one notice. This is suggestive of the complexity of behaviours experienced by a significant proportion of our clients.

**Table 7: FRC clients by number of notices
1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.**

Number of notices received	Number of clients
1	308
2	213
3	173
4	153
5	88
>5	282
Total	1,217

Conferences

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, a total of 2,228 conferences were held relating to 811 clients with 59.2 percent of conferences attended.

**Table 8: Conferences by community and quarter
1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.**

Conferences	Qtr 45	Qtr 46	Qtr 47	Qtr 48
Aurukun	239	320	215	163
Coen	26	13	12	34
Doomadgee	236	279	106	129
Hope Vale	90	88	59	71
Mossman Gorge	33	41	32	42
Total	624	741	424	439

Of those conferences not attended, 21.7 percent were for explained (acceptable) reasons. Conferences during the financial year resulted in 23 agreements to attend community support services, 302 orders made to attend community support services and 219 CIM orders issued.

Referrals

Referrals to service providers are an integral part of achieving the Commission's strategic outcomes of improved community wellbeing and responsibility. During this reporting period 402 referrals inclusive of orders and agreements to attend support services for 286 clients were made to service providers.

The number of referrals is comprised of 120 referrals in the first half of the financial year and 282 referrals in the second half of the financial year. The number of referrals for the financial year represents a 396.3 percent increase from the previous reporting period of 81 referrals. This result is indicative of the review of operations, continuity of funding, engagement with service provider partners and the increased capability of the Commissioners to conference clients with complex behaviours.

**Table 9: FRC referral pathways by referral type and quarter
1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.**

Referral type	Qtr 45	Qtr 46	Qtr 47	Qtr 48
MPower	1	20	62	39
WBC - Apunipima	25	22	59	24
WBC - NWRH	3	7	4	1
School Attendance Officer	10	15	32	35
RAATSIC (FWS) - Parenting Program	1	0	4	1
Gungarde (FWS) - Parenting Program	0	0	1	2
Mulungu (FWS) - Parenting Program	0	0	2	2
QLD Health	0	0	3	0
Save the Children	2	14	11	0
Total	42	78	178	104



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The number of clients placed on a case plan concurrent with a CIM increased from 36 in 2018-19 to 112 in 2019-20 whilst the number placed on a CIM order without a case plan dropped from 140 to 53. These changes are indicative of the shifting views of Local Commissioners to practice a more holistic approach, using support services in conjunction with income management to stabilise family circumstances and encourage improved social behaviour.

Case management monitoring

As at 30 June 2020, 286 clients were being case-managed through active case plans pertaining to referrals. The number of clients case-managed on a current case plan serves as the clearest indicator of the renewed approach of Local Commissioners to assist in building safe, caring and connected communities.

As noted, the Commission has not been receiving client progress reports from some key support services. Whilst it is acknowledged that service providers have competing priorities with respect to their reporting obligations, the lack of information about client progress available to Commissioners impedes the effectiveness of case plan referrals.

Conditional income management

Table 10: Conditional income management orders by community and quarter
1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

CIM orders	Qtr 45	Qtr 46	Qtr 47	Qtr 48
Aurukun	38	9	22	35
Coen	0	0	2	4
Doomadgee	30	38	2	9
Hope Vale	11	5	6	0
Mossman Gorge	4	1	0	3
Total	83	53	32	51

In this reporting period 219 CIM orders were issued to 165 clients. As at 30 June 2020 there were 134 clients subject to a current CIM. CIM remains a flexible tool used by Commissioners to improve the welfare of children by encouraging families to ensure basic household needs are met and to encourage consistency in school attendance.

Voluntary income management

The Commission processed 20 VIM agreements for 18 clients during this reporting period and since the commencement of the Commission in 2008, 151 clients (95 female and 56 male) have had an active VIM agreement. As at 30 June 2020 there were 17 clients on a current VIM. VIM provides a practical option for all welfare reform community members to help manage their finances. The Commission has renewed its focus on raising awareness about VIMs within communities.

Show cause notices

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, no show cause hearings were held.

Show cause notices are intended as a conferencing tool to address non-compliance with a requirement under a case plan to attend a community support service. In the past there has been a tendency to use the 90 percent income management rate in place of the show cause process. The proposed actions for a show cause notice given to a person include imposing a CIM order, increasing the proportion of the person's welfare payments to be income-managed, or increasing the period for which the person is subject to income management. A review of practices and procedures under the Commission's new leadership has resulted in the reimplementation of a show cause process. The renewed approach which will be progressively rolled out over the next two quarters makes greater use of changing the proportion of welfare payments subject to income management and the period for which income management will apply to address non-compliance.

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Amend or end applications

The FRC Act allows clients to apply to amend or end a Commission agreement or order. The Commission views applications to amend or end agreements or orders as an indicator of client confidence in the Commission's ability to provide a fair, just and equitable process.

Whether the outcome was successful depends on what the client requested. This year 58.1 percent of applications were granted. Thirty-six applications resulted in the revocation of income management agreements and orders.

Applications to amend or end voluntary income management are heard in the conference setting, unless the client indicates to the Commission the request requires urgent attention. If so, the application may be considered and a decision made outside of a scheduled conference date.

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, a total of 62 applications (46 female and 16 male) to amend or end an agreement or order were received. The applications resulted in 36 applications being granted, 5 applications resulted in a revised order or agreement, 19 applications were refused, 1 application was withdrawn by the client and 1 application was received at the end of the financial year with the decision pending.

Table 11: Applications to amend or end agreements or orders by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Number of applications	Qtr 45	Qtr 46	Qtr 47	Qtr 48
Aurukun	6	2	15	6
Coen	1	0	0	0
Doomadgee	6	6	1	1
Hope Vale	3	5	2	3
Mossman Gorge	1	2	0	2
Total	17	15	18	12

Granted applications:

- 31 income management agreements and orders revoked
- 1 CIM order and case plan revoked
- 1 CIM order revoked and client given a reprimand
- 2 CIM orders revoked and clients advised to comply with their case plans
- 1 CIM order at 90 percent revoked and client placed on a new CIM order at 75 percent for a period of 12 months

Applications with a revised order or agreement:

- 1 CIM order at 90 percent revoked and client placed on a new CIM order at 60 percent for a period of 12 months
- 1 CIM order at 75 percent revoked and client placed on a new CIM order at 60 percent for a period of 12 months
- 2 CIM orders at 75 percent revoked and clients placed on a new CIM order at 60 percent for a period of 12 months and clients placed on a new case plan
- 1 CIM order at 75 percent revoked and client placed on a new CIM order at 90 percent for a period of 12 months.

Withdrawn applications:

- 1 application withdrawn by the client.

Refused applications:

- 15 applications refused
- 4 applications refused and clients given a reprimand.

Pending applications:

- 1 application was received at the end of the financial year with decisions pending.