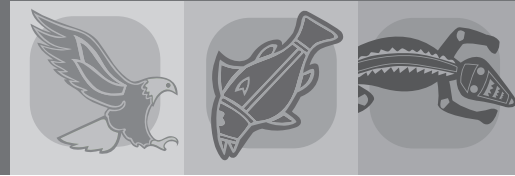


Community operations Mossman Gorge



FRC operations in Mossman Gorge were undertaken by Local Commissioners Loretta Spratt, George Ross-Kelly, Zara Ryan, Jarrod Kulka, Daphne Creek, Helenia Creek and Julie-Ann Williams, supported by Acting Local Registry Coordinators Kate Gooding and Cara Marks. An account of their operations during the reporting period follows.

Mossman Gorge Commissioners' report

We were very thankful to have five new Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners join our team in the 2022-23 financial year. The appointment of new Local Commissioners has increased the diversity, knowledge and strength within our team and has enabled us to resume the local authority envisaged in the FRC Act. With a strong team of seven Local Commissioners, we were able to accomplish the achievements below that demonstrates our commitment to support more clients in our community.

Significant achievements

- There was an 84 percent increase in the number of conferences held from 2021-22 increasing from 58 in 2021-22 to 107 in 2022-23.
- Conference attendance increased to 65.4 percent this year and is the highest attendance since the commencement of the Commission.
- Family responsibilities agreements to attend a support service increased by 65 percent increasing from 17 in 2021-22 to 28 in 2022-23.
- Numbers of referrals to support services from family responsibilities agreements and orders increased by 82 percent increasing from 33 in 2021-22 to 60 in 2022-23.

Challenges

Sorry business

The Mossman Gorge community experienced extended periods of sorry business this year. Local service providers reported delays to the provision of support services over this period, and reduced client engagement, attributing sorry business as the main cause. It is also known that sorry business has a direct impact on school attendance with children often missing several weeks of school.

School attendance

We have been concerned about long-term disengaged students and noticed an increase in the number of students becoming disengaged from school (especially during the transition from primary to high school). We have found it difficult to witness children re-engage in school, only to be set up to fail due to the lack of bridging programs which makes it difficult for them to catch up to their peers. It is our experience that low school attendance can often be attributed to a lack of routine and boundaries for children in the home. As Local Commissioners we struggle to address this issue because of the lack of parenting programs available to refer our clients to so they can enhance their parenting skills and develop positive discipline techniques.



Community operations Mossman Gorge

Increase in domestic violence

We were concerned this year by the increase in domestic violence offences. This is evidenced in the statistics which show Domestic Violence Offence (DVO) notices have increased by 29 percent compared to last year increasing from 14 in 2021-22 to 18 in 2022-23, and Domestic Violence Breach (DVB) notices have increased by 18 percent increasing from 17 in 2021-22 to 20 in 2022-23. This is the highest total in any financial year since the introduction of the domestic violence trigger. In line with the increase in notices, we have prioritised these matters for conferencing and connected clients to support services. To achieve our objective to support the restoration of socially responsible standards of behaviour, we continue to advocate for appropriate perpetrator intervention programs suitable for client referrals in Mossman Gorge.

Increase in youth crime

There has been an increase in youth crime in Mossman Gorge and surrounding areas which we believe is worsening. We have been proactive in our approach to this issue and have attended monthly Youth Community Agency Network meetings attended by representatives from local council, government and non-government agencies who work with youth, but we feel our hands are tied in what we can do due to legislative constraints. We would like to support local youth and their families with our early intervention and culturally appropriate approach, but to do this we need to have the Childrens Court trigger reinstated so that the FRC receives child conviction notices as intended under the FRC Act.

Other community matters

Elevated School Response

In Term 1 (January to March 2023) an Elevated School Response (ESR) strategy was co-developed with local schools and service providers. The strategy was designed in response to concerns raised by the community, Bamanga Bub Ngadimunku Aboriginal Corporation (BBNAC), Mossman State School and Mossman State High School about behavioural issues on the school bus, school aged children roaming around the community during school hours, and an increase in youth offences. The project commenced in Term 2 and has already seen very positive outcomes. For the entire term, one Local Commissioner rode on the Mossman Gorge school bus for three days each week, whilst other Local Commissioners and the Local Registry Coordinator conducted home visits to address missed school at the earliest opportunity. Close relationships that have been fostered with the schools have led to the FRC receiving up to date school attendance so we can tackle school absences in a more effective and efficient manner. FRC presence on the school bus has assisted with behavioural issues and helped to drive increased school attendance for some families. We are proud of the way we have worked with the community and the schools to address this complex issue, as we know that a collaborative approach is necessary to combat systemic and entrenched barriers to school attendance.

Significant community events

At the beginning of the school year, the FRC in Mossman Gorge worked collaboratively with the early childhood sector to explore opportunities for early learning. This culminated in an 'Education and Training Event' to bring services together from cluster playgroups, kindergartens and preps. The event's purpose was to promote school readiness, school attendance and health, and was supported by many local service providers. We will continue to do everything we can to support early childhood development, as we know how important early education is to ensure that children have a strong foundation for future development.

Community operations Mossman Gorge



Enhanced Income Management

Throughout the year we worked closely with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Services Australia on the transition from the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) to the new enhanced Income Management SmartCard. This included hosting staff from DSS in Mossman Gorge on 8 March 2023 to support community members with a successful transition.

As Local Commissioners we were initially concerned when the Australian Government announced the abolishment of the CDC. But we were then relieved to hear that the FRC could continue to use our form of income management with the SmartCard as this is an invaluable tool to help our people. This year Voluntary Income Management (VIM) has emerged as being an increasingly popular and helpful tool by which vulnerable people and Elders are able to take greater control of their own affairs, by using the SmartCard as a way to safeguard their welfare payments from humbugging, and ensuring money is available to buy essential items. We have also noticed that clients on existing VIMs which are due to expire are starting to request to sign up for a new agreement extending the period of VIM. These clients expressed how helpful VIM has been in assisting with budgeting and saving, protecting their payments and supporting daily needs for themselves and their families. Once our clients have entered into a VIM and to promote financial responsibility, we encourage them to also undertake voluntary case plan agreements to attend the Cape York Partnership (CYP) Opportunity Hub where they are provided with long-term budgeting strategies which assists them to utilise the Smartcard to its full potential.

The next 12 months

Last year we reported that developing our Intensive Case Management (ICM) framework would be an active focal point in the coming months. We have certainly focused on increasing our ICM interactions this year. We have found that ICM interactions outside of the formal conference setting has reinforced the supportive nature of FRC interventions, and it has assisted to further build a trusting and supportive relationship with our clients and service providers. We will continue to build on our ICM work over the next 12 months, with an increase of regularly scheduled ICM days providing more opportunities to work with vulnerable clients.

In the future we would like to see better, culturally appropriate support for clients who have recently been released from prison, as it can be very difficult for these clients to be reintegrated back into community. We have noticed that not having appropriate supports has led to clients reoffending, and regularly returning to prison. We would like to have a stronger formal partnership with Queensland Corrective Services to provide a closely coordinated approach to a client's reintegration in community from prison, and to be able to conference clients upon their return to community at the first available opportunity.