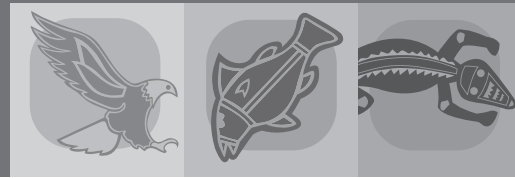


Community operations Mossman Gorge



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

Mossman Gorge Commissioners' report

It has now been over twelve months since the appointment of four of our new Local Commissioners to Mossman Gorge, as we sadly said goodbye to Helenia Creek, who relocated out of the area. We wish Helenia luck in her journey for the future. The team have adapted well, and with quality training the new Local Commissioners have progressed into their formal decision-making roles responding to the needs of individuals and families in our community.

Our team of six Local Commissioners and a Local Registry Coordinator have shown flexibility, understanding and consistent strength when engaging with clients who are confronting difficulties. We believe this consistency has encouraged client willingness to consider voluntary pathways and move towards changing behaviours. We have seen clients voluntarily agreeing to enhanced income management and an increase in voluntary referrals to service providers.

Significant achievements

- Voluntary referrals to service providers have increased from 5 in 2022-23 to 34 in 2023-24. There has been a slight increase in the number of voluntary income management agreements (VIMs) from 10 in 2022-23 to 11 in 2023-24.
- We believe the increase in voluntary agreements has come about because of our new approach to engaging and supporting clients outside of conference. Between January and June 2024, we have recorded 131 client engagement activities.
- Conference attendance has increased again to 65.9% this year and is the highest attendance since the commencement of the Commission, surpassing last year's previous highest attendance of 65.4%.
- The decisions we are making at conference is also reflecting the desire of our clients to seek help. For instance, the number of decisions made by the FRC ordering a client to attend a support service has decreased by 50% from 20 in 2022-23 to a total of 10 in 2023-24. Also, the number of orders for conditional income management has decreased from 6 in 2022-23 to 0 in 2023-24. Instead, we are pleased to see clients taking up income management on a voluntary basis (see VIM statistic above).



Community operations Mossman Gorge

Challenges

Youth crime

The rate of our young people in detention is appalling with the current annual Closing the Gap data reporting Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention is 40.9 per 10,000 youth on an average day.¹

Along with our colleagues, Local Commissioners from the four other FRC communities, Commissioner Williams, Deputy Commissioner Rod Curtin and registry staff, we stand together to advocate for the operationalising of the Childrens Court trigger in the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*. This will allow us to work alongside the Queensland Government and provide opportunities for early intervention to vulnerable and at-risk youth and their families in our communities.

Domestic family violence

Domestic and family violence has been an ongoing challenge in our community and last year we raised concerns about the increase in domestic violence offences from 2021-22 to 2022-23 with increases of 18% in Domestic Violence Orders (DVO) and 29% in Domestic Violence Breaches (DVB). This year we are happy to report a favourable decrease shown in the statistics. DVO notices have declined by 40% compared to last year, decreasing from 20 in 2022-23 to 12 in 2023-24 and DVB notices have declined by 1 from 18 notices in 2022-23 to 17 notices in 2023-24.

Whilst we are pleased to see the reduction in notices and we continue to collaborate with service providers to undertake early intervention practices, the challenge remains for our community to find and implement culturally appropriate perpetrator interventions that are accessible to our clients. Along with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner we are advocating for services to fill this gap which will be funded, developed and delivered in a timely way and align with the strengthened laws enacted by the Queensland Government on 1 August 2023, through the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023*.

Devastating effects of the flood

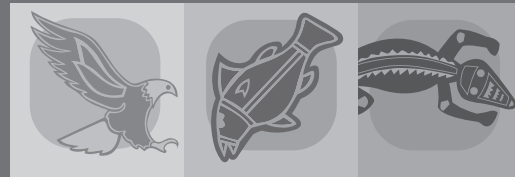
In December 2023 Tropical Cyclone Jasper led to extraordinary flooding with devastating consequences for residents of the Mossman region. Lengthy power outages, large scale isolation, forced evacuations and road closures significantly impacted residents, businesses and service providers who support the most vulnerable people in our community. For some residents and businesses, the effects of the flooding meant they were unable to return to the community for several months. The local water treatment plant was also damaged in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Jasper leaving residents without drinking water for several weeks until it was fully restored.

Other community matters

Client Engagement

We have embraced a new approach with an increased focus on client interactions outside the formal conference setting. This approach has given community members a different way to move in a positive direction toward self-empowerment and changed behaviours for families and individuals. Clients have

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demonstrated a willingness to take personal responsibility through the uptake of voluntary referrals to service providers and voluntary income management. We are also finding the interactions during home visits in community have served to build on the relationships we have and gain more respect from our clients. We are proud that the Client Engagement (CE) approach is working to further advance the main objects of the FRC Act in supporting the restoration of socially responsible standards of behaviour and local authority.

Elevated School Response

In last year's annual report, we discussed the introduction of an Elevated School Response (ESR) strategy which, in Mossman Gorge, was co-designed with parents and local stakeholders including the local Mossman State School and Mossman State High School to address school attendance and youth behavioural concerns raised by the community.

Prior to the commencement of the school year, we implemented early intervention strategies to assist with school readiness. During Term 1 and Term 2 2024, we received positive feedback from clients who were willing to engage in conversation about complex barriers affecting school attendance. An important aspect of the ESR strategy is to address the barriers impacting school attendance by offering a pathway to a service referral. Throughout the financial year there have been several voluntary case plan referrals to support services for clients involved in the ESR initiative. These referral pathways address issues impacting school attendance such as social and emotional wellbeing, parenting, youth support and anger management.

Closing the Gap targets are imperative for our people. Early in the year our focus was also on increasing the proportion of First Nations children enrolled in 'the year before fulltime schooling' target of 95% by 2025. With the support of the Local Registry Coordinator maintaining a list of children eligible to commence Prep in 2024, we worked with parents to actively encourage enrolment to ensure we are contributing to this critical target. We can confirm that to the best of our knowledge, all children of clients in our jurisdiction who were eligible for Prep were successfully enrolled in school for the start of the 2024 school year. This is reassuring and we will continue to educate and encourage children to engage in education for a better future for themselves and their families.

Whole of community approach

On our behalf the Local Registry Coordinator facilitates and participates in a monthly, inter-agency complex case management meeting, where various support services and stakeholders identify vulnerable individuals and/or families facing complex and challenging circumstances that may have fallen through the gaps or who have difficulty engaging. The meetings work well with consistent attendance and valuable information sharing.

The next 12 months

We, as Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners, have brought our diverse backgrounds and experiences together to engage, support and respond to community needs. Statistical evidence together with feedback from our clients has found the CE approach to be successful in empowering our community members to assume greater responsibility for the wellbeing of their family. We will continue to focus our work in this area to enhance the opportunities our people deserve.