

Family Responsibilities Commission

Report to the Family Responsibilities Board

Quarterly Report

No. 61

July 2023 to September 2023



Report prepared by the Family Responsibilities Commission under the leadership of Commissioner Tammy Williams and presented to the Family Responsibilities Board pursuant to section 144 of the Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008.

The Family Responsibilities Commission publishes annual and quarterly reports on the Commission's website in line with its policy and commitment to open data available to the public. For more details see: www.frcq.org.au

Executive Summary

The Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) is a key mechanism to support welfare reform community members and their families to restore socially responsible standards of behaviour and establish local authority.

The *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (FRC Act) provides for the establishment of the Family Responsibilities Board (FR Board). The FR Board has a mandate to give advice and make recommendations to the Minister about the operation of the Commission and similarly to give advice and make recommendations to the Commissioner about the performance of the Commission's functions.

The Commissioner must as soon as practical after each quarter, give the FR Board a written report about the Commission's operations during the period.¹ This report sets out the Commission's key operational matters for the period July to September 2023.

Quantified in the table below are the activities undertaken by the Commission during quarter 61 with comparisons shown to the previous quarter.

Table 1: Activity from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023

Activity for the quarter	Qtr 60	Qtr 61
Total number of notices received by the Commission ²	2,079	2,075
Number of notices within jurisdiction	1,408	1,434
Number of notices not within jurisdiction	671	641
Number of clients notified to the Commission from notices within jurisdiction	714	721
Conferences		
Conferences conducted	250	228
Number of clients served to attend conference	207	184
Attendance percentage for conferences	70%	60%
Non-attendance percentage with acceptable (reasonable) excuse for conferences	38%	40%
Conference outcomes		
Agreements to attend community support services	51	52
Orders made to attend community support services	41	22
Referrals to service providers from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ³	113	92
Agreements for Conditional Income Management (CIM)	0	0
Orders made for CIM	17	13

¹ Section 144 *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*

² Agency notices are counted on the basis of the number of persons named on the notice (e.g. 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 from school for all or part of any three school days during a school term, this counts as three individual School Attendance notices against each person listed on the notice). Counting rules also stipulate that where multiple charges are received on a court notice each charge is counted as an individual notice.

³ An agreement and a decision can have multiple case plans which in turn can have multiple referrals where a service provider has multiple programs.

Domestic Violence statistical information as a subset from the total number of conferences conducted, referrals made and CIMs put in place	Qtr 60	Qtr 61
Conferences for domestic violence matters	61	59
Referrals from domestic violence conferences	30	34
CIM's from domestic violence conferences	6	3
Amend/end decisions for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders		
Number of amend/end decisions for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders	2	1
Accepted	50%	100%
Refused	50%	0%
Voluntary Agreements		
Voluntary agreements for a voluntary case plan (VCP)	15	27
Voluntary referrals to service providers	17	27
Voluntary agreements for Voluntary Income Management (VIM)	24	32
Amend/end decisions for Voluntary Agreements		
Number of amend/end decisions for Voluntary Agreements	5	5
Accepted	100%	100%
Refused	0%	0%
Other activity		
Applications to Amend or End received	7	6
Information as at the last day of the quarter		
Number of clients case-managed through current non-voluntary case plan	214	162
Number of clients subject to a current CIM	28	32
Number of clients on a current VIM	66	62

Quarterly trends

This quarter saw the number of conferences reduce from 250 in quarter 60 to 228 in quarter 61 with a subsequent corresponding reduction in the number of clients served to attend conference. During the period the Commission targeted more days in community for its Intensive Case Management framework which works outside the more formal conference setting. The reduction in conferencing is also reflected in the reduced number of orders to attend support services, referrals from conference and orders for conditional income management. As a result of utilising the Intensive Case Management approach with clients the Commission has seen an 80% increase in the number of voluntary case plans and an increase of 33% in the number of voluntary income management agreements from quarter 60.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

On 9 August 2023 an MoU was entered into between the Australian and Queensland Governments to ensure the Commission continued to service its operations at full capacity for a fixed period of three years from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026. The Commission was pleased with the collegiate approach to the negotiations between the tri-partite partners and is grateful for the outcome of a three year period to be able to provide relative stability to Local Commissioners, clients and staff. The Commission has received in full the first year of funding (i.e. 1 July 23 to 30 June 24) during quarter 61.

Local Commissioner Development Week

A Local Commissioner Development Week was conducted during the week commencing 4 September 2023. Local Commissioners from each community travelled to Cairns to participate in the following activities:

- update on the new Strategic Plan 2023-2027 from Camille Banks
- site visit to Djarragun College, and the Ngak Min Health Service
- occupational violence and aggression de-escalation training
- domestic and family violence training workshop presented by Deputy Commissioner Rod Curtin and Simon Bright from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSILS)
- understanding trauma informed approaches workshop by Professor Judy Atkinson
- strategic direction round table facilitated by Commissioner Tammy Williams and Deputy Commissioner Rod Curtin
- 15th birthday anniversary celebration dinner.

Annual Report

During quarter 61, much work occurred in the drafting and publishing the Commission's Annual Report 2022-23 which is required to be provided to the Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts by 31 October 2023.

ICT Upgrade

The systems hosting the FRC Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database, architecture and file system on Windows Server were rapidly approaching their 'end-of-life' during the quarter. In response to this, the service provider alerted the FRC about the impending decommissioning of these servers by the end of September 2023. In order to address the situation, the ICT team, under the leadership of the ICT Administrator and with the support of the ICT Support Officer, undertook a vital project to migrate the FRC's files and CRM to the latest Windows Server Operating System, Windows Server 2022, and Microsoft Server SQL 2022. Initiated in the early weeks of August, this project encompassed the procurement and setup of the necessary ICT hardware and software, coupled with extensive testing in conjunction with the FRC's key operations staff. The diligent efforts of the ICT team led to the successful migration of the systems on 25 September 2023, ensuring that the FRC's CRM systems are now operating on a secure and compliant platform.

The FRC's network and internet infrastructure also received a substantial upgrade to enhance its performance and reliability during quarter 61. Confronted with limited network speeds of 10Mbps up and down and outdated networking hardware, a significant change was imperative. The ICT team addressed these challenges by securing a new internet service that offers 250Mbps download and 100Mbps upload speeds. In addition, modern networking equipment has been introduced, enabling a thorough redesign and restructure of the network and firewall systems. To ensure continuous connectivity, a 4G backup for the internet has also been implemented. These upgrades have collectively transformed the FRC's network, significantly boosting its speed, efficiency, and overall reliability, to better support the organisation's operations.

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Abbreviations

AU	Aurukun
CO	Coen
CP	Case plan
CPA	Case plan agreement
CPO	Case plan order
CS	Child safety and welfare notice
CIM	Conditional Income Management
DSDSATSIP	Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
DIS	District Court notice
DM	Doomadgee
DVB	Domestic Violence Breach
DVO	Domestic Violence Order
EQ	School attendance notice
FRA	Family Responsibilities Agreement
FRC	Family Responsibilities Commission
HT	Housing tenancy breach
HV	Hope Vale
MAG	Magistrates Court notice
MG	Mossman Gorge
NFA	No further action
SEN	School enrolment notice
VCP	Voluntary Case Plan
VIM	Voluntary Income Management

Also:

Family Responsibilities Commission (the Commission)
Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 (the Act)
Family Responsibilities Commission Registry (the registry)
Family Responsibilities Board (the FR Board)

Family Responsibilities Commission Welfare Reforms

Report to 30 September 2023.

1. Activities and Trends

Client issues and interactions during the quarter

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

Many clients experience a complexity of issues.

Data collected by the FRC provides insight into the complexity of the issues faced by many clients. Table 2 sets out the different types of agency notices received by individual clients during the reporting period. During quarter 61, 607 clients (84%) were notified to the Commission with only one type of trigger notice. The remaining 114 clients (16%) received more than one type of trigger notice.

Table 2: Number of clients by number of different types of agency notices received 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023

Type of Different Types of Agency Notices Received	Number of clients
1	607
2	102
3	10
4	2
Total	721

Investigations reveal the following information regarding the types of sole trigger notices received by Commission clients during the quarter:

- 55% received a school attendance (EQ) notice
- 15% received a Magistrate Court (MAG) notice
- 8% received a child safety and welfare (CS) notice
- 4% received a domestic violence order (DVO) notice
- 1% received a domestic violence breach (DVB) notice.

The remaining sole trigger notices received for Commission clients during the quarter were 2 clients with a District court notice (DIS), 3 clients with a Housing Tenancy Breach notice (HT) and 1 client with a school enrolment notice (SEN).

Table 3 shows the combination of trigger notices received for the 114 clients with more than one type of trigger notice. One can see that predominantly there is a nexus between Court convictions and domestic violence orders/breaches with education notices and child safety issues, and also a strong nexus between child safety issues and education notices.

Table 3: Number of clients with a combination of different types of agency notices (i.e. Child Safety and Welfare (CS), Domestic Violence Order (DVO), Domestic Violence Breach (DVB), Magistrates Court (MAG), District Court (DIS), Education Queensland for school attendance (EQ), Housing Tenancy Breach (HT) and School Enrolment (SEN) from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023⁴

Type of Agency Notice/s	Number of clients
CS,DVB,DVO	1
CS,DVB,DVO,MAG	1
CS,DVB,MAG	1
CS,DVO	3
CS,DVO,EQ,MAG	1
CS,EQ	44
CS,EQ,MAG	2
CS,MAG	6
DVB,DVO,EQ	1
DVB,DVO,MAG	1
DVB,EQ	1
DVB,EQ,MAG	3
DVB,MAG	14
DVO,EQ	2
DVO,MAG	10
EQ,HT	1
EQ,HT,MAG	1
EQ,MAG	21
	114

Client interactions with the Commission fall within a continuum of decisions available.

The following data (tables 4 to 8) provides an overview of interactions that have taken place with clients during this reporting period, consisting of decisions where a final determination has taken place in conference and includes decisions delivered at application hearings. It does not include instances where a client was rescheduled to another conference due to non-attendance, or a conference was adjourned to another date to allow the parties to address matter/s prior to the Commissioners making a determination.

The role of the FRC is to work with the most vulnerable, disadvantaged group who engage in anti-social behaviours. Of this extremely vulnerable cohort who engage in anti-social behaviours there are a range of clients who fall within a spectrum of willingness to take personal accountability for their actions and accept support to address behaviours. The vast majority are prepared to accept support and demonstrate a degree of insight into their behaviours, however, there is a cohort of clients who are resistant to change.

Shown on the next page are the number of interactions (excluding reschedules and adjournments during the quarter) that resulted in a voluntary agreement, a decision by agreement or order, or a decision delivered on an amend/end application. The Commission is still seeing a number of interactions by clients on a less intrusive and more proactive basis, i.e. where engagement is on a voluntary basis (Table 4), or where acceptance of the Commission’s decision for a referral to a support service or income management is by agreement with the client (Table 5). These proactive interactions

⁴ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 5.

are considered to be a positive indication that community members have developed a consciousness of their actions and are demonstrating early insight into the affect those actions have on others.

Table 4: Number of voluntary agreements (where a client has agreed to a voluntary case plan or voluntary income management) entered into from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023⁵

Voluntary Agreements			
	VCP	VIM	Total
Total	27	32	59

Table 5: Number of decisions by agreement (where a client has agreed to a case plan or conditional income management) entered into from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023⁵

Decisions by Agreement			
Community	CP	CIM	Total
AU	27	0	27
CO	4	0	4
DM	14	0	14
HV	4	0	4
MG	3	0	3
Total	52	0	52

Table 6: Number of decisions by order (including where the FRC has mandated a client be the subject of a case plan or conditional income management) from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023⁵

Decision by Order								
Community	CCP	CCP & CIM Concurrently	CCP, CIM Rescheduled	CIM	No Further Action	Recommend Support Service	Reprimand	Total
AU	0	3	0	2	7	2	4	18
CO	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
DM	11	0	2	4	10	2	2	31
HV	2	2	0	0	13	0	0	17
MG	2	0	0	0	1	3	0	6
Total	15	5	2	6	33	7	6	74

Table 7: Number of decisions on applications from a Decision by order and a Decision by agreement (where a client seeks to alter or end their original FRC decision because their circumstances or behaviours have changed) from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023⁵

Decisions on Order and Agreement Amend/End Applications						
Community	CCP End	CCP End & CIM End	CIM Amend	CIM End	No Further Action	Total
Total	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table 8: Number of decisions of voluntary amend/end applications (where a self-referred client seeks to alter or end their voluntary income management agreement because their circumstances have changed) from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023⁶

Decisions of Voluntary Amend/End Applications				
Community	VIM Amend	VIM End	VIM No Further Action	Total
Total	0	5	0	5

⁵ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 5.

⁶ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 5.

During quarter 61 the number of interactions highlighted in tables 4 to 8 related to a total of 168 clients (112 female and 56 male). To clarify the variability of client interactions, the following may occur during the reporting period:

- A client may be placed on a case plan at the beginning of the quarter to one service provider and then referred to another service provider later in the same quarter.
- A client may be placed on a CIM order quarantining 60%, 75% or 90% of their welfare payments and then have their percentage of income management reduced or increased later in the quarter.
- A client may be separately or concurrently placed on a case plan and income management throughout the quarter, and a client may be placed on an income management order but then placed on a case plan under a decision by agreement.
- A client may have entered into a voluntary agreement for voluntary income management along with a separate case plan to attend support services under a decision by agreement.

The nuanced decision-making of Commissioners at conference is reflective of each client's individual circumstances.

Clients with complex and multifaceted issues often require solutions which are best coordinated with multiple service providers who can extend assistance to family members. This requires the Commissioners to take a holistic approach to their decision-making by involving, where appropriate, family and clan group members at conference, together with a network of relevant service providers. The Commissioners, when making decisions, consider a variety of options. These may include not putting clients on case plans when they already have an appropriate referral in place, not making a referral because of the limited availability of appropriate support services to address the client's specific needs and the use of 'No Further Action' being made. The latter decision can be ordered in circumstances where the Commission is satisfied clients are already showing insight into their own behaviours and have taken personal responsibility to address the issue of concern before the matter proceeded to conference. This holistic approach assists in creating a more informative, culturally relevant and empowering experience for the client so they can make the necessary changes in their lives to provide for a safe and secure environment for themselves and their families.

The types of client interactions evident during quarter 61 reinforce the Commission's belief that our clients are displaying a willingness to change and taking personal responsibility for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their families. The following highlights for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023 support our assertion:

- 57.1% of clients at some point during the quarter may have done one or more of the following: self-referred to the FRC for a VCP or a VIM; entered into a Family Responsibilities Agreement; successfully applied to end or amend their decision by order or agreement;
 - As a subset of the above, 46% of clients specifically entered into a voluntary agreement;
- 20.8% of clients were issued with a no further action on their matter/s, or they were recommended to attend a support service with no other action types;
- 3.0% of clients were issued with a reprimand with or without a decision for no further action or recommendation to attend a support service.

There remains a cohort of clients who come before the Commission who struggle to develop insight into their actions and are less inclined to change their behaviours. The nuanced decision-making of Commissioners for these clients may include (as an option of last resort) a decision to income manage the client. These orders are issued as a means of holding the clients to account (and to create some stability in their lives, particularly if they are responsible for children). The Commissioners have made the following decisions in conference for those recalcitrant clients who refuse to change their behaviour:

- 8.9% of clients were ordered to attend a support service under a case plan;
- 3.6% of clients were placed on a CIM order;
- 4.2% of clients were placed on a CIM order and ordered to attend a support service.

Notices

In quarter 61 the Commission received 2,075 agency notices⁷. Some individuals may have been the subject of more than one agency notice. Of that figure 1,434 notices (69%) relating to 721 clients were within the Commission's jurisdiction, and 641 notices (31%) were outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

Table 9: Notices in jurisdiction by type and community 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023

Type of Notice	AU	CO	DM ⁸	HV	MG	Total
Supreme Court notices	0	0	0	0	0	0
District Court notices	1	0	0	0	1	2
Magistrates Court notices	298	31	0	90	13	432
Domestic Violence Breach notices	21	2	0	17	7	47
Domestic Violence Order notices	20	3	0	20	8	51
School Attendance notices	201	26	340	152	26	745
School Enrolment notice	1	0	0	0	0	1
Child Safety and Welfare notices						
Child Concern Reports	20	6	65	24	4	119
Finalised Child Protection Investigations	12	0	2	13	4	31
Housing Tenancy notices	3	0	0	1	2	6
Total	577	68	407	317	65	1434

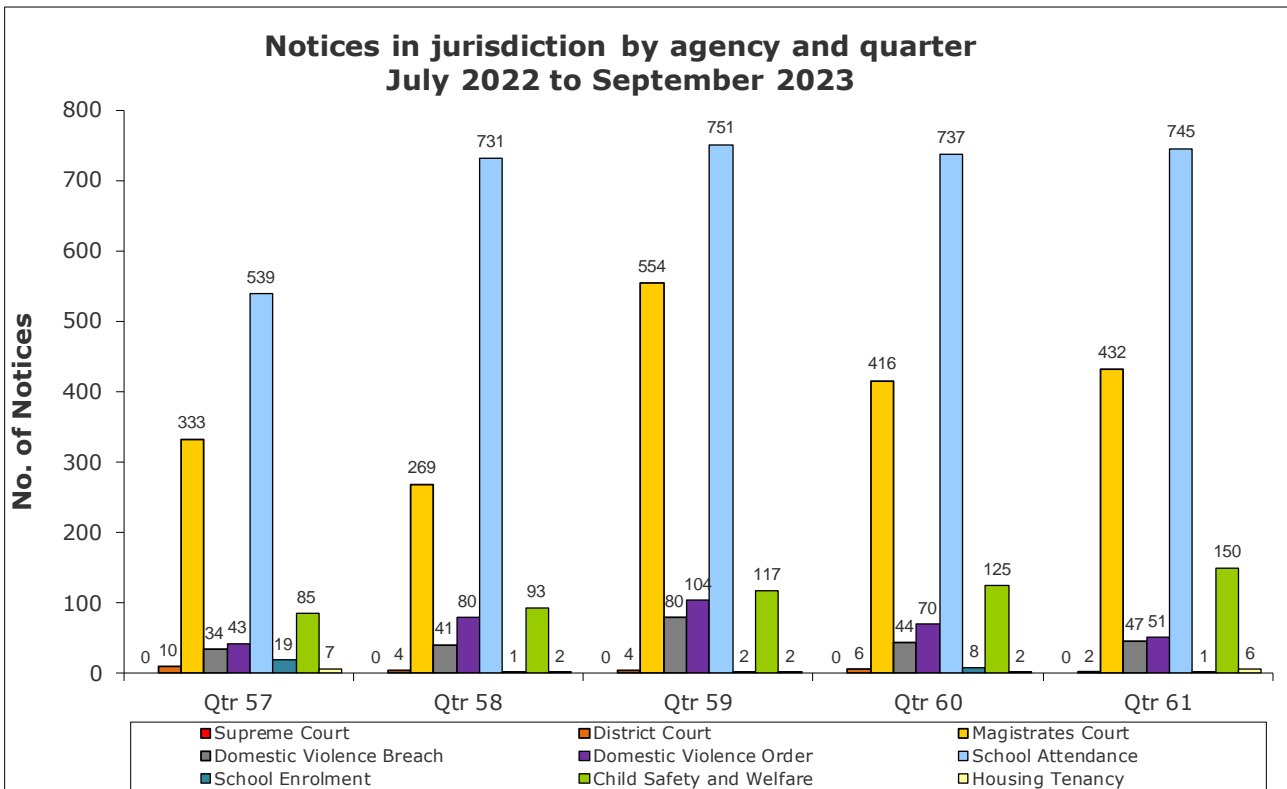
Further details of notices within jurisdiction for each community are set out below:

- Aurukun received 577 notices relating to 257 clients (159 female and 98 male)
- Coen received 68 notices relating to 33 clients (19 female and 14 male)
- Doomadgee received 407 notices relating to 224 clients (163 female and 61 male)
- Hope Vale received 317 notices, relating to 173 clients (102 female and 71 male)
- Mossman Gorge received 65 notices relating to 34 clients (20 female and 14 male).

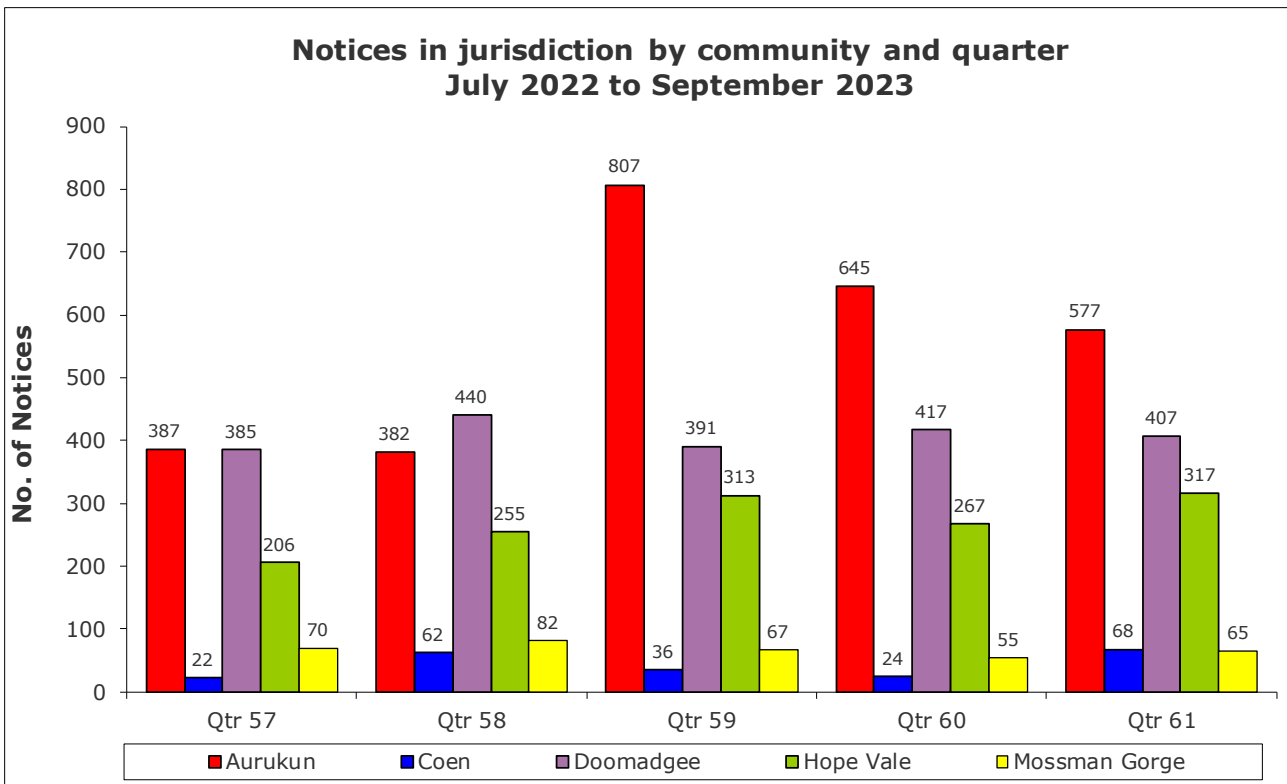
For quarter 61, 49% of clients received more than one notice. Frequently this illustrates multiple child school absences for the one family, or multiple Magistrates Court notices relating to one incident. This may also be suggestive of the complexity of behaviours experienced by a significant proportion of our clients. Conversely, it is important to note the majority of FRC clients (51%) have received only one notice during the reporting period. Thirty-four new clients were added to the Commission's database during the quarter.

⁷ Counting rules are that an agency notice is counted on the basis of number of 'people' 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 from school for all or part of any three school days during a school term, this counts as three individual School Attendance notices against each person listed on the notice). Counting rules also stipulate that where multiple charges are received on a court notice each charge is counted as an individual notice.

⁸ Agency notices for the community of Doomadgee are presently received from the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs only.



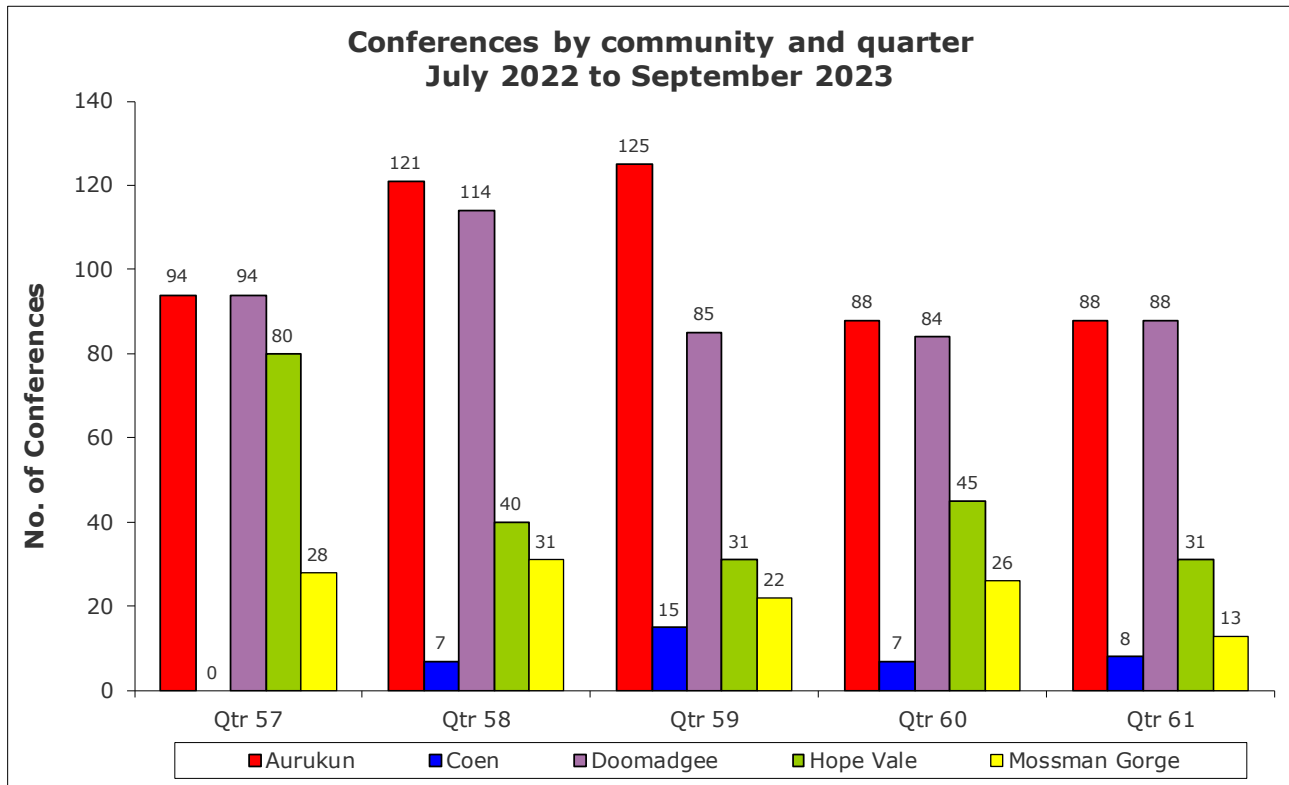
Graph 1: Notices in jurisdiction by type and quarter 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023



Graph 2: Notices in jurisdiction by community and quarter 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023

Conferences

In quarter 61 228 conferences⁹ were held across the five communities (relating to 184 clients served to attend conference). Attendance at conference decreased from 70.4% in quarter 60 to 59.6% in quarter 61.

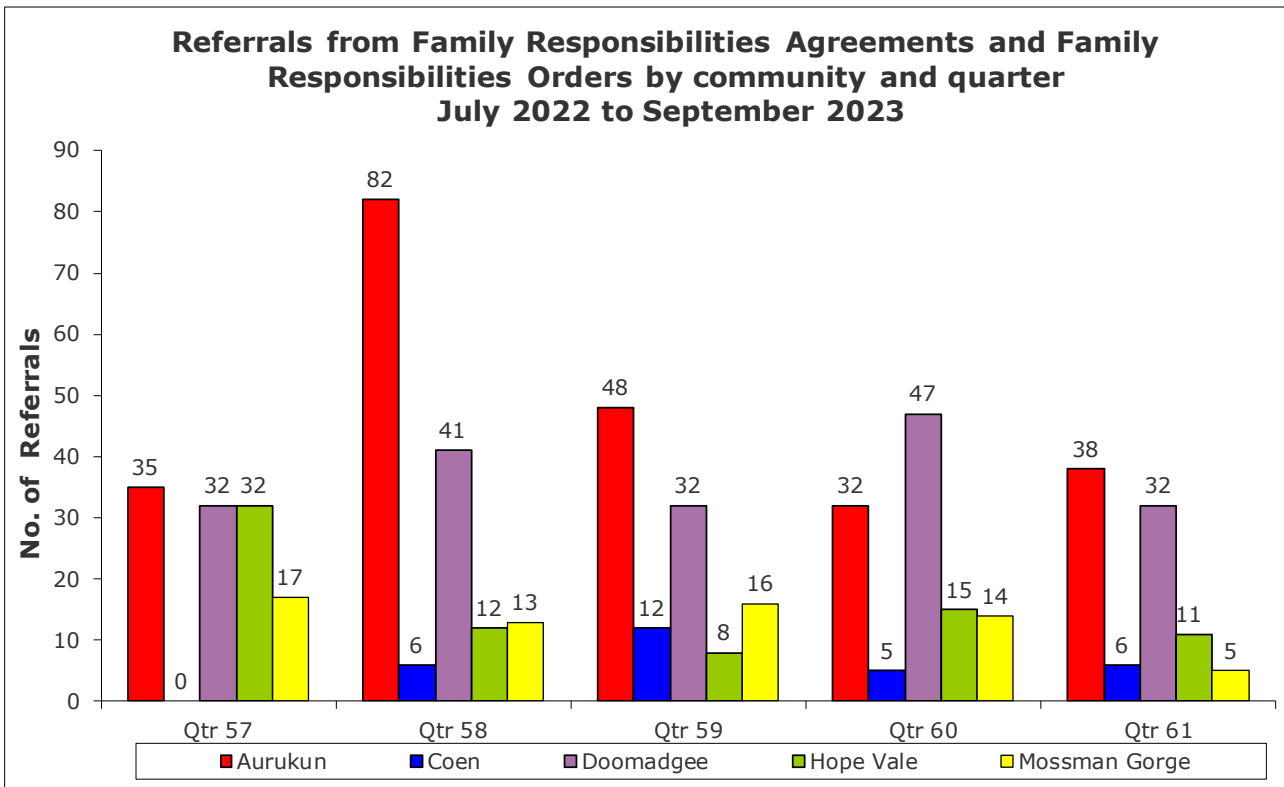


Graph 3: Conferences by community and quarter 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023

Referrals from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders

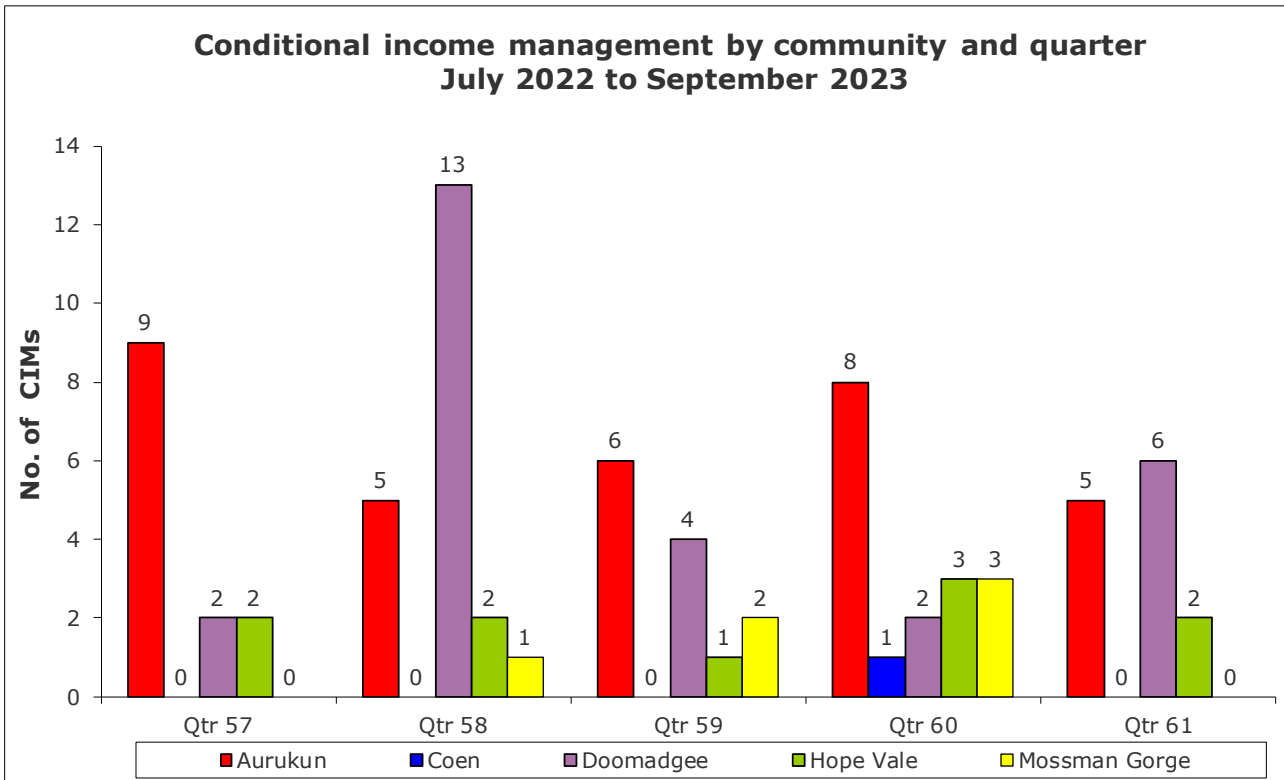
A total of 92 referrals (to service providers from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements (FRAs) and Orders) relating to 73 clients were made in quarter 61. The Local Commissioners continue to raise concerns regarding the availability of appropriate perpetrator intervention programs suitable for client referrals so community members can be supported to address domestic violence behaviours. The broader social impacts of domestic and family violence are set out in Table 3 with an analysis illustrating the nexus between Court convictions and domestic violence orders/breaches with school attendance issues and to a lesser degree child safety issues.

⁹ The number of conferences held relates to the number of conferences listed, which includes where a client was served with a Notice to Attend Conference and subsequently failed to attend.



Graph 4: Referrals by community and quarter 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023

Conditional Income Management from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders



Graph 5: Conditional income management by community and quarter 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023

Local Commissioners continue to use Conditional Income Management (CIM) as a decision of last resort. A total of 13 new CIMs (orders) relating to 13 clients were made in quarter 61 with 54% set at 75% quarantining of welfare payments (see graph 8) and 100% set for a 6-month duration (see graph 6).

As at 30 September 2023 there were 32 clients subject to a current CIM who were responsible for 44 children in their care (24 of whom were school aged children). Of the 32 clients 47% were income managed at 60%, 37% were income managed at 75% and 16% were income managed at 90% whilst duration ranged from 81% for a 6-month duration, 3% for a 9-month duration and 16% for a 12-month duration. Commissioners continue to negotiate with clients to achieve desirable outcomes, or to demonstrate motivation and commitment to make appropriate life choices. Demonstrated positive steps toward taking responsibility provide the Commissioners with sufficient reason to consider amending or ending a CIM when requested by the client.

Voluntary self-referrals from clients to the Commission

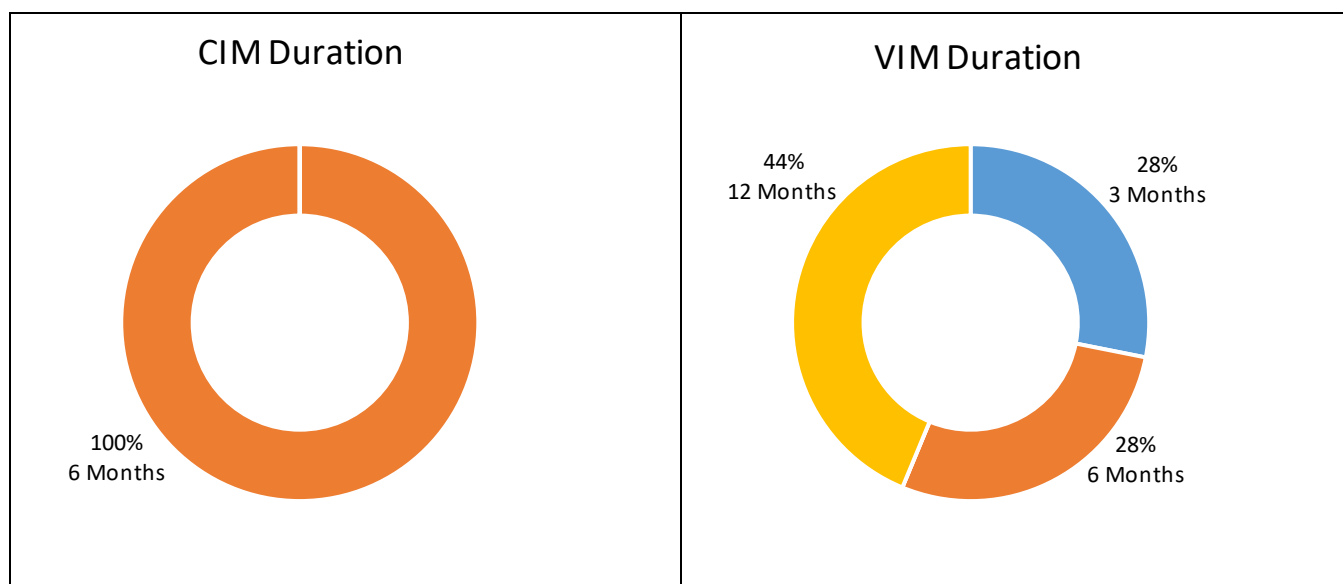
The FRC Act sets out a process under which a community member can voluntarily seek help from the Commission for a referral to a community support service through a voluntary case plan (VCP) or be subject to voluntary income management (VIM). During quarter 61, 27 VCPs were entered into for 27 community support services under a case plan relating to 26 clients. Although the number of clients who have engaged with the FRC on a voluntary basis remain small, it is nonetheless consistent with a broader trend of clients – specifically those entering into Family Responsibility Agreements – who are exhibiting a heightened self-awareness of their personal circumstances and are willing to accept assistance from the Commission at the earliest opportunity in the conferencing process. This is discussed in more detail at *Interactions during the quarter*.

Voluntary Income Management

During this reporting period the Commission processed 32 VIM agreements with 81% of agreements quarantining 60% of welfare payments (see graph 9) and 28% set for both 3 months and 6 months duration and 44% set for a duration of 12 months (see graph 7). As at 30 September 2023 there were 62 clients on a current VIM agreement who had 55 children in their care (33 of whom were school aged children).

Status of the SmartCard in FRC Communities for quarter 61

Forty-five SmartCards (13 for CIM and 32 for VIM) were processed for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023, including orders and agreements that were still awaiting Centrelink action as at 30 September.

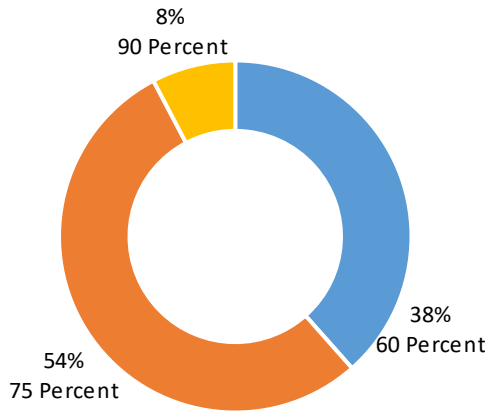


Graph 6: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by duration 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023

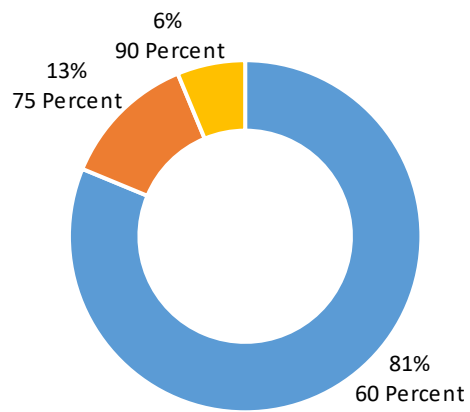
Graph 7: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by duration 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023

Although initially (March 2021) 66% of VIM applications entered into were for a 3-month duration, the VIM chart above for quarter 61 shows that 28% were entered into for both a 3-month duration and a 6-month duration with 44% were entered into for a 12-month duration.

CIM Percentage



VIM Percentage



Graph 8: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by percentage 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023

Graph 9: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by percentage 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023

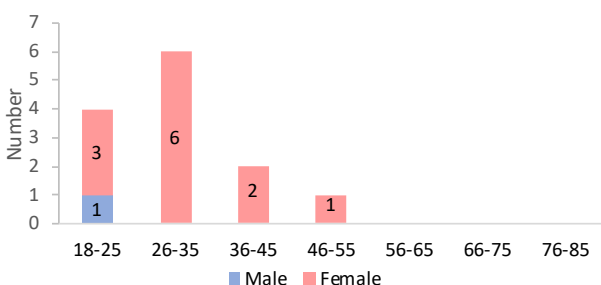
This quarter saw 38% of CIM orders issued quarantining 60% of a client’s welfare payment, 54% quarantining 75% of a client’s welfare payment and 8% quarantining 90% of a client’s welfare payment. The preference by clients to enter into a VIM at 60% remains the popular option with 81% of VIM agreements entered into at 60% for the quarter.

This quarter female community members accounted for the majority of CIMs with 92% relating to female clients. No community member older than 55 years was conditionally income managed by the FRC during the quarter.

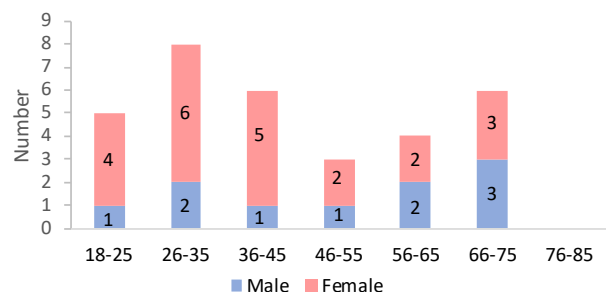
The majority of community members voluntarily participating in voluntary income management this quarter were from the 26 to 35 year age group. Females accounted for 69% of the VIMs. Overall females accounted for 76% of all SmartCards (voluntary and conditional) in quarter 61.

Reasons for applying for the SmartCard were primarily to buy food (84%), to budget (66%), to save for something they needed (59%) and to pay for bills (56%). Circumstances given by voluntary income management participants when applying for the SmartCard were to support themselves (78%), they needed to support their families (56%), they liked the SmartCard (53%), and they needed to support their children (44%). Please note, a client may choose one or more options to reflect their individual reasons and circumstances for participating in voluntary income management.

CIMs by Age Cohort and Gender



VIMs by Age Cohort and Gender



Graph 10: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by age cohorts and gender 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023

Graph 11: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by age cohorts and gender 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023

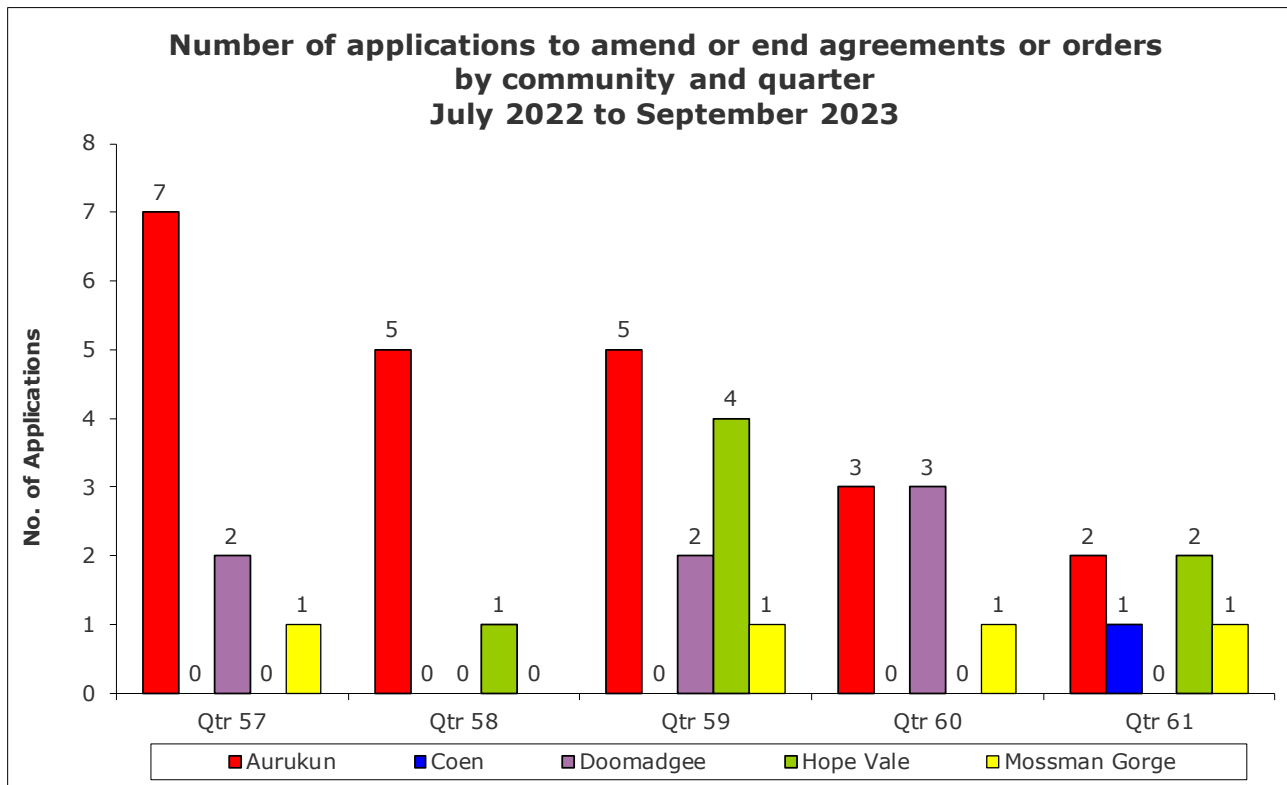
Case Management

Commissioners are guided by the FRC Act, sections 4 and 5, to encourage community members to engage in socially responsible ways, and in doing so, make appropriate use of community support services. The Commissioners use the referral pathways available in each community to strengthen the client’s resilience to face the challenges they experience, and to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children and vulnerable people through broad-based counselling and education. After conference and for the duration of a case plan referral, the FRC registry liaises with clients and support services to monitor the client’s progress against meeting case plan goals. Where appropriate, clients are encouraged to make an application to amend or end their case plan to ensure their evolving needs are met. Commissioners then consider each application to ascertain whether the client has made sufficient progress to justify approving the application and in doing so must consider whether any detriment might impact the welfare of relevant children and/or vulnerable persons. As at 30 September 2023, 162 clients were being case-managed through a current non-voluntary case plan.

Applications to amend or end Agreements or Orders inclusive of Voluntary Agreements

Applications to amend or end an agreement or order are considered an important means of ensuring that FRC decisions remain applicable to the changing needs and circumstances of clients. This mechanism affords clients an opportunity to apply to the Commission to amend or end their agreement or original order by providing their reasons for making the application. Commissioners view the hearing of the applications as an opportunity to engage with clients.

Six applications relating to 6 clients (5 female and 1 male) to amend or end an Agreement, Order or Voluntary Agreement were received in quarter 61. It should be noted that a client may apply to amend or end their Family Responsibilities Agreement, Family Responsibilities Order or Voluntary Agreement on multiple occasions throughout a quarter.



Graph 12: Applications to amend or end agreements or orders by community and quarter 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023

Application decisions

Each application follows a transparent process and is considered by the Commissioners on its own merit whilst observing the principles of natural justice. A timely decision on the application is made under the FRC Act pursuant to section 99 for a family responsibilities agreement (FRA) or order, or section 109 for a voluntary agreement, and may include either agreeing or refusing to amend or end an agreement or order, or if the Commissioners deem the application for an FRA or order frivolous or vexatious, dismissing the application. For an application received under section 97 of the FRC Act, if the Commission fails to make a decision within two months of receipt of the application section 101 of the FRC Act determines that the failure is taken to be a decision by the Commission to refuse to amend or end the FRA or order. For an application to amend or end a voluntary agreement section 109(2) of the FRC Act states: "The Commissioner must amend or end a voluntary agreement as requested by the person, unless the Commissioner is satisfied the amendment or ending would be detrimental to the interests, rights and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable persons living in a welfare reform community area". The opportunity afforded in hearing these applications is utilised by the Commissioners to encourage clients to continue to address any remaining challenges and to exercise personal responsibility in their lives.

It should be noted that a hearing for an amend/end application may not take place in the same quarter as the application was received, especially where an application was received towards the end of a quarter with the resulting hearing scheduled for the following quarter.

A total of 1 amend/end application for a Family Responsibilities Order (to end a CIM) was decided in quarter 61 with the application accepted by the FRC.

Five amend/end applications for voluntary agreements were decided in the reporting period with all applications made by clients accepted by the FRC. A breakdown of the decisions of the applications is as follows:

- 5 Applications were accepted and voluntary income management agreements ended.

The Commission continues to encourage clients to participate in the amend or end process. Commissioners consider that the participation of clients in the amend/end process is indicative of client confidence to question decisions and the reasons behind decisions, both for decisions delivered by the Commission and decisions delivered by external agencies and bodies.

FRC client population by gender and age

Table 10: FRC client population by gender and age 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023

Information for the quarter	Female Count	Male Count		Female Average age	Male Average age
Clients for whom a notice was received ¹⁰	463	258		37	38
Clients conferenced ¹¹	124	60		36	36
Clients referred through Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ¹²	45	28		32	35
Clients placed on CIM ¹³	12	1		30	18
Clients referred through a Voluntary Agreement for a case plan ¹⁴	14	12		37	41
Clients who chose to participate in VIM ¹⁵	22	10		42	51
Clients who submitted an amend/end application ¹⁶	5	1		29	29

Estimated resident populations:

Aurukun: The community of Aurukun had an estimated resident adult population of 795 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,18}.

Coen: The township of Coen had an estimated resident adult population of 201 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,19}.

Doomadgee: The community of Doomadgee had an estimated resident adult population of 918 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,18}.

Hope Vale: The estimated resident adult population of Hope Vale was 652 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,18}.

Mossman Gorge: The Mossman Gorge community had an estimated resident population of 101 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,20}.

¹⁰ Average age of a client who received a notice for the quarter is calculated at the date of the first notice received for the client during the quarter.

¹¹ Average age of a conferenced client for the quarter is calculated at the date of the first conference held for the client during the quarter.

¹² Average age of a referred client for the quarter through a Family Responsibilities Agreement or a Family Responsibilities Order is calculated at the first conference date held where the client was placed on a case plan during the quarter.

¹³ Average age of a CIM'd client for the quarter is calculated at the first conference date held where the client was placed on a CIM during the quarter.

¹⁴ Average age of a referred client for the quarter through a Voluntary Agreement is calculated at the start date of the voluntary agreement where the client entered into a voluntary case plan during the quarter.

¹⁵ Average age of a VIM'd client for the quarter is calculated at the start date of the agreement where the client was placed on a VIM during the quarter.

¹⁶ Average age of a client who submitted an amend/end application for the quarter is calculated at the received date of the application for the client during the quarter.

¹⁷ Note: Australian Statistical Geography Standard 2021 boundaries used are local government areas for Aurukun, Doomadgee and Hope Vale, and statistical areas level 1 (SA1s) of 31501139616 for Coen and 30604116408 for Mossman Gorge.

¹⁸ Note: Adults 18 years and over provided by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office (QGSO), Queensland Treasury, based on the ABS unpublished preliminary Estimated Resident Population (ERP) data by age and sex at the Local Government Area level for 30 June 2022.

¹⁹ Note: Adults 18 years and over provided by QGSO, Queensland Treasury, based on the ABS unpublished preliminary ERP data by age and sex at the Statistical Area level 1 for 30 June 2022.

²⁰ Note: Total population provided by QGSO, Queensland Treasury, not 18 years and older, due to the small size of the total population from the ABS unpublished preliminary ERP data at the Statistical Area level 1 for 30 June 2022.

2. Future Direction and Challenges

Chair and Deputy Chair of the Community Support and Services Committee visited Aurukun

In July the FRC welcomed Ms Corrine McMillan MP Member for Mansfield (Chair) and Mr Stephen Bennett MP, Member for Burnett (Deputy Chair) of the Community Support and Services Committee for QLD parliament, (the FRC's oversight community) to Aurukun to witness conferencing and see first-hand the work of our Local Commissioners and Registry staff. The Commission appreciates Ms McMillian's and Mr Bennett's commitment to better understand the Commission's operations and the challenges experienced by our clients.

MOU with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSILS)

Following months of co-design and collaboration the FRC and ATSILS entered a MOU on 23 August 2023 in relation to the provision of FRC client information to ATSILS with the consent of mutual clients.

Relevant Background

The FRC's Operational Analysis - prepared and published in May 2022 for the Queensland Government's review of Commission operations - proposed that information sharing by the FRC, in appropriate circumstances, could support greater coherence of decision making across the service delivery ecosystem to encourage and incentivise clients' behavioural change. This would occur through embedding FRC input into other key agencies' decisions affecting mutual clients.

One area where this has particular relevance is where an FRC client appears as a defendant in the criminal justice system, specifically when they appear before a court in sentencing proceedings. In such situations the FRC could provide information as to whether the defendant is actively engaging with FRC processes. This may serve as useful information for the consideration of Magistrates and Judges which they would otherwise not have access to.

In circumstances where clients are actively participating in referrals to achieve their FRC case plan goals or voluntary income management, this could potentially assist in reducing the penalties imposed on clients. In a practical sense, this could mean the difference between being sentenced to a community-based order or serving a term of imprisonment.

Implementation

The MOU sets out the process for the provision of the exchange of client information for a period of 6 months between ATSILS (QLD) and the FRC and will be initially confined to the Aurukun community. It provides a framework for communication between the two partners, and it sets out parameters for evaluation, whereby the MOU may be extended for a further period and may be extended to apply to further FRC communities. Following finalisation of relevant documents, it is hoped the project will be implemented in Quarter 62.

Intended outcomes

Both the FRC and ATSILS are committed to supporting First Nations communities and people to Closing the Gap (CtG) on life outcomes; in particular, the over representation of adults in the criminal justice system. The CtG target is by 2031, to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15%. The FRC and ATSILS are hopeful that these practical measures may go towards achieving improved sentencing outcomes for our joint clients.

Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023

The Qld Government's *Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023* came into effect on 1 August 2023.

Relevant Background

The legislation strengthens laws to address the patterned nature of coercive control and lays the foundation to introduce a standalone offence of coercive control.

The amendments:

- modernise and strengthen the offence of unlawful stalking in the Criminal Code to better capture the broad range of tactics used by perpetrators
- broaden the definition of domestic and family violence to include behaviour that occurs over time and that acts of domestic violence must be considered in the context of the whole relationship
- strengthen the court's response to cross applications for protection orders to ensure the protection of the person most at risk
- broaden the court's ability to award costs in civil domestic violence matters to help prevent the use of the legal process to further abuse victims
- strengthen the consideration of previous domestic violence or criminal history when deciding whether to make a domestic violence order
- bring domestic violence complainants and other witnesses within the protected witness scheme
- provide for the giving of jury directions and facilitate expert evidence on domestic violence in criminal law trials.

The amendments respond to a range of recommendations made by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce whereby coercive control is considered as an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Considerations for the FRC

The commencement of the State's legislation may have some impact on our operations, whereby training maybe needed for Local Registry Coordinators, the Case Management and Monitoring team and Local Commissioners to understand coercive control behaviours and what culturally relevant and appropriate referral pathways are available to address coercive controlling behaviours, so that clients can be referred to appropriate support services.

New practices and processes may need to be implemented, to give effect to the downstream outputs arising from the new Act. Further work may be required to include new functionality in the FRC's CRM database to capture:

- whether there has an increase of Domestic Violence Orders (DVOs) or Domestic Violence Breaches (DVBs) because of coercive control
- subtype or form of coercive control used (such as stalking)
- perpetrator/survivor demographics such as gender and age group, and if children are protected in the DVO or DVB
- length of DVO.

FRC's Submission to the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Perpetrator Strategy

On 21 September 2023 the FRC made a submission to the consultation on Queensland's DFV perpetrator strategy with the following proposed recommendations:

Early Intervention

- 1. The Strategy should include greater use of the FRC, and other established bodies or services supporting people with multiple risk factors, to capitalise on opportunities to provide early support to those using, or at risk of using violence.*
- 2. The FRC's children's court trigger should be operationalised to support young people already using or at risk of using violence.*

Strengthening perpetrator interventions

- 3. The Strategy should urgently provide for the funding and implementation of accessible, evidence-based, culturally appropriate perpetrator interventions both:
 - on the ground in First Nations communities;
 - in correctional centres for prisoners with shorter sentences or on remand.*
- 4. The strategy should include capacity building for Police and others in the justice system, to reduce the application of standard, long-term conditions on protection orders in First Nations communities. The Strategy should include greater support for First Nations respondents in remote communities to navigate the justice system.*

Systemic reform

- 5. The FRC is an existing model of community accountability, which provides a fulcrum to support both systemic and individual accountability. The Strategy may consider like models in other geographic locations.*

The preparation of this submission and recommendations proposed are aligned with the FRC's strategic plan 2023-2027 of 'embedding the FRC as a partner in the co-design and decision making of Government.'

The FRC also notes the media release on 21 September 2023 from Minister Rishworth on behalf of the Australian Government announcing the opening of a funding round by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to fund safe spaces for victims and survivors of domestic and family violence. The FRC is pleased to support both the State and Australian Governments' priority focus on addressing DFV in the broader community.

FR Board meeting held in Cairns

FR Board members Ms Clare O'Connor, Director-General, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (Chair), Ms Jody Broun, CEO, National Indigenous Australians Agency and Mr Noel Pearson, Founder, Cape York Partnership representing the Cape York Institute travelled to Cairns in September to attend in person at the FR Board meeting with members of the FRC - Commissioner Williams, Acting Registrar Helen Weedon and Acting Executive Officer (Corporate) Wayne Massey. As the FR Board meeting was held during the Local Commissioner Development Week, the FRC also invited the Chair of the FR Board Ms Clare O'Connor to address our Local Commissioners. Ms O'Connor thanked the Local Commissioners for their tireless dedication to their communities over the past 15 years.

School Attendance Data for term 2

The Commission can advise that secondary school attendance improved from term 1 2023 to term 2 2023 for Aurukun, Doomadgee and Mossman. School attendance still remains a challenge with our elevated school response working hard to help our clients overcome the barriers to getting their children to school. The Commission is pleased to report the Coen Campus of CYAAA led the state for selected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, at 82.1% attendance in term 2 2023.

PCYC funding in Aurukun

On 22 August 2023 the Queensland Government announced the provision of significant funding to upgrade PCYC facilities, including one million dollars provided to Far North PCYC to upgrade facilities for Aurukun, Napranum and Yarrabah to help youth offenders get off the street and into positive activities such as boxing and basketball. The upgrades are part of a \$50m budget investment to support new and upgraded PCYC facilities across the state. PCYC Queensland chief executive Phil Schultz welcomed government support of early intervention initiatives and diversionary programs. "This funding will be a huge support to us carrying out much needed upgrades and enhanced program delivery," he said. The FRC looks forward to the completion of the upgrades in Aurukun.

3. Governance

Governance

Part 12 of the Act provides for the establishment of the Family Responsibilities Board (the FR Board).

The FR Board has a mandate to give advice and make recommendations to the Minister about the operation of the Commission and similarly to give advice and make recommendations to the Commissioner about the performance of the Commission's functions.

The FR Board must meet at least every six months. The meeting may be held by using any technology available which will allow for efficient and effective communication, however, the FR Board members must meet in person at least once a year. A quorum for the FR Board is comprised of two members. The FR Board's membership consists of the following members:

- Ms Clare O'Connor Director-General, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (Chair)
- Ms Jody Broun CEO, National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Mr Noel Pearson Founder, Cape York Partnership representing the Cape York Institute.

Operational

In meeting obligations under Part 3 of the Act, the Family Responsibilities Commission Registry (the registry) commenced operations on 1 July 2008 with a central registry office established in Cairns and local registry offices operating in each of the five welfare reform communities.

The registry, managed by the Registrar, provides corporate and operational support to the Commissioner, the Local Commissioners and the Local Registry Coordinators.

4. Financial Operations

Income:

- Income of the Commission attributable to the quarter (1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023) totalled \$1,188,347. This income consisted of:
 - \$641,250 Queensland Government funding
 - \$499,997 Australian Government funding
 - \$47,075 interest received
 - \$25 sundry income.

The balance of available funds in the bank as at 30 September 2023 is \$7,089,674.

Expenditure:

- Expenditure for the quarter (1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023) was \$1,351,056.

Table 11: Expenditure in quarter 61

1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023	Expenditure Qtr 61	1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023	Expenditure Qtr 61
Employee salaries – FRC staff	507,653	Internet & IT	76,648
Employee salaries – Local Commissioners	143,725	Motor Vehicle	16,744
Employee on costs – FRC staff	99,088	Property	66,944
Employee on costs – Local Commissioners	20,783	Travel	147,930
Other employment costs	220,507	General Operating	30,578
Communications	4,002	Other expenses	16,454
		Total	1,351,056

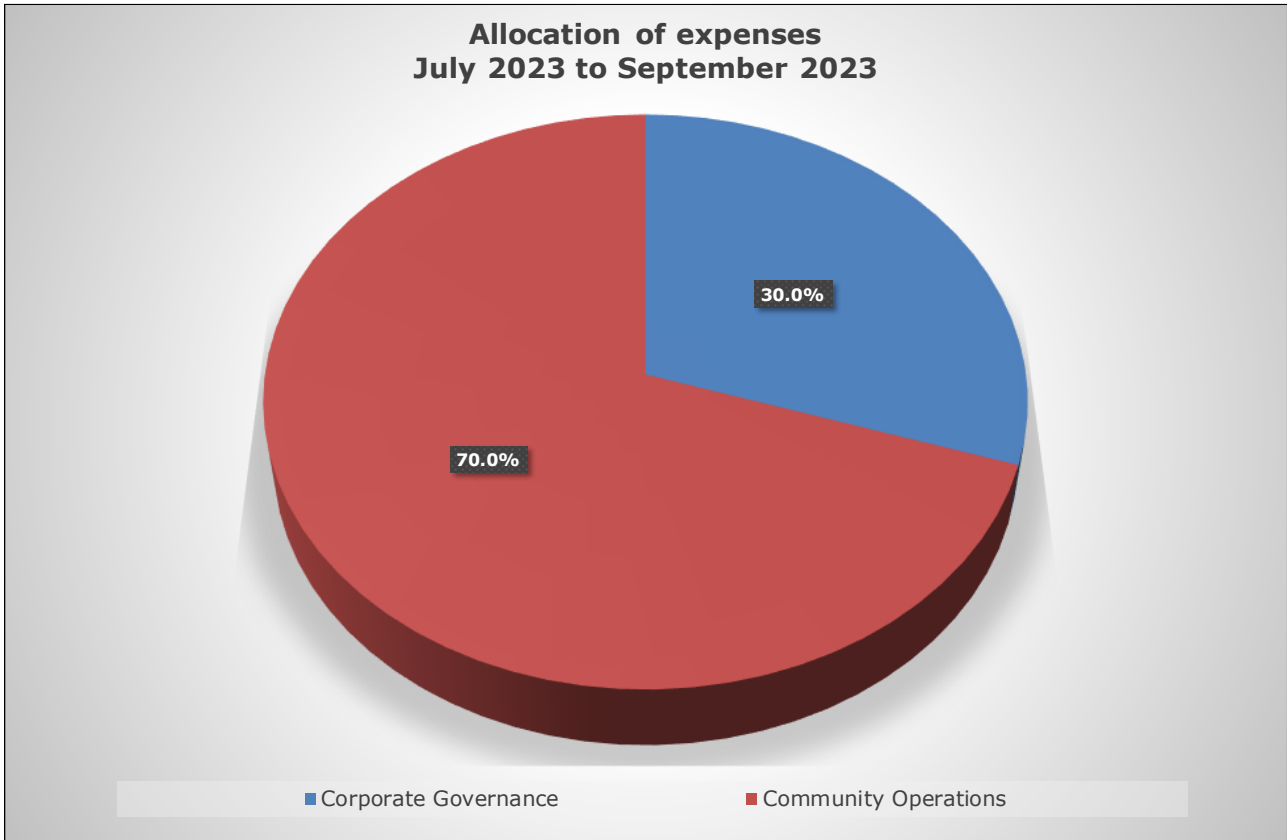
The expenditure of the FRC can be categorised as follows:

- Community operations** – further broken down into:
 - On-the-ground community operational expenses** including the operational expenses in each of the five communities to conduct conferences and hearings, prepare and monitor case plans for clients for attendance at community support services and prepare and monitor income management orders and agreements.
 - Support and facilitation expenses** including costs associated with facilitating the holding of conferences and hearings in the five communities, providing support to the Local Commissioners and Local Registry Coordinators to hold conferences and hearings, assisting with the on-going monitoring of case plans for clients through the provision of data and other information and processing income management orders and agreements.
- Corporate governance** includes finance, statistical reporting, corporate governance, compliance, training and other administrative functions to ensure the effective and efficient operations of the Commission.

The functions of corporate governance and conference and hearing facilitation are conducted primarily in the registry office in Cairns with frequent visits to community by staff. Community operations are conducted by Local Registry Coordinators and Local Commissioners, resident in their respective

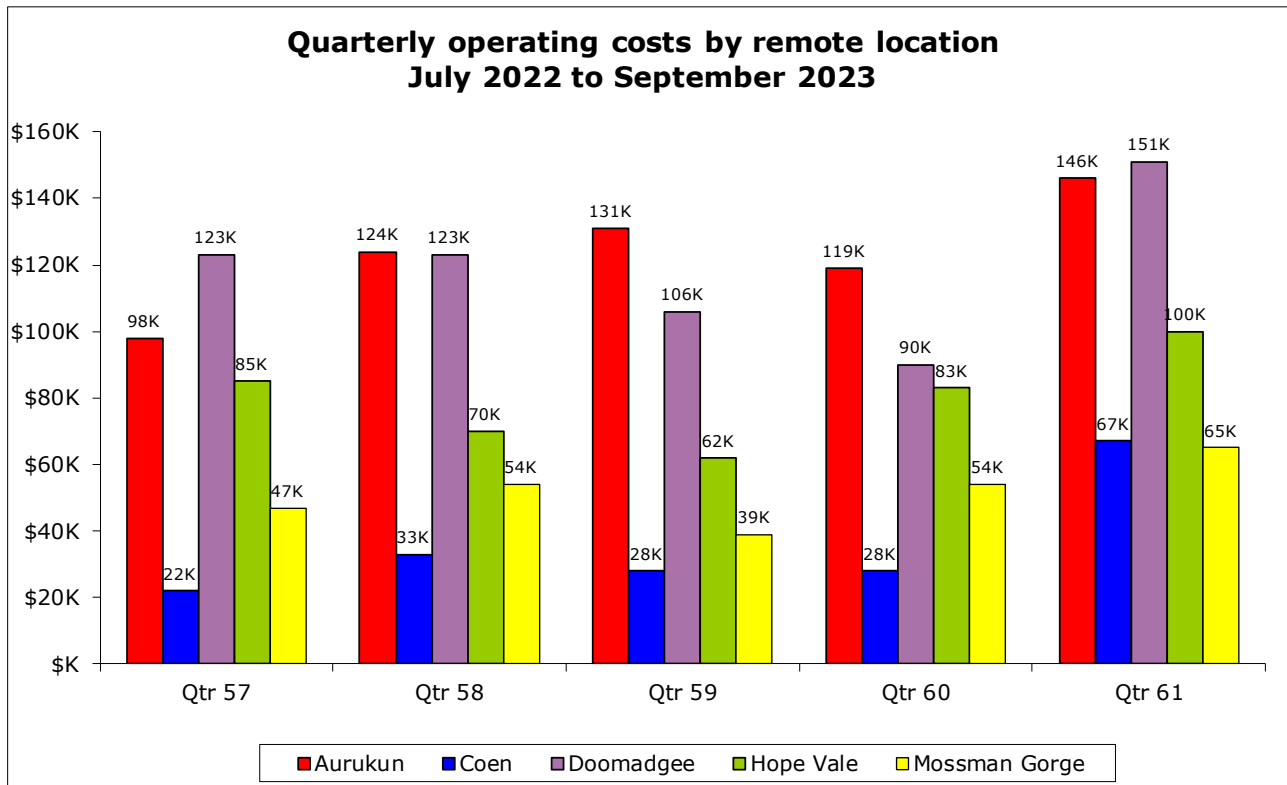
communities, who are paid as sessional sitting Commission members for conferencing, serving notices, meetings and professional development.

As can be observed in Graph 13 below which displays the allocation of FRC costs across the core functions in quarter 61, the largest allocation during the reporting period is in relation to community operations (70.0%).



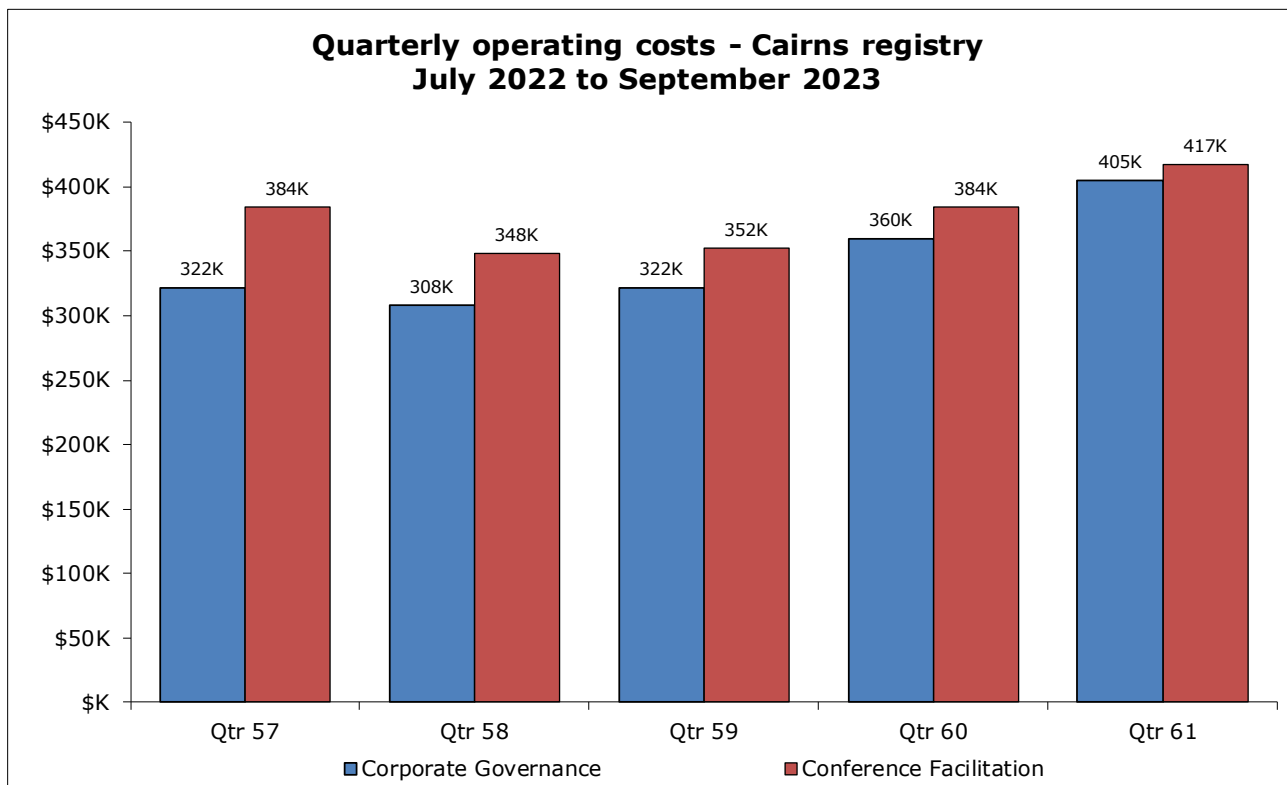
Graph 13: Allocation of expenses 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023

Regional operational expenditure by location and quarter.



Graph 14: Operating costs by remote location 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023

Cairns Registry expenditure for quarter 61 compared to the previous four quarters.



Graph 15: Quarterly operating costs Cairns 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023

APPENDIX A



**SITTINGS CALENDAR 2023
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION
1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023**



Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
3 July					Public Holiday – DM Only	7 - NAIDOC Day - DM Cooktown – Circuit
10 July		11 ICM 11 ICM	12	13 ICM		Doomadgee Gulf Circuit
17 July		18	19 19 ICM	20	Public Holiday	21 - Cairns Show Day Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
24 July	Public Holiday – MG Only	25	26 26 ICM	27 ICM 27 ½ day ICM		24 - Mossman Show Day
31 July		1	2 ICM 2	3 ICM	Public Holiday – AU Only	4 - Aurukun Day Public Holiday Estimates: Tuesday 1/08/2023 – Friday 4/08/2023
7 August						Cooktown – Circuit 10-13 Mount Isa Mines Rodeo Estimates: Tuesday 8/08/2023 – Thursday 10/08/2023 The FRC will appear before the committee on the morning of 10 August 2023.
14 August		15 ½ day Conf 15 ½ day ICM	16 16 16	17 17 ICM		Doomadgee Gulf Circuit Aurukun Cape B Circuit
21 August		22 22 ½ day Conf 22 ½ day ESR/ICM	23 ½ day Conf 23 ½ day ESR/ICM	24 ICM	Public Holiday – DM Only	25 - Doomadgee Day Public Holiday 25-27 Camooweal Drivers Camp Festival
28 August		29 ICM	30 30	31 ICM	Student Free Day	
4 September		5	6	7		Local Commissioner Development Week Cooktown – Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
11 September		12 ICM	13 ICM 13	14		Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
18 September	Public Holiday – AU Only					18 – Aak Ngamparam Public Holiday - AU
25 September	25 ICM	26 ICM	27 ICM	28 ICM		
2 October	Public Holiday		4 ICM	5 5		2 King's Birthday
9 October		10 10	11	12 ICM		Cooktown – Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
16 October		17 ½ day ICM	18 18	19 19 ½ day ICM		Aurukun Cape B Circuit
23 October		24 ICM	25 ICM	26 ICM		
30 October		31 31 ICM	1 1 1	2 ½ day Conf 2 ½ ICM		

Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
6 November		7 ½ day ICM	8 ICM	9 ½ day ICM		Cooktown – Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
13 November			15 15	16		Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
20 November		21 21	22	23		
27 November		28 28 28 ½ day ICM & serving	29 29 ½ day Conferencing 29 ½ day ICM 29	30 ICM 30 30 ½ day ICM 30		
4 December		5 ½ day ICM 5 ½ day Pre-conference	6 6 ICM	7		Cooktown – Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit Mossman schools finish 8/12/2022
11 December						Aurukun Cape B Circuit
18 December						
25 December	Public Holiday	Public Holiday				Mon 25 th & Tue 26 th Christmas Day and Boxing Day, 27, 28, 29 Office closed for XMAS

LEGEND

	Office Days/School Holidays
	Public/Bank Holidays
	Aurukun Sitting
	Coen Sitting
	Doomadgee Sitting
	Hope Vale Sitting
	Mossman Gorge Sitting

OFFICE	CONTACT NAME	Phone	Mobile	Facsimile
Cairns – Commissioner	Tammy Williams	4081 8413	0447 739 137	4041 0974
Cairns – Deputy Commissioner	Rod Curtin	4081 8400	0419 647 948	4041 0974
Cairns – Acting Registrar	Helen Weedon	4081 8412	0409 461 624	4041 0974
Cairns – Acting Executive Officer (Finance)	Wayne Massey	4081 8411	0429 495 353	4041 0974
Cairns – Manager (Compliance and Policy) (Tue, Wed, Thu morning)	Camille Banks	4081 8407	0400 355 040	4041 0974
Cairns – Manager (Case Management and Monitoring)	Anne Crampton	4081 8414	0458 041 191	4041 0974
Cairns – Senior Advisor (Statistics and Research)	Michelle Synott	4081 8404		4041 0974
Cairns – ICT Administrator	Mark Doktor	4081 8406	0427 954 870	4041 0974
Cairns – Manager (Coordination)	Sandi Rye	4081 8410	0438 195 342	4041 0974
Acting Aurukun Local Registry Coordinator	Cara Marks	4060 6185	0428 985 106	4041 0974
Acting Coen Local Registry Coordinator	Kate Gooding	4081 8410	0417 798 392	4041 0974
Doomadgee Local Registry Coordinator	Brenden Joinbee	4745 8111	0418 666 204	4041 0974
Hope Vale Local Registry Coordinator	Josephine Pinder	4060 9153	0408 482 026	4041 0974
Acting Mossman Gorge Local Registry Coordinator	Kate Gooding	4081 8410	0417 798 392	4041 0974