



## COMMISSIONERS SITTING INDEPENDENTLY

In a conference about an agency notice, the Commission must deal with the matters for which the client was brought to conference in a way that: allows the client to seek assistance if necessary and/or change their behaviours as quickly as possible; supports the client to behave as expected by the community and in the best interests of the client, their family and the community; and utilises available community support services to assist the client to make lasting changes. When a child is involved in a conference, the child's views and wishes must be taken into account in a way that is sensitive to the child's age and the child's ability to understand. Procedures for and conduct of Commission conferences are governed by the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*. Commissioners must therefore comply with this legislation in all proceedings and decisions made.

Commissioner Glasgow has mentored the Local Commissioners through countless conferences since 2008, and has imparted to each of them the knowledge required to comply with legislative requirements, and most importantly, the confidence to independently make decisions in regard to their fellow community members.

Over the past 12 months Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners Karen Gibson, Karen Shuan and Loretta Spratt have commenced sitting alone in conference, with Commissioner Glasgow available

by telephone if required. In doing so they have faced some challenging situations that were at times quite confronting, but have found during these conferences that there is improved client attendance. This improved attendance they believe is partly due to the community's perception that the Local Commissioners can confidently and responsibly guide the community. Sitting alone, the Mossman Gorge Commissioners have found that the content of discussion is often more in-depth, with clients discussing issues they would normally not bring up with Commissioner Glasgow or Deputy Commissioner Curtin present. The quality of engagement has likewise improved, with clients arriving ready to facilitate a constructive conversation. The improved communication at conference has enhanced the development of comprehensive case plans which have in turn led to successful outcomes.

Mossman Gorge Commissioners Karen Gibson, Karen Shuan and Loretta Spratt acknowledge that sitting alone in conference would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Commissioner Glasgow, Local Coordinators Amy Barden and Sandi Rye, and the Cairns office staff. Together they have worked to streamline processes and guidelines for conferencing. Although Local Commissioners Gibson, Shuan and Spratt sit alone quite frequently, they will continue to further their knowledge and strengthen their capacity through the mentoring provided by Commissioner Glasgow.



*Mossman Gorge Commissioners Karen Gibson, Karen Shuan and Loretta Spratt*