

COMMISSIONER GLASGOW'S MESSAGE



From the Commissioner

The Commission publishes this report of its activities and assessment of its performance during the past twelve months.

We operated again within our budget providing an operating surplus in the financial year just concluded. Being entrusted with significant public monies in the administration of our statutory functions, we are focused to ensure that the Commission operates cost effectively whilst remaining committed to achieving its objectives.

Commission focus

The Commission's activities in each of the five communities over the past year are detailed in this annual report. Many challenges remain which are outlined by Registrar Maxine McLeod. Significant and troubling though they may be (particularly in the community of Aurukun) the Aurukun Commissioners, like their colleagues in Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, remain committed and are determined to work with the community to achieve lasting improvements. They are a formidable band of women and men who deserve our respect and support.

Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge each continue maintaining solid school attendance with improving academic success. The attitude of an uncooperative minority in Aurukun continues to exasperate the best efforts of the Local Commissioners and Elders. Doomadgee has shown encouraging results, and although improvement has not been consistent, the Commission is hopeful to establish an upward trend in the next financial year.

The indifference to the value of education shown by some families is frustrating the best efforts of many of us. This attitude, combined with unrestricted noise disturbances (loud music in the late evenings and early mornings) and drunken and violent confrontations within the Aurukun community over the past eighteen months are the major cause of poor and fluctuating school attendance.

Government closure of the Aurukun school in May diverted public and community attention from these problems to the management of the school and its students. Whilst education in Aurukun has had its problems, they are insignificant when compared with the lawlessness and indifference of a small number to the needs of children for undisturbed sleep, and their right to a safe and happy life.

I am encouraged to see that the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) has now focused a considerable amount of energy to attempt to transition Aurukun into a functioning community. The appointment of Brendon McMahon on 30 May as the Senior Government Coordinator is regarded by all as a significant step in this direction. Brendon McMahon's appointment has been universally welcomed by not only the members of the community, but also service providers. His leadership has already shown improved accountability and commitment from those tasked with delivering services to the community.

Commission staff

Our small and dedicated staff have functioned well over the past year and have been ably lead by Maxine McLeod, who herself has been active in visiting each community and responding to their needs.



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We were indeed fortunate to obtain the services of Camille Banks as our Client Manager in November 2015. She has reviewed procedures, brought a fresh perspective and refocused our operations on the ground. Our Accountant, Andrea Cotton, has continued her dedicated service to the Commission. I acknowledge their remarkable leadership and organisational skills.

I also acknowledge the commitment of our Local Coordinators who live and work in the communities. They provide inspiration to our Commissioners and also regularly attend to tasks outside their position descriptions to fill in gaps in services.

Deputy Commissioner Curtin continues the responsibilities of the Doomadgee circuit. I thank him for his valued work.

Concerns – Child Safety and Youth Justice

I have reported to Government the significant, and as yet unsatisfactorily explained, reduction in the receipt of Child Safety and Welfare notices for the communities of Aurukun and Hope Vale – 75 percent and 47 percent respectively. These reductions, together with the effect of recent amendments to the *Youth Justice Act 1992* which preclude the sending of Childrens Court notices to the Commission as from July 1, 2016, are of major concern to me as Commissioner.

Acknowledgements

I record the gratitude of the Commission, our Local Commissioners and staff to Noel Pearson, the architect of the FRC. His continuing selfless leadership and inspiration, particularly during times of challenge from the uninformed and self-interested, has been of great comfort to us all.

I also acknowledge the dedication, leadership and commitment of Clare O'Connor, Director-General of DATSIP, to improving the lives of Queensland's Indigenous people. She has challenged us all to do better.

I am confident that the FRC will continue to deliver on its objectives and will be competent to operate effectively within expanded areas if requested by Indigenous communities and the Queensland and Australian Governments.

David Glasgow, AM
Family Responsibilities Commissioner



Local Commissioners from Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge with Commissioner Glasgow and Deputy Commissioner Curtin at the Local Commissioner Development Week May 2016