



# LOCAL COMMISSIONERS' YEAR IN REVIEW

## Hope Vale Commissioners' report

We started this year hoping to change the perception of coming to the FRC from a negative experience to a more positive experience, and hoping to play a greater part in making Hope Vale a better place to live. Hope Vale is a community that is maturing and making good progress in managing its own affairs. We are continuing to see steady school attendance (though not as high as we would like) and a better emphasis on service delivery in the community. For us Local Commissioners it has been a challenging but rewarding year.

In the past 12 months we have managed to conduct over 90 percent of Hope Vale's FRC conferences ourselves without Commissioner Glasgow being present. This independence has given us great confidence going forward. We have also managed to increase the client attendance rate for conference this year; something that makes us proud of our hard work.

One of the major challenges this year has been a spate of break-ins by disengaged youth in Hope Vale. As Local Commissioners we are keen to help tackle this problem, but we were unable to get details from the Queensland Police Service as all of the children were under the age of 18. Instead we have attended a number of community meetings and held workshops to see how we can work with other services to tackle this problem. We have also met with Cooktown State School and Holy Spirit College in Cooktown as a number of children had become disengaged from education. We wanted to work with the schools to see how we could help get children re-engaged, or better still, help them before they became totally disengaged. So far break-in numbers have declined and a number of services have begun targeting the youth as a community initiative to keep them busy and off the streets. Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Apunipima) is in the process of setting up workshops and youth camps. They have also taken on the responsibility of engaging with children who have been suspended from school. Apunipima is endeavouring to keep the children occupied whilst they are suspended instead of roaming the streets.

We began the 2018 year with a focus on helping the Hope Vale campus of CYAAA improve school attendance. In doing so we have conferenced a number of clients whose children had poor attendance in 2017. This initiative was aimed at setting a good standard of school attendance right from the start of the school year. A number of meetings were held in the first three weeks of term and information was shared between the school and the FRC about school attendance and which of our clients required assistance in getting their children to school. We have also joined the school's Adopt-a-Class Program and are helping our class by supporting achievements such as 100 percent attendance and good behaviour.

In mid-2017 the school underwent a management restructure with a new CYAAA Executive Principal, Principal and curriculum staff. This has been a relatively smooth transition and the behaviour and attendance at the school have remained steady. The school has two local Case Managers, one of whom is Local Commissioner Cheryl Cannon. Having a Hope Vale Commissioner working as a Case Manager has really assisted us in tackling the issue of school attendance. One of the downfalls for the Case Managers over the past 12 months has been the lack of access to a vehicle to use to visit families of truant children, however the Case Managers are hopeful this will soon change.

This year Apunipima has the contract for mental health services in Hope Vale, and has so far made a positive start in this area. A new youth worker who is from Hope Vale is also making some proactive changes and has more activities planned for the community's youth. Apunipima has also attended community meetings and employed more local Indigenous staff in an effort

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to better identify community issues and work out on-the-ground practical solutions. The referral pathway for FRC clients affected by domestic violence has worked well, and the cohesive working relationship between Apunipima and the FRC has been a real achievement during 2018.

This year we have been unsure if the FRC will continue in Hope Vale, after having been advised of a review of Welfare Reform including the Commission. We have been made aware that there is a possibility that our Hope Vale office could even close this year as a result of the review. This has caused great angst not only for us Local Commissioners, but also for community members who understand that the FRC is here to help keep the onus of responsibility on the community. Although the uncertainty has been very stressful it was heartening to hear at the community consultation held in Hope Vale a number of our clients speaking up about how much the FRC has helped them, and how they felt they wouldn't be where they are today if not for the help of the Commissioners.

2018 has not been the easiest year for us in our roles as Local Commissioners with the knowledge that it could be our last, but a quote from Hope Vale Commissioner Victor Gibson when speaking to representatives from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships at both the Hope Vale consultations and the recent Local Commissioner Development Week in Cairns best sums up what we, as Hope Vale Commissioners, are about:

***“One thing we need you to take away - the continuation of this program - it's not about us. It's about us - what we want to do for our community and for our children.”***

**Hope Vale Commissioners Victor Gibson, Doreen Hart, Erica Deeral, Cheryl Cannon and Selina Bowen.**

*Commissioner Glasgow, Hope Vale Commissioners Victor Gibson, Cheryl Cannon and Erica Deeral with the FRC Adopt-a-Class students Frank Kerr, Lex Bowen, Casiarna Deemal, Kyomie Deemal, Rashedah Bambie and Tykeerah Cobus from the CYAAA Hope Vale campus*

