



Community operations

FRC operations in Doomadgee were undertaken by Local Commissioners Christopher Logan, Eleanor Logan, Elaine Cairns, Kaylene O'Keefe, Guy Douglas, Isabel Toby and Dawn Aplin, supported by Local Registry Coordinator Robert Hazeldine and by Acting Local Registry Coordinator Brenden Joinbee. A report of their operations during the reporting period follows.

Doomadgee Commissioners' report

The past 12 months has been another eventful time for Doomadgee, especially the second half of the year. The emergence of COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the community in general. Doomadgee has been in lockdown since March this year and the community is beginning to feel the effects of isolation. The COVID-19 pandemic along with community unrest early in 2020 have impacted school attendance greatly, with primary school attendance at 50.8 percent for Term 1 of 2020 before decreasing to 33.3 percent for Term 2. Unfortunately, sorry business has once again had a profound effect on school attendance.

We, as Doomadgee Local Commissioners, have not forgotten the importance of the work we do in community, and we decided to continue to conference our clients during the COVID-19 lockdown. We have accepted the challenge in front of us as we believe that even though the current situation is far from ideal, the FRC needs to continue providing assistance and support to our community and our people. Conferences are important because they allow us to communicate with our people and to work with them to find the best solution to address the issues they are experiencing. We are beginning to see a shift in people's attitudes towards the FRC and towards us as Local Commissioners. Many clients are now attending conference willingly to participate and interact with us and discuss issues they are experiencing. Clients are more willing to approach us in community to ask for assistance and we have also had clients discuss the positive impacts income management has had on their lives.

During conference we continue to reinforce the importance of school attendance to our clients, especially those clients with children who are of boarding school age. We do not wish to see our children miss the opportunity of going to boarding school and obtaining an education. In saying that, we also stress the importance of a proper start to education for families of young children. We want all children to gain a quality education and to become successful; that is our dream. At the end of each term we arrange the delivery of a household hamper to two families whose children have good school attendance, or who have made significant changes to help improve their children's attendance.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, we have seen an influx of money into the community which has ultimately led to an increased number of parties, drinking and gambling in the community. These issues have been exacerbated by the fact that the community has been locked down and isolated since March, leading to heightened tensions.

We have also seen an increase in the number of cases of petrol sniffing in community. There have been several transient children come into the community from outside Doomadgee, bringing this anti-social behaviour with them. This is an issue that has only emerged recently, and we want to work with service providers in community to help eradicate the problem as quickly as possible. Doomadgee has a newly elected council which we are eager to work with to help combat this issue. We believe that all the services in the community need to work together toward a solution to this horrific problem. Save the Children have been conducting day trips out

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to country to try and assist at-risk children, removing them from influences that could lead to petrol sniffing. We are also extremely happy to hear that Save the Children have begun planning for future camps to be conducted once COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

The appointment of Commissioner Williams to the position of FRC Commissioner has been a breath of fresh air. Commissioner Williams' enthusiasm, drive and commitment to the position has really energised us to continue the work we do in community. Through her encouragement we have realised that we are capable of so much more. Since Commissioner Williams' appointment our confidence has increased dramatically, and we are more motivated than ever to assist our community and our people. The training and support Commissioner has given us shows that she is passionate about our work, and it is something we are extremely grateful for. Working with Commissioner Williams, we have set several goals that we aim to achieve, including increasing our conference attendance rate and the number of referrals to service providers. Without the support and guidance of Commissioner Williams, we would not have the confidence to set and achieve these goals.

We have been serving clients with notices to attend conference by ourselves due to the lock-down measures implemented by the Government. Our Acting Local Registry Coordinator who normally assists us with the serving of notices and other administrative duties related to our work as FRC Local Commissioners has not been able to travel to Doomadgee due to the restrictions in place. This has meant that for us to continue our commitment to Doomadgee, we have had to take on many of the administrative duties in his absence. We have also had to conduct conferences without our Acting Local Registry Coordinator present in Doomadgee. He has continued to assist via telephone during conferencing, noting our decisions and providing information and support as required. We have taken this opportunity to step up and take responsibility to provide the support that is going to best suit the community and our people. Although there have been some minor issues with conferencing remotely, the work we do is too important not to continue. Commissioner Williams and the Cairns registry have provided us with an extraordinary amount of support during this time and we would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Commissioner Williams and the registry staff.

We have expressed to Commissioner Williams our wish to receive additional triggers, allowing us to address matters involving the Magistrate Court, domestic violence and notices for housing violations. We would also like to have access to a Children's Court trigger, so we can work with our young people and their families. We feel that our ability to offer clients a more holistic response is extremely limited due to only receiving education and child safety notices.

We are happy to announce that Commissioner Isabel Toby has returned to the FRC after a short time away, and we would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest FRC Local Commissioner for Doomadgee, Dawn Aplin. Commissioner Aplin's appointment will help strengthen our team and provide additional knowledge and experience to assist us in conferencing and engaging with clients. We look forward to continuing our work as FRC Local Commissioners in the future, and with the assistance of Commissioner Williams, have big plans to better help our community and people.