



# Community operations Doomadgee

*FRC operations in Doomadgee were undertaken by Local Commissioners Christopher Logan, Eleanor Logan, Elaine Cairns, Kaylene O'Keefe, Guy Douglas, Isabel Toby, Dawn Aplin and Karen Jupiter, supported by Local Registry Coordinator Brenden Joinbee. An account of their operations during the reporting period follows.*

## Doomadgee Commissioners' report

Our focus this year has been to promote our working relationship with the community and create a greater understanding of our purpose.

### Significant achievements

When this financial year commenced, we set out a number of goals that we wished to achieve. The ones we are most proud of are:

- 88 Family Responsibilities Agreements entered into with our clients (an increase of 1000 percent from the 2019-20 financial year)
- 159 referrals to support services under a Family Responsibilities Agreement or Order (an increase of 46 percent from the 2019-20 financial year)
- 10 voluntary income management agreements entered into with clients (an increase of 150 percent from the 2019-20 financial year).

We have altered our conferencing style this year to allow us more time to have in-depth conversations with our clients. We believe this has contributed to what we have identified as a shift in our clients' attitudes toward us as Local Commissioners, and toward the FRC generally. We are recognising that clients are more willing to participate in conference because they are gaining a greater understanding of our purpose. The changed conferencing style has led to a 66 percent reduction in the number of clients placed on conditional income management and an emerging trend in the uptake of voluntary income management by self-referring community members.

There has been an increase in clients and community members who have expressed an interest in the new Cashless Debit Card (CDC). Along with our Local Registry Coordinator, we will continue to engage with the community and inform those interested about the features of the CDC and answer any questions about the new card. Our community can benefit from the CDC, especially our elderly and vulnerable people as it can be used as a safeguard against humbugging.

We like to celebrate our client's successes and acknowledge the work our clients do to help improve their lives. Sometimes their achievements may seem quite small, but every small step forward is a leap in challenging circumstances. Part of our acknowledgement of their efforts is to present incentive hampers each term to clients and families who have gone above and beyond to improve school attendance for their children or improve the wellbeing of their families. The pleasure we see on the faces of the recipients of these hampers is the greatest reward we can receive and delivering these hampers shows our clients that we are there to support them and to celebrate their successes with them.

### Challenges

Unfortunately, the ongoing impact of the COVID pandemic continued to affect school attendance throughout 2020 with primary school Term 4 attendance for 2020 at 35.8 percent. We are happy to report that Term 1 of 2021 saw a dramatic increase in primary school attendance to 60.8 percent. We note that the increase was the most improved school attendance from Term 4 2020 to Term 1 2021 in the State for an Indigenous

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community school. Doomadgee was isolated from December 2020 to March 2021 due to our annual wet season. This isolation contributed to the school being able to maintain their focus on improving school attendance, and the increase has been most welcome. Term 2 attendance was unfortunately affected by sorry business recording 51.0 percent.

For much of 2020 Doomadgee was plagued by youth volatile substance misuse (VSM). Opal (or low aromatic) fuel which contains less of the toxic compounds that allow sniffers to get high, had previously been sold in Doomadgee from October 2018 until its replacement in May 2019 with regular unleaded petrol. We are very pleased that the Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council, with the support of the Doomadgee police, made the decision to opt for the return of Opal fuel in the community. That decision and action has led to a significant decrease in the number of cases involving VSM. Doomadgee continues, however, to experience problems with youth offending, particularly in break and enter of properties. Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council appointed a new CEO, Troy Fraser, in January 2021 and tackling these youth issues have been high on his agenda. We look forward to working with the council next financial year to improve the wellbeing and educational outcomes for our children in Doomadgee.

## Other community matters

One of the positives for the community during this reporting period has been visits to Doomadgee by Preston Campbell through The Preston Campbell Foundation. The foundation travels to remote Indigenous communities to promote the value of education to families, students and the community. The foundation encourages young people and students to choose safe pathways, develop resilience and mentors them to become self-empowered for success.

One of the major issues of concern remains the lack of youth support services and activities available in Doomadgee. We are aware that the police are attempting to re-establish the Police-Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) program in Doomadgee to provide after school and school holiday activities and on-Country programs. We support this endeavour as being a proactive step in engaging with youth who have been involved in the youth justice system or have disengaged from education.

Sorry business continues to be a significant factor affecting school attendance. We understand discussions have commenced within the community to find a solution to observe sorry business in a culturally respectful and sensitive manner, whilst balancing the need for service delivery and trade to continue. These are complex matters that inevitably will take time to be considered and resolved by community members.

## The next 12 months

We have grown in our decision-making capability over the past year and have made significant progress in our acceptance as FRC Local Commissioners in community. As with many of our brother and sister Local Commissioners from other FRC communities, we have a concern in regard to better representing our community and would like to see the appointment of new Local Commissioners from different clan and family groups and of a younger age, allowing not only for more comprehensive engagement, but also succession planning. We have previously raised this issue with the Queensland Government and hope that early in the next financial year we will see our numbers expanded.

The FRC in Doomadgee only receives trigger notices for child safety and welfare and education breaches. We continue to lobby the Queensland Government for the addition of other trigger notices which apply to the welfare reform communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. Among those triggers we would particularly like to see the addition (or return) of the Children's Court trigger to enable us as FRC Local Commissioners and concerned community members to help combat the growing problem of disengaged young people in the community.