

# Community operations Mossman Gorge



*FRC operations in Mossman Gorge were undertaken by Local Commissioners Loretta Spratt and George Ross-Kelly, supported by Acting Local Registry Coordinators Simeon Miglioranza, Sandi Rye and Cara Marks. An account of their operations during the reporting period follows.*

## **Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners' report**

We continue to refine our conferencing and decision-making skills through training to improve the way we support and communicate with clients. Our significant achievements listed below are a testament to our professional approach in this regard.

### **Significant achievements**

- Voluntary income management agreements for the Cashless Debit Card increased by 200 percent.
- Conditional income management decreased by 64 percent.
- Voluntary case plan referrals have increased by 150 percent.
- Conference attendance increased to 63.8 percent this year and is the highest attendance since the commencement of the Commission.

### **Challenges**

#### ***Impact of COVID-19 and the introduction of ICM***

COVID-19 challenged us again at the start of 2022, causing a delay to the commencement of conferencing. The Intensive Case Management (ICM) framework was established which allowed us to work with clients outside of the traditional conference setting. This initiative allowed us to engage with vulnerable and at-risk clients, connecting them to support services on a voluntary basis for targeted priority needs. Building trust and reinforcing the work we do through actions and messaging is important to us. The ICM has been well accepted and has allowed us to support clients when many other support services were unable to deliver face to face engagement due to their policy restrictions.

#### ***Legislative constraints***

Legislative constraints in regard to jurisdiction continue to inhibit us in addressing the antisocial behaviour of people who visit Mossman Gorge and stay for lengthy periods. We have lobbied for all visitors to adhere to the values of our community, but still struggle to address poor behaviours. Engaging with residents returning to the community from incarceration and having knowledge of their return has proven difficult to navigate, with returning residents only being identified upon receiving a new trigger notice. It would be helpful were we able to conference these returning community residents and provide support in their assimilation back to community life.



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## ***Local Commissioner appointments – exercising Local Authority***

During 2021-22 there were only two of us available to sit as Local Commissioners in Mossman Gorge, and although we are very committed to our role, we feel it is also a large burden to carry for two people. We have been asking for the appointment of new Local Commissioners since before Local Commissioner Karen Shuan's retirement on 30 June 2021 and have required consistent support from Commissioner Tammy Williams and Deputy Commissioner Rodney Curtin to be able to legally form a panel to conduct conference as required by section 50 of the FRC Act. We have been unable to constitute a panel under section 50A and have therefore been unable to utilise full local authority in our decision-making. We are very happy to advise that on 30 May 2022 the Commission was informed of the successful appointment of five new Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners effective from 5 May 2022: Zara Ryan, Jarrod Kulka, Daphne Creek, Helenia Creek and Julie-Ann Williams.

## **Other community matters**

### ***Cashless Debit Card***

Income management has been an invaluable tool for the people of Mossman Gorge over the years. With the introduction of the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) we have seen more of our community members volunteer to have part of their welfare payments quarantined. Those that volunteer to be income-managed tend to be those most vulnerable people (such as our Elders) who can be taken advantage of, but increasingly other community members who simply need some help to make sure there is food in the house see the benefits of the CDC.

To kick start the financial year we held a Cashless Debit Card information session in conjunction with Cape York Partnership to share knowledge on the opportunities available through voluntary income management, while the staff from MPower shared knowledge of their new digital PAMA app. The day was a success with a few community members signing voluntary income management agreements. This year we have seen the number of voluntary income management agreements rise significantly with clients experiencing positive outcomes from the use of the CDC.

### ***Mossman Gorge complex case conference meetings***

The FRC has always been a key part of coordinated responses to community issues. In the past year the FRC has continued to lead the Mossman Gorge Complex Case Conference meeting on a monthly basis. The aim of the meeting is to identify and action a plan of support for vulnerable people with complex needs or those that have fallen through service gaps. The group consists of representatives from our service partners at Bamanga Bubu Ngadimunku Aboriginal Corporation (BBNAC), Mossman Police, Mossman Elders Justice Group, Apunipima Cape York Health Council, Queensland Housing and Queensland Health Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATODS). The group identifies vulnerable community members, not just FRC clients, and together the services identify and coordinate which organisations are relevant to provide support for the individual and their families. We are proud to be involved in this whole of community collaboration which will provide long-term benefits for those in need.

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## FRC Future Directions Review

During this reporting period we were advised, yet again, that the FRC would be subject to a review, “to inform a modernisation of the FRC, and to consider its operations in a contemporary context”. The Mossman Gorge community decided to have the FRC model in our community over a decade ago because it offered us the hope of giving local people decision-making power, and the power to link our community with the support they needed. FRC Mossman Gorge was the beginning of many support services coming into our community; the O-Hub and the Wellbeing Centre were brought in to support the work of the FRC, and we continue to have strong relationships with those services to this day. We have remained consistent and committed to supporting our people as Local Commissioners, because we still believe it is the best way we can help. We know that the FRC has worked in Mossman Gorge. We have seen with our own eyes the change from the days of dysfunction with drinking in the streets, parties, loud music, and lack of respect for the community. We still experience these issues, but we know that the situation has greatly improved since 2008. We need the ongoing support of Government, so that we can make the FRC work even better to suit the needs of our community.

## The next 12 months

Developing our ICM framework will be an active focal point in the coming months. The positive response to the intent of the framework has filled us with the hope of engaging more clients in this setting.

We are delighted to grow our team of local decision-makers and welcome the five new Local Commissioners to our family. With our team of two Local Commissioners now growing to seven, the diversity, knowledge, and experience this brings to the community is a gift and overwhelmingly exciting. We look forward to sharing our knowledge and guiding their way through training over the coming months.

In the FRC’s annual report for 2018-19 we made the following statement:

*“Our vision for the future of Mossman Gorge is simple. We envision a community where respect for each other is valued; capacity building is present to support our mob toward improved social and emotional wellbeing; opportunities for employment exist in a variety of sectors; our children are attending school consistently and education is valued; there is no violence, loud music or parties; and our Bama people are happy.”*

This simple vision remains. It is a vision that we are confident we can see come to pass, in time, with the support of the Queensland and Australian Governments to make the FRC the best it can be.