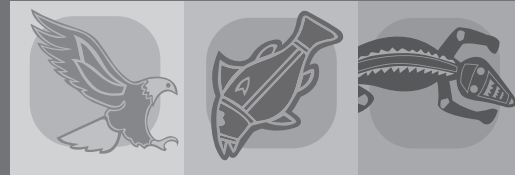


Community operations Doomadgee



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

Doomadgee Commissioners’ report

This financial year we focused on building our relationship with the Doomadgee State School and working with clients to implement strategies to overcome barriers to their children’s regular school attendance. We did this through co-designing an Elevated School Response (ESR) strategy where we partnered with the school to increase our engagement with families of non-attending students outside of the conferencing process.

Significant achievements

When this financial year commenced, we established a number of goals we wished to achieve. The ones we have achieved and are most proud of are:

- A strengthened relationship with the Doomadgee State School and the implementation of the ESR. The ESR has enabled us to increase our presence and interact more favourably with non-attending students to stress the importance of attending school consistently. We regularly communicate with teaching staff and students and attend school assemblies to present awards.
- The three new Local Commissioners (Wendy Taylor, Virginia Collins and Lila Cairns) who commenced last year have transitioned into their roles well. The new Local Commissioners are an asset to the team and have assisted us to increase our engagement with clients, the community and with service providers. We look forward to continuing our mentoring roles, assisting with training and sharing the knowledge we have acquired over the years.
- We have identified a cohort of clients who have reported the benefits of voluntary income management and have gained confidence to manage their own money. We see this as a positive outcome as it means our clients are demonstrating personal responsibility for their households and families.

Challenges

Impact of flooding

Early 2023 saw Doomadgee experience a significant flooding event, with the Nicholson River reaching record flood levels which threatened to engulf the community. This incredibly stressful event created panic and led to food shortages with food having to be flown into the community a couple of times per week. The flow-on effect of food being transported by air was the enormous increase to the cost of groceries causing economic stress and health issues for community members.



Community operations Doomadgee

School attendance

School attendance continues to be affected by numerous community events in and outside of Doomadgee that our community members traditionally attend such as the Mt Isa Show, the bull riding tour and local rodeo circuit.

In an effort to combat the historically low school attendance for Term 3, we implemented an ESR strategy with the assistance of our Local Registry Coordinator. The aim of this strategy is to increase school attendance by engaging with clients on a more regular basis outside of the conference setting, and to identify and source solutions to issues that are impacting on a child's school attendance. This engagement received a positive response and provided the opportunity to continue building constructive relationships with our clients.

Following a lengthy period in which the Doomadgee State School Principal's position was filled by temporary Acting Principals we are pleased to see the school now has a new permanent Principal in Mandi White. We look forward to meeting with the Principal. The school has also now employed a supervisor to oversee the Student Attendance Officer team. This is going to be a great asset to both the Doomadgee State School and to us as FRC Local Commissioners and will allow us to work more collaboratively with the school to improve school attendance for the children of Doomadgee.

Sorry business

The Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council has now established sorry business protocols for the community. It is hoped that these protocols will limit the impact on school attendance and service provision whilst continuing to allow for the cultural requirements of sorry business.

Lack of trigger notices

In all other communities the FRC operates in,¹ except Doomadgee, the Local Commissioners have the benefit of using a full suite of 'trigger notices'. The FRC Act allows the Commission to receive notifications from agencies, in the following circumstances or triggering events:

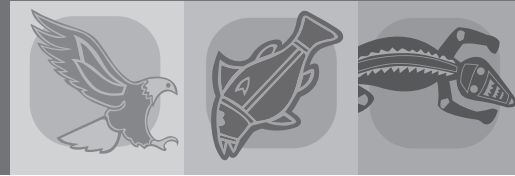
- a child of the person is either not enrolled or not meeting designated school attendance requirements
- there is an intake involving the person by the Department of Child Safety in relation to alleged harm or risk of harm
- the person, as a tenant, is in breach of a social housing tenancy agreement
- a court convicts the person of an offence or makes a domestic violence protection order against the person.

In Doomadgee, we are limited to only helping our families with school attendance or enrolment, and child safety issues. It is imperative that we gain access to the full suite of trigger notices that other FRC communities receive so we can take a holistic approach to the issues that our clients are experiencing.

Youth crime

Youth crime is a serious problem in Doomadgee, and we fear that the recent escalation in criminal activity by gangs of young people aged between 8 and 15 years has the potential to result in loss of life. These children are running rampant at all hours of the night breaking into businesses and

Community operations Doomadgee



service provider premises and causing significant damage. This puts an enormous strain on the community as it disrupts service provision and prevents community members from accessing supportive assistance. The issue of youth crime requires a multi-prong approach. The FRC doesn't have all of the answers, but strongly believes if we were able to use the Childrens Court trigger which exists under section 43 of *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*, we could engage the parents of these youth offenders and work with them, in partnership with the police and service providers, towards making the community safe again.

Other community matters

Lack of GP in community

Unfortunately, as at 30 June 2023 Doomadgee residents still do not have regular access to a GP doctor. Our community members should not have to travel to Mt Isa and other towns to seek a service that should be available in a community of approximately 1200 people. The lack of a doctor not only puts stress on patients but also their families, especially with the requirement to travel and stay away to access medical care.

Working with the police

We welcomed a new Officer in Charge (OIC) of the Doomadgee Police Station this past year and are very excited to continue growing our relationship with the new OIC and the police in Doomadgee. We greatly appreciate the work they do to help keep our community safe and we look forward to working with them to help achieve this goal. Even though we are limited in Doomadgee with only child safety and welfare and school attendance and non-enrolment triggers upon which we can conference, we regularly meet with Doomadgee police officers to discuss safety and issues of unrest in the community and work with them to find solutions.

The next 12 months

Over the next 12 months we look forward to building on our strong working relationship with the Doomadgee State School, especially through ESR and regular meetings with the new Principal. We want our children to have every chance to succeed and getting a good education is the foundation to success. We also hope to build on our relationship with the Student Attendance Officer team to help address issues impacting school attendance and provide appropriate solutions to rectify these issues.

As the FRC in Doomadgee, we will continue to advocate for the additional agency notice triggers that our fellow Local Commissioners in the FRC communities in Cape York have at their disposal. We believe the full suite of 'trigger notices' are necessary for us to deal with issues in the community in a more holistic way. We don't want another year to pass of not being able to do our job the way it should've been done from the start, otherwise our community members will continue to miss out.

For the sake of our young people and community safety, we will also not give up the fight to have the Childrens Court trigger operating in Doomadgee.