



Community operations Coen

FRC operations in Coen were undertaken by Local Commissioners May Kepple, Elaine Liddy, Alison Liddy, Maureen Liddy, Ramana Walker and Naomi Hobson, supported by Local Registry Coordinator Linda Saunders and Coordination Manager Sandi Rye.

Coen Commissioners' report

The FRC continues to prioritise strong, meaningful engagement with vulnerable community members. Our approach remains embedded in visibility, presence and trust-building, meeting with people and working collaboratively with them to support their goals. Over the past year, we have seen a notable increase in voluntary participation, with many reaching out to us directly for support. This shift signals increased confidence in the FRC's impact and validates the success of our strengths-based, client-led model in supporting meaningful change.

Our work within the broader community also continues to grow, including effective engagement with the local and visiting service providers, and collaboration with Coen Campus of Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy (CYAAA). Our involvement in local events this year has provided an opportunity not only to observe the rich community spirit, but also to connect with families, carers and educators in informal and inclusive settings. These efforts contribute to a holistic strategy that strengthens community ties, promotes early engagement and supports the wellbeing of Coen residents across all life stages.

Significant achievements

- In 2023-24 with the implementation of client engagement at the start of the 2024 calendar year, we recorded 55 client engagement activities for the remaining six months of the financial year relating to 32 clients. In 2024-25 we have increased this number significantly with a total of 210¹ client engagement activities, involving 63² unique clients – representing 30.3% of Coen's estimated resident adult population (as at 30 June 2024³).
- Of these client engagement activities 95 or 45.2% were finance-related, all 19 Voluntary Income Management (VIM) agreements signed in 2024-25 directly related to client engagement activities. Out of the 19 VIMs, 9 were linked to an agreement for a Voluntary Case Plan (VCP) to Cape York Partnership's MPower money management program.

1. This figure records the total number of all client engagement activities undertaken in Coen by the FRC to support clients outside of conference. These include both contact and non-contact activities. Of these, 18 instances were related to administrative support including preparation for upcoming client engagements and 51 instances involved unsuccessful attempts to engage with a client for the following reasons: medical, no longer living in community, not suitable time, out of the community, in prison, sorry business, substance affected/aggressive and unable to locate.
2. This figure records the total number of Coen community members identified with a client engagement activity outside of conference inclusive of contact and non-contact activities.
3. Australian Statistical Geography Standard Edition 3, July 2021 – June 2026 boundaries for statistical areas level 1 (SA1s) of 31501139616 for Coen. Adults 18 years and over provided by QGSO, Queensland Treasury, based on the ABS unpublished preliminary ERP data by age and sex at the Statistical Area level 1 for 30 June 2024.



Challenges

Local Commissioner availability

While client engagement outside of conference has benefited from the ongoing availability of at least one Local Commissioner, convening a consistent panel for conference for higher-level matters remains challenging due to the availability of Local Commissioners. Five of the six current Local Commissioners are employed full-time, some in senior roles and/or outside of the community for extended periods.

Recent nominations for new Local Commissioner appointments present a valuable opportunity to expand and diversify the team. These developments support efforts to strengthen culturally respectful and inclusive engagement. Broadening representation within the Local Commissioner panel enhances the ability to respond to community needs with greater cultural insight and gender balance.

Legislative constraints

Recruitment of new Local Commissioners remains hindered by existing legislation. The *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* disqualifies individuals who have previously been subject to an FRC agreement or decision, limiting the opportunity for otherwise respected and highly suitable candidates to be nominated.⁴ Legislative amendments would allow for greater participation and reduce pressure on current Local Commissioners who are balancing multiple responsibilities.

Other community matters

School attendance

Despite leadership and other staff transitions at the Coen Campus of CYAAA, which can be unsettling for a school community, attendance has remained strong. This reflects the establishment of effective attendance systems and succession planning at the school level, and the community's shared commitment to the importance of education.

Community collaboration

The FRC's continued collaboration with the Coen Campus of CYAAA and our ongoing support for students and their families has been recognised by CYAAA leadership as a key factor in maintaining one of the highest attendance rates among comparable communities.

The Coen Community Services Muster was a standout event uniting local and visiting services over two days. Services engaged directly with the community, providing licensing and Blue Card services, housing support and more. The FRC's participation played a key role in linking community members with the services they needed. This support has contributed to a growing network of sustainable, community-led initiatives. A strong indicator of this success is the high number of local residents now employed in service roles, highlighting Coen's ongoing progress in building capacity and fostering long-term resilience.

4. Section 20(1)(iii) disqualifies a person from being a Local Commissioner if 'the person is, or has been, the subject of a family responsibilities agreement or a decision of the Commission under section 69(1)(b)'.



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New homes for Coen

Over the past 12 months, six new homes were constructed providing much needed relief from overcrowding and easing household pressures. This development has significantly improved community wellbeing. Many of the new residents are voluntary clients of the FRC and their transition into stable housing has seen positive change. Tenants have demonstrated renewed motivation and commitment to healthier living environments by starting home gardens, setting boundaries to limit visits from intoxicated individuals, enrolling in income management programs and actively collaborating with local service providers. These proactive steps reflect a growing sense of stability, responsibility and community engagement.

The next 12 months

The FRC's Client Engagement approach exemplifies a proactive and inclusive approach to helping people resume primary responsibility for the wellbeing of themselves, their families and the greater community. By promoting voluntary participation, fostering strong inter-agency collaboration and supporting responsive service delivery, the FRC will continue to help create and advocate for more effective and culturally appropriate support systems. Client engagement in Coen has been the catalyst for client success stories of personal growth and positive behaviour change, especially in financial management and domestic violence prevention.

We will strengthen partnerships with existing providers and address service delivery gaps, advocating for increased services in mental health, alcohol and other drugs support and children and youth programs. We will intensify efforts to support the early childhood sector, including the Kindergarten, through advocating school readiness activities, Kindergarten attendance and parenting support. Additionally, we recognise the critical need for support services for carers. Plans to gather information directly from community members who care for vulnerable people and children have commenced, to ensure we can identify their specific needs.