

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 Leila Cairns supported by Local Registry Coordinator Brenden Joinbee. An account of their operations during the reporting period follows.

Doomadgee Commissioners’ report

This year we continued to build on the positive relationships we have established with our clients and community members. In the second half of the financial year we have also undertaken more engagement initiatives with the Doomadgee school, which has yielded some very positive results. These engagement strategies will continue into the next year, as we believe it is important for our children to understand the opportunities that can open up for them with a good education.

Significant achievements

- Continuing from our efforts last year, we have again seen an increase in client attendance at conference, with the attendance rate up from 66.8% to an all-time high of 71.1%. This continued increase in conference attendance highlights the relationships we have built with our clients and reflects a high level of community trust in us as Local Commissioners.
- We have also experienced a growth in stakeholder confidence, with the First Nations Unit of the Queensland Police Service seeking Local Commissioner input and advice to assist with their induction process for new officers commencing employment in Doomadgee.
- Client Engagement (CE) is an initiative we commenced last year as we sought to continue to build trusting and respectful relationships with our clients outside of the more formal conference setting. We believe this work is vital in allowing us to work more closely with community members to achieve positive outcomes for their families. We have increased the number of client engagement activities in community from 376 recorded in the last six months of the 2023-24 financial year relating to 111 clients to a total of 426¹ client engagement activities in 2024-25 relating to 171² clients.

1. This figure records the total number of all client engagement activities undertaken in Doomadgee by the FRC to support clients outside of conference. These include both contact and non-contact activities. Of these, 3 instances were related to administrative support including preparation for upcoming client engagements and 185 instances involved unsuccessful attempts to engage with a client for to 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 Doomadgee community members identified with a client engagement activity outside of conference inclusive of contact and non-contact activities.



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Challenges

School attendance

The Doomadgee State School attendance in Term 4 2024 dropped to the second lowest overall attendance rate recorded between Term 1 2021 and Term 4 2024, with an attendance rate of just 30.6%. It has been extremely disappointing to see the school attendance steadily decrease from 49.8% in Term 1 2024 to 30.6% Term 4 2024.

We continued to offer support to the school through engagement strategies with staff and students however, there was no uptake of our offers. The low attendance rate was also compounded by a lack of School Attendance Officers (SAOs) throughout 2024.

Sport and Recreation building not being utilised

Unfortunately, in November 2024 the Doomadgee Sport and Recreation building was broken into and substantial damage was caused by the children responsible. As a result of the damage the activities previously available to community members can no longer be offered.

Whilst concerns have been raised about youth criminal activity in the community, we are frustrated by our inability to deal with youth offenders due to the Youth Justice trigger not currently being utilised in Doomadgee.

Alcohol and drugs in community

There has been an increase in drugs and alcohol entering the community, leading to a rise in anti-social behaviour. People are intoxicated and fighting in the streets and having late night parties. These factors have impacted school attendance as children are being kept awake by the noise and fighting and are too tired to attend school the next morning.

Flooding

Although we did not face the same flooding levels as in previous years, the community was still heavily impacted by high water levels in the Nicholson River. The supply of food and provisions again became a significant problem for the community with supplies needing to be flown in, leading to further increases to already inflated prices. This situation results in enormous stress on already vulnerable community members. On a positive note, the fuel supply was restored in April, which was sooner than in previous years.

Other community matters

Principal of Doomadgee State School

The principal who oversaw the operations of the Doomadgee State School during 2024 departed at the end of the school year, with a temporary principal appointed whilst the Department of Education undertook a recruitment process for a replacement.

We are pleased to report that the 2025 school year commenced with a new principal and leadership team, with plans for a local recruitment drive to fill the vacant SAO positions.

Term 1 2025 saw a significant increase in the overall school attendance to 49.4% and a more positive community attitude. The principal engaged well with the community and service providers stating, "We understand that this is a community school, not a school in a community".

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This mindset gave us hope that the school could start heading in the right direction and we remain confident that this is the case with the new permanent appointment to the principal's position. While we acknowledge there is still a way to go, we look forward to working with the new leadership team towards positive outcomes for Doomadgee children.

Under the new leadership team the school employed 38 community members in various positions, a significant increase on previous years and a demonstration of respect and inclusion.

The next 12 months

We will continue working with stakeholders to obtain the additional trigger notices we so desperately need and which are already legislated for the other FRC communities. Without these notices we are severely impacted in our ability to address all the issues that are impacting community members and their family units and support our clients holistically. We hope that the inclusion of other trigger notices will lead to a greater demand for the provision of support services in community and more employment opportunities for community members.

More employment and training opportunities will be another focus for the FRC in Doomadgee in the coming year. We will continue engaging with My Pathway to explore training and employment opportunities for our clients, with a particular focus on school leavers and clients returning to community after incarceration. Our Local Registry Coordinator will also continue engagement with QBuild in Doomadgee to ensure any employment or training opportunities are not missed.

We look forward to building on our relationship with the Doomadgee State School. The new principal and leadership team are committed to working with the FRC to achieve successful outcomes for the community and we can't wait to see the results of our collaboration. We will continue to provide assistance under our own 'Elevated School Response' initiative to help achieve these results and we look forward with anticipation for what is to come.