



# CLIENT PROFILE

## WORDS CAN BE WALLS

When the Commission first came to our community we all thought it was going to be just another person coming into community telling us what to do. Some of us already knew Commissioner Glasgow from court, but we did not understand why we should have to answer to him about our children and our day to day living. We then found out some of our aunts and uncles were now Local Commissioners and unlike in the Murri Court, they were equal decision makers. We did not think this could be true and believed that they were just token names on a committee.

Sure enough, my children missed some school and I was called up to the Commission. I was ready to tell these aunts and uncles that I thought they were showing off and trying to be better than the rest of us. I knew some of them had a past, and all of them had children and grandchildren that had not always been number one community members. When I got there it was not at all what I had expected. The Local Commissioners asked me questions and offered assistance. They seemed to understand the problems and also what it was like to deal with outsiders and filling in forms. They spoke to me in language and then spoke to Commissioner Glasgow in English, leaving out some of the really personal stuff.

I saw and heard the nasty things people said to them, the different words and actions to discourage them and make them resign. The Local Commissioners started attending meetings, having dignitaries and government people visit them. We also found out they got paid to say what they thought and to give recommendations. I knew they received training and information, and sometimes got to travel to Cairns and Brisbane. Like many other community

members I was jealous and thought they were getting to think they were better than the rest of us.

One day I attended conference again about school attendance. I told the Local Commissioners that it was okay for them because they had more money and personal possessions than I had. They challenged me and told me to try to do something for myself and not to be so negative because they worked hard for what they had. They pointed out to me the abuse and negative things that people had said over the years, and that these people had not stopped them from achieving what they had achieved, and continued to achieve. They remembered I had been a good student, that I was a good mother most of the time and asked me why I did not have a job. At first I was very mad at them and then I thought why am I mad at them? I was the one missing out.

I applied for a part-time job and could not believe it when they said I could start straight away. I was so happy I told everyone. It was then the wall of words came. The words were so negative and so cruel. The words were like a wall stopping me from taking the job. It was easier to say no to the job, and then everyone would know I was not trying to be different than they were.

I spoke with my partner and children, and to my surprise they encouraged me to take the job. "Look at some of your family who are Local Commissioners. They are strong, learning new things and understand both our culture and the outside culture. They work well in both worlds. Why can't you?"

I now work part-time and I am learning more and more each day. I have travelled by myself to the bottom of Queensland