



LOCAL COMMISSIONERS' YEAR IN REVIEW

Hope Vale Local Commissioners' report

It has been another successful year for the Hope Vale community. The school has seen solid attendance again this year and Hope Vale residents are really embracing community spirit and engaging more in community events. Hope Vale has seen an increase in community members stepping up and trying, along with service providers, to tackle issues in their community such as disengaged youth, safety and security.

Community members are starting to want to make a change, and take control of their community

In July 2015 we farewelled our Local Coordinator Francesca Adams due to family commitments outside of Hope Vale and in August 2015 we welcomed Samantha Foster to Hope Vale as our Local Coordinator. Sam worked with the Commission in Cairns and after cross-training in the Local Coordinator role to help relieve across all communities, she jumped at the opportunity to work in Hope Vale. Her passion for healthy communities and empowering youth saw her participate in the Youth Forum hosted in Hope Vale in March. The Forum was a great opportunity for young people in community to speak about their future and have direct input into the Queensland Youth Strategy.

The Hope Vale campus of CYAAA has had an injection of new teachers this year and they have been a breath of fresh air. The new teachers are really embracing the community by getting out and riding their bikes, going to the beach and participating in community events. The teachers love the school and the kids, and their enthusiasm and excitement about being in Hope Vale has rubbed off on both students and other staff.

We have once again embraced the graduating class as our adopt-a-class. This is obviously a very important year for these students and we, as Local Commissioners, hope to motivate these students to dream big and aim high. Once a month the class comes over to the conference room with questions and they sit and have a yarn with us about whatever issues they are interested in. We have discussed the conference process, the school attendance information that we receive, the importance of good school attendance, their future, and whether they would like to become FRC Local Commissioners one day. We also visit the class at school once a month with cupcakes to celebrate birthdays, and have a picnic planned to get the students out of the classroom for something different at the end of the term.

This term the Cape York Partnership (CYP) Parenting team has moved into the school grounds. This move happened during the school holidays after the first term and it has already made an impact on the school atmosphere. Having the parenting staff on the school grounds providing their programs to parents, being present at parade and at the school to assist wherever they can seems to be contributing to the positive school culture.

For the most part, our secondary students have had a positive start to the year as well. Attendance at Holy Spirit College has been positive and their flexibility and understanding of family dynamics has seen families, who have previously struggled to get their children to school, enroll all of their children at Holy Spirit College for Monday to Friday boarding. A core group of teenagers are still disengaged and resorting to criminal and anti-social behaviour, however, they do not make up the majority, and the community is taking steps to combat this challenge through community safety meetings.

We want to continue to work with service providers in Hope Vale and to encourage them to work collaboratively with each other. Greater accountability and better coordination between various service providers would make a big difference for our community. We would love to see partnerships between the various services in Hope Vale, rather than services working in isolation and potentially working at cross-purposes, even though they all want the best outcome for clients.

A great example of what cooperation can achieve in Hope Vale is the recent change in approved activities at My Pathway, the local employment agency. Community members are now able to log hours for their My Pathway obligations at the school. This enables parents to not only get their children to school, but to spend time at the school, which will benefit the school and the wider community immensely. This is a great example of how

LOCAL COMMISSIONERS' YEAR IN REVIEW



collaboration between the school, the parenting team and My Pathway has resulted in a positive step for our community.

In May we attended the annual Local Commissioner Development Week and can all agree that this year has been the best so far. The invited speakers and topics of discussion were all extremely relevant and very helpful. We particularly enjoyed hearing a police officer from the Drug Squad talk about drugs in community and their operations to combat this. We also found the talks from Dr Ernest Hunter about suicide and suicide prevention in communities, and resilience and self-care training from Kate Skilbeck very interesting. The highlight was definitely the day trip to the Girl Academy at Wangetti Beach and the trip up to Mossman Gorge. The Community of Mossman Gorge is beautiful and we would like to thank the Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners for having us on their land and talking to us about how they work in their community. The entire schedule was very well planned out and all of the Commissioners from various communities spoke freely with each other and shared lessons that they have learnt and different approaches they have tried in their communities. We all left the development week feeling re-energised, ready to get back into our communities and not only continue to do what we do, but to also try some new approaches.

Slowly the community is starting to see the value in the FRC's presence in community. We are starting to see a shift in the attitudes of community members towards ourselves as Local Commissioners and community members, and our Local Coordinator. Community members are more frequently coming to us and asking for support or advice. We have several community members volunteering to go on the BasicsCard as a tool to help them save their money. We also recently had a couple come into conference and thank the FRC for their support which assisted them in getting into a new home in Hope Vale. There is still a long way to go, however, the shift in mindset within the community has started. Community members are starting to want to make a change, and take control of their community to achieve positive outcomes. Clients are starting to see why we are in community, and that our aim is not to make their lives harder, but to support them and make sure that their children have every opportunity to have an education to ensure their future.

Hope Vale Commissioners Brian Cobus, Victor Gibson, Doreen Hart, Ivan Deemal, Erica Deeral, Cheryl Cannon and Selina Bowen



Assembly at the Hope Vale Campus of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy