

# **Family Responsibilities Commission**

*Report to the Family Responsibilities Board*

## **Quarterly Report**

**No. 49**

**July 2020 to September 2020**



*Report prepared by the Family Responsibilities Commission under the leadership of  
Commissioner Tammy Williams*

## Executive Summary

Quantified in the table below are the activities undertaken by the Commission during quarter 49 with comparisons shown to the previous quarter.

**Table 1:** Activity from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020.

<b>Activity for the quarter</b>	<b>Qtr 48</b>	<b>Qtr 49</b>
Total number of notices received by the Commission <sup>1</sup>	1,231	2,372
Number of within jurisdiction notices	837	1181
Number of not within jurisdiction notices	394	1191
Number of clients notified to the Commission from within jurisdiction notices	460	622
Number of clients served to attend conference	309	257
Conferences conducted	439	331
Conference attendance percentage	61.7%	54.4%
Conference non-attendance percentage with acceptable (reasonable) excuse	14.3%	24.5%
<b>Conference outcomes for the quarter</b>		
Agreements to attend community support services	9	39
Orders made to attend community support services	75	44
Referrals to service providers <sup>2</sup>	104	93
Agreements for Conditional Income Management (CIM)	0	1
Orders made for CIM	51	34
<b>Client interactions during the quarter<sup>3</sup></b>		
Number of clients placed on a voluntary case plan (VCP), voluntary income management (VIM) and CIM	0	1
Number of clients placed on a VCP	0	2
Number of clients placed on a case plan without a CIM	57	69
Number of clients placed on a case plan and VIM	2	0
Number of clients placed on a case plan and CIM	25	13
Number of clients placed on a VIM	9	4
Number of clients placed on a CIM without a case plan	26	21
<b>Other activity for the quarter</b>		
Applications to Amend or End received	12	8
Voluntary agreements for VIM	11	5
Voluntary agreements for a voluntary case plan	0	3
<b>Information as at the last day of the quarter</b>		
Number of clients case-managed through a current case plan	286	317
Number of clients subject to a current CIM	134	118
Number of clients on a current VIM	17	11

<sup>1</sup> Agency notices are counted on the basis of the number of persons named on the notice (e.g. a Child Safety and Welfare notice relating to two parents is counted as two notices and if three children from one family have an unexplained absence on one day, it is counted as three individual School Attendance notices).

<sup>2</sup> A case plan can have multiple referrals (e.g. a client may be referred to both the Wellbeing Centre and MPower under the same case plan).

<sup>3</sup> During the quarter: 3 voluntary agreements, 39 agreements and 44 orders to attend community support services, 1 agreement for CIM, 34 CIM orders and 5 VIMs relate to 110 unique clients.

As reported in Quarterly Report No 48, travel to the FRC communities was discontinued due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, although conferencing continued in each community in order to provide assistance during the lockdown period and to ensure that the interests and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable persons were prioritised. The effect of the pandemic restrictions which limited the operational capability of relevant Queensland Government departments was reflected in the number of notices received in Quarter 48. Due to the subsequent easing of restrictions, quarter 49 has seen a resumption of departmental activity and a corresponding increase in notices received. This quarter, however, saw a substantial increase of notices received (approximately half) which were assessed by the FRC to be outside its jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> Commission travel resumed to the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge with the permission of the relevant Councils and Local Commissioners, whilst recommended hygiene practices and appropriate distancing measures were complied with. Of note in the above activity table is the substantial increase this quarter in agreements to attend community support services, the decrease in orders made to attend community support services, and the first agreement for CIM in many years of operations. Additionally, there were 3 voluntary agreements for a voluntary case plan. These statistical highlights are reflective of the renewed focus on timely decision making, a review of conferencing strategies focusing on engaging clients in a more holistic fashion, using support services in conjunction with income management to stabilise family circumstances and to encourage agreements in the first instance compliant with sections 46 and 68 of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (FRC Act).

Quarter 48 ended with the terms of appointment for Commissioner Williams, 29 Local Commissioners across the five welfare reform communities and members of the FR Board expiring on 30 June 2020. As at the commencement of this quarter (1 July 2020), no significant appointments to the Commission or the FR Board had been made pursuant to section 15 of the FRC Act. Subsequently the Commission commenced the quarter without a Chief Executive Officer, Local Commissioners or a current Board. It is understood that the delay in statutory appointments was not exclusive to the Commission, and that the pandemic has adversely affected Governmental administrative processes. The delay, however, resulted in the necessity for the Registrar to advise the FR Board and the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (who had gained oversight function to monitor and review the FRC on 21 May 2020) that pursuant to section 35 of the FRC Act duties would be limited to administrative functions only. Financial decision-making powers were likewise compromised, and Commissioner Williams and the Local Commissioners were stood down until the receipt of an instrument of appointment. Official advice was received mid-morning on 2 July that the Governor in Council had made the following significant appointments to the FRC for the term 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021:

- Tammy Williams as Commissioner
- Rodney Curtin as Deputy Commissioner
- Edgar Kerindun, Vera Koomeeta, Doris Poonkamelya, Dorothy Pootchemunka, Keri Tamwoy and Ada Woolla as Aurukun Local Commissioners
- Elaine Liddy, Maureen Liddy, Alison Liddy, May Kepple and Garry Port as Coen Local Commissioners
- Elaine Cairns, Guy Douglas, Christopher Logan, Eleanor Logan, Dawn Aplin, Isabel Toby, Kaylene O'Keefe and Karen Jupiter as Doomadgee Local Commissioners
- Erica Deeral, Victor Gibson, Doreen Hart, Cheryl Cannon, Selina Bowen, Robert Gibson and Priscilla Gibson as Hope Vale Local Commissioners
- Karen Shuan, Loretta Spratt and George Ross-Kelly as Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners.

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<sup>4</sup> Reasons an Agency Notice may be deemed not within the FRC's jurisdiction include (a non-exhaustive list): the person the subject of the Agency Notice is found not to be a 'relevant person' pursuant to the FRC Act and cannot be held responsible for the alleged behaviour; is no longer a community member living in a welfare reform community area; ceases to be in receipt of a certain welfare payments; or the notifying agency has not complied with the statutory requirements and the Agency Notice is invalid.

The following appointments to the Family Responsibilities Board for a term from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 were also approved:

- Dr Chris Sarra (Chairperson), Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Mr Ray Griggs AO CSC, CEO, National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Mr Noel Pearson, Cape York Institute.

Of particular relevance to the Commission was the appointment of Deputy Commissioner Rodney Curtin. Section 25 of the FRC Act provides that a Deputy Commissioner (if appointed) is to act as the Commissioner if (a) the Commissioner is not available to perform the Commissioner's functions; or (b) there is a vacancy in the office of the Commissioner. Prior to the Deputy Commissioner's appointment on 1 July 2020 he was engaged on an intermittent consultancy basis to support and advise on a legislative review, support the Commission's intensive response in Aurukun and Doomadgee (early 2020), provide recommendations on the drafting of Memoranda of Understanding for prescribed entities and assist with the implementation of amended conferencing processes. The role of Deputy Commissioner has a significant frontline operational focus and the appointment will serve to safeguard the Commission's business continuity. Rodney Curtin's previous history of engagement with the Commission, whilst establishing a solid foundation with the Local Commissioners and Commission stakeholders across the board, has enhanced efficiencies in our changing operational environment.

In September of this reporting period the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee released its Report No 76 'Oversight of the Family Responsibilities Commission'. The Committee's responsibilities regarding the Commission include:

- monitoring and reviewing the performance of the Commission
- reporting to the Legislative Assembly on any matter concerning the Commission, including its functions and performance
- examining annual reports and, if appropriate, commenting on any aspect of the report and
- reporting to the Assembly on any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the Commission that the Committee considers desirable for more effective operations.

In Report No 76 the Committee examined the Commission's 2018-19 Annual Report and referred to the oversight briefing by Commissioner Williams and Commission staff to the Economics and Governance Committee on 25 November 2019. The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee commented, "*The committee recognises the extremely challenging nature of many of the issues being examined by the FRC and the volume of work undertaken by the FRC. The committee also commends the FRC for the professional and considered approach that it takes in the discharge of its functions*".

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### **Abbreviations**

CP	Case Plan
CIM	Conditional Income Management
DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
DVB	Domestic Violence Breach
DVO	Domestic Violence Order
FRA	Family Responsibilities Agreement
FRC	Family Responsibilities Commission
VCP	Voluntary Case Plan
VIM	Voluntary Income Management

### **Also:**

Family Responsibilities Commission (the Commission)  
*Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (the Act)  
Family Responsibilities Commission Registry (the registry)  
Family Responsibilities Board (the FR Board)

# Family Responsibilities Commission Welfare Reforms

Report to 30 September 2020.

## 1. Activities and Trends

### Notices

In quarter 49 the Commission received 2,372 agency notices<sup>5</sup>. Some individuals may have been the subject of more than one agency notice. Of that figure 1,181 notices (49.8 percent) relating to 622 clients were within the Commission's jurisdiction, and 1,191 notices (50.2 percent) were outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

**Table 2:** In jurisdiction notices by type and community 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

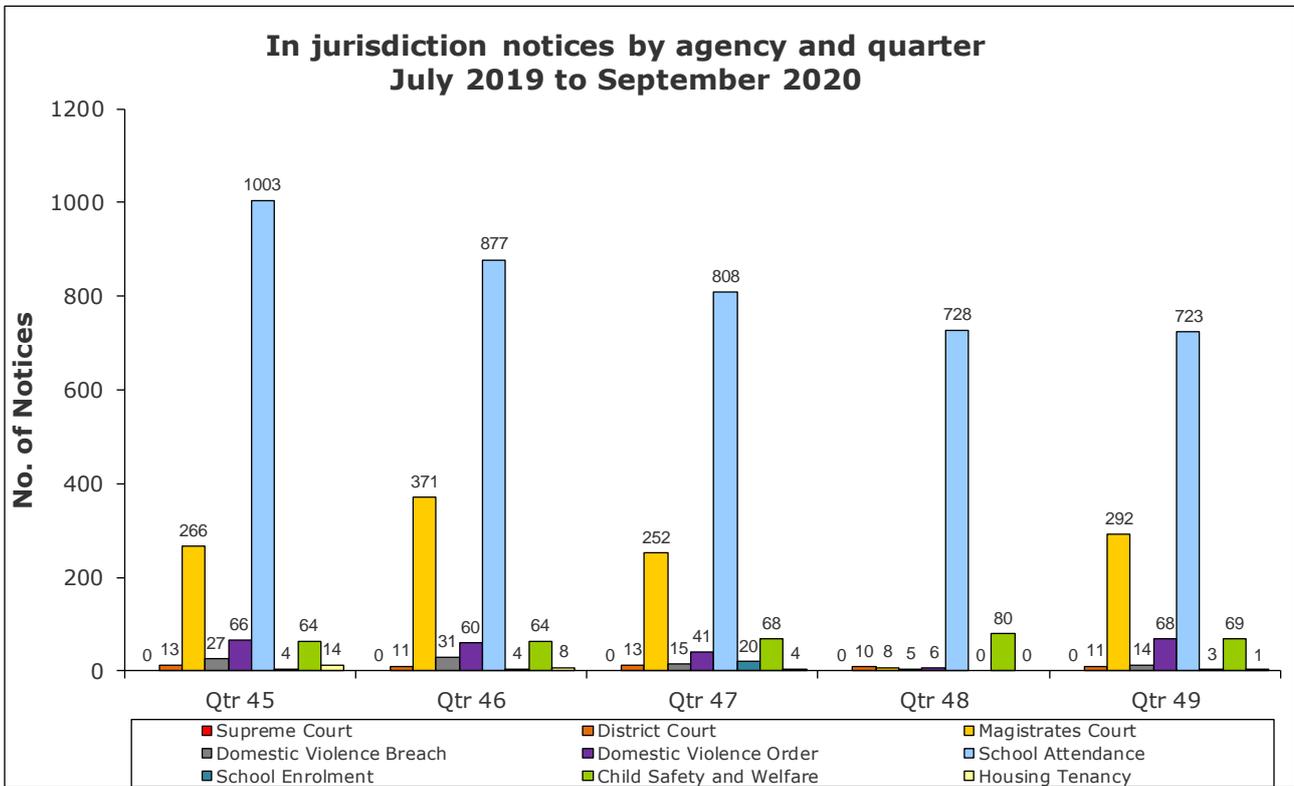
Type of Notice	AU	CO	DM <sup>6</sup>	HV	MG	Total
Supreme Court notices	0	0	-	0	0	<b>0</b>
District Court notices	11	0	-	0	0	<b>11</b>
Magistrates Court notices	179	20	-	73	20	<b>292</b>
Domestic Violence Breach notices	5	2	-	7	0	<b>14</b>
Domestic Violence Order notices	45	7	-	12	4	<b>68</b>
School Attendance notices	200	32	334	137	20	<b>723</b>
School Enrolment notice	1	0	0	1	1	<b>3</b>
Child Safety and Welfare notices						
Child Concern Reports	3	0	57	4	5	<b>69</b>
Finalised Child Protection Investigations	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Housing Tenancy notices	0	0	-	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>1181</b>

### Further details of notices within jurisdiction for each community are set out below:

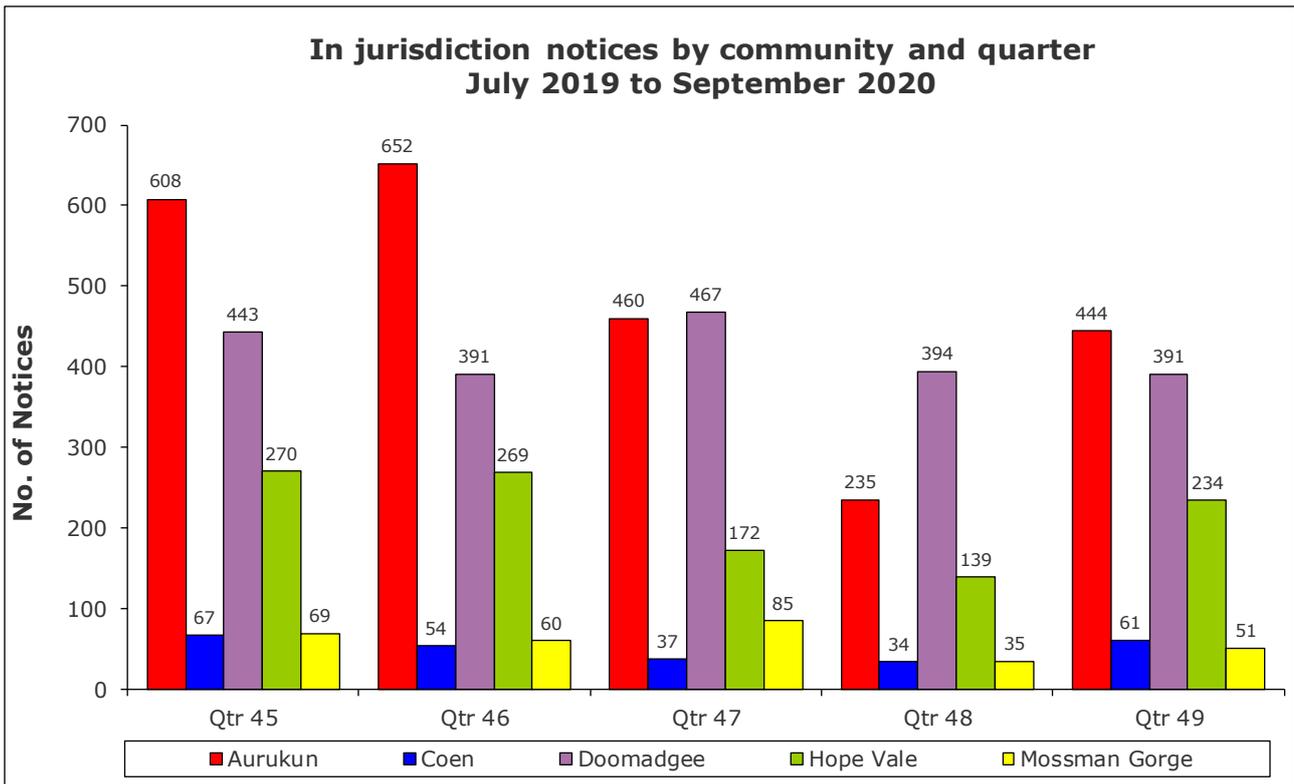
- Aurukun received 444 notices relating to 229 clients (130 female and 99 male)
- Coen received 61 notices relating to 39 clients (21 female and 18 male)
- Doomadgee received 391 notices relating to 203 clients (150 female and 53 male)
- Hope Vale received 234 notices, relating to 130 clients (71 female and 59 male)
- Mossman Gorge received 51 notices relating to 21 clients (12 female and 9 male).

<sup>5</sup> Counting rules are that an agency notice is counted on the basis of number of 'clients' on the notice. For example a child safety and welfare notice relating to two parents is counted as two notices.

<sup>6</sup> Agency notices for the community of Doomadgee are presently received from the Department of Education and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women only.

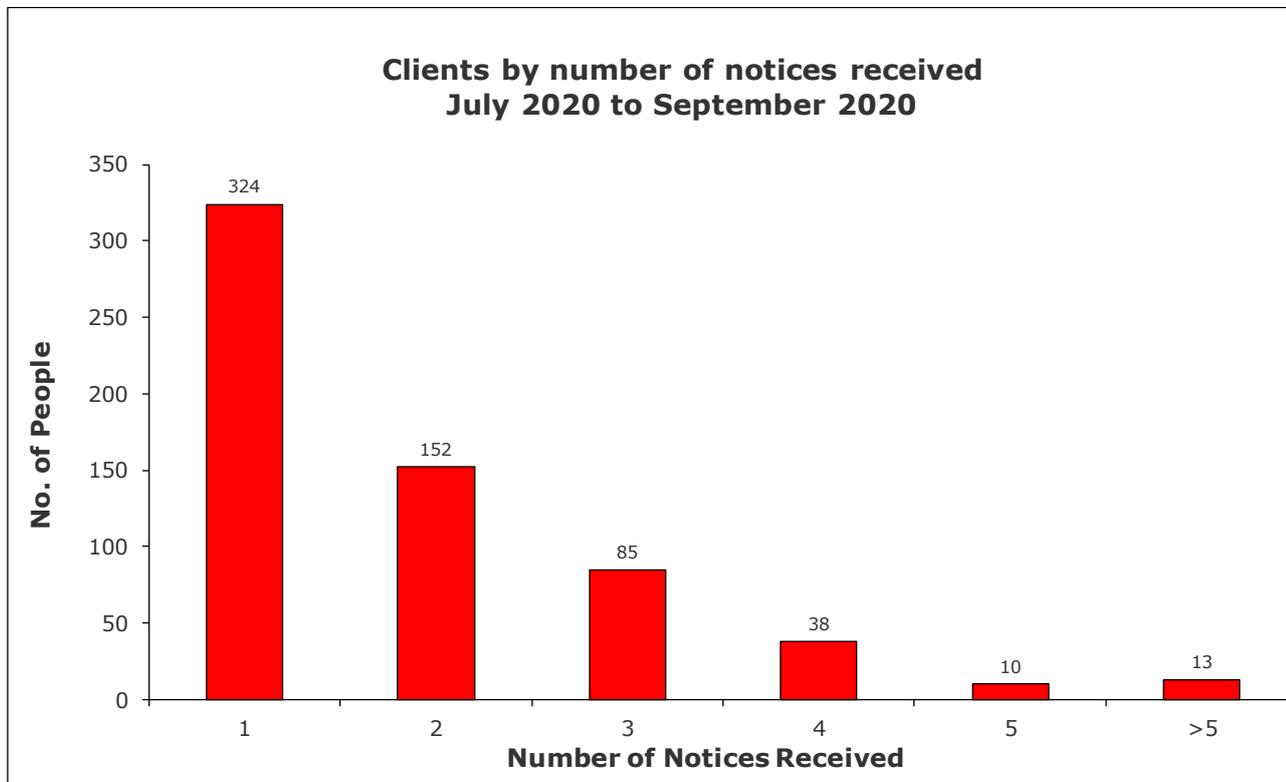


**Graph 1:** In jurisdiction notices by agency processed and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.



**Graph 2:** In jurisdiction notices by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

For quarter 49, 47.9 percent of clients have received more than one notice with 2.1 percent of clients receiving more than five notices. Frequently this illustrates multiple child school absences for the one family, or multiple Magistrates Court notices relating to one incident. This may also be suggestive of the complexity of behaviours experienced by a significant proportion of our clients. Conversely, it is important to note the majority of FRC clients (52.1 percent) have received only one notice during the reporting period. This trend has been observed over the past twelve months. Thirty-two new clients were added to the Commission’s database during the quarter.



**Graph 3:** FRC clients by number of notices 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

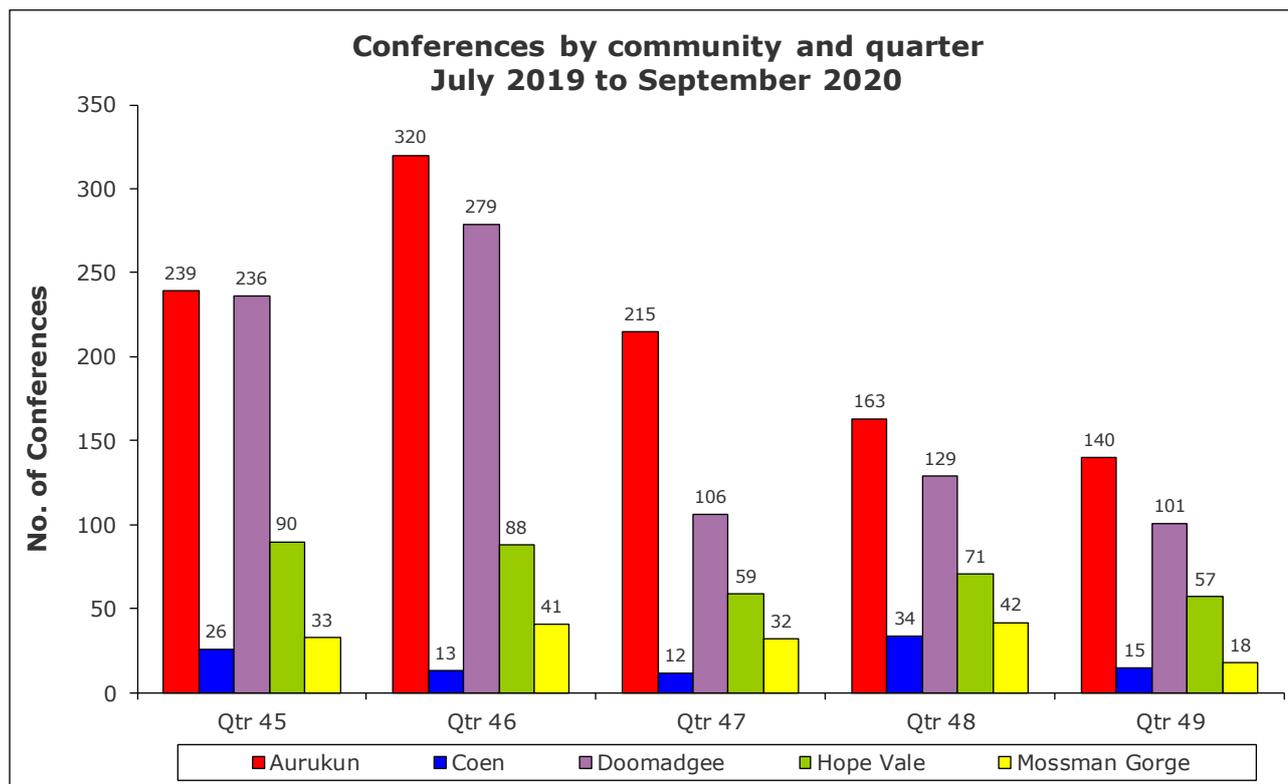
(**Note:** Counting rules stipulate that where multiple charges are received each charge is counted as an individual notice or each child’s absence is counted as one notice – i.e. if three children from the one family were absent, that was counted as three notices).

### Conferences

A total of 331 conferences<sup>7</sup> (relating to 257 clients served to attend conference) were held across the five communities in quarter 49, resulting in (for the first time) 3 voluntary agreements to attend community support services, 39 agreements to attend community support services, 1 agreement for CIM, 44 orders made to attend community support services and 34 CIM orders issued. When compared to last quarter there was an increase of 3 voluntary agreements to attend community support services, an increase of 30 agreements to attend community support services and an increase of 1 agreement for CIM. There was also a decrease of 31 orders to attend community support services and a decrease of 17 CIM orders. It should be noted that a decision by order in conference may include a number of outcomes for a client, for example a client may be placed on a case plan and an income management at the same time. Other outcomes as a result of conferencing during the quarter included decisions for no further action, reprimand, reschedule and adjournment to return for the purpose of determining if any parties of the adjourned conference have addressed the matter/s in question during the adjournment period. Conferences decreased from 439 in quarter 48 to 331 in quarter 49. Attendance at conference decreased from 61.7% in quarter 48 to 54.4% in quarter 49, however, non-attendance with reasonable excuse increased from 14.3% in the previous quarter to 24.5% during this reporting

<sup>7</sup> The number of conferences held relates to the number of conferences listed, which includes where a client was served with a Notice to Attend Conference and subsequently failed to attend.

period. Local Commissioners have observed an increase in community members travelling away from community after the easing of COVID restrictions to attend outstanding medical appointments in regional centres, visit family and undertake cultural obligations, all of which have impacted on overall conference attendance.



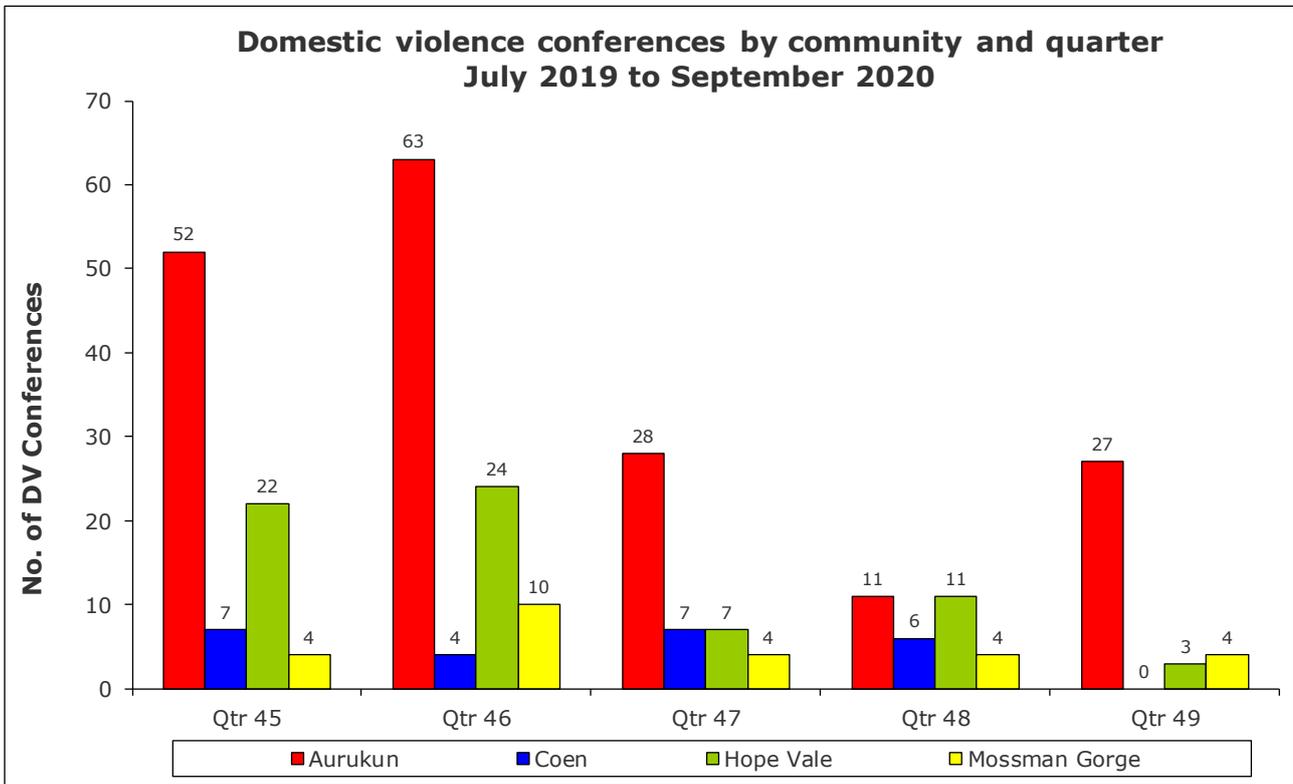
**Graph 4:** Conferences by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

### Conferences for Domestic Violence related matters

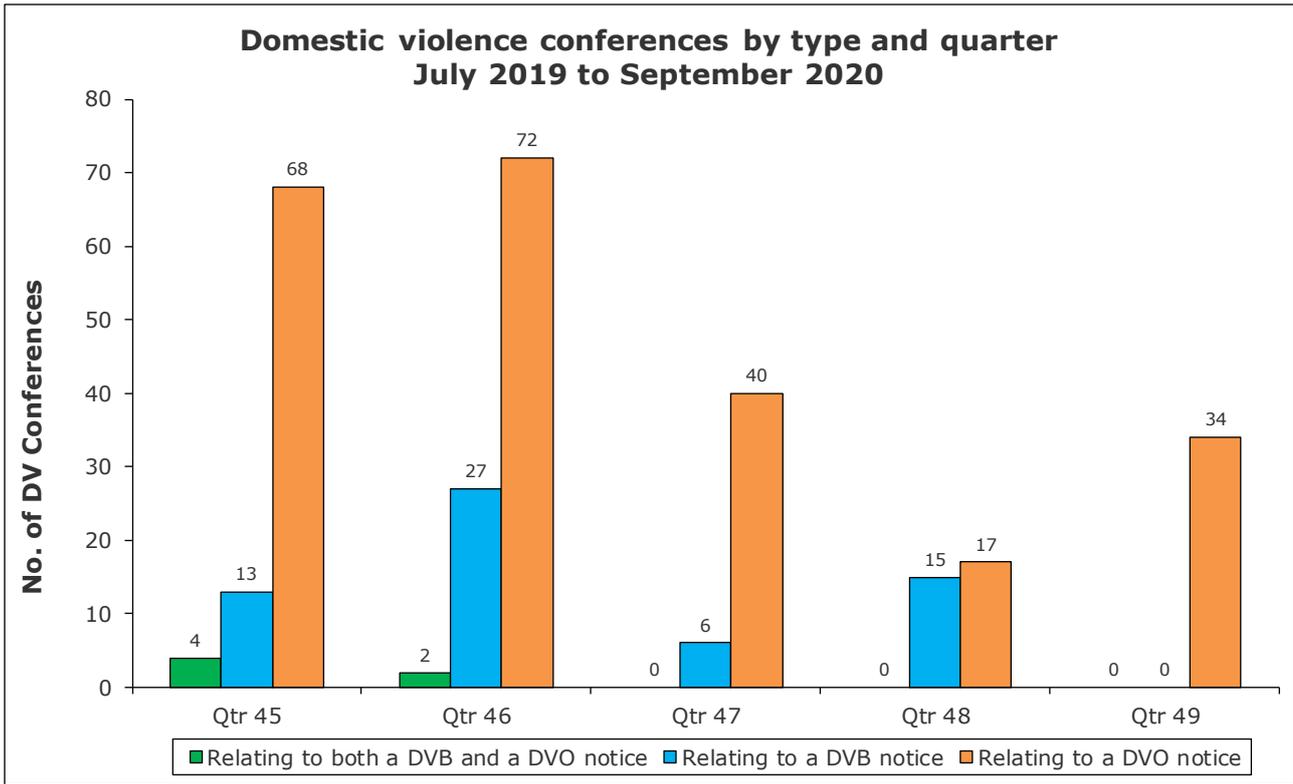
As a subset of the total number of conferences conducted for the quarter, 34 domestic violence conferences were conducted in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge in quarter 49, an increase of 2 domestic violence conferences from the previous quarter. Domestic violence conferences in the communities during the quarter were as follows: Aurukun increased by 16, Coen decreased by 6, Hope Vale decreased by 8 and Mossman Gorge remained unchanged with 4 domestic violence conferences for the quarter.

**Table 3:** Number of conferences held in relation to domestic violence notices (breaches and orders) per community 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

Number of Domestic Violence Conferences	AU	CO	HV	MG	Total
Relating to both a DVB and a DVO notice	0	0	0	0	0
Relating to a DVB notice	0	0	0	0	0
Relating to a DVO notice	27	0	3	4	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>34</b>



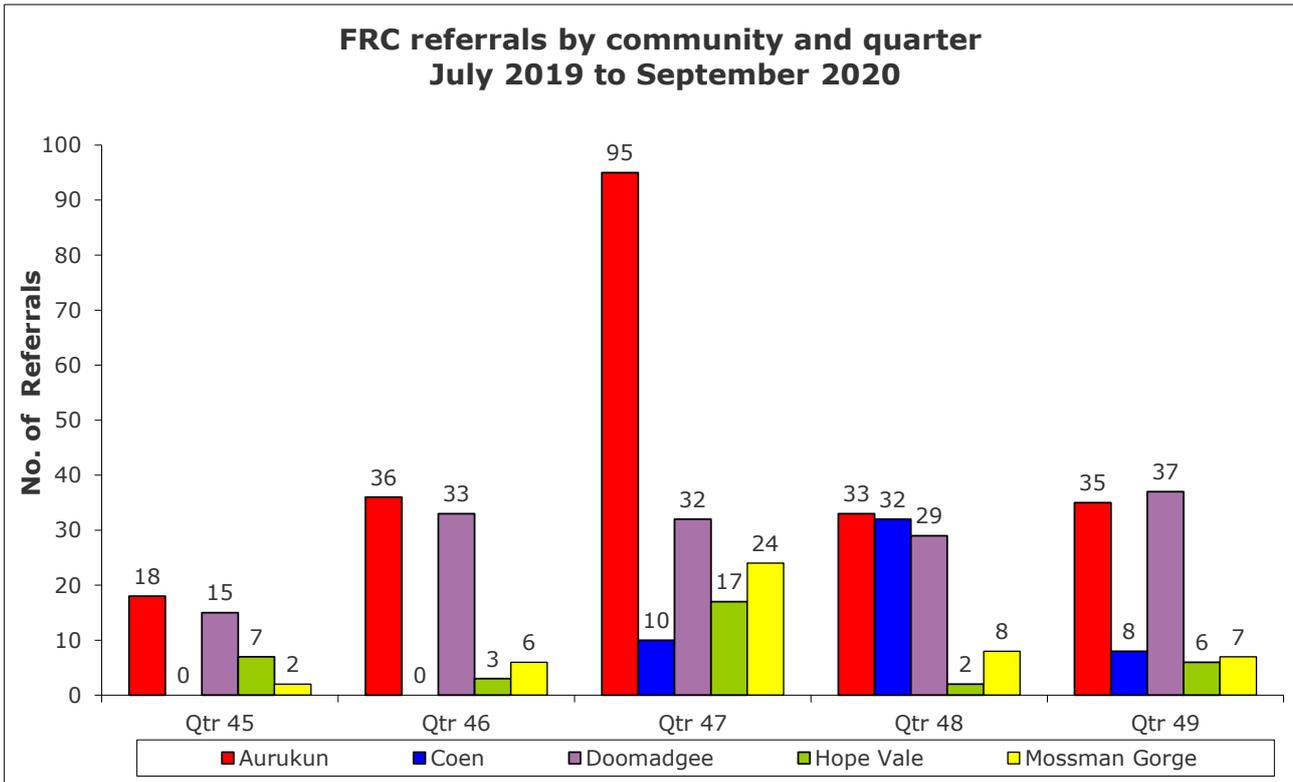
**Graph 5:** Domestic violence conferences by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.



**Graph 6:** Domestic violence conferences by type and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

**Referrals**

The total number of referrals to service providers relating to 85 clients (from decision by orders, decision by agreements and voluntary agreements) decreased from 104 in quarter 48 to 93 in quarter 49. Since 2008 the Commission has referred 1,185 clients (612 female and 573 male) to service providers for assistance. Referrals in the communities during the quarter were as follows: Aurukun increased by 2, Coen decreased by 24, Doomadgee increased by 8, Hope Vale increased by 4 and Mossman Gorge decreased by 1.



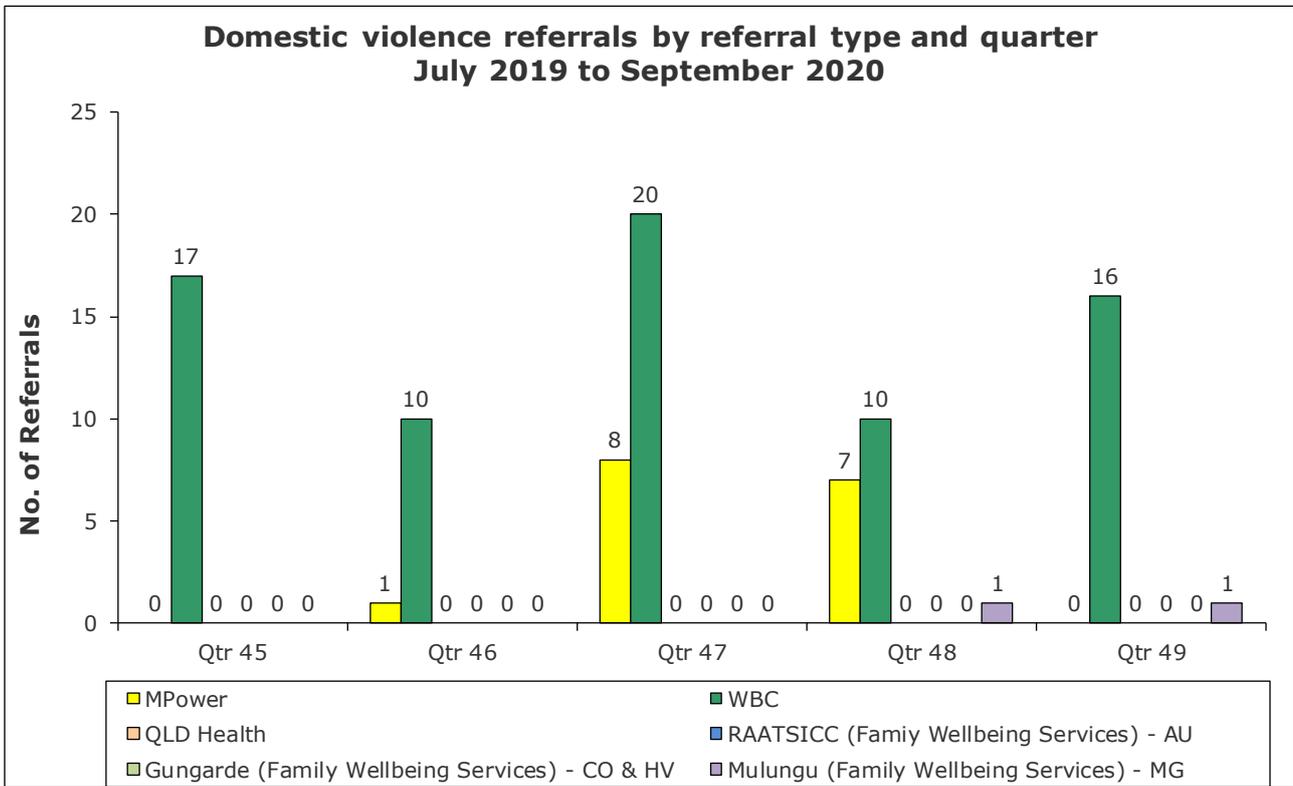
**Graph 7:** Referrals by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

#### Referrals for Domestic Violence related matters

As a subset of the total number of referrals in the quarter, 17 referrals were made in relation to domestic violence conferences in quarter 49, representing a decrease of 1 from the previous quarter. The Local Commissioners continue to raise concerns about the availability of appropriate perpetrator intervention programs suitable for client referrals.

**Table 4:** Number of referrals in relation to domestic violence notices (breaches and orders) per community 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

Notice Type	Community	Referral	Provider Total
<b>DVO</b>	Aurukun	Wellbeing Centre	16
	Mossman Gorge	Mulungu Parenting Program	1
	<b>DVO Total</b>		<b>17</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>17</b>



**Graph 8:** Domestic violence referrals by referral type and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

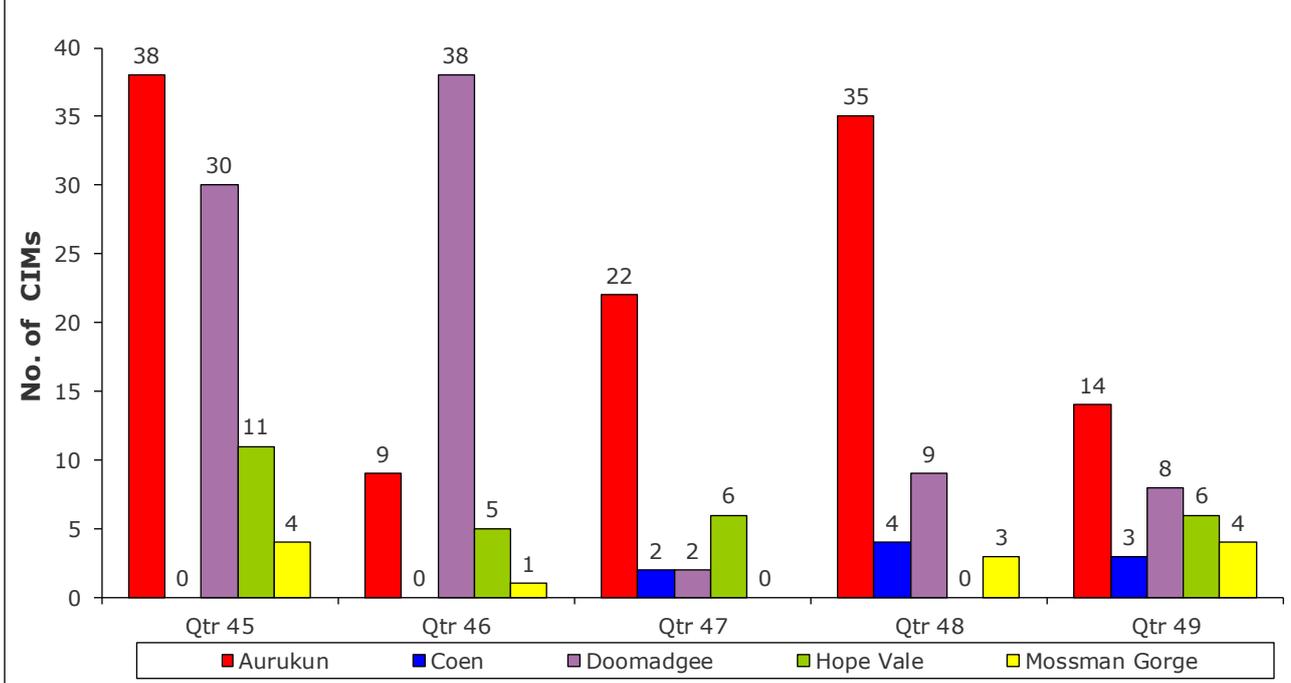
### Conditional Income Management

Local Commissioners continue to use Conditional Income Management (CIM) as a decision of last resort. The 2019-20 reporting period saw a growing number of clients placed on a case plan for a referral to a support service and a CIM. This clearly demonstrates income management is delivered within a highly targeted and flexible approach nuanced to the client's circumstances. In this way, CIM is utilised as a tool to support people and children at risk, promote socially responsible choices, and as an incentive to meet individual and community obligations.

A total of 34 CIM orders and 1 CIM agreement relating to 35 clients were made in quarter 49, a decrease of 16 CIMs from quarter 48. Since the commencement of the Commission CIMs inclusive of original agreements and orders, extensions and amendments have been made relating to 955 clients (552 female and 403 male). Decreases were seen in Aurukun, Coen and Doomadgee of 21, 1, and 1 CIM respectively, whilst Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge increased by 6 and 1 CIM for the quarter.

As at 30 September 2020 there were 118 clients subject to a current CIM. Commissioners continue to negotiate with clients to achieve desirable outcomes, or to demonstrate motivation and commitment to make appropriate life choices. Demonstrated positive steps toward taking responsibility provide the Commissioners with sufficient reason to consider revoking a CIM when requested by the client.

### Conditional income management by community and quarter July 2019 to September 2020

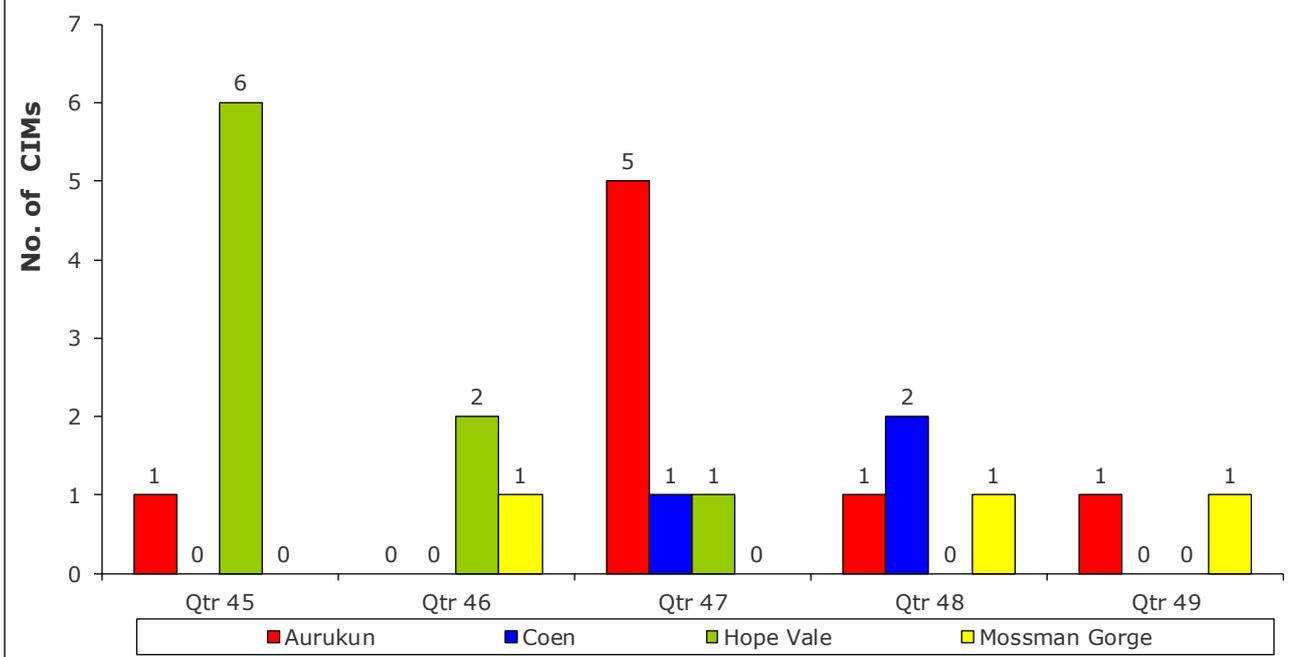


**Graph 9:** Conditional income management by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

### Conditional Income Management for Domestic Violence related matters

As a subset of the total number of CIMs in the quarter, 2 CIMs inclusive of alterations were made in relation to domestic violence conferences in quarter 49, representing a decrease of 2 from the previous quarter.

### Domestic violence conditional income management by community and quarter July 2019 to September 2020



**Graph 10:** Domestic violence conditional income management by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

## Voluntary Agreement

The Commission processed 5 Voluntary Income Management (VIM) agreements this quarter and since the commencement of the Commission in 2008, 153 clients (97 female and 56 male) have had an active VIM agreement. As at 30 September 2020 there were 11 clients on a current VIM agreement. Those clients that request a VIM agreement use income management as a savings and budget tool, often for a specified period and to deter family members from accessing their income. VIM agreements are also a useful tool to assist elderly community members (who have not otherwise been referred to the FRC) to ensure their welfare payments are expended on their own needs. For the very first time 3 voluntary agreements were entered into for clients to attend community support services under a case plan. The Commissioners consider the number of voluntary agreements entered into as indicative of a willingness of community members to take responsibility, to look after family members, and as a general improvement in community social norms.

## Type of interactions during the quarter

The following tables show the number of interactions (excluding reschedules and adjournments during the quarter) that resulted in a voluntary agreement or a decision by agreement or order. A client may have multiple interactions during a quarter, for example a client may be placed on a case plan at the beginning of the quarter to one service provider and then referred to another service provider later in the same quarter. Similarly, a client may be placed on a CIM order at 60%, 75% or 90% and then have their percentage of income management reduced or increased later in the quarter. A client may also be separately or concurrently placed on a case plan and income management throughout the quarter.

The FRC observes an emerging trend of increased interactions by the client with the Commission on a less intrusive and more proactive basis, i.e. where engagement is on a voluntary basis (Table 5) or where acceptance of the Commission's decision for a referral to support service or income management is by agreement with the client (Table 6). The FRC considers this to be a positive indication that community members have developed a consciousness of their actions and are demonstrating early insight into the effect those actions have on others.

**Table 5:** Number of voluntary agreements entered into 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

<b>Voluntary Agreements<sup>8</sup></b>			
	<b>VCP<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>VIM<sup>10</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

**Table 6:** Number of decisions by agreement entered into 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

<b>Decisions by Agreement</b>			
<b>Community</b>	<b>CP<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>CIM<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>
AU	13	0	<b>13</b>
CO	2	0	<b>2</b>
DM	17	1	<b>18</b>
HV	2	0	<b>2</b>
MG	5	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>40</b>

<sup>8</sup> Due to the small numbers a breakdown by community is not provided to protect the privacy of clients

<sup>9</sup> Voluntary Case Plan Agreement

<sup>10</sup> Voluntary Income Management Agreement

<sup>11</sup> Case Plan entered into by agreement with the client

<sup>12</sup> Compulsory Income Management entered into by agreement with the client

**Table 7:** Number of decisions by order from 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

<b>Decisions by Order</b>						
<b>Community</b>	<b>CP<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>CIM<sup>14</sup></b>	<b>CP &amp; CIM Concurrently</b>	<b>Reprimand</b>	<b>No Further Action</b>	<b>Total</b>
AU	15	9	5	26	11	<b>66</b>
CO	0	0	3	1	3	<b>7</b>
DM	15	5	2	5	13	<b>40</b>
HV	2	6	0	0	26	<b>34</b>
MG	1	3	1	1	3	<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>156</b>

### **Number of clients and their interactions during the quarter**

During quarter 49 the number of interactions highlighted in tables 5, 6 and 7 related to a total of 110 clients. For those clients (80 female and 30 male), the following table shows the types of interactions and the combinations of interactions (not necessarily enacted concurrently):

**Table 8:** Number of clients who had an interaction of a voluntary case plan, voluntary income management, case plan or conditional income management or any combination of the above 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

<b>Type of interaction</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
VCP, VIM & CIM	1	0	<b>1</b>
VCP	1	1	<b>2</b>
CP	48	21	<b>69</b>
CP & CIM	11	2	<b>13</b>
VIM	3	1	<b>4</b>
CIM	16	5	<b>21</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>110</b>

The majority of the 21 clients stated above who were placed on a CIM without a case plan already had an existing case plan in place at the time they were placed on a CIM.

### **Case Management**

As at 30 September 2020, 317 clients were being case-managed through a current case plan, an increase of 31 from quarter 48. Increases were seen in Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee and Mossman Gorge of 10, 4, 15 and 4 respectively whilst Hope Vale decreased by 2.

### **Applications to Amend or End Agreements or Orders**

Eight applications (5 female and 3 male) to Amend or End an Agreement or Order were received in quarter 49, a decrease of 4 from quarter 48. A client may apply to amend or end their agreement or order on multiple occasions throughout a quarter. Outcomes of the 8 applications received are as follows:

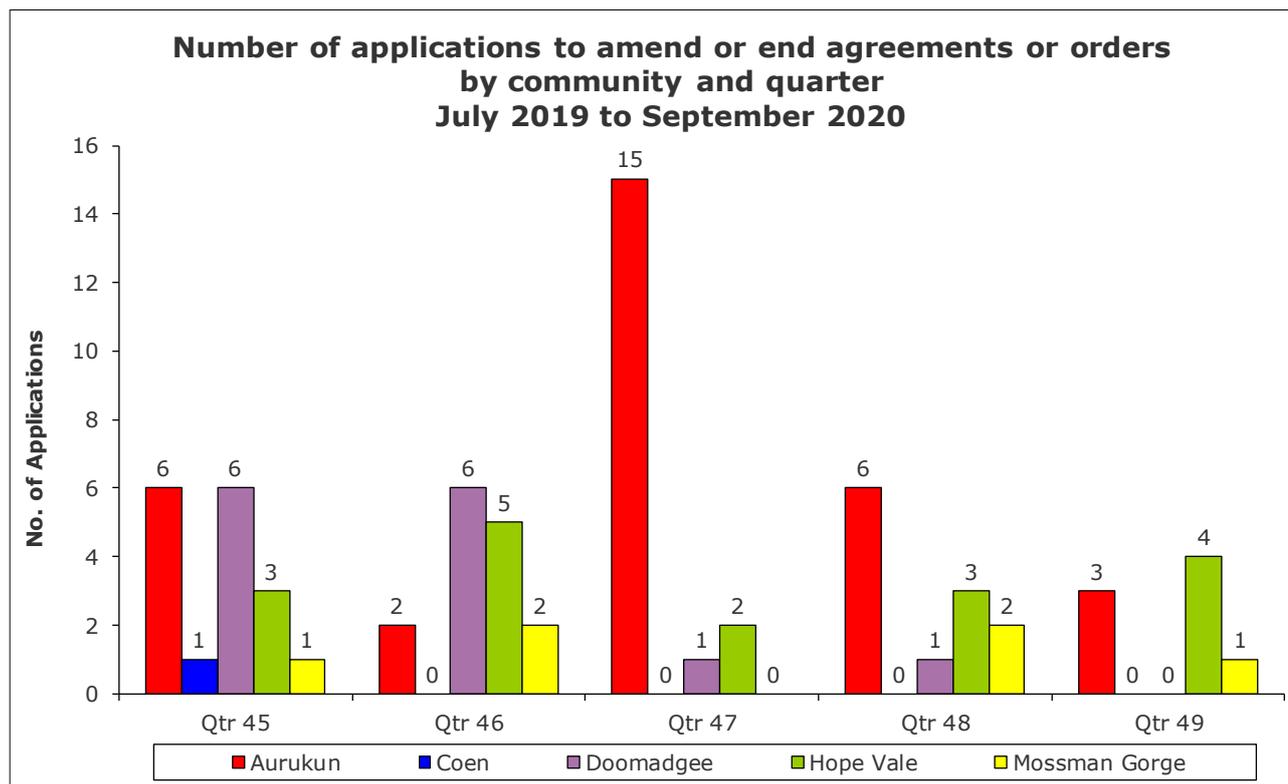
- 4 Applications granted and income management agreements and orders revoked
- 2 Applications refused
- 2 Application received at the end of the quarter, decision pending.

The Commission continues to encourage clients to participate in the Amend or End process. Commissioners report increasing client confidence to question decisions and the reasons behind

<sup>13</sup> Case Plan ordered by the Commission

<sup>14</sup> Compulsory Income Management ordered by the Commission

decisions, both for decisions delivered by the Commission and decisions delivered by external agencies and bodies.



**Graph 11:** Applications to amend or end agreements or orders by community and quarter 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

### FRC client population by gender and age

**Table 9:** FRC client population by gender and age 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

Information for the quarter	Female Count	Male Count	Female Average age	Male Average age
Clients who received a notice during the quarter <sup>15</sup>	384	238	37	38
Clients who conferenced during the quarter <sup>16</sup>	196	61	36	40
Clients referred during the quarter <sup>17</sup>	61	24	37	41
Clients placed on CIM during the quarter <sup>18</sup>	28	7	37	44
Clients placed on VIM during the quarter <sup>19</sup>	4	1	36	56

<sup>15</sup> Average age of a client who received a notice for the quarter is calculated at the date of the first notice received for the client during the quarter.

<sup>16</sup> Average age of a conferenced client for the quarter is calculated at the date of the first conference held for the client during the quarter.

<sup>17</sup> Average age of a referred client for the quarter is calculated at the first conference date held where the client was placed on a case plan during the quarter.

<sup>18</sup> Average age of a CIM'd client for the quarter is calculated at the first conference date held where the client was placed on a CIM during the quarter.

<sup>19</sup> Average age of a VIM'd client for the quarter is calculated at the start date of the agreement where the client was placed on a VIM during the quarter.

### **Estimated resident populations:**

**Aurukun:** The community of Aurukun had an estimated resident adult population of 950 people as at 30 June 2019<sup>20,21</sup>.

**Coen:** The township of Coen had an estimated resident adult population of 260 people as at 30 June 2019<sup>20,22</sup>.

**Doomadgee:** The community of Doomadgee had an estimated resident adult population of 829 people as at 30 June 2019<sup>20,21</sup>.

**Hope Vale:** The estimated resident adult population of Hope Vale was 735 people as at 30 June 2019<sup>20,21</sup>.

**Mossman Gorge:** The Mossman Gorge community had an estimated resident population of 87 people as at 30 June 2019<sup>20,23</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Note: Australian Statistical Geography Standard 2016 boundaries used are local government areas for Aurukun, Doomadgee and Hope Vale, and statistical areas level 1 (SA1s) of 3139616 for Coen and 3116408 for Mossman Gorge.

<sup>21</sup> Note: Adults 18 years and over provided by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office (QGSO), Queensland Treasury, based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) unpublished preliminary Estimated Resident Population (ERP) data by age and sex at the Local Government Area level for 30 June 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Note: 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 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Note: Total population provided by QGSO, Queensland Treasury, not 18 years and older, due to the small size of the total population from the ABS unpublished preliminary ERP data at the Statistical Area level 1 for 30 June 2019.

## 2. Future Direction and Challenges

### Annual Report

Pursuant to Section 143 of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*, as soon as practicable after each financial year, but not later than 31 October, the Commissioner must prepare and give the Minister a written report containing a review of the operation of the Commission during the financial year. Much of this quarter the Executive Management Team and publishing staff have been occupied with finalising the Commission's Annual Report 2019-20. In October the FRC Annual Report 2019-20 will be delivered to the Minister's office, together with an accompanying brief and electronic copy for tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

### Family Responsibilities Commission (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020

In March 2020 the Department of Justice and Attorney-General coordinated a whole of government omnibus Bill to respond to the COVID-19 health emergency. Proposed amendments were sought from each department for inclusion in the COVID-19 Emergency Response Bill 2020 to assist in dealing with the declared public health emergency. The Bill was passed in Parliament on 22 April 2020. This quarter the Family Responsibilities Commission (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020 was progressed to the Minister. The Regulation modifies the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* pursuant to the main purposes of the *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020*, to facilitate the continuance of public administration and protect the health, safety and welfare of people affected by the COVID-19 emergency in the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. The Regulation allows conferences to be conducted and lawfully binding decisions made by the Family Responsibilities Commissioner (or Deputy Commissioner) and one Local Commissioner for the relevant community, thereby enabling the Commission to continue to hold conferences and make decisions during the COVID-19 emergency. The Regulation also enables the FR Board to meet using communication technology, removing the requirement to meet in person at least once a year. It is anticipated that the Regulation will be made in early October 2020.

### Resumption of travel to FRC communities

Commencing from July 2020 Commissioner Williams, Deputy Commissioner Curtin and the Local Registry Coordinators (excepting the Aurukun Registry Coordinator who remained in Aurukun with his family throughout the COVID-19 period) recommenced travelling to the communities to conduct conferencing, support the training and professional development of Local Commissioners, and undertake general community engagement. Travel was increased on the basis that the window of opportunity to engage locally may close again due to the possibility of the COVID-19 situation evolving rapidly resulting in a possible reinstatement of restrictions. Medium term planning was undertaken with the Local Registry Coordinators to prioritise tasks including the conferencing of priority clients and strengthening of relationships with community stakeholders in the event of a future lockdown.

### Goward Policy Review into Child Youth Sexual Violence on Cape York Peninsula and West Cairns

Commissioner Williams, Deputy Commissioner Curtin and the Aurukun Local Commissioners were invited by the Cape York Institute to present oral submissions to the Goward Policy Review into Child Youth Sexual Violence on Cape York Peninsula and West Cairns. The Commission was advised that the Goward Policy Review was commissioned by the Cape York Institute to identify what recommendations from the 'Smallbone Report' had been successfully implemented, audit the provision of Government services in Aurukun and Napranum, and make recommendations about measures to protect young people from youth sexual and family violence, and recommend alternative and innovative approaches to reduce the incidence of youth sexual violence and family violence. Oral submissions were provided by the Deputy Commissioner and further clarification provided by Commissioner Williams to the review.

## **Community updates**

### Aurukun

On 10 September 2020 Commissioner Williams, Registrar Maxine McLeod and Senior Community Coordinator for the Aurukun response, Anne Crampton, participated in a whole of government retrospective review into the Aurukun response via teleconference with the Whole of Government Coordinator, Duane Amos. The Commission reported that initially the State Government response to the Aurukun crisis was comprised of different departments and organisations effecting their own separate response efforts. A working coalition did eventuate, however, and as part of that Anne Crampton was able to link in with the DATSIP representative to locate FRC clients in Cairns. Prior to that, obtaining information regarding clients was a challenge as misconceptions existed regarding the FRC's legislative jurisdiction outside of the Aurukun community. It is worth noting that a prime example of leadership provided by the Aurukun Local Commissioners during this time was their ability to pull together and act in the best interests of the community, despite the fact that two of them were members of opposing families involved in the conflict and resulting murder, and were able to rise above their individual interests in doing so. The Aurukun Commissioners conferenced clients related to the unrest on some very challenging notices. They were very professional with every notice and provided the appropriate referrals and support to each community member they conferenced.

During the COVID lockdown period many local businesses and service providers ceased operating, however, the government gave the Aurukun Shire Council the option to keep the school open. The FRC supported the Aurukun Shire Council's decision to keep the school open allowing education to continue as normal. Primary school attendance for Term 2 2020 was 41.5 percent, down from Term 1 (49.1 percent) and also down from Term 2 2019 which was 43.1 percent. Published Term 3 school data for Aurukun primary students shows a slight increase of 0.2 percent to 41.7. The Aurukun State School continues to provide a safe learning environment for the children of the community, and it has disappointed the Local Commissioners that many community members are not taking advantage of educating their children. It is evident that the problem of low school attendance is not singularly a reflection on the school, but clearly reflects broader community issues. The school has developed a case management approach for families with disengaged children, with regular service provider meetings (including the FRC Local Registry Coordinator) to discuss support for these families.

One of the main effects of the pandemic on Aurukun was the ceasing of Work for the Dole activities and community members' reporting obligations. As a result, many adults in households had no day to day routine as they were exempt from mutual obligation or reporting requirements ordinarily required to receive certain welfare payments. The situation was compounded by the COVID stimulus package which saw an increase in money flooding into Aurukun. It was reported to the FRC that this contributed to an increase in gambling, alcohol intake and late-night partying.

Since July the Aurukun community has very much returned to normal activity. For the quarter July to September 2020, 35 referrals to support services were made for FRC clients. This compares to the same quarter last year (Quarter 45) where 18 referrals were made to support services.

### Coen

Coen community has settled since the 'Aurukun crisis' occurred in early January 2020, followed by the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. There is only one Aurukun family that now remain as permanent residents in Coen since the crisis. The Aurukun crisis and pandemic have highlighted the need for some changes in the community, including a review of the housing situation and the importance of services working in collaboration. The Department of Housing and Public Works, Cooktown Hub has since commenced door knocking each home in Coen obtaining evidence to inform a comprehensive

report on the number of persons in each home (overcrowding), outstanding maintenance issues and which residents require assistance in completing housing applications.

The Coen Campus of CYAAA has introduced a new principal in Term 3 who has been well accepted by the community. Primary school attendance for Term 2 2020 has been published at 78.7 percent, down from 81.0 percent in Term 1, while Term 3 attendance has been published at 72.5 percent. Week 5 experienced a high number of absences as many parents and carers informed the principal their children would be attending a significant cultural event to celebrate the first Cape York Indigenous language dictionary held at Port Stewart. Contributing to the attendance percentage are five students still represented on the Coen roll who have left community with their families and not enrolled elsewhere.

Since July 2020 Coen Commissioners have adapted their conferencing style to incorporate a more in-depth case-management focus. These conferences prioritise clients with complex needs and are Case Assessment Conferences involving the collaboration of (in some cases) other family members and support services. For the quarter July to September 2020, 8 referrals to support services were made for FRC clients. This compares to the same quarter last year (Quarter 45) where 0 referrals were made to support services.

#### Doomadgee

The Doomadgee State School reports they continue to experience issues with the behaviour of children who do not attend school regularly and who, when attending school, struggle to keep up with the curriculum and cause disruption. Additionally, retaining or maintaining staff to execute the School Attendance Officer (SAO) strategy has been difficult. It was previously reported to the FR Board that the school attendance officers were a newly formed group without the benefit of the former supervisor, that management of the group is vital to ensure its effectiveness and that this manager must be an independent individual, free from involvement in community and family unrest. Despite the reported difficulties, the Doomadgee Commissioners continue to refer clients to the SAO team. The Commission supports the need for a dedicated school-based professional support program to address behavioural issues in the school and recognises and supports the need to appoint a supervisor to manage the SAO team. Doomadgee school attendance has continued to decline since the COVID-19 lockdown with Term 3 primary school attendance reported at 30.4 percent.

Few reports from service providers regarding their engagement with FRC clients during the lockdown period were received. Reports prior to the lockdown and from July 2020 have also been negligible. In order to aid the school to provide quality client progress reports, the Commission has created a basic reporting template which will be provided to the principal in Term 4 (next quarter). It is hoped the Commission will receive sufficient information from this reporting to enable the Local Commissioners to make informed decisions in conference. The FRC Registry Coordinator is planning to meet and greet the Doomadgee SAO team in October 2020 and the FRC is planning an extra conference during the first week of Term 1 2021 to start off the new school year.

In broad terms the FRC has commenced targeted engagement with service providers to improve case plan referral outcomes for clients. The Commission is grateful for the assistance of DATSIP Regional Manager, Greg Anderson, for his assistance in providing details of relevant providers and his offer to assist with further engagement with his government counterparts based in Townsville and Mount Isa. The Commission strongly believes that stakeholder relationships are key to strengthening both the community and government response to social disfunction. The Commission has committed to a weekly presence in Doomadgee with the Local Registry Coordinator attending in serving weeks and performing case-management and stakeholder engagement, and Commission Williams or Deputy Commissioner Curtin attending every Doomadgee conference for the foreseeable future.

On 17 September 2020 Commissioner Williams and Deputy Commissioner Curtin met with Mayor Jason Ned, CEO Garry Jeffries and the Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Councillors at the Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council meeting day. Discussions were held regarding the work of the Commission, the FRC Act, income management and other issues of relevance. A further meeting is planned in Quarter 50 to continue our investment in community relationships.

Following on from our report last quarter regarding volatile substance misuse (VSM) in Doomadgee, the community continues to experience youth volatile substance abuse incidents. During the period 1 January to 30 September 2020, 138 Child Concern Reports within jurisdiction were received by the Commission relating to 94 clients, a number of which involved VSM (Volatile Substances Misuse). Clients have been conferenced in regard to these incidents and linked with support services offered by Save the Children. Unfortunately support services are yet to be fully staffed and delivered on the ground. The Commission considers that VSM counselling should be made available in Doomadgee at the earliest opportunity. The Commission is advised that as at 15 December 2020, the Doomadgee Roadhouse will revert to the sale of Opal fuel after positive stakeholder consultation and engagement with the Australian Government.

### Hope Vale

The Hope Vale Campus of CYAAA Term 2 2020 school attendance was reported at 85.3 percent, down from the 88.6 reported for Term 1, whilst Term 3 attendance has been published at 81.7 percent. Hope Vale community students attending at Cooktown State School (primary and secondary) showed an increased attendance for Term 2 (75.5 percent) as compared to Term 1 (64.7 percent). Term 3 percentage has again decreased to 64.9 percent. It should be noted that generally school attendance for Term 3 across the board tends to be the lowest percentage for the year.

The Cooktown State School and the Hope Vale community have been making a concerted effort to improve school attendance.

- The Hope Vale community has been working together to assist to re-engage a group of year 7 high school students from Cooktown State School. Community stakeholder meetings and Youth Network workshops have been held to review the issues impacting school attendance, student disengagement and juvenile crime.
- Since mid-August identified students have been attending a community run program to establish a regular routine to prepare them for their planned return to mainstream education in Term 4.
- Cooktown State School has initiated Support Plans for students from prep to year 12 and Individual Curriculum Plans for prep to year 10, and has been working in conjunction with the Youth Support Officer from the Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council, supporting students who could not return to boarding school during the COVID lockdown.
- The Cooktown State School and Cooktown District Community Centre have jointly provided assistance by distributing school uniforms and lunch to those students in need. The school has also identified that there is a need for a familiarisation program or induction to assist year 6 students to transition to the high school system.

Local Commissioners report that during the community lockdowns due to the COVID-19 Pandemic noise complaints from partying households in receipt of stimulus payments were causing problems in the Hope Vale community, and the resultant sleep deprivation for community members was impacting school attendance. The Department of Housing and Public Works has since reported a reduction in noise complaints from the commencement of this quarter.

A joint initiative between The Department of Housing and Public Works and local councils has delivered the Family Fresh Food Garden project to public and community housing tenants in Hope Vale, Laura, Wujal Wujal, Coen and Cooktown. The program is set to build 140 garden beds in the Hope Vale community comprising of one square meter raised beds including soil, matting, mulch, seedlings and gardening equipment. This is a great family health project initiated from COVID lockdown which has been supported by DATSIP, Gungarde and My Pathway. Unfortunately, distribution of gardening supplies and equipment has experienced delays due to the non-attendance of some My Pathway participants.

Since July the community has seen the resumption of activities such as District Court sittings, Women's Group meetings held every Wednesday, and the Men's Group will recommence meetings from 19 October. The Wellbeing Centre staff are establishing a good rapport with Police to deal with DV cases and Apunipima Cape York Health Council are in the process of recruiting for the Alcohol and Other Drugs non-residential program with 15 clients registered.

### Mossman Gorge

Community primary school published attendance for Term 2 2020 was 83.2 percent, up from Term 1 which was 69.4 percent, and also up from Term 2 2019 (70.6 percent), however Term 3 attendance has fallen to 61.4 percent. Due to the small cohort of students in Mossman Gorge a reported absence or illness in one family significantly affects the overall attendance percentages. Local Commissioners have found the reasoning behind student absences is closely connected to families who are experiencing complex issues. Sorry business, particularly for out of town funerals, and families transitioning to and from other communities also affect school attendance. Local Commissioners continue to work with the community and stakeholders to improve student attendance and although attendance has seen some improvement, they remain concerned at attendance levels for FRC identified high school students. A strategy the Mossman Gorge Commissioners have actively considered this quarter is to encourage parents to bring their non-attending school child to conference, and there provide the child with a voice to identify their needs, and in collaboration with the parents and school, to identify additional support pathways towards improved attendance. This approach is consistent with section 5(2)(b) of the FRC Act which sets out the principles for administering the Act and makes provision for the Commission to take into account the views and wishes of children where appropriate. The school has advised that they will be happy to participate in this strategy commencing from the new school year 2021.

The overuse of alcohol remains a problem in Mossman Gorge with visitors from the Mossman area using the Mossman Gorge community as the party place. Mossman Police report there have been many breaches in relation to alcohol. The FRC Local Registry Coordinator has been meeting with a coordinated group of services in Mossman and Mossman Gorge (including the Mossman Police) to ensure vulnerable clients have opportunities to engage with wrap around services as an early intervention approach to avoid prison.

The Mossman Gorge Commissioners have continued with business as usual during the past quarter utilising COVID-19 safe practices. Operating in a COVID-19 environment has necessitated the Local Commissioners to seek new and innovative strategies to encourage clients to attend conference. One of these strategies has been a change in conference location to better engage clients who are too shamed or have been reluctant to attend the Mossman Gorge registry office in the past. This quarter has seen conference attendance of 61 percent, an increase of 18.7 percent from the same period last year. As a result of the increase in conference attendance, referrals to support services have also increased.

### 3. Governance

#### Governance

Part 12 of the Act provides for the establishment of the Family Responsibilities Board (the FR Board).

The FR Board has a mandate to give advice and make recommendations to the Minister about the operation of the Commission and similarly to give advice and make recommendations to the Commissioner about the performance of the Commission's functions.

The FR Board must meet at least every six months. The meeting may be held by using any technology available which will allow for efficient and effective communication, however, the FR Board members must meet in person at least once a year. A quorum for the FR Board is comprised of two members. The FR Board's membership consists of the following members:

- Dr Chris Sarra                      Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (Chair)
- Mr Ray Griggs AO, CSC      CEO, National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Mr Noel Pearson                  Founder, Cape York Partnership representing the Cape York Institute.

#### Operational

In meeting obligations under Part 3 of the Act, the Family Responsibilities Commission Registry (the registry) commenced operations on 1 July 2008 with a central registry office established in Cairns and local registry offices operating in each of the five welfare reform communities.

The registry, managed by the Registrar, provides corporate and operational support to the Commissioner, the Local Commissioners and the Local Registry Coordinators.

## 4. Financial Operations

### Income:

- Income received by the Commission for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020 totalled \$1,046,647. This income consisted of:
  - \$426,500 Queensland Government funding
  - \$163,250 Queensland Government funding – Doomadgee
  - \$450,000 Australian Government funding
  - \$6,443 interest received
  - \$454 received in sundry income.

The balance of available funds in the bank as at 30 September 2020 is \$4,305,375.

### Expenditure:

- Expenditure for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020 was \$907,443.

**Table 10:** Expenditure in quarter 49.

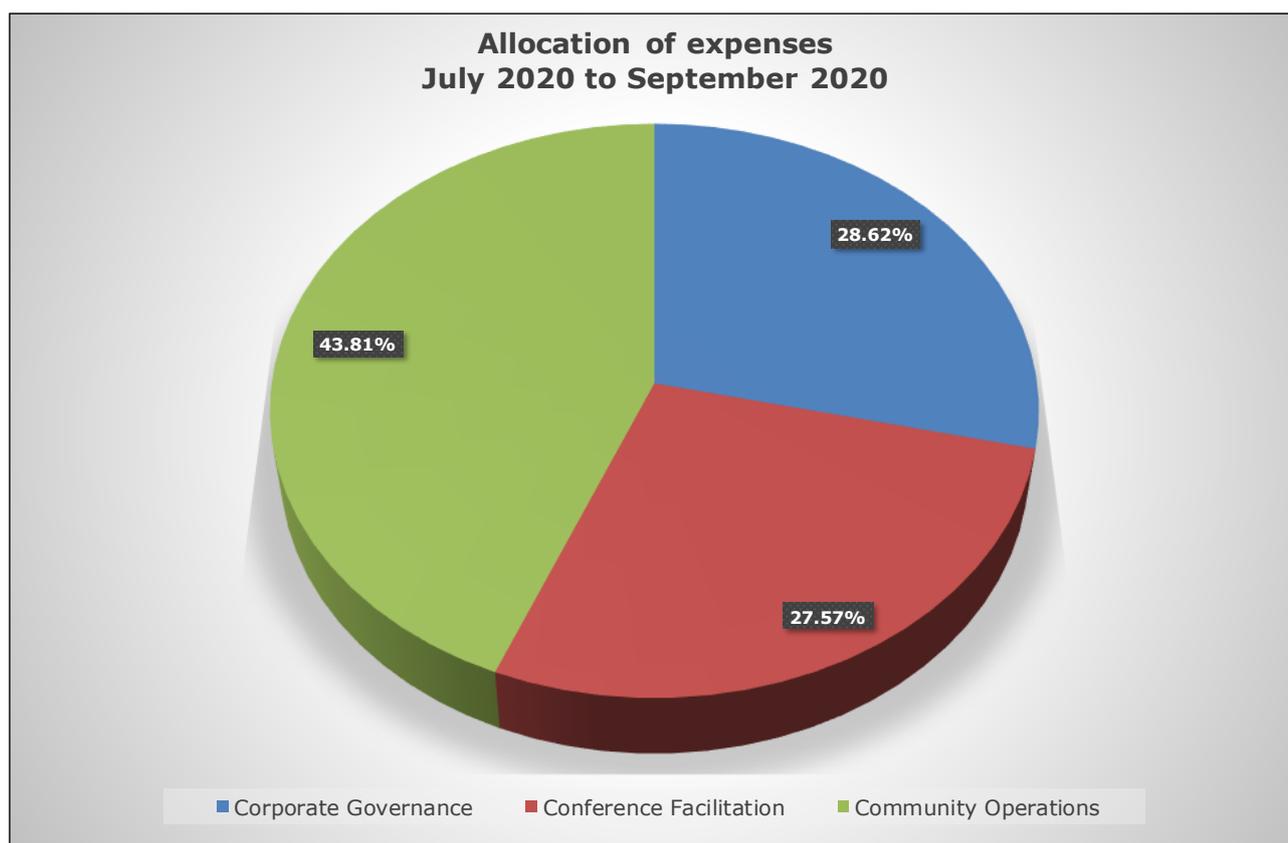
1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020	Expenditure Qtr 49	1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020	Expenditure Qtr 49
Employee salaries – FRC staff	\$486,503	Internet & IT	\$53,669
Employee salaries – Local Commissioners	\$61,950	Motor vehicle	\$17,858
Employee on costs – FRC staff	\$88,976	Property	\$57,103
Employee on costs – Local Commissioners	\$8,963	Travel	\$39,608
Other employment costs	\$7,000	General operating	\$69,674
Communications	\$3,457	Other expenses	\$12,682
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$907,443</b>

The core functions of the FRC can be summarised into three broad categories:

- **Corporate Governance:** including corporate governance, finance, statistical reporting, training and other administrative functions to ensure the effective and efficient operations of the Commission.
- **Community Operations:** including the operational costs in each of the five communities to conduct conferences, prepare and monitor case plans for clients for attendance at community support services and prepare and monitor income management orders.
- **Conference Facilitation:** including to facilitate the holding of conferences in the five communities, provide support to the Local Commissioners and Local Registry Coordinators to hold conferences, assist with the on-going monitoring of case plans for clients through the provision of data and other information and process income management orders where considered necessary.

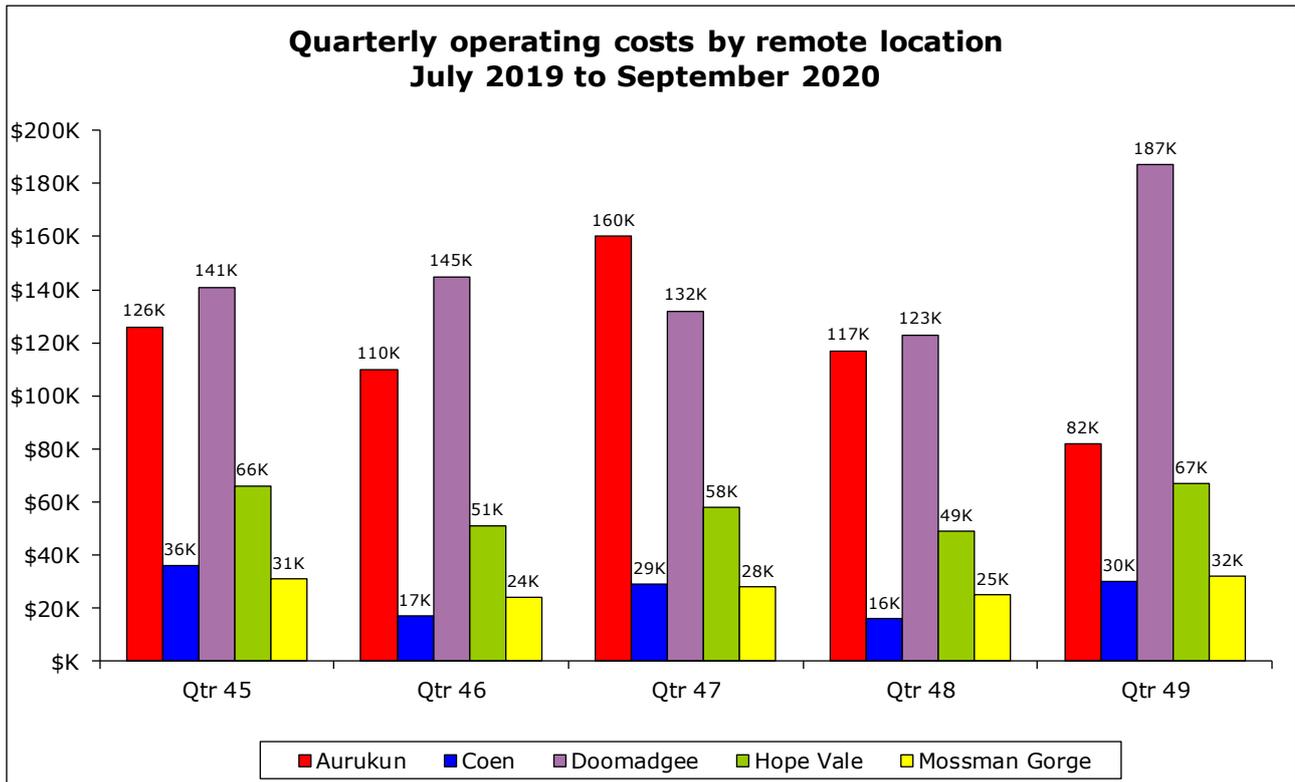
The functions of corporate governance and conference facilitation are conducted primarily in the registry office in Cairns with frequent visits to community by staff. Community operations are conducted by Local Registry Coordinators (with one of these living remotely in the larger community of Aurukun and twenty-nine Local Commissioners, resident in their respective communities, and are paid as sessional sitting Commission members for conferencing, serving notices, meetings and professional development.

The allocation of the FRC's costs in quarter 49 based on the above core functions is:



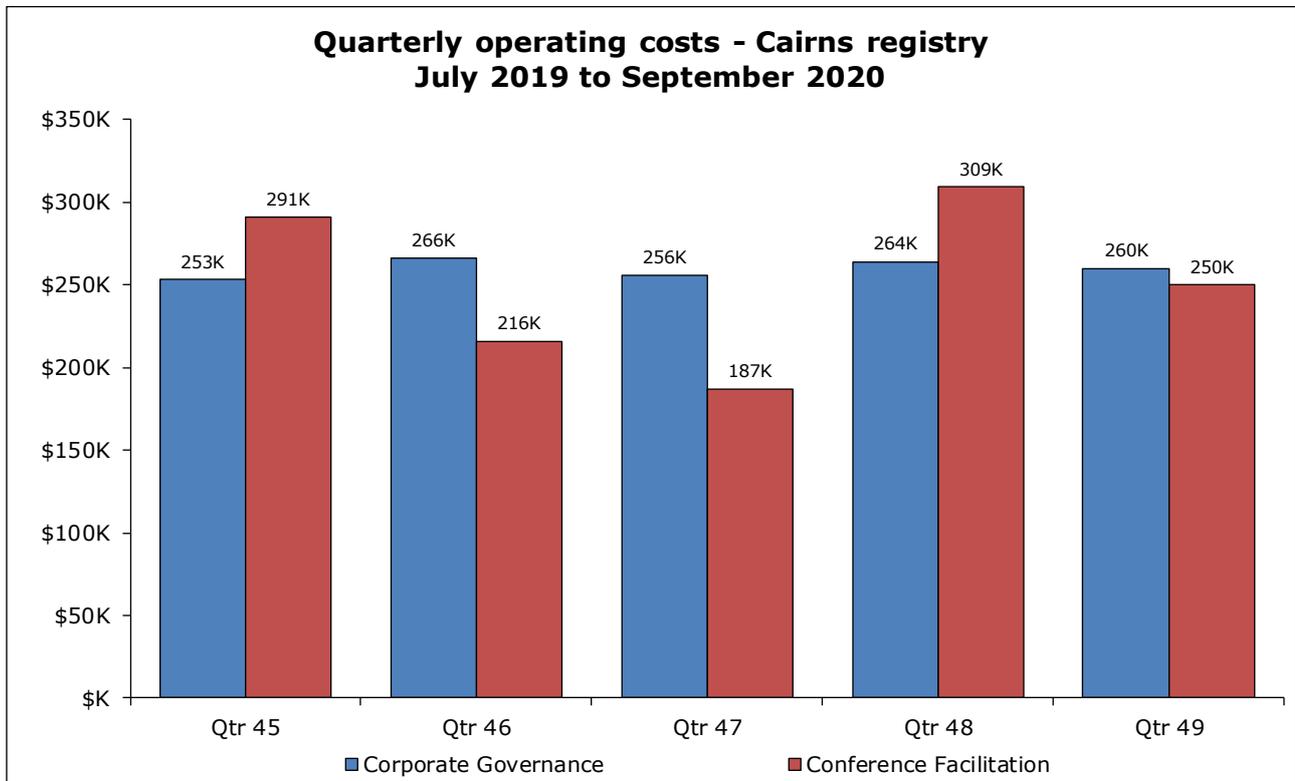
**Graph 12:** Allocation of expenses 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

Regional operational expenditure by location and quarter.



**Graph 13:** Operating costs by remote location 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

Cairns expenditure for quarter 49 compared to the previous four quarters.



**Graph 14:** Quarterly operating costs Cairns 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2020.

**APPENDIX A**



**SITTINGS CALENDAR 2020  
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION  
1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020**



Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
6 July						Cooktown Circuit
13 July					Public Holiday	17 Cairns Show Day Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
20 July	Public Holiday	21 21	22	23		20 Mossman Show Day
27 July		28 28	29	30		
3 August		Public Holiday	5	6 6		4 Aurukun Day Cooktown Circuit
10 August		11 11	12	13		Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit Aurukun Cape B Circuit
17 August		18 18	19	20 20		
24 August		25 25	26		Public Holiday	28 Doomadgee Day
31 August		1 1	2	3 3		
7 September		8				Cooktown – Circuit Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
14 September		15	16			Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
21 September						
28 September						
5 October	Public Holiday		7	8		5 Queen's Birthday Cooktown – Circuit
12 October		13 13	14	15 15		Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit Aurukun Cape B Circuit
19 October		20 20	21	22		
26 October		27 27	28	29		

Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
2 November		3 3	4	5		Cooktown – Circuit
9 November		10	11	12		Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
16 November		17 17	18	19		
23 November		24	25	26 26		
30 November		1 1	2	3		CYAAA, Aurukun and Doomadgee schools finish 4/12/2020 Cooktown – Circuit
7 December		8				Mossman schools finish 11/12/20 Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit Aurukun Cape B Circuit
14 December						
21 December					Public Holiday	25 Christmas Day
28 December	Public Holiday				Public Holiday	28 Boxing Day Public Holiday, 1 New Year's Day 29, 30, 31 Office closed for XMAS

#### LEGEND

	Office Days
	Public Holidays
	Aurukun Sitting
	Coen Sitting
	Doomadgee Sitting
	Hope Vale Sitting
	Mossman Gorge Sitting
∅	Cancelled Conference

OFFICE	CONTACT NAME	Phone	Mobile	Facsimile
Cairns – Commissioner	Ms Tammy Williams	4081 8413	0447 739 137	4041 0974
Cairns – Deputy Commissioner	Mr Rod Curtin	4081 8410	0419 647 948	4041 0974
Cairns – Registrar	Ms Maxine McLeod	4081 8412	0409 461 624	4041 0974
Cairns – Executive Officer (Finance)	Ms Tracey Paterson	4081 8411	0429 495 353	4041 0974
Aurukun Local Registry Coordinator	Mr Bryce Coxall	4060 6185	0428 985 106	4041 0974
Coen Local Registry Coordinator	Ms Sandi Rye		0417 798 392	4041 0974
Acting Doomadgee Local Registry Coordinator	Mr Brenden Joinbee	4745 8111	0418 666 204	4041 0974
Acting Hope Vale Local Registry Coordinator	Ms Josephine Pinder	4060 9153	0408 482 026	4041 0974
Mossman Gorge Local Registry Coordinator	Ms Sandi Rye		0417 798 392	4041 0974