

Family Responsibilities Commission

Report to the Family Responsibilities Board

Quarterly Report

No. 50

October 2020 to December 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 50 with comparisons shown to the previous quarter.

Table 1: Activity from 1 July 2020 to 30 December 2020.

Activity for the quarter	Qtr 49	Qtr 50
Total number of notices received by the Commission ¹	2,372	2,145
Number of within jurisdiction notices	1,181	1,125
Number of not within jurisdiction notices	1,191	1,020
Number of clients notified to the Commission from within jurisdiction notices	622	563
Number of clients served to attend conference	257	322
Conferences conducted	331	424
Conference attendance percentage	54.4%	60.1%
Conference non-attendance percentage with acceptable (reasonable) excuse	24.5%	27.8%
Conference outcomes for the quarter		
Agreements to attend community support services	39	59
Orders made to attend community support services	44	63
Referrals to service providers from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ²	90	139
Agreements for Conditional Income Management (CIM)	1	0
Orders made for CIM	34	22
Client interactions during the quarter³		
Number of clients placed on a voluntary case plan (VCP), voluntary income management (VIM) and CIM	1	0
Number of clients placed on a VCP	2	2
Number of clients placed on a case plan without a CIM	69	107
Number of clients placed on a case plan and VIM	0	3
Number of clients placed on a case plan and CIM	13	9
Number of clients placed on a VIM	4	1
Number of clients placed on a CIM without a case plan	21	13
Other activity for the quarter		
Applications to Amend or End received	8	6
Voluntary agreements for a voluntary case plan	3	2
Voluntary referrals to service providers	3	3
Voluntary agreements for VIM	5	4
Information as at the last day of the quarter		
Number of clients case-managed through a current case plan	317	348
Number of clients subject to a current CIM	118	98
Number of clients on a current VIM	11	11

¹ 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).

² 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).

³ During the quarter: 2 voluntary case plans, 59 agreements and 63 orders to attend community support services, 22 CIM orders and 4 VIMs relate to 135 unique clients.

Commissioner Tammy Williams commenced with the FRC in September 2019. A clear picture on the direction of the FRC since that date can now be revealed by comparing quarter 50 (October to December 2020) with the first full quarter under Commissioner Williams' leadership, quarter 46 (October to December 2019). The table below provides some interesting comparisons.

Table 2: Activity for quarter 46 and quarter 50.

Conference Outcomes	Qtr 46	Qtr 50
Family Responsibility Agreements entered into	0	59
Orders made to attend community support services	68	63
Decisions by agreement and order referrals to service providers ⁴	78	139
Conditional Income Management Orders (CIM) made	53	22
Client Management		
Clients case-managed	133	348
Number of clients placed on a case plan without a CIM	52	107
Number of clients placed on a CIM order without a case plan	35	13
Number of clients on a current CIM as at 31 December	160	98

The Local Commissioners continue to receive training on a number of techniques to facilitate appropriate discussions in conference with clients and their families to understand the value of seeking timely and targeted support from community-based providers to change individualised behaviour and minimise further risk of harm to others. The above table captures an increased trend across all communities which is indicative of clients assuming greater personal responsibility and demonstrating insight for their actions at the earliest opportunity (i.e. agreements entered into at conference). The trend continues to increase as demonstrated through statistics compiled from 1 July 2020 – 31 December 2020 which reveal that almost half (47.8%) of all decisions to attend such support services have been by agreement.

One of the remarkable advances in the adoption of personal responsibility by clients has been the increase of agreements for case plans in Doomadgee. There has been just short of a six-fold increase of clients in the current financial year entering into Family Responsibilities Agreements to attend support services compared to the previous financial year, demonstrating a broad appeal to embracing support offered by the Local Commissioners through referrals and case plans, and the service offering available in Doomadgee. This is best illustrated by a Complex Case Conferencing timetable the FRC scheduled in Doomadgee during this quarter (October 2020) to prioritise parents of young people with volatile substances (i.e. petrol) misuse issues. The FRC arranged for a specialist provider from Mount Isa to be available at conference in Doomadgee to participate in discussions and assist Local Commissioners and parents to identify diversionary strategies and issues impacting on the young person's recovery. In half of all finalised matters⁵ the parents entered into Family Responsibilities Agreements.

Referrals to service providers from decisions by agreement or order have also increased by 78 percent from quarter 46 to quarter 50. This is a direct result of the Commissioners' focus on seeking specialist assistance for clients to build their capacity and resilience to cope with life challenges. The increase in referrals is likewise reflected in the increase in clients case-managed above – an increase of 162%.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Clients attended conference relating to seven matters. One matter was adjourned and not finalised at conference on this occasion. Three matters were finalised by decision to enter into a Family Responsibilities Agreement and three matters were finalised by a Family Responsibilities Order of the Commission.

The FRC has long recognised that though income management has an important role to play in welfare reform, income management alone is unlikely to create the behavioural changes required. To consider whether there is a nexus between the value of FRC's mandated referrals and positive client behavioural change, the Commission relies on statistics provided by Cape York Partnerships (CYP). Since 2014, CYP advise that 239 clients have been referred to the Mpower program by the FRC for financial support. CYP provided analysis undertaken on 133 of these clients who had completed their FRC case plans and found:

- There was a very high participation and retention rate of these clients to engage with O-Hub as required by their FRC case plan with ninety-one percent (91%) of the 133 clients reported to have attended either during and/or after their case plans had concluded. This data demonstrates the appropriateness of FRC decisions made by Local Commissioners – drawing on local knowledge and information obtained by the FRC Registry from partner organisations under the FRC Act to successfully match clients with relevant community support services to build individual capacity and encourage behavioural change. The retention rate is also indicative of the quality of service delivery provided by the O-Hub resulting in high levels of client engagement.
- Significantly, eighty-one percent (81%) of these clients continued to engage with the O-Hub after their FRC case plan term had expired by choosing to access further O-Hub resources such as Parenting and Student Education Trust support, or continuing to engage with the Mpower program on a voluntary basis. On one hand this data suggests the relevance of O-Hub's broad service offering to clients and their needs. The data also highlights in positive terms the willingness and motivation of clients to seek continued support - indicative of an improved self-awareness and insight – elements necessary to facilitate long term behavioural change.

Quarter 50 saw the Queensland Government enter caretaker mode on 6 October, followed by Queensland State elections conducted on 31 October 2020. With the outcome of the elections Ministerial portfolio changes were made with Minister Crawford retaining the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships portfolio and gaining the responsibility for Seniors and Disability Services. Pursuant to Section 143 of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*, on 21 October 2020 a copy of the FRC Annual Report 2019-20 was delivered to Minister Crawford for tabling to Parliament. The Parliamentary oversight committee for the FRC also changed from the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to the Community Support and Services Committee. The FRC looks forward to briefing the new Committee on its activities in quarter 51.

The 2020-21 Queensland Budget was tabled in State Parliament on Tuesday 1 December 2020. In the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Community Participation Service Area Highlights, the Department committed to working with Queensland's five Welfare Reform communities of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge to build on community achievements and successes to date and build local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority and governance to support communities to work collaboratively with the Queensland Government.

The Commission's annual School Awards ceremonies were conducted in December in each of the five communities. Prizes were awarded for attendance achievements and included certificates, medals and other incentives. Each year the Local Commissioners present the awards to provide positive recognition and support for those students (and their families) who regularly attend school, to provide an incentive for those students who wish to improve their school attendance and to reiterate the importance of education in achieving a dream, and better life for the future.

On 10 December 2020 the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Continuation of Cashless Welfare) Bill 2020 passed both Houses of Parliament (the House of Representatives and the Senate)

and received Royal Assent on 17 December. The Bill ensured the continuation of the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) for a further two years (to 31 December 2022) and allowed for the transition from the BasicsCard to the CDC in FRC communities. Services Australia is working to embed processes for transition on 17 March 2020 with the Australian Government committed to maintaining the existing policy settings for Cape York Income Management as legislated in the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*. The passing of this Bill provides stability to the operations of the Commission and allows the Local Commissioners to continue meeting the objectives of supporting the restoration of socially responsible standards of behaviour in FRC communities. The FRC considers it particularly encouraging that the Bill also expands the element of voluntary participation to reflect the positive outcomes which are achievable from income management. Limiting the amount of welfare discretionary spending can reduce social harm caused by those recipients who abuse the privilege of receiving government assistance by spending it on drugs, alcohol and gambling at the expense of their families and other vulnerable community members. A coordinated response from all levels of government is necessary to ensure that the appropriate local supports are provided in conjunction with income management to improve social norms and the future of participating communities.

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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 31 December 2020.

1. Activities and Trends

Notices

In quarter 50 the Commission received 2,145 agency notices⁶. Some individuals may have been the subject of more than one agency notice. Of that figure 1,125 notices (52.4 percent) relating to 563 clients were within the Commission's jurisdiction, and 1,020 notices (47.6 percent) were outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

Table 3: In jurisdiction notices by type and community 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

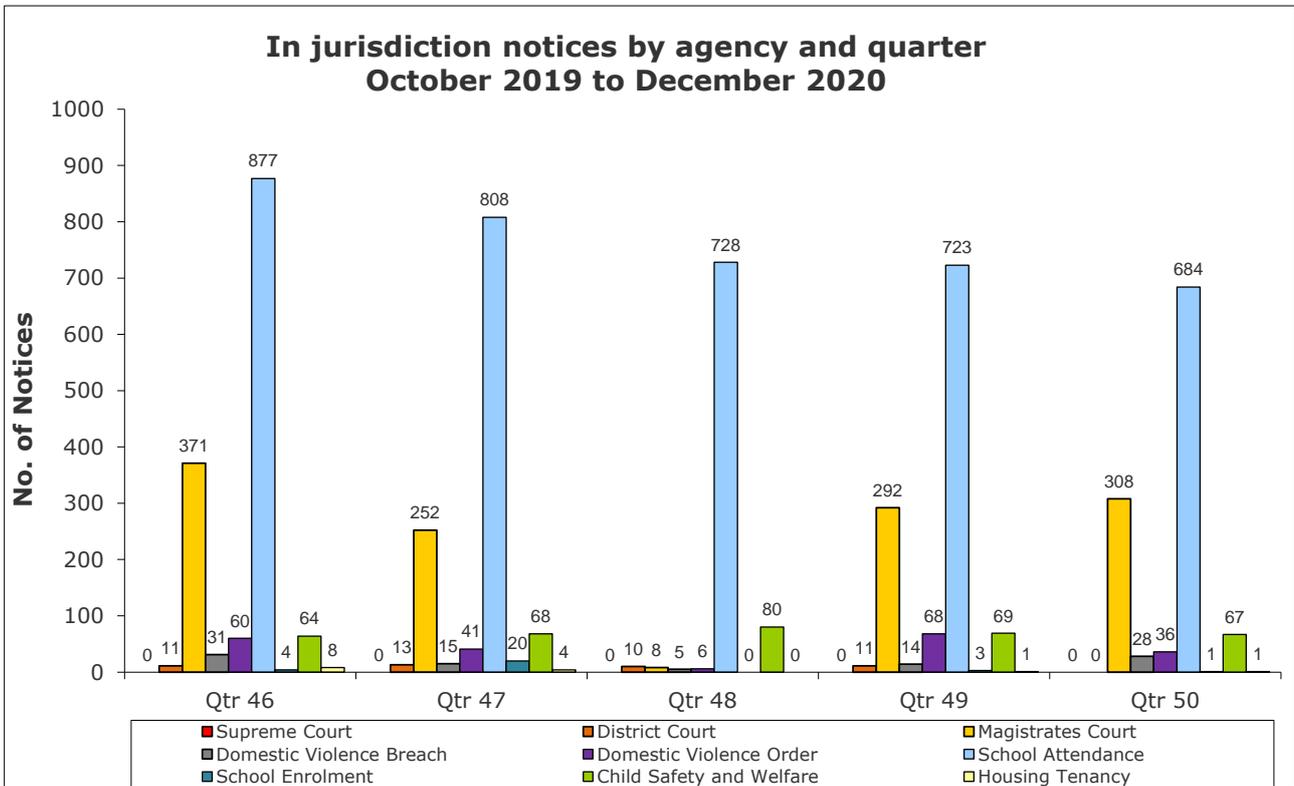
Type of Notice	AU	CO	DM ⁷	HV	MG	Total
Supreme Court notices	0	0	-	0	0	0
District Court notices	0	0	-	0	0	0
Magistrates Court notices	199	21	-	65	23	308
Domestic Violence Breach notices	17	2	-	5	4	28
Domestic Violence Order notices	30	1	-	3	2	36
School Attendance notices	205	30	317	113	19	684
School Enrolment notice	0	0	0	1	0	1
Child Safety and Welfare notices						
Child Concern Reports	15	6	29	13	2	65
Finalised Child Protection Investigations	2	0	0	0	0	2
Housing Tenancy notices	0	0	-	0	1	1
Total	468	60	346	200	51	1125

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

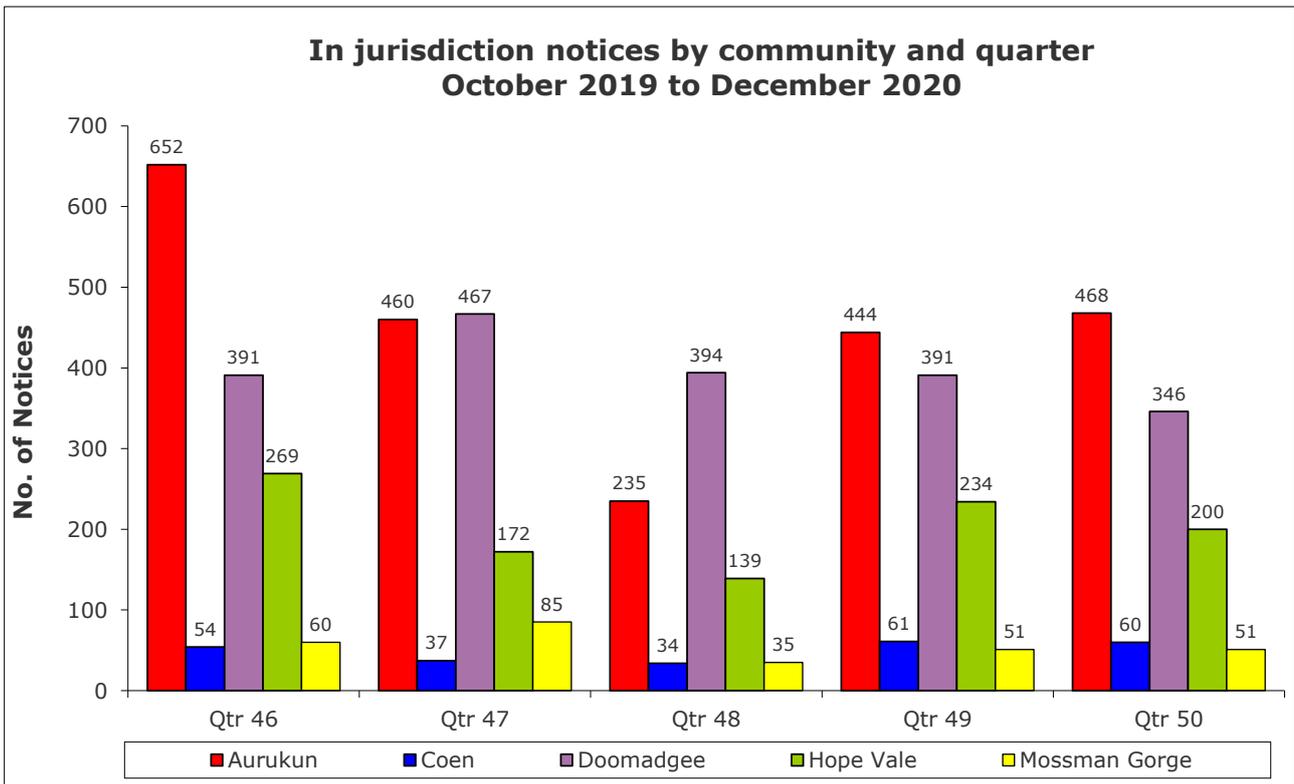
- Aurukun received 468 notices relating to 212 clients (132 female and 80 male)
- Coen received 60 notices relating to 26 clients (14 female and 12 male)
- Doomadgee received 346 notices relating to 191 clients (145 female and 46 male)
- Hope Vale received 200 notices, relating to 117 clients (64 female and 53 male)
- Mossman Gorge received 51 notices relating to 17 clients (14 female and 3 male).

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

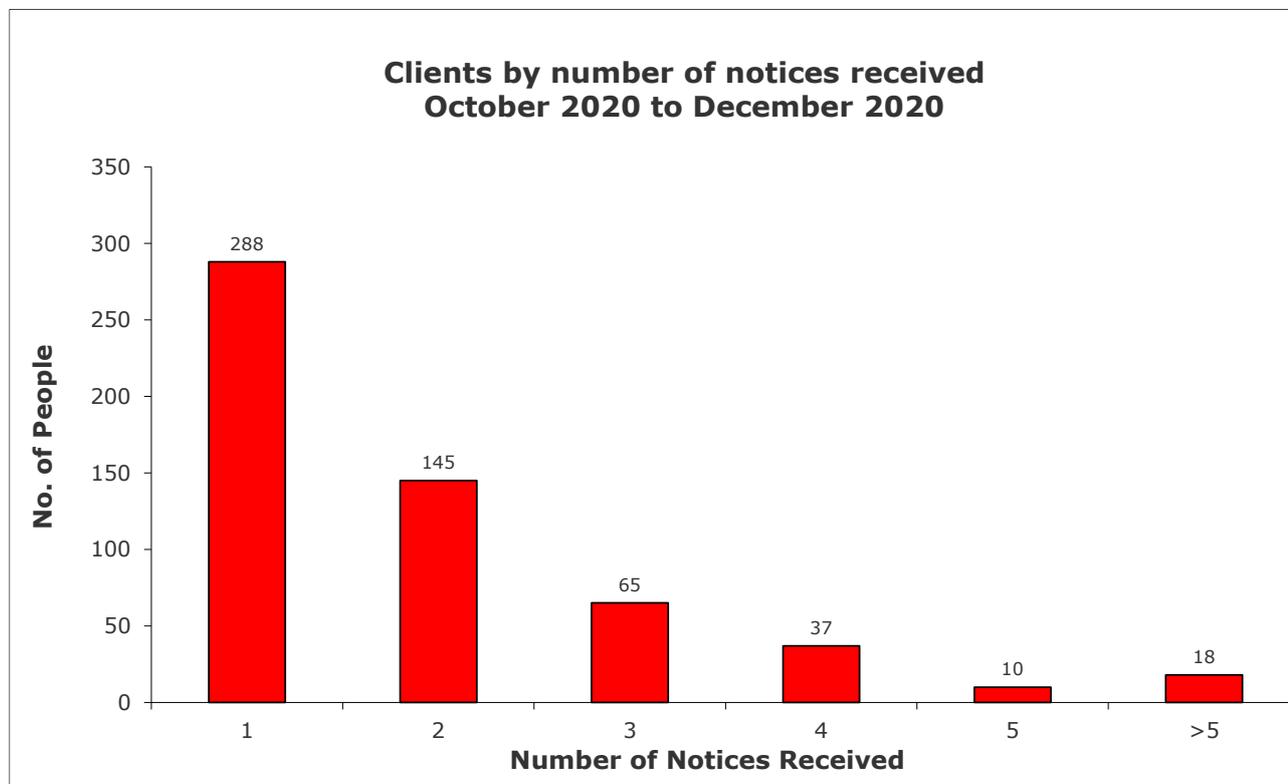


Graph 1: In jurisdiction notices by agency processed and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.



Graph 2: In jurisdiction notices by community and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

For quarter 50, 48.8 percent of clients have received more than one notice with 3.2 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 (51.2 percent) have received only one notice during the reporting period. This trend has been observed over the past twelve months. Twenty-nine new clients were added to the Commission’s database during the quarter.



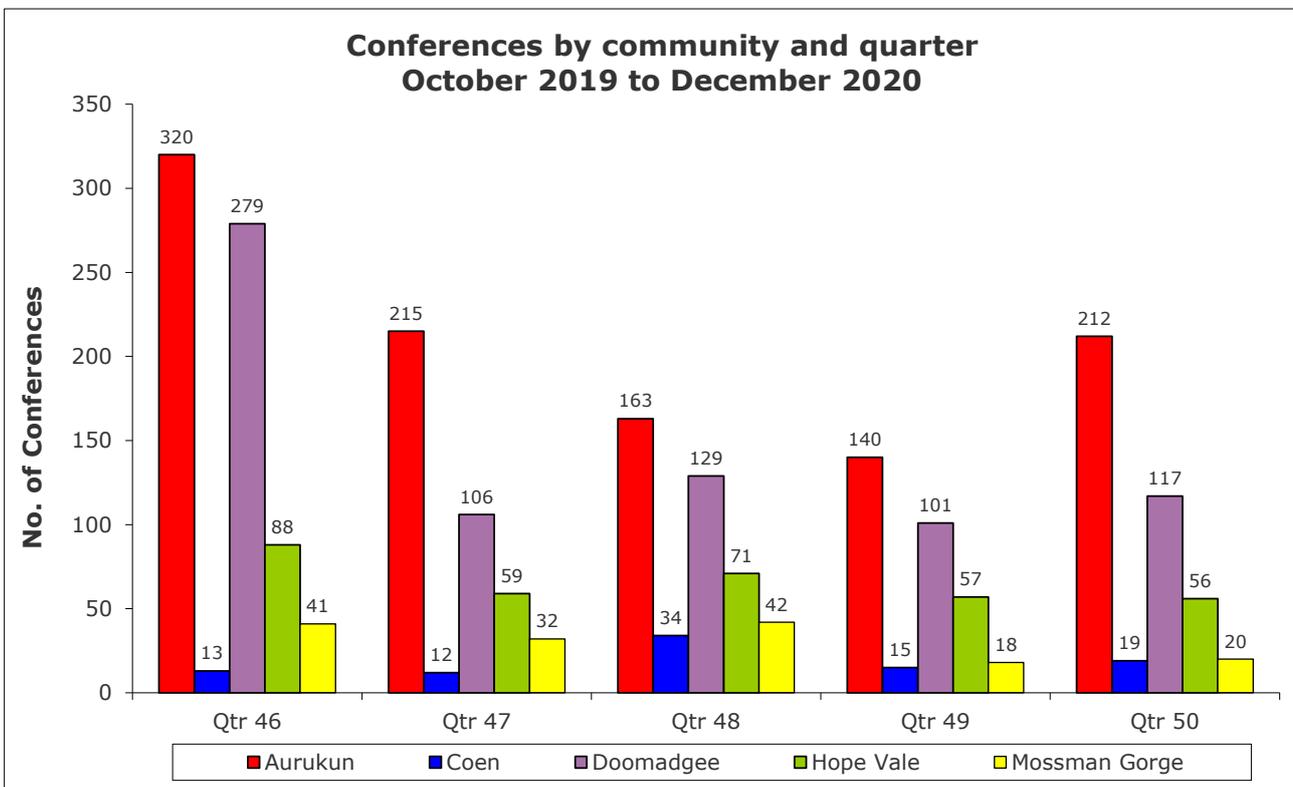
Graph 3: FRC clients by number of notices 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

(**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 424 conferences⁸ (relating to 322 clients served to attend conference) were held across the five communities in quarter 50, resulting in 59 agreements to attend community support services, 63 orders made to attend community support services and 22 CIM orders issued. When compared to last quarter there was an increase of 20 agreements to attend community support services and a decrease of 1 agreement for CIM. There was also an increase of 19 orders to attend community support services and a decrease of 12 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 increased from 331 in quarter 49 to 424 in quarter 50. Attendance at conference increased from 54.4% in quarter 49 to 60.1% in quarter 50, and non-attendance with what the Commissioners considered a reasonable justification increased from 24.5% in the previous quarter to 27.8% during this reporting period.

⁸ 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.



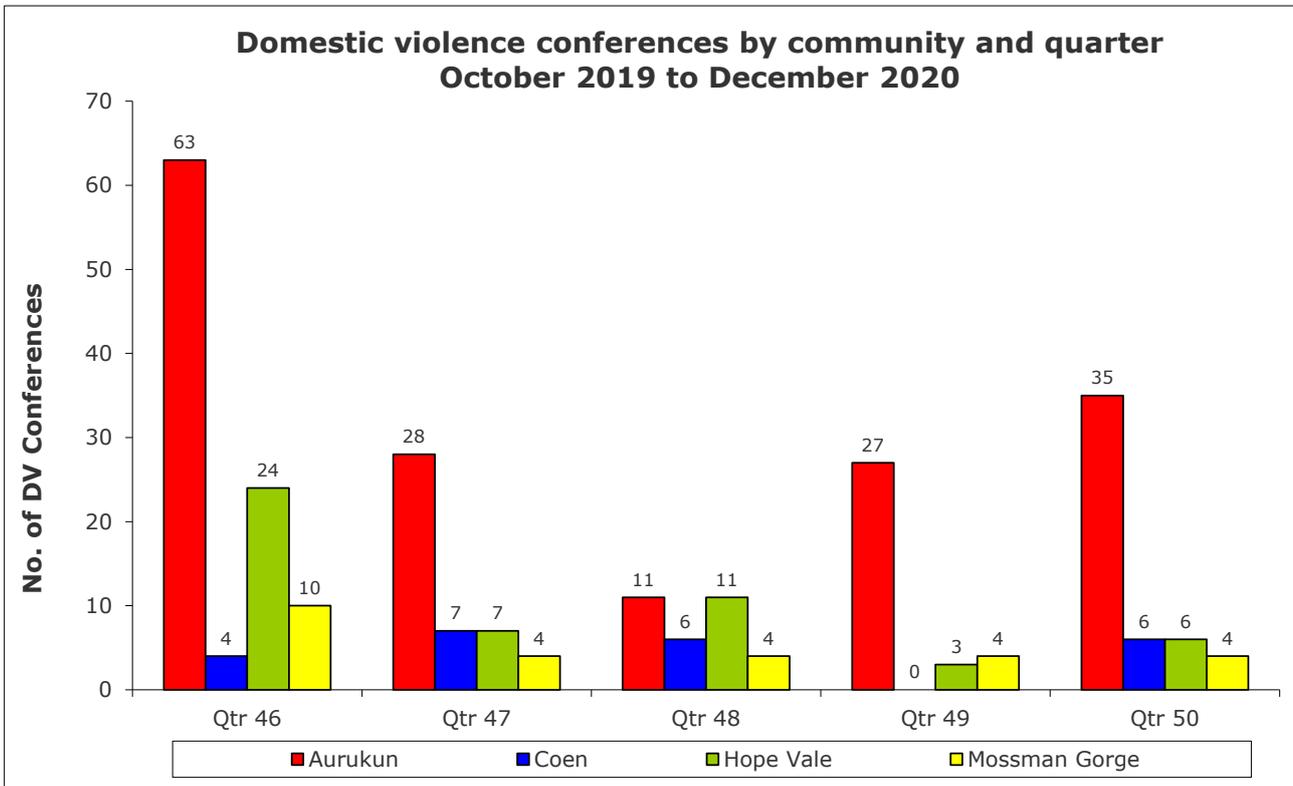
Graph 4: Conferences by community and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

Conferences for Domestic Violence related matters

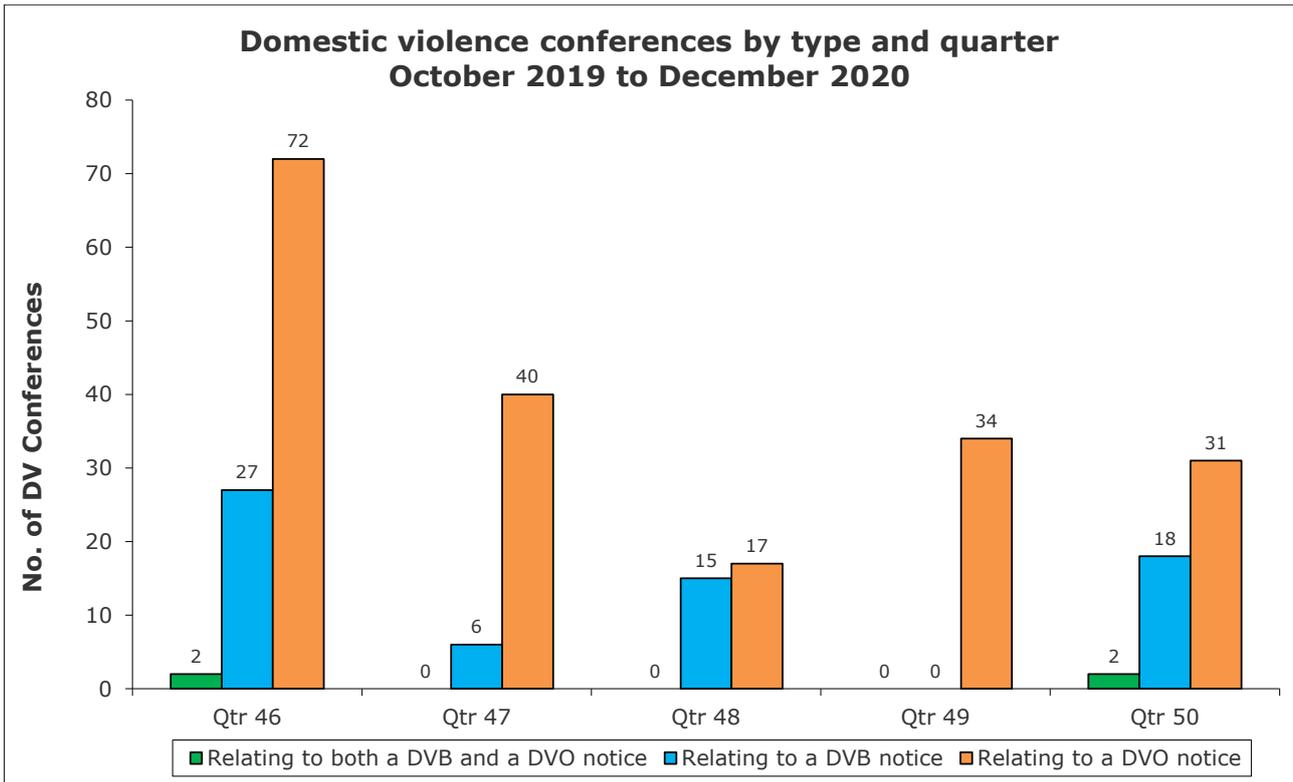
As a subset of the total number of conferences conducted for the quarter, 51 domestic violence conferences were conducted in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge in quarter 50, an increase of 17 domestic violence conferences from the previous quarter. Domestic violence conferences in the communities during the quarter were as follows: Aurukun increased by 8, Coen increased by 6, Hope Vale increased by 3 and Mossman Gorge remained unchanged with 4 domestic violence conferences for the quarter.

Table 4: Number of conferences held in relation to domestic violence notices (breaches and orders) per community 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Number of Domestic Violence Conferences	AU	CO	HV	MG	Total
Relating to both a DVB and a DVO notice	0	0	0	2	2
Relating to a DVB notice	12	3	1	2	18
Relating to a DVO notice	23	3	5	0	31
Total	35	6	6	4	51



Graph 5: Domestic violence conferences by community and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

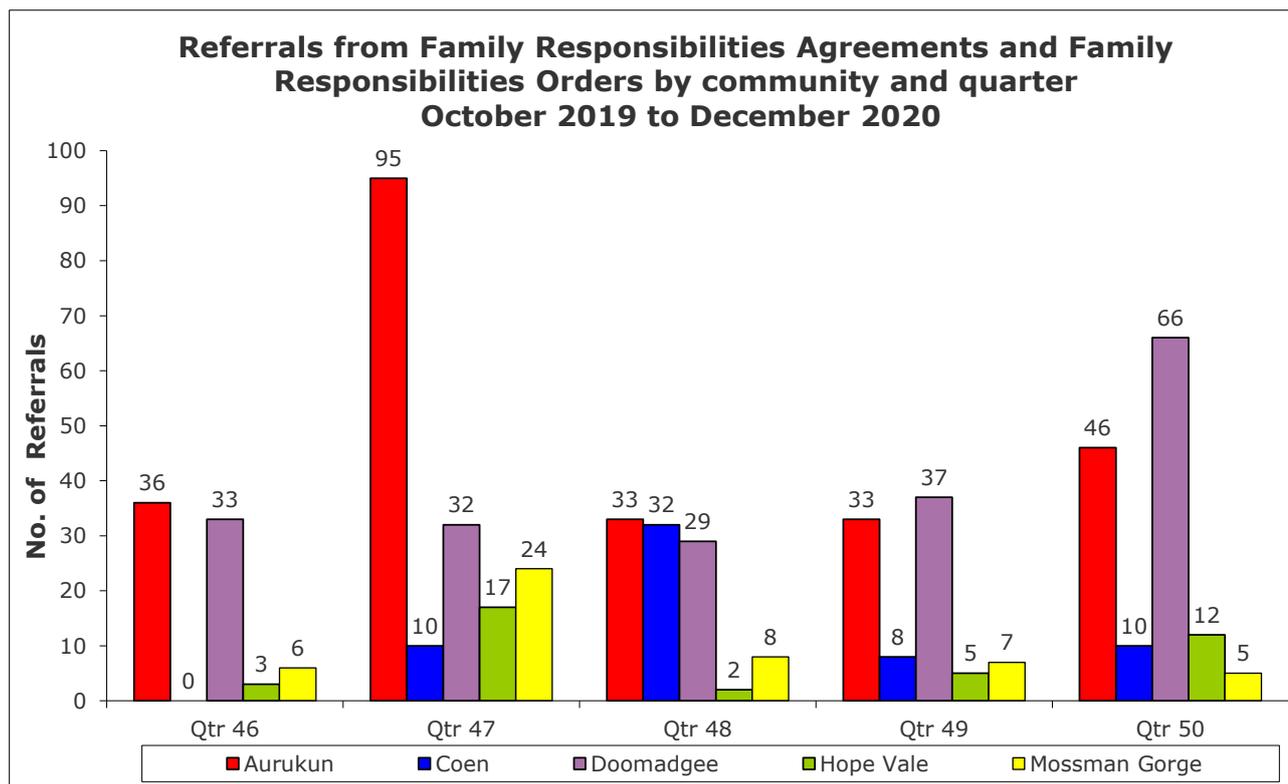


Graph 6: Domestic violence conferences by type and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

Referrals from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders

The total number of referrals to service providers from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders relating to 119 clients increased from 90 in quarter 49 to 139 in quarter 50. Since 2008 the Commission has referred 1,213 clients (633 female and 580 male) to service providers for assistance under a Family Responsibilities Agreement or Family Responsibilities Order. Referrals in the communities for decisions by agreement and decisions by order during the quarter were as follows:

Aurukun increased by 13, Coen increased by 2, Doomadgee increased by 29, Hope Vale increased by 7 and Mossman Gorge decreased by 2.



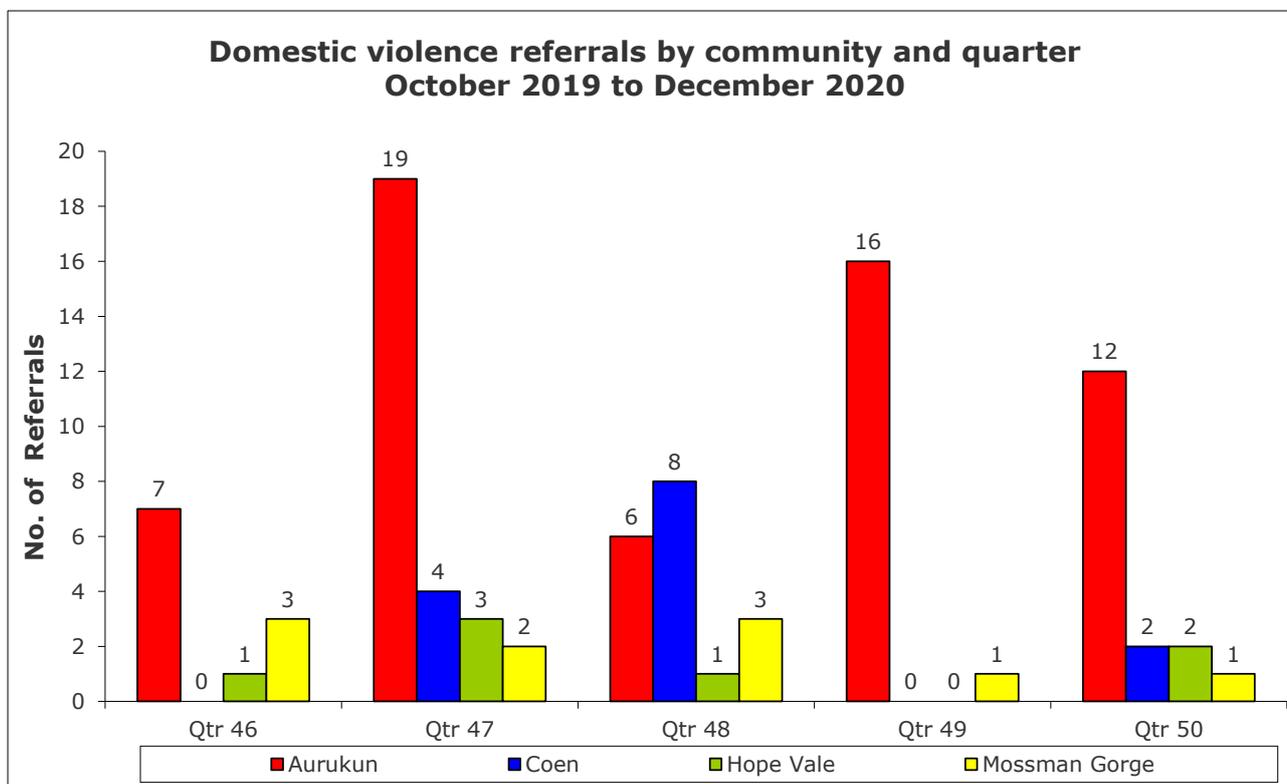
Graph 7: Referrals by community and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

Voluntary self-referrals from clients to the Commission

The FRC Act sets out a process under which a community member can voluntarily seek help from the Commission for a referral to a community support service (voluntary case plan) or be subject to voluntary income management. During quarter 50 a further 2 voluntary agreements relating to 3 referrals were entered into for clients to attend community support services under a case plan. Although the number of clients engaging with the FRC on a voluntary basis is still small, it is nonetheless consistent with a broader trend of clients – specifically those entering into Family Responsibility Agreements – who are exhibiting an increased self-awareness of their personal circumstances and are willing to accept assistance from the Commission at the earliest opportunity in the conferencing process. This is discussed below in more detail at *Interactions during the quarter*.

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 50, consistent with the previous quarter. The Local Commissioners continue to raise concerns about the availability of appropriate perpetrator intervention programs suitable for client referrals.



Graph 8: Domestic violence referrals by community and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

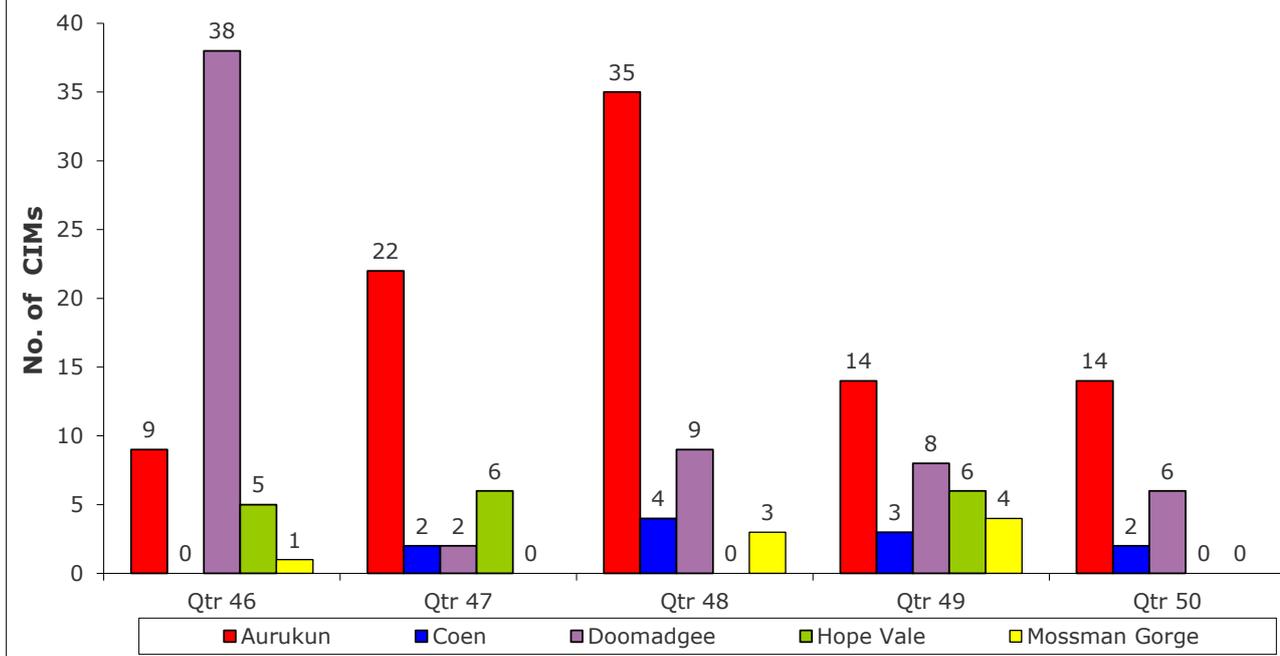
Conditional Income Management

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 22 CIMs relating to 22 clients were made in quarter 50, a decrease of 13 CIMs from quarter 49. Since the commencement of the Commission CIMs inclusive of original agreements and orders, extensions and amendments have been made relating to 957 clients (552 female and 405 male). Decreases were seen in Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge of 1, 2, 6 and 4 CIMs respectively, whilst Aurukun remained unchanged with 14 CIMs for the quarter.

As at 31 December 2020 there were 98 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 October 2019 to December 2020

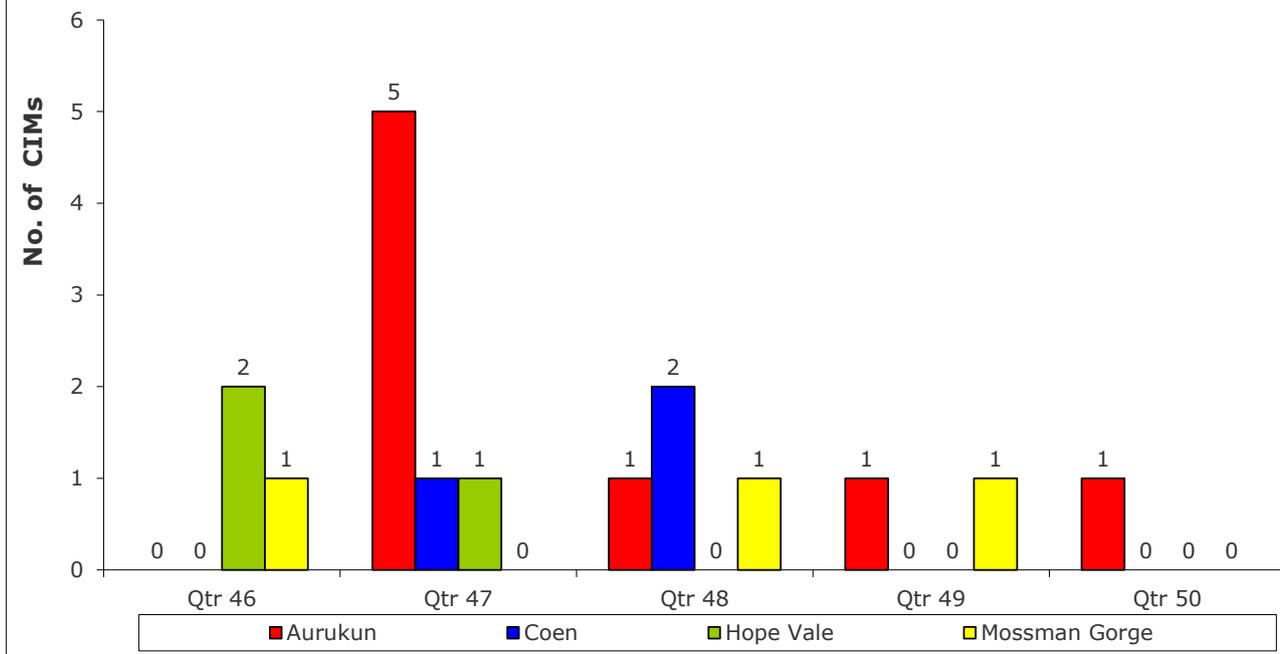


Graph 9: Conditional income management by community and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

Conditional Income Management for Domestic Violence related matters

As a subset of the total number of CIMs in the quarter, 1 CIM was made in relation to domestic violence conferences in quarter 50, representing a decrease of 1 from the previous quarter.

Domestic violence conditional income management by community and quarter October 2019 to December 2020



Graph 10: Domestic violence conditional income management by community and quarter 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

Voluntary Income Management

The Commission processed 4 Voluntary Income Management (VIM) agreements this quarter and since the commencement of the Commission in 2008, 157 clients (100 female and 57 male) have had an active VIM agreement. As at 31 December 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.

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 a growing 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 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Voluntary Agreements⁹			
	VCP¹⁰	VIM¹¹	Total
Total	2	4	6

Table 6: Number of decisions by agreement entered into 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Decisions by Agreement			
Community	CP¹²	CIM¹³	Total
AU	12	0	12
CO	4	0	4
DM	33	0	33
HV	5	0	5
MG	5	0	5
Total	59	0	59

⁹ Due to the small numbers a breakdown by community is not provided to protect the privacy of clients.

¹⁰ Voluntary Case Plan Agreement

¹¹ Voluntary Income Management Agreement

¹² Case Plan entered into by agreement with the client

¹³ Compulsory Income Management entered into by agreement with the client

Table 7: Number of decisions by order from 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Decisions by Order						
Community	CP¹⁴	CIM¹⁵	CP & CIM Concurrently	Reprimand	No Further Action	Total
AU	26	9	5	67	11	118
CO	0	1	1	0	3	5
DM	26	5	1	9	8	49
HV	4	0	0	1	20	25
MG	0	0	0	4	2	6
Total	56	15	7	81	44	203

Client interactions during the quarter

During quarter 50 the number of interactions highlighted in tables 5, 6 and 7 related to a total of 135 clients. For those clients (106 female and 29 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 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Type of interaction	Female	Male	Total
VCP	1	1	2
CP	86	21	107
CP & VIM	2	1	3
CP & CIM	7	2	9
VIM	1	0	1
CIM	9	4	13
TOTAL	106	29	135

The majority of the 13 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 31 December 2020, 348 clients were being case-managed through a current case plan, an increase of 31 from quarter 49. Increases were seen in all communities with Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge increasing by 11, 4, 11, 4 and 1 respectively.

Applications to Amend or End Agreements or Orders

Six applications (6 female) to Amend or End an Agreement or Order were received in quarter 50, a decrease of 2 from quarter 49. A client may apply to amend or end their agreement or order on multiple occasions throughout a quarter. Outcomes of the 6 applications received are as follows:

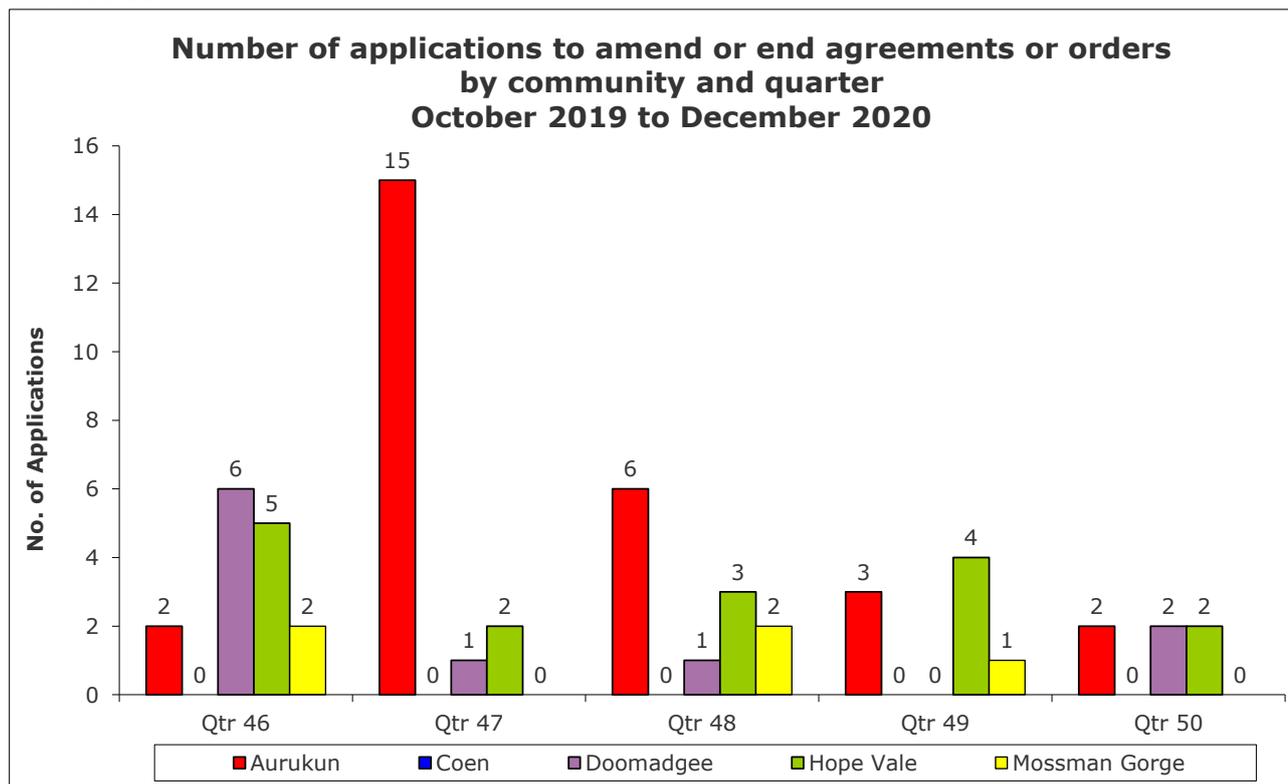
- 2 Applications accepted and income management agreements and orders ended
- 1 Application accepted and case plan ended
- 1 Application accepted and CIM order amended from 75% to 60% for the remaining period of the existing order
- 2 Applications refused.

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

¹⁴ Case Plan ordered by the Commission

¹⁵ 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 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

FRC client population by gender and age

Table 9: FRC client population by gender and age 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Information for the quarter	Female Count	Male Count	Female Average age	Male Average age
Clients who received a notice during the quarter ¹⁶	369	194	37	37
Clients who conferenced during the quarter ¹⁷	234	88	36	40
Clients referred during the quarter through Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ¹⁸	95	24	36	43
Clients referred during the quarter through a Voluntary Agreement ¹⁹	1	1	26	45
Clients placed on CIM during the quarter ²⁰	16	6	39	42
Clients placed on VIM during the quarter ²¹	3	1	51	36

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Average age of a referred client for the quarter through a Family Responsibilities Agreement or a Family Responsibilities Order is calculated at the first conference date held where the client was placed on a case plan during the quarter.

¹⁹ Average age of a referred client for the quarter through a Voluntary Agreement is calculated at the start date of the voluntary agreement where the client entered into a voluntary case plan during the quarter.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ Average age of a VIM 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^{22,23}.

Coen: The township of Coen had an estimated resident adult population of 260 people as at 30 June 2019^{22,24}.

Doomadgee: The community of Doomadgee had an estimated resident adult population of 829 people as at 30 June 2019^{22,23}.

Hope Vale: The estimated resident adult population of Hope Vale was 735 people as at 30 June 2019^{22,23}.

Mossman Gorge: The Mossman Gorge community had an estimated resident population of 87 people as at 30 June 2019^{22,25}.

²² 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.

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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

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

The *Family Responsibilities Commission (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020* (the Regulation) commenced on 2 October 2020. 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 any communication technology, removing the requirement to meet in person at least once a year. In early December the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 received assent, thereby extending the Act from an expiry of 31 December 2020 to 30 April 2021 or an earlier date to be prescribed by regulation.

Doomadgee

This quarter saw the forty-first meeting of the FR Board held on 3 November 2020. The Board considered the following report on Doomadgee and a recommendation by the Commissioner that volatile substance use (VSU) counselling be provided in the community at the earliest opportunity.

- After a review of a number of Child Concern reports received from the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs regarding VSU, the FRC held a conference day on 14 October dedicated solely to address VSU notices. The Doomadgee Registry Coordinator contacted Save the Children to source an appropriate program to refer clients to. Clients were referred to the Strong Culture, Strong Tomorrow program. Unfortunately, Save the Children later advised that they were unable to provide a service to these referred clients as they had limited staffing and capacity to accommodate them. The FRC has since been informed that the situation is under review by Save the Children and the FRC is awaiting their advice. It is generally acknowledged that Doomadgee is lacking in youth support services and facilities. The Youth Hub which is operated by the Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council has provided some support for older youth aged 17 to 25 years but is not designed for younger youth who have been the subject of VSU and suicide.

The Doomadgee 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. Retaining and maintaining staff to execute the School Attendance Officer (SAO) strategy has been problematical. The FRC advised the FR Board of its support for a dedicated school-based professional support program to address behavioural issues in the school and recognised the need to appoint a supervisor to manage the SAO team. The FRC has been advised that a supervisor to manage the SAO team has since been appointed.

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 is happy to report that in December the Doomadgee Roadhouse reverted back to the

sale of Opal fuel after positive stakeholder consultation and engagement with the Australian Government.

Cashless Debit Card Summit

In November of this quarter the FRC was invited to attend and present at a Cashless Debit Card Summit hosted by the Minderoo Foundation. The Summit brought together Indigenous community leaders, government representatives, service providers, community stakeholders and CDC participants from across Australia. With the advent of the transition from the BasicsCard to the CDC, it was an opportunity to share our experiences and learn about the new technologies attached to the CDC which currently are not available to FRC clients on the BasicsCard. During the Summit Commissioner Williams and Registrar McLeod presented on the work of the FRC and elements of the FRC model – State based legislation involving local decision making, and client centred decisions with a focus on supporting changed behaviour through referral pathways. The FRC received an enthusiastic welcome and all delegates expressed their interest in a model of income management unlike any other. The FRC is currently liaising with the Australian Government Department of Social Services, on the transition of FRC clients from the BasicsCard to the CDC in quarter 51.

Referrals and case management

In the Review of non-financial performance - Case management and monitoring section of the FRC's 2019-20 Annual Report, it was reported: "As noted, the Commission has not been receiving client progress reports from some key support services. Whilst it is acknowledged that service providers have competing priorities with respect to their reporting obligations, the lack of information about client progress available to Commissioners impedes the effectiveness of case plan referrals".

Part 8, Information exchange, of the FRC Act defines the information which can be requested by the Commissioner, and from whom this information can be requested. Section 91 defines relevant information as information that the holder of the information reasonably believes may help the Commissioner or Commission to properly consider matters to which an agency notice relates, help the Commissioner decide whether to hold a conference, assist the Commissioner to identify persons to attend the conference, assist the Commission to make appropriate decisions, prepare case plans, and importantly "(g) help the registrar to assess the effectiveness of, and to monitor compliance with, a case plan". This information may be requested from, amongst other entities, "90 (d) the chief executive officer, however called, of an entity that provides a community support service that is attended by a person under a case plan".

Although referrals increased this quarter by 54 percent from quarter 49, the Commission continues to be unable to determine the extent of service provision (or outcomes) during the quarter. For example, as at 30 November 2020, there were 590 quarterly reports due or outstanding from service providers for 314 clients on 12-month case plans. Of those reports due, only 81 reports were received to indicate whether the client had attended the service provider and what (if any) progress was made regarding their case plan. The Case Management and Monitoring team remind service providers of reports due each month, and then a follow-up reminder is generally sent for reports still outstanding. The figure as at 30 November 2020 is a cumulative figure – it includes outstanding reports from prior months. No reports were received for December 2020 due to the Christmas and school holiday period where many service providers reduce visits to community.

In quarter 51 the Case Management and Monitoring Team will be reviewing all outstanding quarterly reports and closing off expired case plans for which the Commission was not successful in receiving

progress reports. The team will continue to focus on seeking quality information in relation to client engagement from service providers.

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 October 2020 to 31 December 2020 totalled \$1,047,310. This income consisted of:
 - \$426,500 Queensland Government funding
 - \$163,250 Queensland Government funding – Doomadgee
 - \$450,000 Australian Government funding
 - \$6,414 interest received
 - \$1,146 received in sundry income in relation to prior year recouped costs.

The balance of available funds in the bank as at 31 December 2020 is \$3,375,772.

Expenditure:

- Expenditure for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020 was \$948,245.

Table 10: Expenditure in quarter 50.

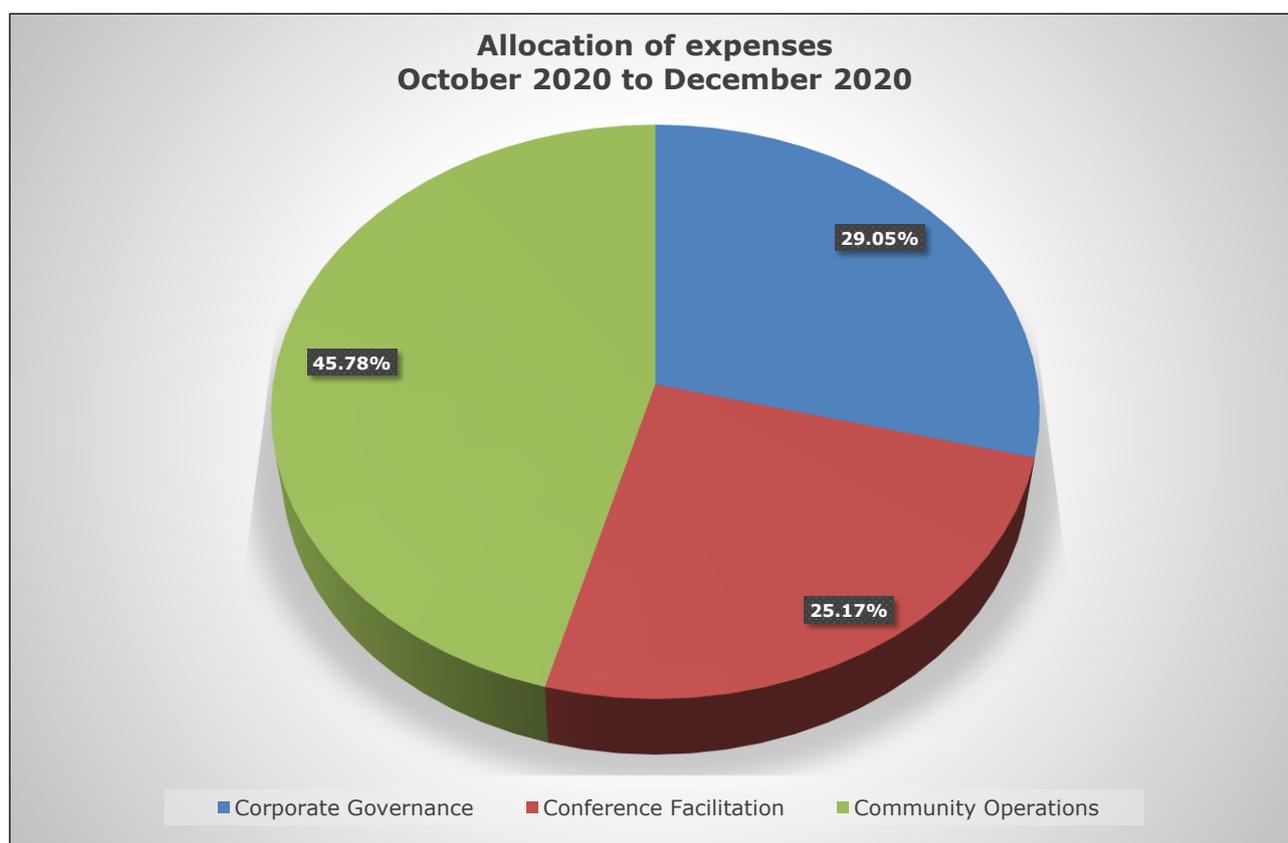
1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020	Expenditure Qtr 50	1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020	Expenditure Qtr 50
Employee salaries – FRC staff	\$513,971	Internet & IT	\$54,155
Employee salaries – Local Commissioners	\$75,425	Motor vehicle	\$11,086
Employee on costs – FRC staff	\$90,699	Property	\$56,848
Employee on costs – Local Commissioners	\$10,725	Travel	\$47,981
Other employment costs	\$13,051	General operating	\$58,040
Communications	\$3,582	Other expenses	\$12,682
		Total	\$948,245

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.

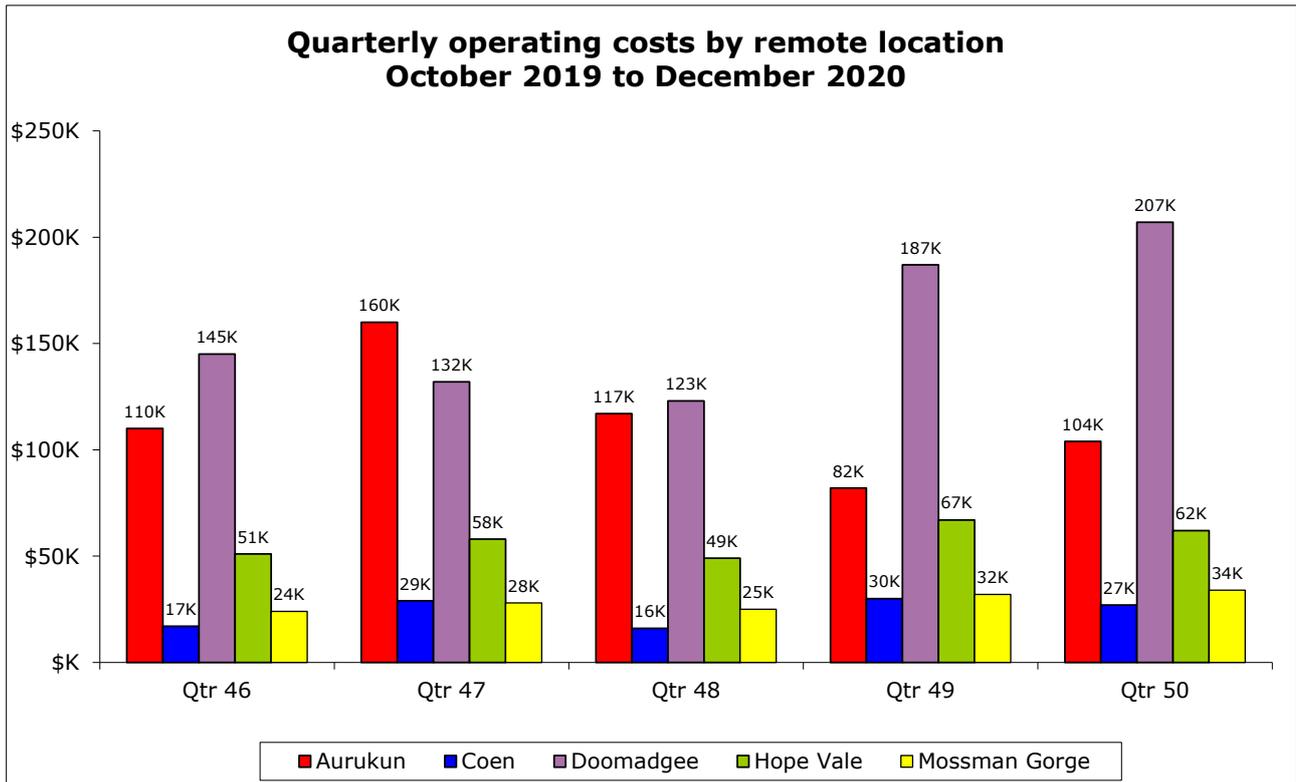
The functions of corporate governance and conference facilitation are conducted primarily in the registry office in Cairns with frequent visits to community by staff. Community operations are conducted by Local Registry Coordinators (with one of these living remotely in the larger community of Aurukun 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 50 based on the above core functions is:



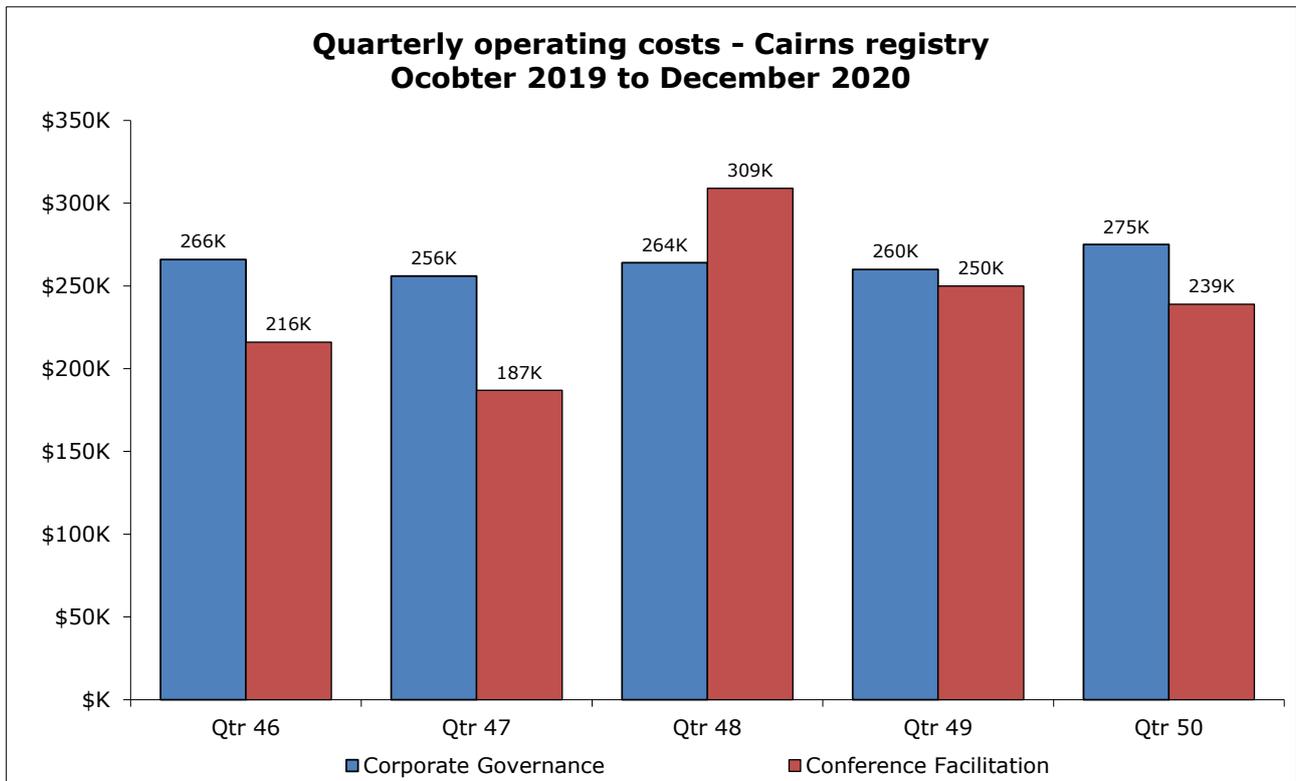
Graph 12: Allocation of expenses 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Regional operational expenditure by location and quarter.



Graph 13: Operating costs by remote location 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2020.

Cairns expenditure for quarter 50 compared to the previous four quarters.



Graph 14: Quarterly operating costs Cairns 1 October 2019 to 31 December 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 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