

# **Family Responsibilities Commission**

*Report to the Family Responsibilities Board*

## **Quarterly Report**

**No. 53**

**July 2021 to September 2021**



*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 53 with comparisons shown to the previous quarter.

**Table 1:** Activity from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021.

<b>Activity for the quarter</b>	<b>Qtr 52</b>	<b>Qtr 53</b>
Total number of notices received by the Commission <sup>1</sup>	2,154	2,137
Number of notices within jurisdiction	1,144	1,096
Number of notices not within jurisdiction	1,010	1,041
Number of clients notified to the Commission from notices within jurisdiction	567	568
<b>Conferences and amend/end application hearings for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders</b>		
Conferences conducted	365	396
Number of clients served to attend conference	289	313
Amend/end application hearings conducted for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders	1	6
Number of amend/end application hearing clients	1	5
Attendance percentage for conferences and amend/end application hearings for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders	57%	54%
Non-attendance percentage with acceptable (reasonable) excuse for conferences and amend/end application hearings for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders	28%	26%
<b>Conference outcomes</b>		
Agreements to attend community support services	84	89
Orders made to attend community support services	29	51
Referrals to service providers from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders <sup>2</sup>	136	157
Orders made for CIM	25	36
<b>Amend/end hearing outcomes for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders</b>		
Accepted	100%	50%
Refused	0%	50%
<b>Voluntary Agreements</b>		
Voluntary agreements for a voluntary case plan	6	0
Voluntary referrals to service providers	8	0
Voluntary agreements for VIM	67	63
<b>Amend/end outcomes for Voluntary Agreements</b>		
Accepted	100%	100%
Refused	0%	0%

<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> An agreement and a decision can have multiple case plans which in turn can have multiple referrals where a service providers has multiple programs.

<b>Other activity</b>	<b>Qtr 52</b>	<b>Qtr 53</b>
Applications to Amend or End received	3	16
<b>Information as at the last day of the quarter</b>		
Number of clients case-managed through current non-voluntary case plan	288	240
Number of clients subject to a current CIM	65	66
Number of clients on a current VIM	79	124

### **Continuing positive trends**

The statistics reported above in table 1 for the quarter July to September 2021 reveal a continuing high number of 89 agreements entered into to attend community support services - an increase of 5 from quarter 52. A 15.4 percent increase in referrals to service providers from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Orders for quarter 53 will continue to place pressure on support services to meet an increased demand for client services. Voluntary agreements for voluntary income management (VIM) remained strong at 63, whilst orders made to attend support services and orders made for conditional income management (primarily in Aurukun) increased.

### **Encouraging economic participation**

In the FRC's Annual Report 2020-21 the Commission's workforce profile was reported to include 18.75 percent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. In order to increase operational efficiencies in Aurukun with its heavy workload, and to provide an employment opportunity and work experience for a community member, the Commission sought expressions of interest for a casual administrative assistant to assist with the holding of conferences in community by providing administrative and logistical support to the FRC Commissioner, Local Commissioners, Local Registry Coordinator and other Commission staff. As a result, the Commission welcomed Caitlin Walpo to the Aurukun team in an administrative support role this quarter. Caitlin is an Aurukun resident and her presence in community during COVID travel restrictions is proving of great value, enabling the Commission to maintain operations with support from the team in Cairns.

### **2020-21 Annual Report**

For the corporate governance, statistics and ICT teams, much of quarter 53 was spent on drafting and publishing the Commission's Annual Report 2020-21 which is required to be provided to the Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships by 31 October 2021.

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### **Abbreviations**

AU	Aurukun
CO	Coen
CP	Case plan
CPA	Case plan agreement
CPO	Case plan order
CS	Child safety and welfare notice
CIM	Conditional Income Management
DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
DIS	District Court notice
DM	Doomadgee
DVB	Domestic Violence Breach
DVO	Domestic Violence Order
EQ	School attendance notice
FRA	Family Responsibilities Agreement
FRC	Family Responsibilities Commission
HT	Housing tenancy breach
HV	Hope Vale
MAG	Magistrates Court notice
MG	Mossman Gorge
NFA	No further action
SEN	School enrolment notice
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)

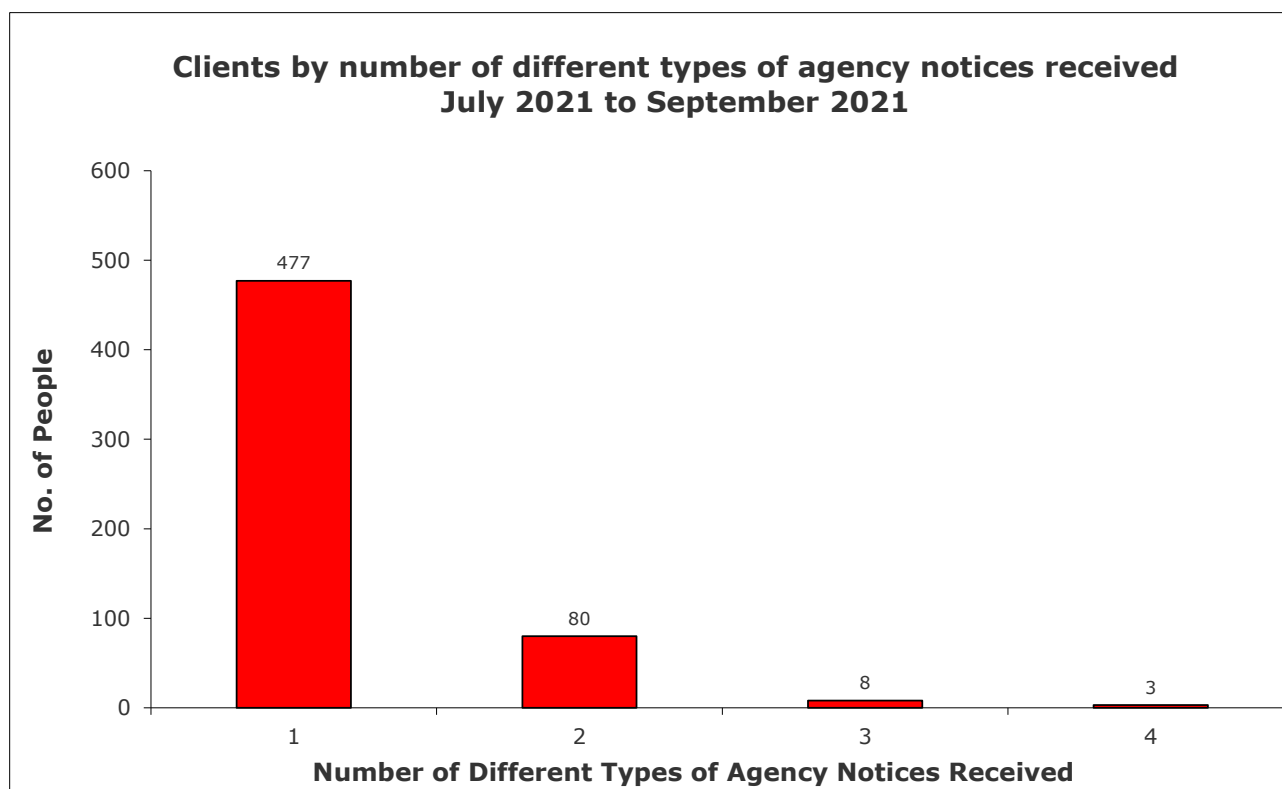
# Family Responsibilities Commission Welfare Reforms

Report to 30 September 2021.

## 1. Activities and Trends

### Client interactions during the quarter

The Commission delivers services to communities which are culturally unique and geographically remote. Each community is different, however each can be characterised by the entrenched disadvantage of Indigenous community members. Over-crowded housing, high rates of Indigenous welfare dependency and multi-generational poverty have resulted in communities with high numbers of individuals and families with complex needs. The Commission has been reporting on the number of notices individual clients receive (refer graph 4) for a number of years. The graph below provides a further insight into the complexity of the issues faced by many clients. During quarter 53, 477 clients (84 percent) were notified to the Commission with only one type of trigger notice. The remaining 91 clients (16 percent) received more than one type of trigger notice.



**Graph 1:** Number of clients by number of different types of agency notices received 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021.

Investigations reveal the following information regarding the types of sole trigger notices received by Commission clients during the quarter:

- 60 percent received a school attendance (EQ) notice
- 13 percent received a Magistrate Court (MAG) notice
- 5 percent received a child safety and welfare (CS) notice
- 5 percent received a domestic violence order (DVO) notice
- 1 percent received a domestic violence breach (DVB) notice
- 1 percent received a District Court (DIS) notice and
- 1 percent received a housing tenancy breach (HT) notice.

Additional insight into the complexity of issues faced by clients can be seen below. Table 2 shows the combination of trigger notices received for 91 clients with more than one type of trigger notice. One can see that predominantly there is a nexus between Court convictions and domestic violence orders/breaches with education notices and child safety issues, and also a strong nexus between child safety issues and education notices.

**Table 2:** Number of clients with multiple and differing agency notices (i.e. Child Safety and Welfare (CS), Domestic Violence Order (DVO), Domestic Violence Breach (DVB), Magistrates Court (MAG), District Court (DIS), Education Queensland for school attendance (EQ), Housing Tenancy Breach (HT) and School Enrolment (SEN) from 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021<sup>3</sup>.

Type of Agency Notice/s	Number of clients
CS,DVB,DVO	1
CS,DVB,DVO,MAG	2
CS,DVO	1
CS,DVO,HT	1
CS,EQ	26
CS,MAG	2
DVB,DVO	2
DVB,DVO,EQ,MAG	1
DVB,DVO,MAG	1
DVB,EQ	2
DVB,EQ,MAG	4
DVB,MAG	9
DVO,EQ	5
DVO,EQ,MAG	1
DVO,MAG	15
EQ,HT	4
EQ,MAG	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>

As a result of an extensive upgrade to the functionality of the CRM database implemented in February 2021, the Commission is now able to provide a more comprehensive overview of the interactions that have taken place with clients over a period of time. The following information consists of decisions where a final determination has taken place in conference and includes decisions delivered at application hearings. It does not include instances where a client was rescheduled to another conference due to non-attendance, or a conference was adjourned to another date to allow the parties to address matter/s prior to the Commissioners making a determination.

Shown below are the number of interactions (excluding reschedules and adjournments during the quarter) that resulted in a voluntary agreement, a decision by agreement or order, or a decision delivered on an amend/end application. A continuing trend of interactions by the client with the Commission on a less intrusive and more proactive basis has been identified, i.e. where engagement is on a voluntary basis (Table 3), or where acceptance of the Commission’s decision for a referral to support service or income management is by agreement with the client (Table 4). These proactive interactions are considered 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.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 4.

**Table 3:** Number of voluntary agreements (where a client has agreed to a voluntary case plan or voluntary income management) entered into 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021<sup>4</sup>.

<b>Voluntary Agreements</b>			
	<b>VCP</b>	<b>VIM</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>63</b>

**Table 4:** Number of decisions by agreement (where a client has agreed to a case plan or conditional income management) entered into 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021<sup>4</sup>.

<b>Decisions by Agreement</b>			
<b>Community</b>	<b>CP</b>	<b>CIM</b>	<b>Total</b>
AU	48	0	<b>48</b>
CO	4	0	<b>4</b>
DM	27	0	<b>27</b>
HV	4	0	<b>4</b>
MG	6	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>89</b>

**Table 5:** Number of decisions by order (including where the FRC has mandated a client be the subject of a case plan or conditional income management) from 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021<sup>4</sup>.

<b>Decisions by Order</b>							
<b>Community</b>	<b>CP</b>	<b>CP &amp; CIM Concurrently</b>	<b>CIM</b>	<b>No Further Action</b>	<b>Recommend Support Service</b>	<b>Reprimand</b>	<b>Total</b>
AU	5	15	7	15	2	15	<b>59</b>
CO	3	0	0	1	0	1	<b>5</b>
DM	11	3	5	11	0	17	<b>47</b>
HV	4	5	0	23	0	1	<b>33</b>
MG	4	1	0	1	0	2	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>152</b>

**Table 6:** Number of decisions by application hearing (where a client seeks to alter or end their original FRC decision because their circumstances or behaviours has changed) from 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021<sup>4</sup>.

<b>Decisions by Application Hearing</b>				
<b>Community</b>	<b>CP End &amp; CIM End</b>	<b>CIM End</b>	<b>No Further Action</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>

**Table 7:** Number of decisions of voluntary amend/end applications (where a self-referred client seeks to alter or end their voluntary income management agreement because their circumstances have changed) from 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021<sup>4</sup>.

<b>Decisions of Voluntary Amend/End Applications</b>			
<b>Community</b>	<b>VIM Amend</b>	<b>VIM End</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

<sup>4</sup> Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 4.

During quarter 53 the number of interactions highlighted in tables 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 related to a total of 279 clients (166 female and 113 male). To clarify the variability of client interactions, the following may occur during the reporting period:

- 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.
- 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 be separately or concurrently placed on a case plan and income management throughout the quarter, and a client may be placed on an income management order but then placed on a case plan under a decision by agreement.
- A client may have entered into a voluntary agreement for voluntary income management along with a separate case plan to attend support services under a decision by agreement.

Clients with complex and multifaceted issues often require solutions which are best coordinated with multiple service providers who can extend assistance to family members. This requires the Commissioners to take a holistic approach to their decision-making by involving, where appropriate, family and clan group members at conference, together with a network of relevant service providers. This holistic approach assists in creating a more informative, culturally relevant and empowering experience for the client so they can make the necessary changes in their lives to provide for a safe and secure environment for themselves and their families.

The types of client interactions evident during quarter 53 reinforce the Commission's belief that our clients are displaying a willingness to change and taking personal responsibility for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their families. The following highlights for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021 support our assertion:

- 48 percent of clients entered into a Family Responsibilities Agreement or self-referred to the FRC and sought a voluntary agreement during the quarter;
  - As a subset of the above, 30 percent of clients specifically entered into a voluntary agreement with either no other interactions, or a decision for no further action;
- 16 percent of clients did not require any further action on their matter/s, where no further action was the only outcome; and
- 11 percent of clients were considered to only require a reprimand for their actions.

There remains a small cohort of clients who come before the Commission who are still developing insight into their actions and are less inclined to change their behaviours. The Commissioners have made the following decisions in those situations:

8 percent of clients were placed on a CIM order and ordered to attend a support service;  
4 percent of clients were placed on a CIM order; and  
9 percent of clients were ordered to attend a support service under a case plan.

A full breakdown of client interactions (including combinations of types of interactions) are recorded by the Commission and will inform future tracking of client progress and ultimately the Commission's impact on improving social norms.



## Notices

In quarter 53 the Commission received 2,137 agency notices<sup>5</sup>. Some individuals may have been the subject of more than one agency notice. Of that figure 1,096 notices (51 percent) relating to 568 clients were within the Commission's jurisdiction, and 1,041 notices (49 percent) were outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

**Table 8:** Notices in jurisdiction by type and community 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021.

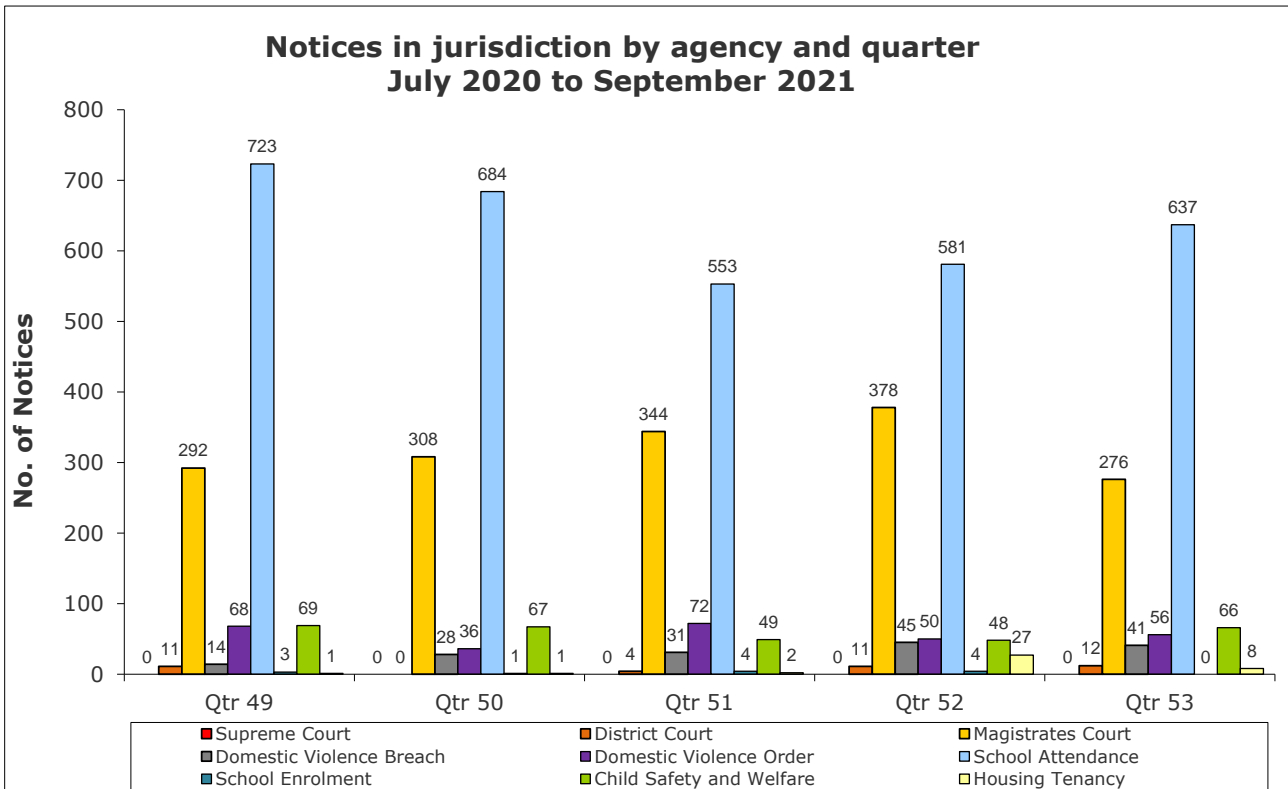
Type of Notice	AU	CO	DM <sup>6</sup>	HV	MG	Total
Supreme Court notices	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
District Court notices	12	0	0	0	0	<b>12</b>
Magistrates Court notices	149	22	0	92	13	<b>276</b>
Domestic Violence Breach notices	19	7	0	13	2	<b>41</b>
Domestic Violence Order notices	35	4	0	15	2	<b>56</b>
School Attendance notices	205	26	265	130	11	<b>637</b>
School Enrolment notice	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Child Safety and Welfare notices						
Child Concern Reports	13	0	31	1	2	<b>47</b>
Finalised Child Protection Investigations	3	0	11	5	0	<b>19</b>
Housing Tenancy notices	3	1	0	4	0	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1096</b>

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

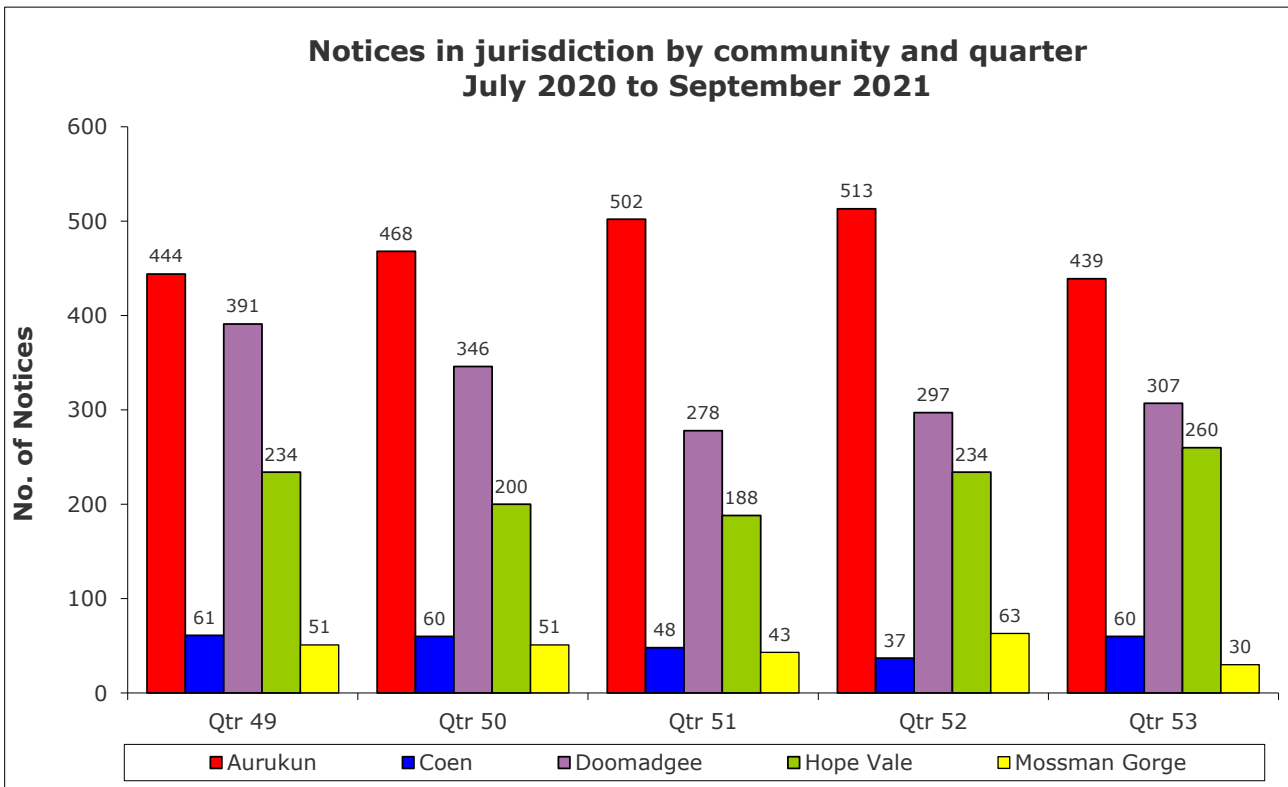
- Aurukun received 439 notices relating to 238 clients (142 female and 96 male)
- Coen received 60 notices relating to 30 clients (14 female and 16 male)
- Doomadgee received 307 notices relating to 168 clients (122 female and 46 male)
- Hope Vale received 260 notices, relating to 117 clients (58 female and 59 male)
- Mossman Gorge received 30 notices relating to 15 clients (10 female and 5 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 Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs only.

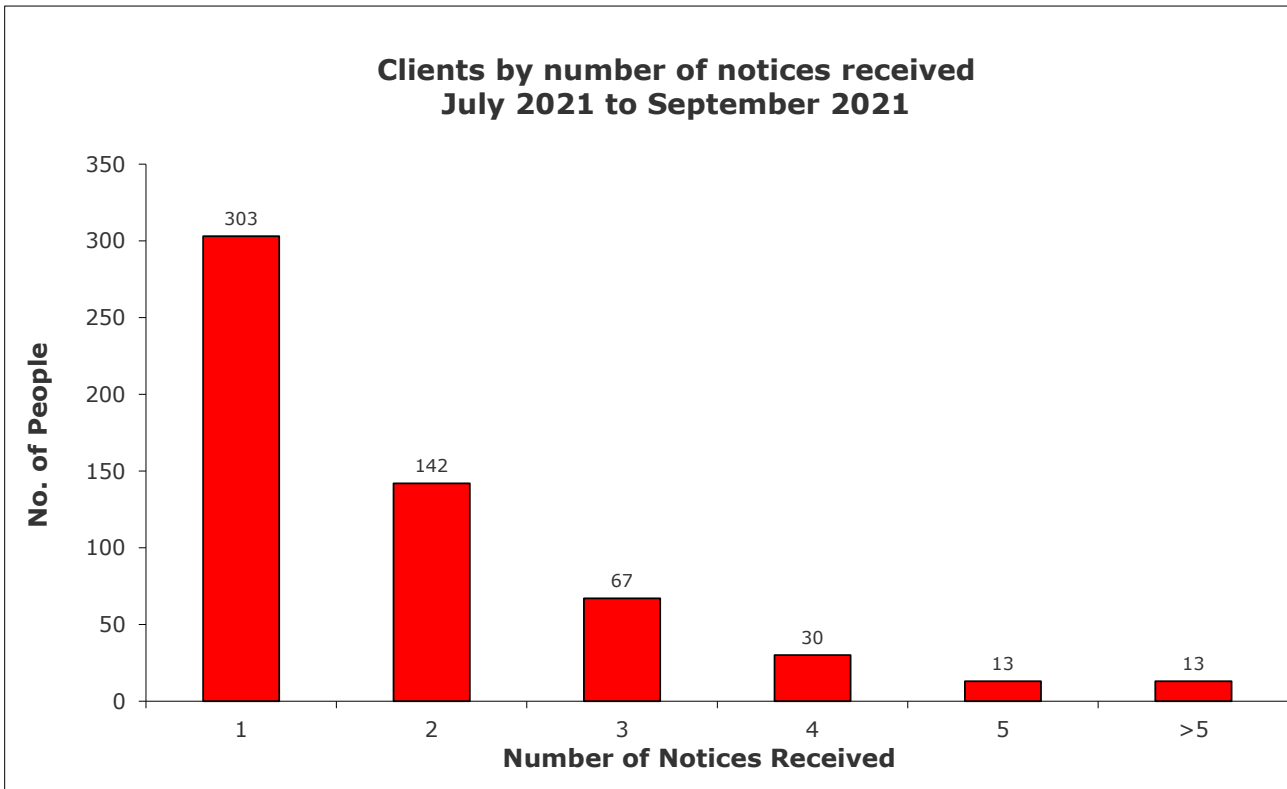


**Graph 2:** Notices in jurisdiction by type and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.



**Graph 3:** Notices in jurisdiction by community and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

For quarter 53, 47 percent of clients received more than one notice. 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 (53 percent) have received only one notice during the reporting period. This trend has been observed over the past twelve months. Thirty-four new clients were added to the Commission’s database during the quarter.



**Graph 4:** FRC clients by number of notices 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021<sup>7</sup>.

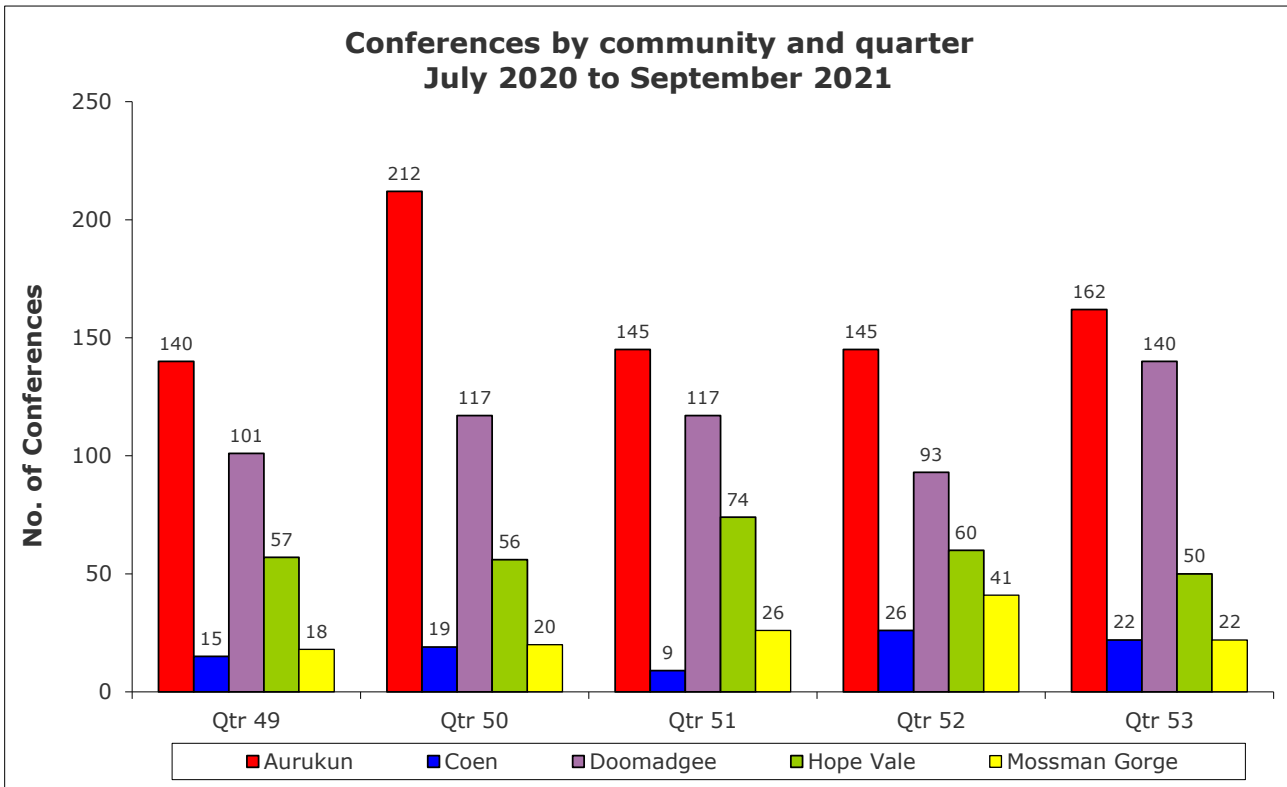
**Conferences**

The total number of conferences held across the five communities in quarter 53 increased from 365 in quarter 52 to 396 conferences<sup>8</sup> (relating to 313 clients served to attend conference), resulting in 89 agreements to attend community support services, 51 orders to attend community support services and 36 new CIM orders issued. When compared to last quarter there was an increase of 5 agreements to attend community support services, an increase of 22 orders to attend community support services and an increase of 11 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, recommending a support service, and 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. Attendance at conference decreased from 57.3 percent in quarter 52 to 53.0 percent in quarter 53, and non-attendance with what the Commissioners considered a reasonable justification decreased from 28.2 percent in the previous quarter to 26.3 percent during this reporting period. Reasons for non-attendance at conference generally include the effects of community unrest, the occurrence of funerals and associated Sorry Business, illness, carer responsibilities and absence from community. Refer to the application outcomes section of this report for matters heard under an amend/end application hearing process.

<sup>7</sup> Counting rules stipulate that where multiple charges are received each charge is counted as an individual notice and each child’s absence is counted as one notice – i.e. if three children from the one family were absent, this counts as three notices.

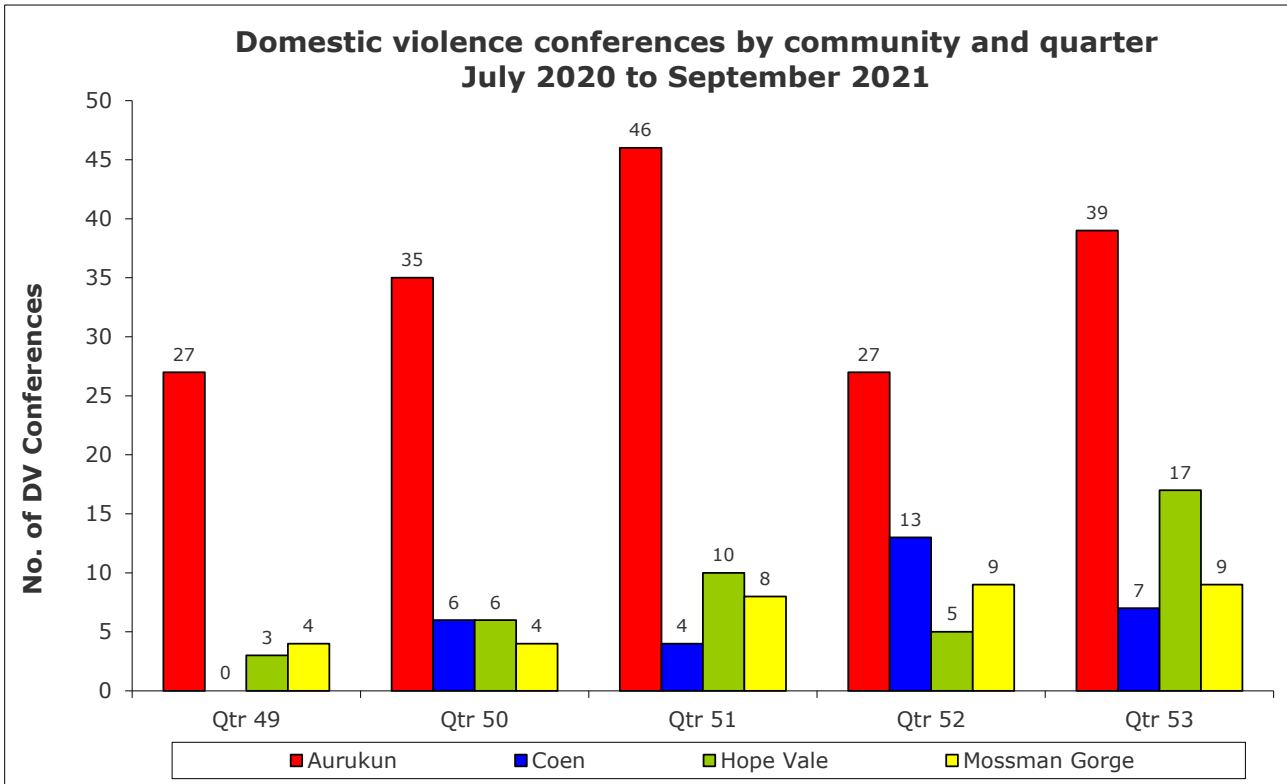
<sup>8</sup> The number of conferences held relates to the number of conferences listed, which includes where a client was served with a Notice to Attend Conference and subsequently failed to attend.



**Graph 5:** Conferences by community and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

**Conferences for Domestic Violence related matters**

As a subset of the total number of conferences conducted for the quarter, 72 domestic violence conferences were conducted in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, an increase of 18 from the previous quarter. Domestic violence conferences in the communities during the quarter were as follows: Aurukun increased by 12, Coen decreased by 6, Hope Vale increased by 12 and Mossman Gorge remained unchanged with 9 conferences for DV related matters.



**Graph 6:** Domestic violence conferences by community and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

**Table 9:** Number of conferences held in relation to domestic violence notices (breaches and orders) per community 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021.

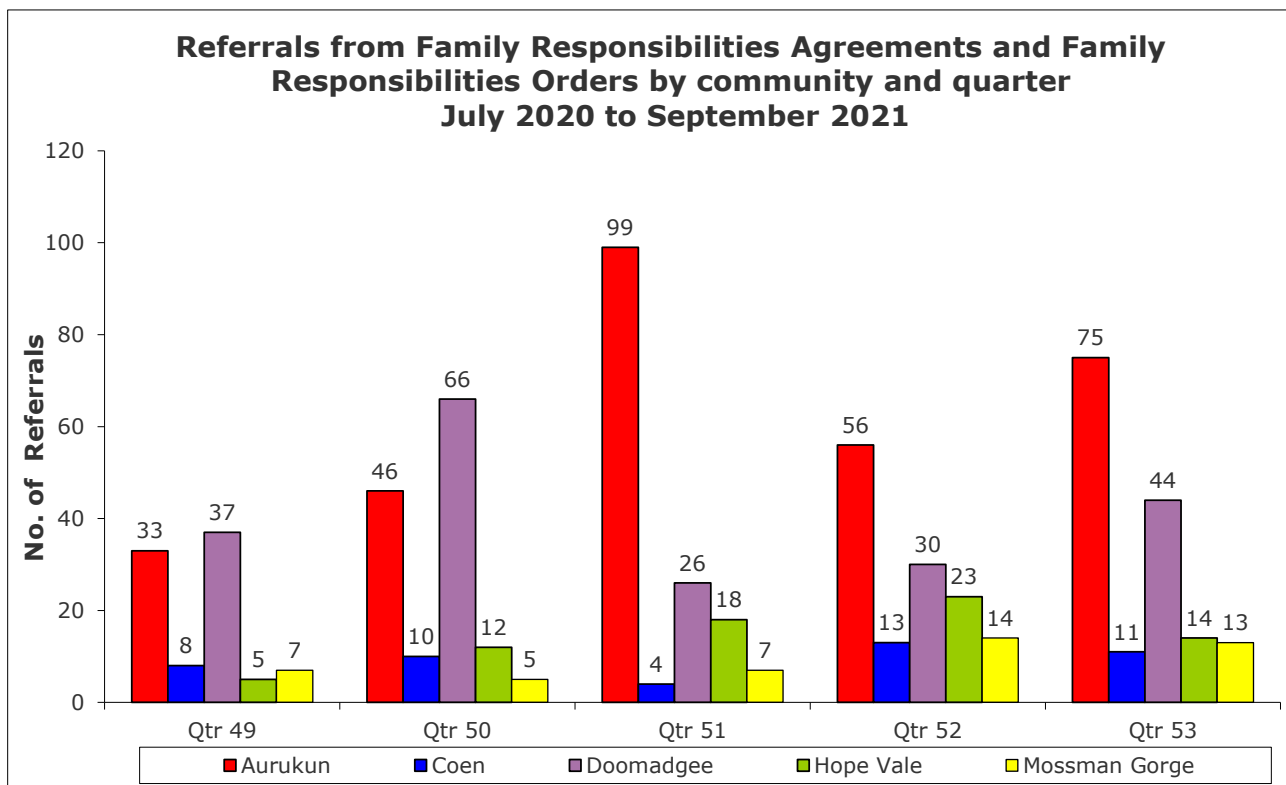
<b>Number of Domestic Violence Conferences</b>	<b>AU</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>HV</b>	<b>MG</b>	<b>Total</b>
Relating to both a DVB and a DVO notice	4	4	1	0	<b>9</b>
Relating to a DVB notice	13	3	3	2	<b>21</b>
Relating to a DVO notice	22	0	13	7	<b>42</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>72</b>

**Table 10:** Domestic violence conferences by type and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021

<b>Number of Domestic Violence Conferences</b>	<b>Qtr 49</b>	<b>Qtr 50</b>	<b>Qtr 51</b>	<b>Qtr 52</b>	<b>Qtr 53</b>
Relating to both a DVB and a DVO notice	0	2	3	2	9
Relating to a DVB notice	0	18	7	18	21
Relating to a DVO notice	34	31	58	34	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>72</b>

**Referrals from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders**

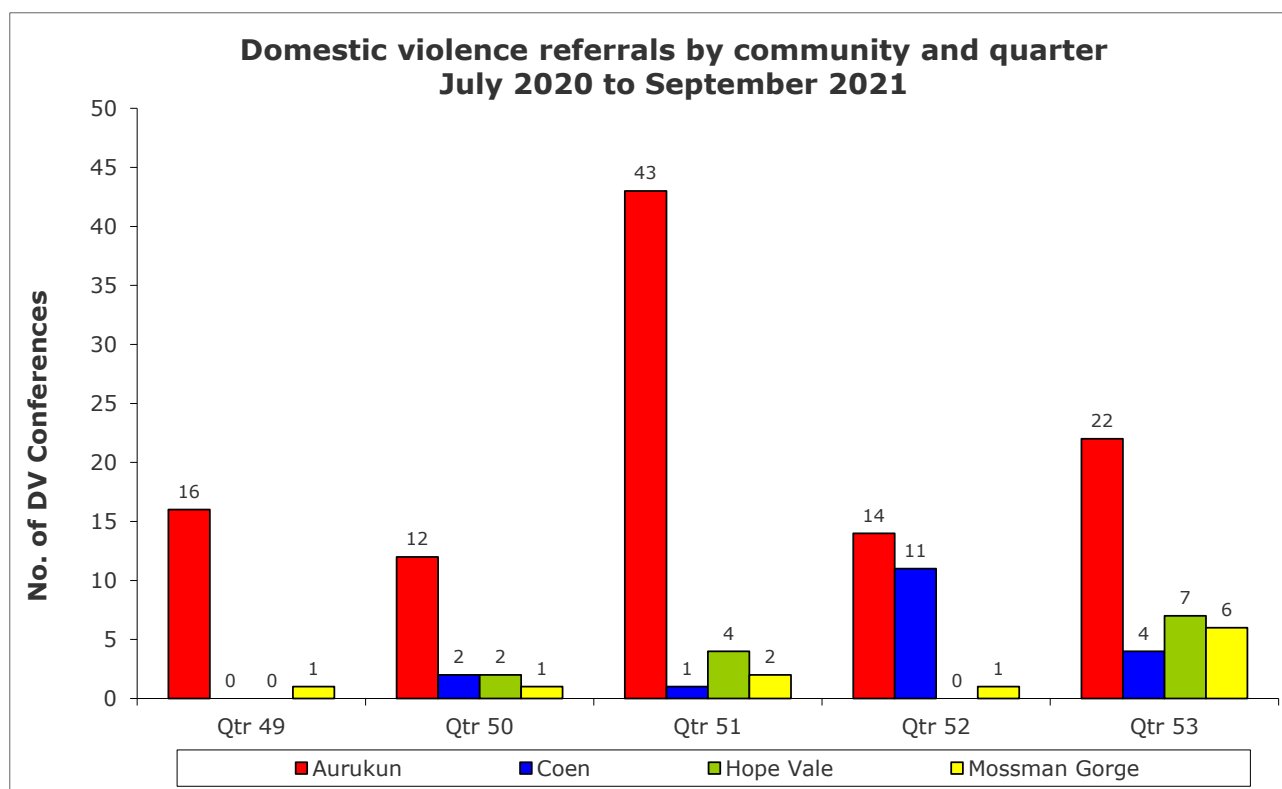
A total of 157 referrals (to service providers from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements (FRAs) and Orders) relating to 138 clients were made in quarter 53, an increase from 136 referrals in quarter 52. Since 2008 the Commission has referred 1,302 clients (681 female and 621 male) to service providers for assistance under a 'Family Responsibilities' Agreement or Order. Referrals in the communities for decisions by agreement and order during the quarter were as follows: Aurukun increased by 19, Coen decreased by 2, Doomadgee increased by 14, Hope Vale decreased by 9 and Mossman Gorge decreased by 1.



**Graph 7:** Referrals by community and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

### Referrals for Domestic Violence related matters

As a subset of the total number of referrals from FRAs and orders in the quarter, 39 referrals were made in relation to domestic violence conferences, an increase of 13 from quarter 52. The Local Commissioners continue to raise concerns regarding the availability of appropriate perpetrator intervention programs suitable for client referrals so community members can be supported to address these behaviours. The broader social impacts of domestic and family violence is set out in Table 2 with analysis on page 8, illustrating the nexus between Court convictions and domestic violence orders/breaches with education and child safety issues.



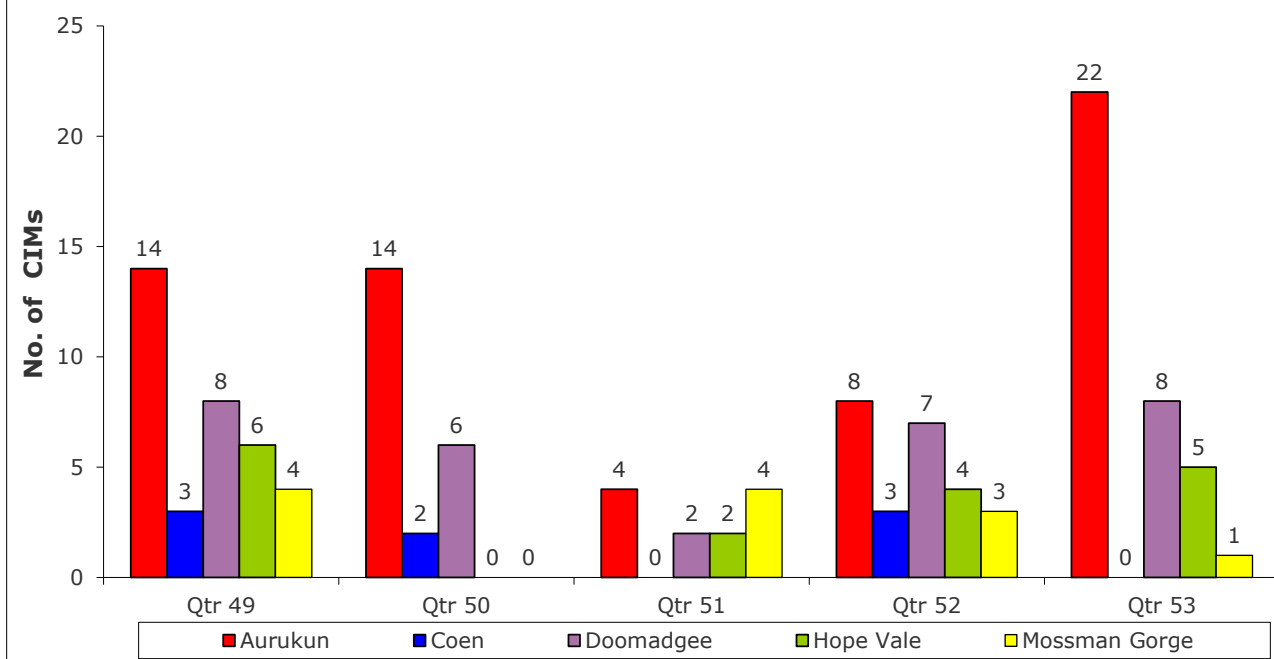
**Graph 8:** Domestic violence referrals by community and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

### Conditional Income Management from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders

Local Commissioners continue to use Conditional Income Management (CIM) as a decision of last resort. A total of 36 new CIMs relating to 36 clients were made in quarter 53, an increase of 11 CIMs from quarter 52, with 86 percent at 60 percent conditional income management and 89 percent for a 6-month duration. Since the commencement of the Commission CIMs inclusive of original agreements and orders, extensions and amendments have been made relating to 982 clients (565 female and 417 male). Increases in quarter 53 were seen in Aurukun, Doomadgee and Hope Vale of 14, 1 and 1 CIMs respectively, whilst Coen and Mossman Gorge decreased by 3 and 2 CIMs respectively for the quarter.

As at 30 September 2021 there were 66 clients subject to a current CIM, with 74 percent at 60 percent conditional income management and 74 percent for a 6-month duration. 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 amending or ending a CIM when requested by the client.

### Conditional income management by community and quarter July 2020 to September 2021



**Graph 9:** Conditional income management by community and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

### Conditional Income Management for Domestic Violence related matters

As a subset of the total number of CIMs in the quarter, 11 were made in relation to domestic violence conferences in quarter 53.

**Table 11:** Domestic violence conditional income management by community and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021

Number of Domestic Violence CIMs	Qtr 49	Qtr 50	Qtr 51	Qtr 52	Qtr 53
Aurukun	1	1	1	0	7
Coen	0	0	0	2	0
Hope Vale	0	0	0	0	3
Mossman Gorge	1	0	2	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>

### 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 53, no voluntary agreements were entered into for clients to attend community support services under a case plan. Although the number of clients who have engaged with the FRC on a voluntary basis remains 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 in more detail at *Interactions during the quarter*.

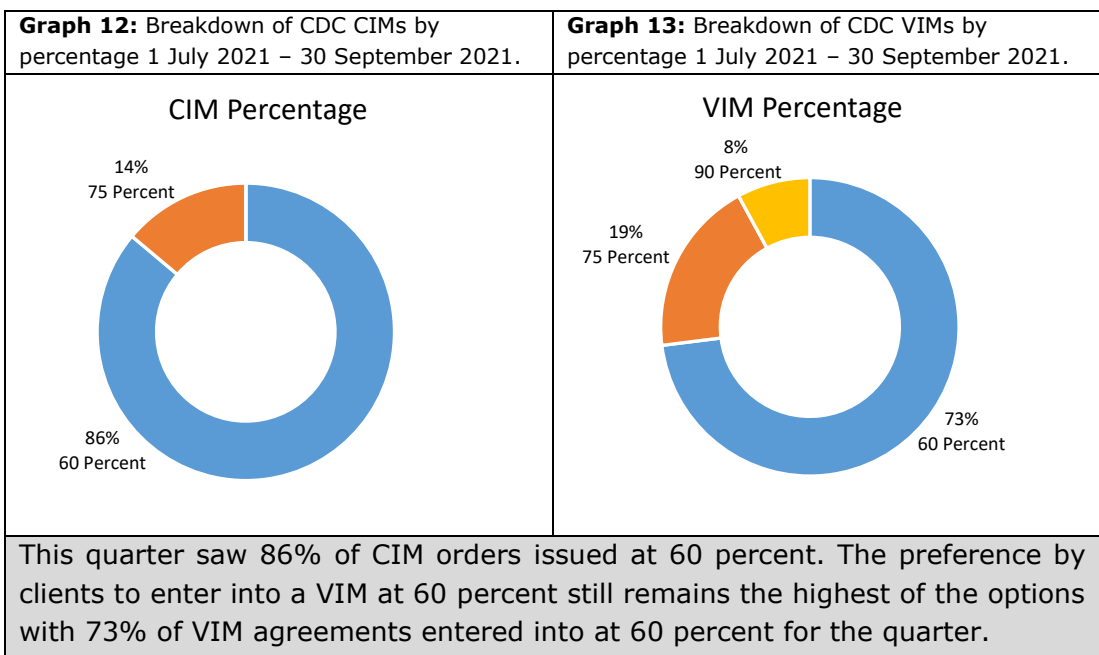
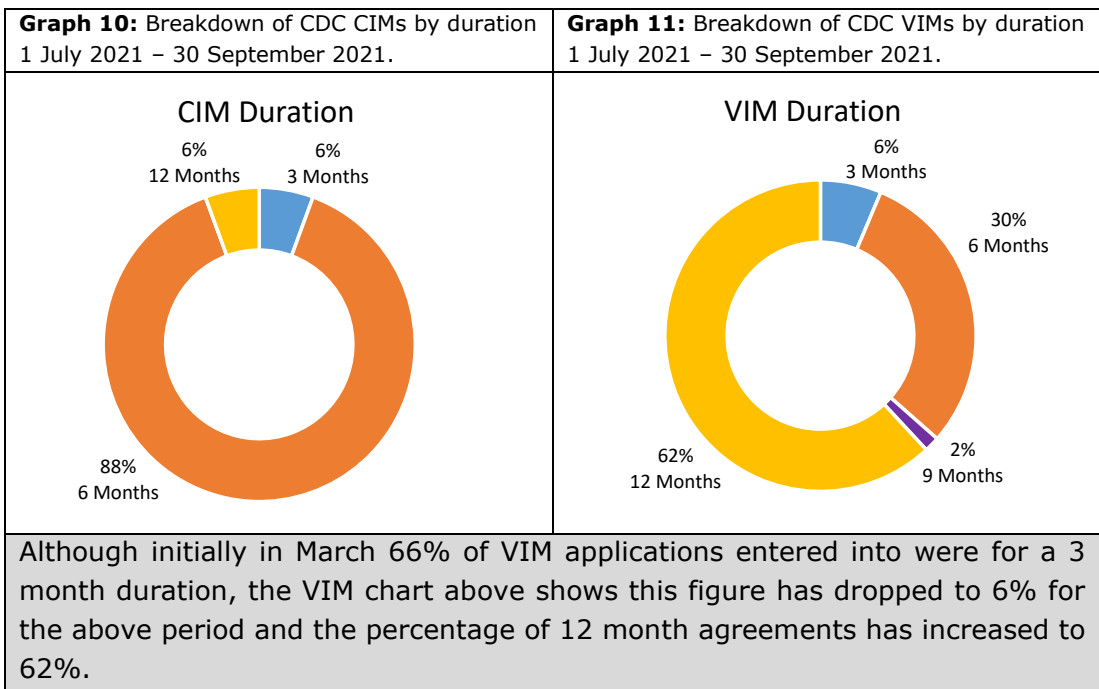
### Voluntary Income Management

During this reporting period the Commission processed 63 Voluntary Income Management (VIM) agreements with 73 percent at 60 percent voluntary income management and 62 percent for a 12-month duration. Since the commencement of the Commission in 2008, 273 clients (172 female and 101 male) have had an active VIM agreement. As at 30 September 2021 there were 124 clients on a current VIM agreement, with 77 percent at 60 percent voluntary income management and 60 percent

for a 12-month duration. 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.

**Status of CDC in FRC Communities for quarter 53**

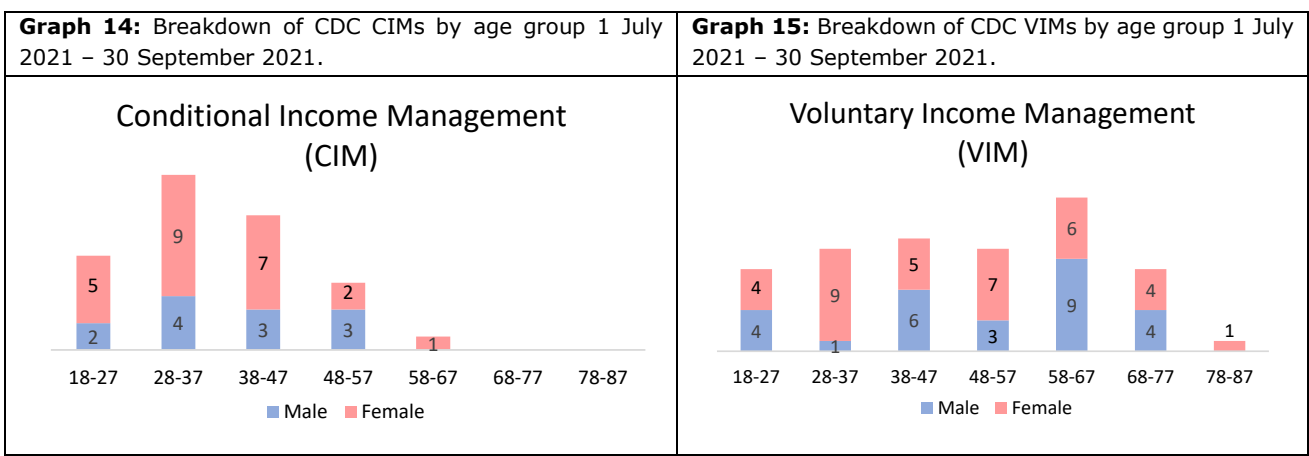
Ninety-nine Cashless Debit Cards (36 for CIM and 63 for VIM) were processed for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021, including orders and agreements that were still awaiting Centrelink action as at 30 September.



It is interesting to note that the majority of community members conditionally income managed by the FRC (community members notified to the FRC) were in the 28 to 37 year age group, whilst the majority of community members voluntarily participating in voluntary income management were in



the 58 to 67 year age group. Reasons given by voluntary income management participants for applying for the CDC were primarily to support themselves, to pay bills, to buy food and to save for a specific purchase. Thirty-three percent reported on their applications that they liked the CDC.

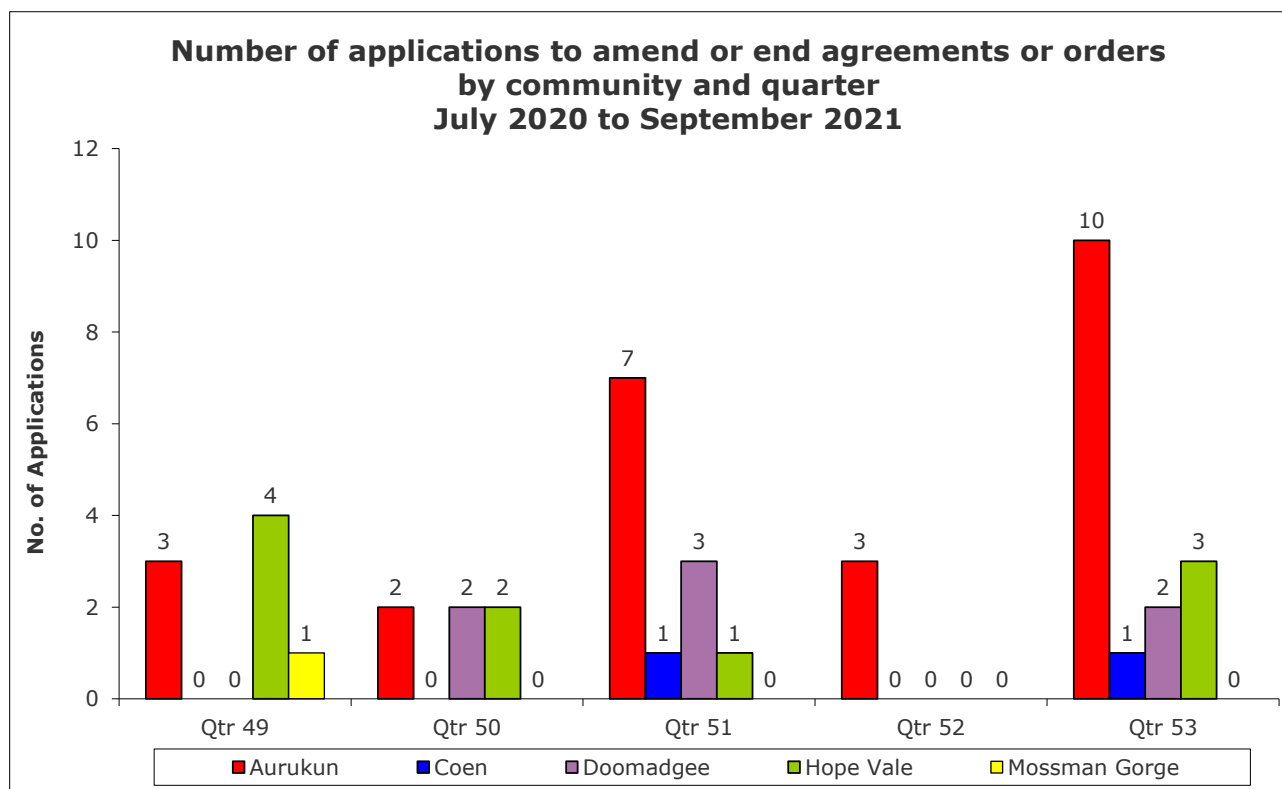


**Case Management**

As at 30 September 2021, 240 clients were being case-managed through a current non-voluntary case plan, a decrease of 48 from quarter 52. Decreases were seen in Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee and Hope Vale of 25, 1, 20 and 3 respectively, whilst Mossman Gorge increased by 1.

**Applications to Amend or End Agreements or Orders inclusive of Voluntary Agreements**

Sixteen applications relating to 14 clients (7 females and 7 males) to Amend or End an Agreement, Order or Voluntary Agreement were received in quarter 53, an increase of 13 applications from the previous quarter. It should be noted that a client may apply to amend or end their Family Responsibilities Agreement, Family Responsibilities Order or Voluntary Agreement on multiple occasions throughout a quarter.



**Graph 16:** Applications to amend or end agreements or orders by community and quarter 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

### **Application outcomes**

To provide further clarity regarding the types of decisions made by Commissioners, application hearing decisions for amendments to Family Responsibilities Agreements or Orders and decisions on amendments to voluntary agreements for voluntary income management are reported separately from conference decisions. In past reports decisions delivered upon the hearing of amend/end applications were counted in the overall conference count. It should be noted that a hearing for an amend/end application may not take place in the same quarter as the application was received, especially where an application was received towards the end of a quarter with the resulting hearing scheduled for the following quarter.

A total of 6 application hearings were conducted relating to amend/end applications for a Family Responsibilities Order in quarter 53:

- 2 Applications were accepted and conditional income management orders ended
- 1 Application was accepted and case plan and conditional income management order ended and
- 3 Applications were refused.

A total of eight amend/end applications for a voluntary agreement were decided:

- 5 Applications were accepted and voluntary income management agreements ended
- 2 Applications were accepted and voluntary income management agreements amended reducing from 90% to 60% for the remaining period of the voluntary agreement
- 1 Application was accepted and the voluntary income management agreement amended reducing the duration from 12 months to 6 months

The Commission continues to encourage clients to participate in the Amend or End process. Commissioners consider that the participation of clients in the amend/end process is indicative of client confidence to question decisions and the reasons behind decisions, both for decisions delivered by the Commission and decisions delivered by external agencies and bodies.

## FRC client population by gender and age

**Table 12:** FRC client population by gender and age 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021.

Information for the quarter	Female Count	Male Count		Female Average age	Male Average age
Clients for whom a notice was received <sup>9</sup>	346	222		38	38
Clients who conferenced <sup>10</sup>	196	117		36	39
Clients who had an application hearing for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders <sup>11</sup>	1	4		31	40
Clients referred through Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders <sup>12</sup>	82	56		35	40
Clients placed on CIM <sup>13</sup>	24	12		36	37
Clients referred through a Voluntary Agreement for a case plan <sup>14</sup>	0	0		0	0
Clients who chose to participate in VIM <sup>15</sup>	36	27		47	51
Clients who submitted an amend/end application <sup>16</sup>	7	7		36	46

<sup>9</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>10</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>11</sup> Average age of an application hearing client for the quarter is calculated at the date of the first application hearing held for the client during the quarter.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</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>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</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.

<sup>16</sup> Average age of a client who submitted an amend/end application for the quarter is calculated at the received date of the application for the client during the quarter.

### **Estimated resident populations:**

**Aurukun:** The community of Aurukun had an estimated resident adult population of 923 people as at 30 June 2020<sup>17,18</sup>.

**Coen:** The township of Coen had an estimated resident adult population of 263 people as at 30 June 2020<sup>17,19</sup>.

**Doomadgee:** The community of Doomadgee had an estimated resident adult population of 850 people as at 30 June 2020<sup>17,18</sup>.

**Hope Vale:** The estimated resident adult population of Hope Vale was 761 people as at 30 June 2020<sup>17,18</sup>.

**Mossman Gorge:** The Mossman Gorge community had an estimated resident population of 87 people as at 30 June 2020<sup>17,20</sup>.

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<sup>17</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>18</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>19</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>20</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

### Gambling harm minimisation

On 22 February 2021 the FRC made a submission to the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Fair Trading of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General as part of the consultation process for the Gambling Harm Minimisation Plan for Queensland 2021-2025. Following this submission on 20 August 2021 the Commission received correspondence from the Office thanking the Commission for the feedback in relation to gambling activities in the five Welfare Reform communities, noting that our *"personal experiences and views have been important in helping to shape the final version of the plan"*.

The Gambling Harm Minimisation Plan for Queensland 2021-2025 shows consistencies between the FRC's submission and elements of the high-level plan such as:

- Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons and communities are an at-risk group, specifically *"There is a need for a multi-faceted response to address harm from regulated and unregulated gambling in Aboriginal communities, which includes harm reduction, education and treatment in culturally appropriate ways that uphold the principles of self-determination"*.
- As a strategic risk it is recognised that there is *"potential for increased harmful gambling behaviours due to the impacts of COVID-19"*.
- In order to achieve its vision of working together to prevent and minimise gambling harm to individuals, families and Queensland communities, the Plan seeks to deliver this through four strategic pillars:
  - Leadership and culture – by *"creating a strong mandate, identifying and encouraging leadership and grass roots level engagement"* and developing *"information, tools and services tailored for general, at-risk and high-risk populations"*.
  - Technology and environment – by *"transitioning to safe cashless environments"* (note: our submission addressed the proactive use of income management and its benefits).
  - Public Health Approach – by *"interventions addressing specific needs of 'at risk' communities"*.
  - Regulatory Framework – by *"taking a local and national approach to regulation"* (note: our submission addressed the need for the use of local by-laws to prohibit certain forms of gambling activities such as card games because the state regulatory framework does not adequately address this).

In terms of implementation, the Commission is advised the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee will be taking a lead role in implementing the Plan and will develop annual work plans for each of the four years. These plans will identify priority activities and measurements. In the reply from the Deputy Director-General to the FRC's submission, it is stated, *"there will be further opportunities, via working group participation or targeted consultation processes for you or representatives from your organisation to participate in developing specific actions and progressing relevant key deliverables and actions"*.

Although the Commission was only one of a number of stakeholders to make a submission – and further noting that aspects of the Plan are fairly generic and possibly could have also been issues raised by other stakeholders in their submissions, it is nonetheless pleasing to see consistencies between the Commission's position and the Attorney-General's department. The Commission is committed to look for opportunities to link the work of the FRC with the objectives of the Gambling Harm Minimisation Plan. The Commission has an active and important role to play in the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, but unfortunately, no direct trigger

for problem or illegal gambling can bring an individual before the Commission. Commissioners can, nevertheless, counsel a client whilst in conference for other Agency Notices should gambling be identified as a significant issue affecting their (and their family's) wellbeing. The FRC would welcome the opportunity to discuss with the Queensland Government the development of a statutory trigger to enable the FRC to better support community members who are exhibiting anti-social behaviours caused by problematic gambling.

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

The *Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Act 2021* received assent and commenced on 9 September 2021. The Act further extends measures in the *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020*, including the FRC Regulation, to 30 April 2022 or an earlier date to be prescribed by regulation.

The *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020* commenced on 2 October 2020 and modified the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* to enable the FRC to be constituted by the Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner and one Local Commissioner for conferences, and allow the Family Responsibilities Board to conduct all meetings digitally. Fifty-nine conferences were conducted under the new FRC COVID-19 Regulation during the 2020-21 financial year, with a further 55 conferences and 1 application hearing conducted under the regulation this quarter. The Commission considers this legislation vital to its continuing operations in the current COVID-19 environment.

The Commission currently has only two Local Commissioners appointed to Mossman Gorge, and this regulation has assisted the Commission to continue holding conferences when only one Local Commissioner has been available.

The Commission has recommended to the FR Board that new Local Commissioners be appointed to the FRC as the capacity for Local Commissioners to sit in conference has been compromised in all communities due to work commitments, health issues and on occasions conflicts of interest. The Commission experiences difficulties on frequent occasions to secure the attendance of three Local Commissioners to meet the requirements of holding s50A conferences, and to ensure there is sufficient diversity amongst the pool of Local Commissioners currently appointed in regard to gender, age, clan affiliation and expertise.

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

The Commission's strategic partners in Welfare Reform, the Queensland Government, Australian Government and Cape York Institute, continue their discussions on the future of Welfare Reform and the Commission. Currently there is no agreement between the parties beyond 30 June 2021, however, there is no current stated intention to cease operations of the Commission. The Australian Government has released advice stating its support for an extension of the Commission for a period of three years to 30 June 2024, whilst the Queensland Government has confirmed an extension of twelve months to 30 June 2022. It is expected that the Memorandum of Understanding will be finalised once the terms of reference and consultant to be engaged to undertake the FRC review (commissioned by DSDSATSIP) have been settled. It is now not expected that the FRC review will be finalised prior to the end of the 2021 calendar year.

### 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:

- Mr Robert (Bob) Gee APM                      Director-General, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Chair)
- Mr Ray Griggs AO, CSC                      Secretary of the Department of Social Services
- 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 2021 to 30 September 2021 totalled \$1,061,221. This income consisted of:
  - \$604,500 Queensland Government funding
  - \$450,000 Australian Government funding
  - \$5,678 interest received
  - \$1,043 sundry income

The balance of available funds in the bank as at 30 September 2021 is \$3,788,164.

### Expenditure:

- Expenditure for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021 was \$966,770.

**Table 13:** Expenditure in quarter 53.

1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021	Expenditure Qtr 53	1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021	Expenditure Qtr 53
Employee salaries – FRC staff	\$565,783	Internet & IT	\$58,039
Employee salaries – Local Commissioners	\$74,750	Motor vehicle	\$13,361
Employee on costs – FRC staff	\$98,245	Property	\$57,443
Employee on costs – Local Commissioners	\$11,169	Travel	\$48,857
Other employment costs	\$5,657	General operating	\$18,147
Communications	\$3,406	Other expenses	\$11,913
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$966,770</b>

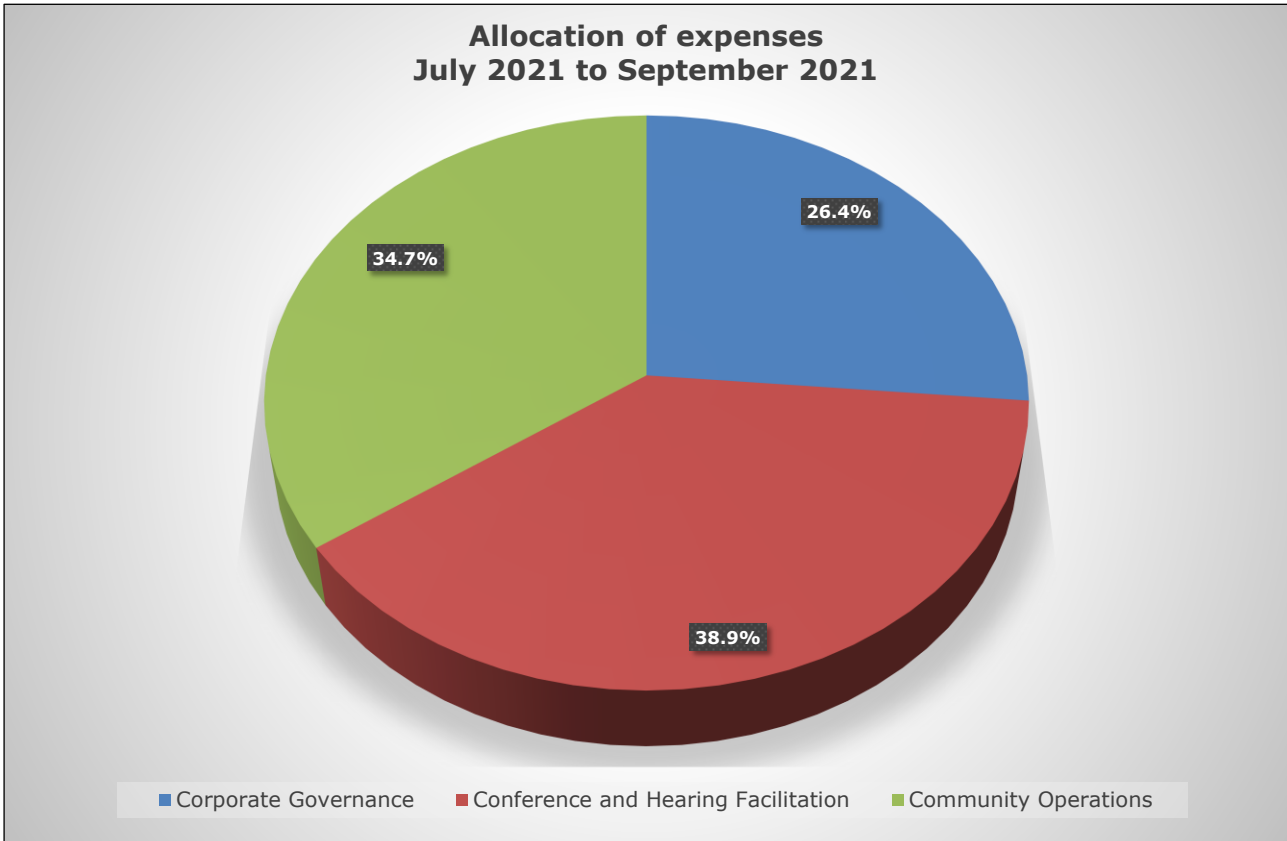
The core functions of the FRC can be summarised into three broad categories:

- 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 and hearings, prepare and monitor case plans for clients for attendance at community support services and prepare and monitor income management orders.
- Conference and Hearing Facilitation:** including to facilitate the holding of conferences and hearings in the five communities, provide support to the Local Commissioners and Local Registry Coordinators to hold conferences and hearings, 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 and hearing 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 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.

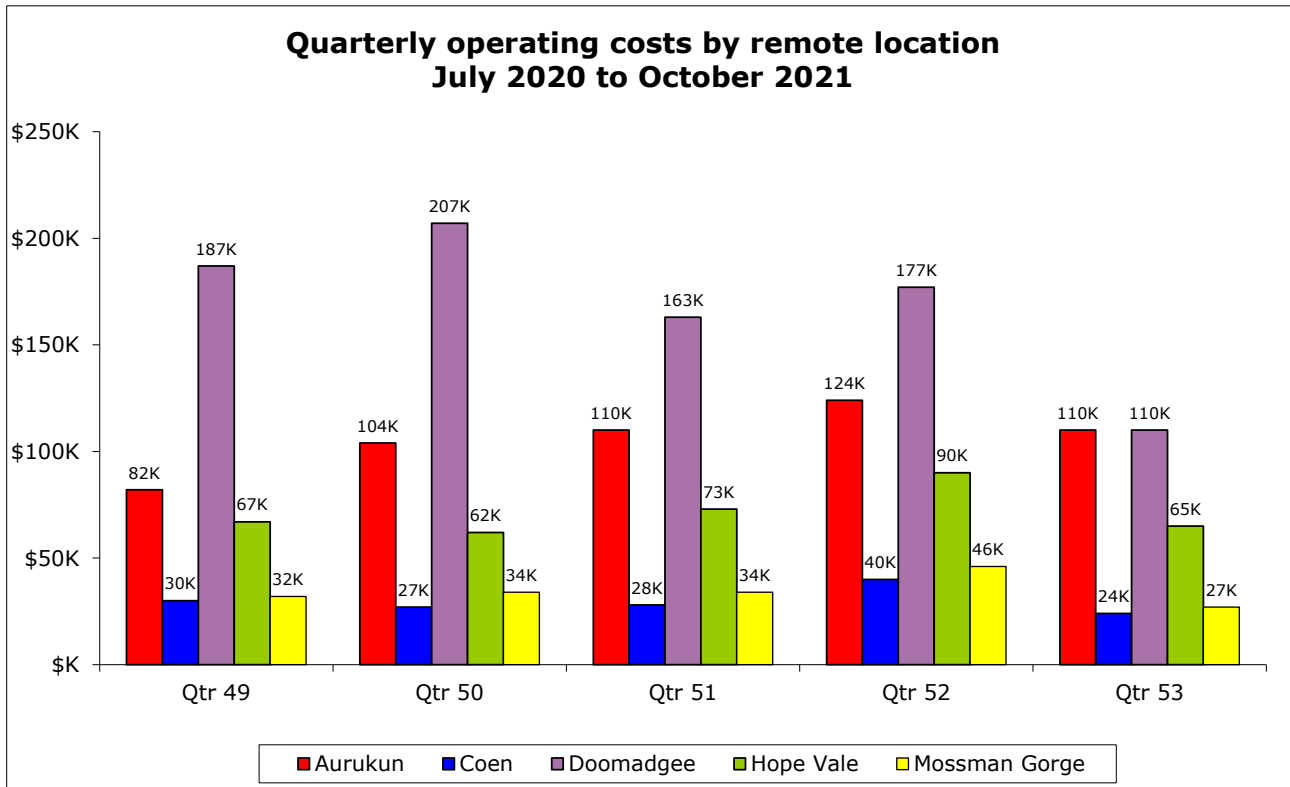


The allocation of the FRC's costs in quarter 53 based on the above core functions is:



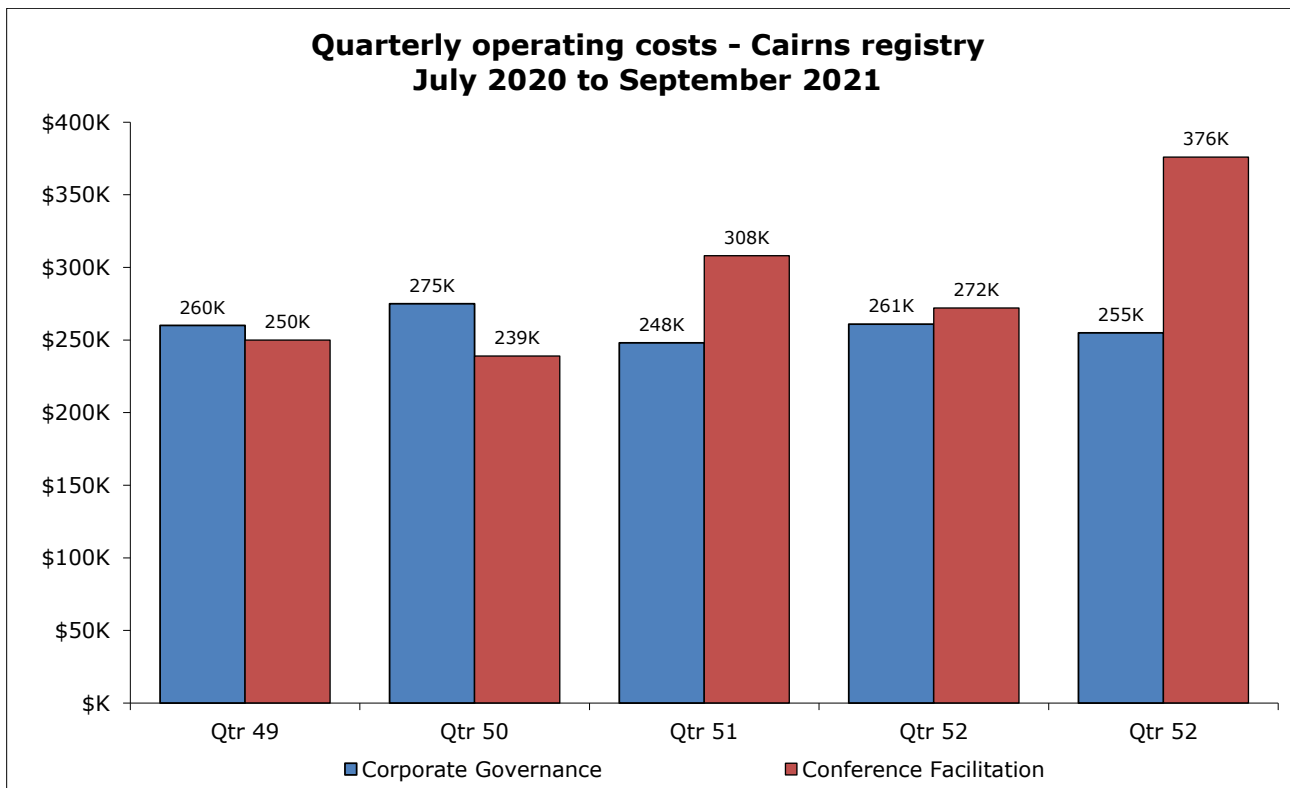
**Graph 17:** Allocation of expenses 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021.

Regional operational expenditure by location and quarter.



**Graph 18:** Operating costs by remote location 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

Cairns expenditure for quarter 53 compared to the previous four quarters.



**Graph 19:** Quarterly operating costs Cairns 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2021.

**APPENDIX A**



**SITTINGS CALENDAR 2020  
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION  
1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021**



Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
5 July						Cooktown Circuit
12 July		13 13	14		Public Holiday	16 Cairns Show Day Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
19 July	Public Holiday	20 20	21			19 Mossman Show Day
26 July		27 27	28	29 29		Estimates: Wednesday 28/07/2021 – Friday 30/07/2021
2 August		3	4 Public Holiday			4 Aurukun Day Cooktown Circuit
9 August		10 10	11	12		Estimates: Tuesday 10/08/2021 – Friday 13/08/2021 12-15 Mount Isa Mines Rodeo Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
16 August		17 17	18			
23 August		24 24	25 25	26 26	Public Holiday	27 Doomadgee Day
30 August			1	2		Cooktown – Circuit
6 September		7 7	8	9 9		Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
13 September		14 14	15			
20 September						
27 September						
4 October	Public Holiday		6	7		4 Queen's Birthday Cooktown – Circuit
11 October		12 12	13 13			Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
18 October		19 19	20	21		
25 October		26	27	28		

Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
1 November						Cooktown – Circuit
8 November		9 9	10			Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
15 November		16 16	17			
22 November		23	24	25		
29 November		30 30 30	1 1	2		Cooktown – Circuit CYAAA, Aurukun and Doomadgee schools finish 2/12/2021
6 December		7		9		Mossman schools finish 10/12/2021 Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
13 December						
20 December						
27 December	Public Holiday	Public Holiday				27 Christmas Day and 28 Boxing Day Public Holidays, 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
Acting Client Manager	Ms Sandi Rye	4081 8410	0438 195 342	4041 0974
Aurukun Local Registry Coordinator	Mr Bryce Coxall	4060 6185	0428 985 106	4041 0974
Acting Coen Local Registry Coordinator	Mr Simeon Miglioranza		0417 798 392	4041 0974
Doomadgee Local Registry Coordinator	Mr Brenden Joinbee	4745 8111	0418 666 204	4041 0974
Hope Vale Local Registry Coordinator	Ms Josephine Pinder	4060 9153	0408 482 026	4041 0974
Acting Mossman Gorge Local Registry Coordinator	Mr Simeon Miglioranza		0417 798 392	4041 0974