

Family Responsibilities Commission

Report to the Family Responsibilities Board

Quarterly Report

No. 58

October 2022 to December 2022



Report prepared by the Family Responsibilities Commission under the leadership of Commissioner Tammy Williams and presented to the Family Responsibilities Board pursuant to section 144 of the Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008.

The Family Responsibilities Commission publishes annual and quarterly reports on the Commission's website in line with its policy and commitment to open data available to the public. For more details see: www.frcq.org.au

Executive Summary

The Families Responsibilities Commission (FRC) is a key mechanism to support welfare reform community members and their families to restore socially responsible standards of behaviour and establish local authority.

The *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (FRC Act) provides for the establishment of the Family Responsibilities Board (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 Commissioner must as soon as practical after each quarter, give the FR Board a written report about the Commission's operations during the period.¹ This report sets out the Commission's key operational matters for the period October to December 2022.

Quantified in the table below are the activities undertaken by the Commission during quarter 58 with comparisons shown to the previous quarter.

Table 1: Activity from 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022

Activity for the quarter	Qtr 57	Qtr 58
Total number of notices received by the Commission ²	2,132	2,166
Number of notices within jurisdiction	1,070	1,221
Number of notices not within jurisdiction	1,062	945
Number of clients notified to the Commission from notices within jurisdiction	543	672
Conferences		
Conferences conducted	296	313
Number of clients served to attend conference	243	266
Attendance percentage for conferences	64%	66%
Non-attendance percentage with acceptable (reasonable) excuse for conferences	32%	31%
Conference outcomes		
Agreements to attend community support services	72	86
Orders made to attend community support services	23	45
Referrals to service providers from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ³	116	154
Agreements for Conditional Income Management (CIM)	0	0
Orders made for CIM	13	21

¹ Section 144 *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*

² 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 from school for all or part of any three school days during a school term, this counts as three individual School Attendance notices against each person listed on the notice). Counting rules also stipulate that where multiple charges are received on a court notice each charge is counted as an individual notice.

³ An agreement and a decision can have multiple case plans which in turn can have multiple referrals where a service provider has multiple programs.

Domestic Violence statistical information as a subset from the total number of conferences conducted, referrals made and CIMs put in place	Qtr 57	Qtr 58
Conferences for domestic violence matters	71	78
Referrals from domestic violence conferences	30	53
CIM's from domestic violence conferences	5	0
Amend/end decisions for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders		
Number of amend/end decisions for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders	1	1
Accepted	100%	100%
Refused	0%	0%
Voluntary Agreements		
Voluntary agreements for a voluntary case plan (VCP)	10	8
Voluntary referrals to service providers	10	8
Voluntary agreements for Voluntary Income Management (VIM)	30	35
Amend/end decisions for Voluntary Agreements		
Number of amend/end decisions for Voluntary Agreements	9	5
Accepted	100%	100%
Refused	0%	0%
Other activity		
Applications to Amend or End received	10	6
Information as at the last day of the quarter		
Number of clients case-managed through current non-voluntary case plan	212	227
Number of clients subject to a current CIM	33	36
Number of clients on a current VIM	69	81

Quarterly trends

Table 1 above has been amended to include the subset of domestic and family violence statistics previously included in the body of quarterly reports, and also in graphs 6 and 7 and tables 9 and 10. This amendment has been made in the interests of streamlining the quarterly reporting process and, we trust, for the benefit of our readers.

Statistics for quarter 58 show an increase of 129 clients notified to the Commission from within jurisdiction notices, and a subsequent increase in conferences conducted and conference outcomes from the previous quarter. Notably the largest increases from the previous quarter are a 95.7 percent increase in orders to attend support services and a 61.5 percent increase in orders made for CIM, both of which partially reflect poor school attendance reported for the period and DV matters carried over to the present quarter. In particular, 67 percent of the CIM orders were related to school attendance notices for clients conferenced during the period. Referrals to support services (which include referrals for DV matters) were up by 32.8 percent from the previous quarter. Voluntary agreements for VIM continued to increase from the previous two quarters, and the number of clients on a current VIM as at the last day of the quarter increased by 12 from quarter 57.

Annual Report 2021-22

As per section 143 of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008*, as soon as is practicable after each financial year, but not later than 31 October, the Commissioner must prepare and give the Minister a written report containing a review of the operation of the Commission during the financial year. On 25 October the Commission delivered to The Honourable Craig Crawford MP, Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, the Commission's Annual Report 2021-22, together with a Brief providing a summary of the operational performance highlights during the reporting period, some of which are reported below.

- As seen in previous years the vast majority (80 percent) of Commission decisions at conference throughout 2021-22 continued to be made by three Local Commissioners sitting alone to constitute the panel. Due to only two Local Commissioners being appointed to the community of Mossman Gorge during this reporting period, the Mossman Gorge Local Commissioners were unable to hold conferences constituted by three Local Commissioners (section 50A conferences), thus negatively impacting the overall percentage of Local Commissioners sitting alone.
- The FRC's implementation of additional assurance and oversight mechanisms throughout the 2021-22 financial year resulted in quality decision-making with improved client-focused outcomes and contributed to the result of no appeals against Commission decisions by community members.
- The Commission focused on developing Local Commissioner skills to support the holistic approach of encouraging client participation in the decision-making process. The Local Commissioners received training during the Local Commissioner Development Week to support client engagement through the motivational interviewing technique – a strategy focused on laying down a foundation of trust and connection to foster a safe environment for clients to feel heard and share their stories.
- The success of the holistic and collaborative approach to decision-making is reflected in the increased client engagement mirrored in conference attendance statistics for the period.
- Clients continued to assume personal responsibility demonstrating insight regarding their actions at the earliest opportunity with 66 percent of all decisions to attend support services made by agreement with the client.
- Activity for the 2021-22 year resulted in the second highest number of clients referred to attend support services (under either an FRA or order) in the Commission's 14-year history.
- The FRC has seen an increase of 71 percent in the number of referrals under a voluntary case plan from 2020-21. The increase is indicative of the broader acceptance by community members to undertake personal responsibility.
- The reporting period reflected a continued reduction in the number of clients placed on a CIM without a conditional case plan (CCP). The reduction demonstrates that CIM is delivered with a highly targeted approach linking in support services to support the client's needs.
- Following the Australian Government transitioning from the BasicsCard to the CDC, during the 2021-22 reporting period the FRC experienced continued growth in the number of community members willing to enter into a VIM agreement.
- As at 30 June 2022 there were 75 clients on a current VIM who were claiming Centrelink payments for 66 children of which 41 were of school age.
- During the 2021-22 reporting period there was an increase in the number of clients who self-referred (not subject to show cause) without a mandated requirement to attend conference.

An embargoed electronic copy of the annual report was provided to the FR Board Members and Secretariate for their internal briefing purposes.

Family Responsibilities Board

Members of the FRC Executive Management Team travelled to Brisbane to attend an FR Board meeting held on 13 October 2022. A community update report for Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge was provided for the period 1 July to 30 September 2022 including operational highlights, challenges and other significant community news. The Commission prepared and presented a budget report for the financial year 2022-23, and Quarterly Report No 55 for the period January to March 2022 was presented and received the FR Board's endorsement.

Quarterly Report No 56 for the period April to June 2022 was presented to the FR Board in an out of session paper in November 2022.

Annual school awards

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 participate in 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 maintain a focus on the importance of education for the future of the community.

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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
DSDSATSIP	Department of Seniors, Disability Services and 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 31 December 2022.

1. Activities and Trends

Client issues and 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 welfare dependency and multi-generational poverty have resulted in communities with high numbers of individuals and families with complex needs.

Many clients experience a complexity of issues.

Data collected by the FRC provides insight into the complexity of the issues faced by many clients. Table 2 sets out the different types of agency notices received by individual clients during the reporting period. During quarter 58, 581 clients (86 percent) were notified to the Commission with only one type of trigger notice. The remaining 91 clients (14 percent) received more than one type of trigger notice.

Table 2: Number of clients by number of different types of agency notices received 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022

Type of Different Types of Agency Notices Received	Number of clients
1	581
2	85
3	6
Total	672

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

- 62 percent received a school attendance (EQ) notice
- 10 percent received a Magistrate Court (MAG) notice
- 7 percent received a domestic violence order (DVO) notice and
- 6 percent received a child safety and welfare (CS) notice.

The remaining sole trigger notices received for Commission clients during the quarter were 2 clients with a District court notice (DIS), 5 clients with a domestic violence breach (DVB) notice, 1 client with a housing tenancy breach notice and 1 client with a school enrolment notice (SEN).

Table 3 shows the combination of trigger notices received for the 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 3: Number of clients with a combination of different types of 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 October 2022 to 31 December 2022⁴

Type of Agency Notice/s	Number of clients
CS,DVB	1
CS,DVO	3
CS,EQ	32
CS,MAG	1
DVB,DVO	2
DVB,DVO,MAG	4
DVB,EQ	3
DVB,EQ,MAG	1
DVB,MAG	12
DVO,EQ	5
DVO,EQ,MAG	1
DVO,MAG	11
EQ,HT	1
EQ,MAG	14
Total	91

Client interactions with the Commission fall within a continuum of decisions available.

The following data (tables 4 to 8) provides an overview of interactions that have taken place with clients during this reporting period, 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.

The role of the FRC is to work with the most vulnerable, disadvantaged group who engage in anti-social behaviours. Of this extremely vulnerable cohort who engage in anti-social behaviours there are a range of clients who fall within a spectrum of willingness to take personal accountability for their actions and accept support to address behaviours. The vast majority are prepared to accept support and demonstrate a degree of insight into their behaviours, however, there is a small cohort of clients who are resistant to change.

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. The Commission is still seeing a number of interactions by clients on a less intrusive and more proactive basis, i.e. where engagement is on a voluntary basis (Table 4), or where acceptance of the Commission’s decision for a referral to a support service or income management is by agreement with the client (Table 5). 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 affect those actions have on others.

⁴ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 5.

Table 4: Number of voluntary agreements (where a client has agreed to a voluntary case plan or voluntary income management) entered into from 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022⁵

Voluntary Agreements			
	VCP	VIM	Total
Total	8	35	43

Table 5: Number of decisions by agreement (where a client has agreed to a case plan or conditional income management) entered into from 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022⁵

Decisions by Agreement			
Community	CP	CIM	Total
AU	62	0	62
CO	3	0	3
DM	7	0	7
HV	7	0	7
MG	7	0	7
Total	86	0	86

Table 6: 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 October 2022 to 31 December 2022⁵

Decision by Order										
Community	CP	CP & CIM Concurrently	CCP, CIM, Rescheduled	CIM	CIM, Rescheduled	No Further Action	No Further Action, Rescheduled	Recommend Support Service	Reprimand	Total
AU	5	1	0	4	0	7	0	1	17	35
CO	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
DM	22	7	1	4	1	20	1	8	7	71
HV	5	0	0	2	0	18	0	3	0	28
MG	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	6
Total	35	9	1	10	1	45	1	15	26	143

Table 7: Number of decisions on applications from a Decision by order and a Decision by agreement (where a client seeks to alter or end their original FRC decision because their circumstances or behaviours have changed) from 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022⁵

Decisions on Order and Agreement Amend/End Applications						
Community	CCP End	CCP End & CIM End	CIM Amend	CIM End	No Further Action	Total
Total	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table 8: 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 October 2022 to 31 December 2022⁵

Decisions of Voluntary Amend/End Applications				
Community	VIM Amend	VIM End	VIM No Further Action	Total
Total	1	4	0	5

During quarter 58 the number of interactions highlighted in tables 4 to 8 related to a total of 250 clients (162 female and 88 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.

⁵ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 5.

⁶ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 5.

- 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.

The nuanced decision-making of Commissioners at conference is reflective of each client's individual circumstances.

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. The Commissioners, when making decisions, consider a variety of options. These may include not putting clients on case plans when they already have an appropriate referral in place, not making a referral because of the limited availability of appropriate support services to address the client's specific needs and the use of 'No Further Action' being made. The latter decision can be ordered in circumstances where the Commission is satisfied clients are already showing insight into their own behaviours and have taken personal responsibility to address the issue of concern before the matter proceeded to conference. 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 58 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 October 2022 to 31 December 2022 support our assertion:

- 44 percent of clients at some point during the quarter may have done one or more of the following: self-referred to the FRC for a VCP or a VIM; entered into a Family Responsibilities Agreement; successfully applied to end or amend their decision by order or agreement;
 - As a subset of the above, 18 percent of clients specifically entered into a voluntary agreement;
- 22 percent of clients were issued with a no further action on their matter/s, or they were recommended to attend a support service with no other action types; and
- 9 percent of clients were issued with a reprimand with or without a decision for no further action or recommendation to attend a support service.

There remains a small cohort of clients who come before the Commission who struggle to develop insight into their actions and are less inclined to change their behaviours. The nuanced decision-making of Commissioners for these clients may include (as an option of last resort) a decision to income manage the client. These orders are issued as a means of holding the clients to account (and to create some stability in their lives, particularly if they are responsible for children). The Commissioners have made the following decisions in conference for those recalcitrant clients who refuse to change their behaviour:

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

Notices

In quarter 58 the Commission received 2,166 agency notices⁷. Some individuals may have been the subject of more than one agency notice. Of that figure 1,221 notices (56 percent) relating to 672 clients were within the Commission's jurisdiction, and 945 notices (44 percent) were outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

Table 9: Notices in jurisdiction by type and community 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022

Type of Notice	AU	CO	DM ⁸	HV	MG	Total
Supreme Court notices	0	0	0	0	0	0
District Court notices	0	0	0	3	1	4
Magistrates Court notices	164	23	0	52	30	269
Domestic Violence Breach notices	24	1	0	11	5	41
Domestic Violence Order notices	50	4	0	25	1	80
School Attendance notices	133	33	365	156	44	731
School Enrolment notice	0	1	0	0	0	1
Child Safety and Welfare notices						
Child Concern Reports	8	0	70	8	1	87
Finalised Child Protection Investigations	1	0	5	0	0	6
Housing Tenancy notices	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	382	62	440	255	82	1221

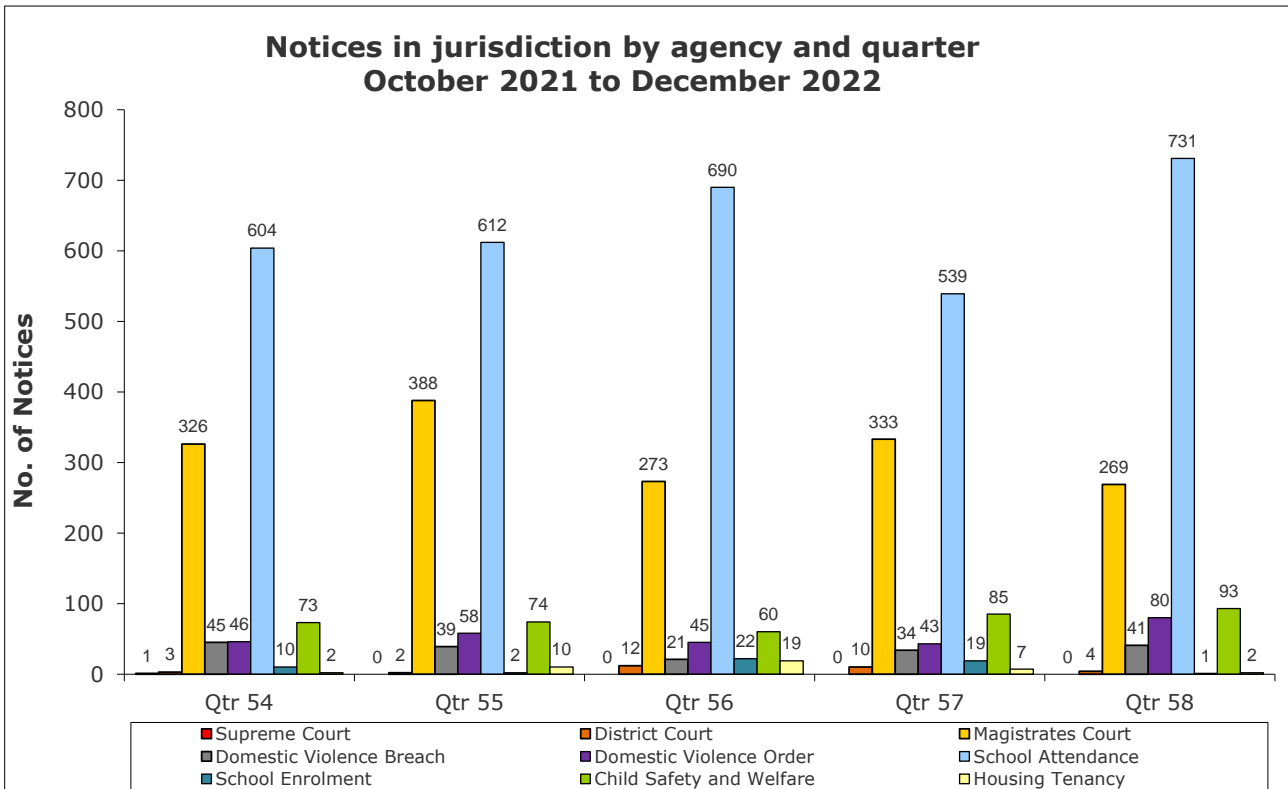
Further details of notices within jurisdiction for each community are set out below:

- Aurukun received 382 notices relating to 192 clients (108 female and 84 male)
- Coen received 62 notices relating to 36 clients (23 female and 13 male)
- Doomadgee received 440 notices relating to 245 clients (169 female and 76 male)
- Hope Vale received 255 notices, relating to 160 clients (90 female and 70 male)
- Mossman Gorge received 82 notices relating to 39 clients (22 female and 17 male).

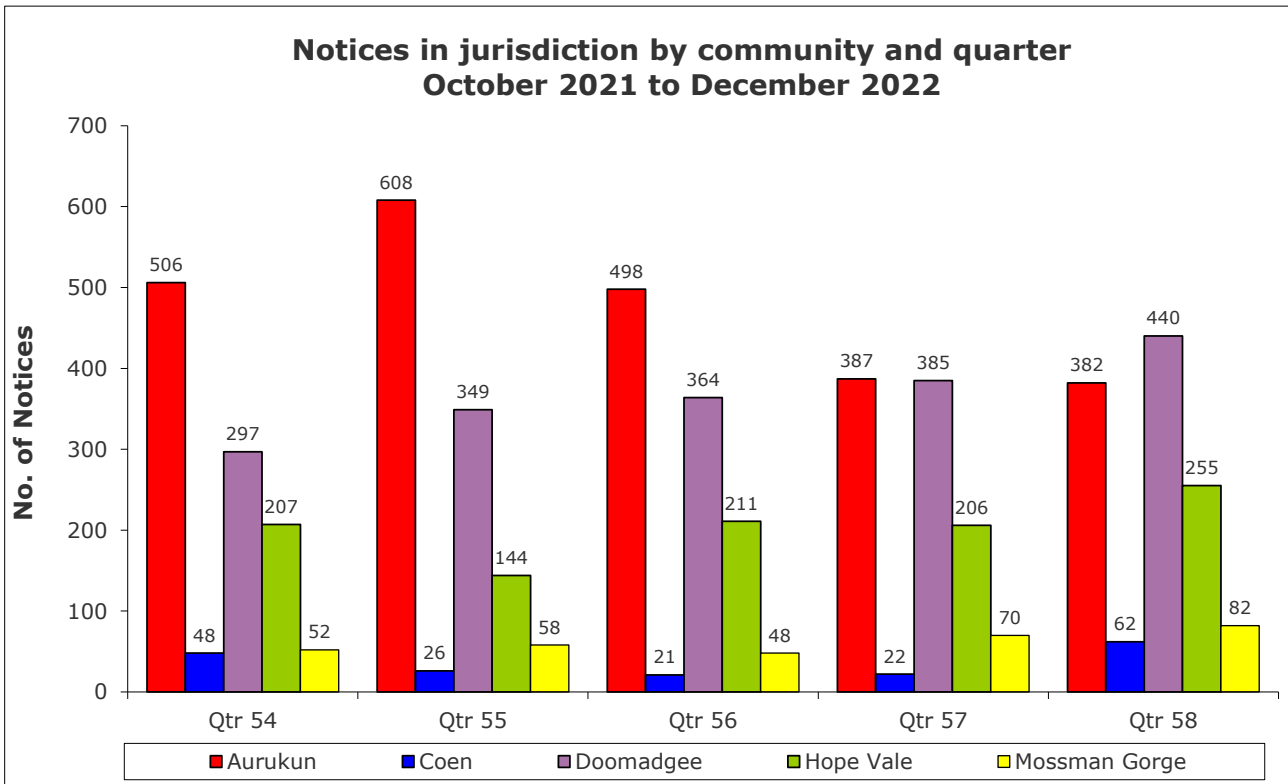
For quarter 58, 43 percent of clients received more than one notice. Frequently this illustrates multiple child school absences for the one family, or multiple Magistrates Court notices relating to one incident. This may also be suggestive of the complexity of behaviours experienced by a significant proportion of our clients. Conversely, it is important to note the majority of FRC clients (57 percent) have received only one notice during the reporting period. Thirty-one new clients were added to the Commission's database during the quarter.

⁷ Counting rules are that an agency notice is counted on the basis of number of 'people' named on the notice. For example 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 from school for all or part of any three school days during a school term, this counts as three individual School Attendance notices against each person listed on the notice). Counting rules also stipulate that where multiple charges are received on a court notice each charge is counted as an individual notice.

⁸ 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 1: Notices in jurisdiction by type and quarter 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022

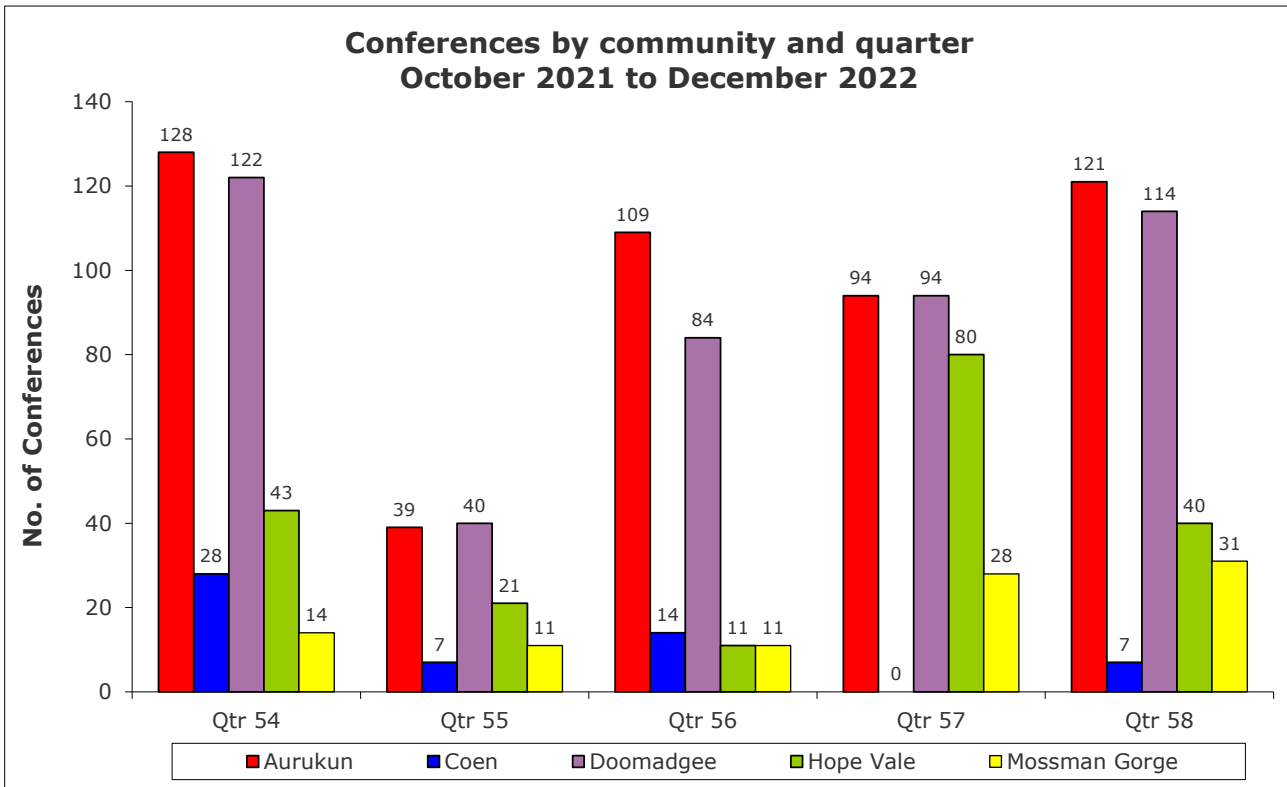


Graph 2: Notices in jurisdiction by community and quarter 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022

Conferences

In quarter 58 313 conferences⁹ were held across the five communities (relating to 266 clients served to attend conference). Attendance at conference increased from 64.2 percent in quarter 57 to 66.1 percent in quarter 58.

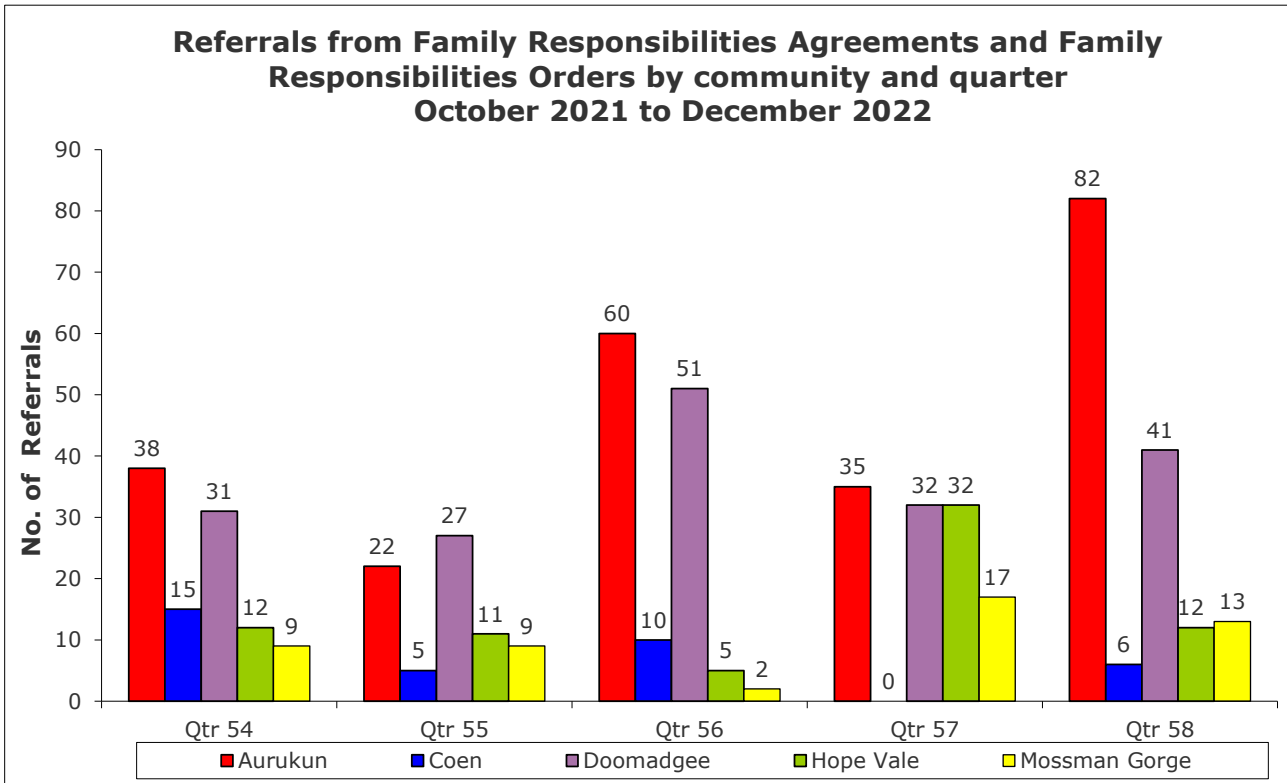
⁹ The number of conferences held relates to the number of conferences listed, which includes where a client was served with a Notice to Attend Conference and subsequently failed to attend.



Graph 3: Conferences by community and quarter 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022

Referrals from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders

A total of 154 referrals (to service providers from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements (FRAs) and Orders) relating to 131 clients were made in quarter 58. 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 domestic violence behaviours. The broader social impacts of domestic and family violence are set out in Table 3 with an analysis illustrating the nexus between Court convictions and domestic violence orders/breaches with school attendance issues and to a lesser degree child safety issues.

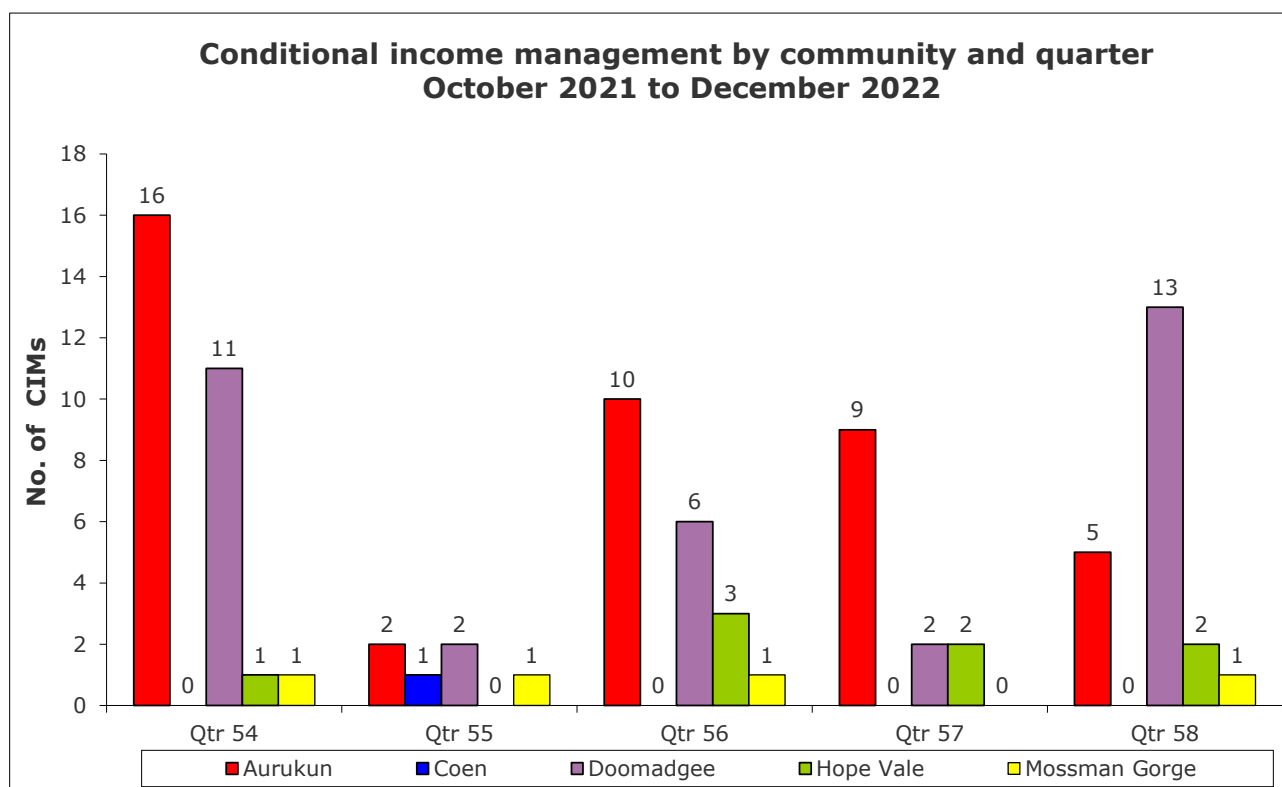


Graph 4: Referrals by community and quarter 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022

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 21 new CIMs (orders) relating to 21 clients were made in quarter 58. Sixty-two percent of CIMs quarantined 60 percent of welfare payments with all CIMs issued for a 6-month duration.

As at 31 December 2022 there were 36 clients subject to a current CIM who were responsible for 50 children in their care (37 of whom were school aged children). Sixty-one percent of the 36 clients were income managed at 60 percent whilst duration ranged from 94 percent for a 6-month duration and 6 percent for 9-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.



Graph 5: Conditional income management by community and quarter 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022

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 through a voluntary case plan (VCP) or be subject to voluntary income management (VIM). During quarter 58, 8 VCPs were entered into for 8 community support services under a case plan relating to 8 clients. Although the number of clients who have engaged with the FRC on a voluntary basis remain small, it is nonetheless consistent with a broader trend of clients – specifically those entering into Family Responsibility Agreements – who are exhibiting a heightened 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*.

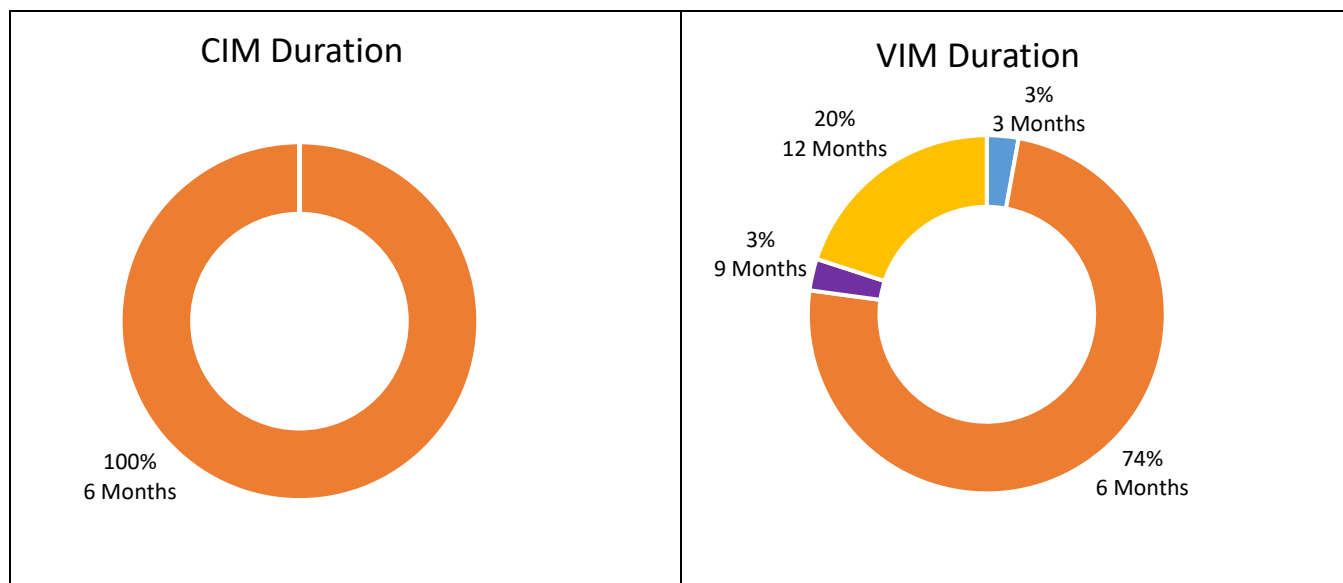
Voluntary Income Management

During this reporting period the Commission processed 35 Voluntary Income Management (VIM) agreements with 91 percent of clients electing to have 60 percent of their welfare payments voluntarily

income managed (see graph 9). Clients also showed a preference to be subjected to income management at 6 months (see graph 7). As at 31 December 2022 there were 81 clients on a current VIM agreement who had 103 children in their care (65 of whom were school aged children). The growth in the number of community members willing to enter into a VIM agreement continues to exceed levels reported in periods prior to the introduction of the CDC in March 2021 (see section below on the Status of the CDC).

Status of CDC in FRC Communities for quarter 58

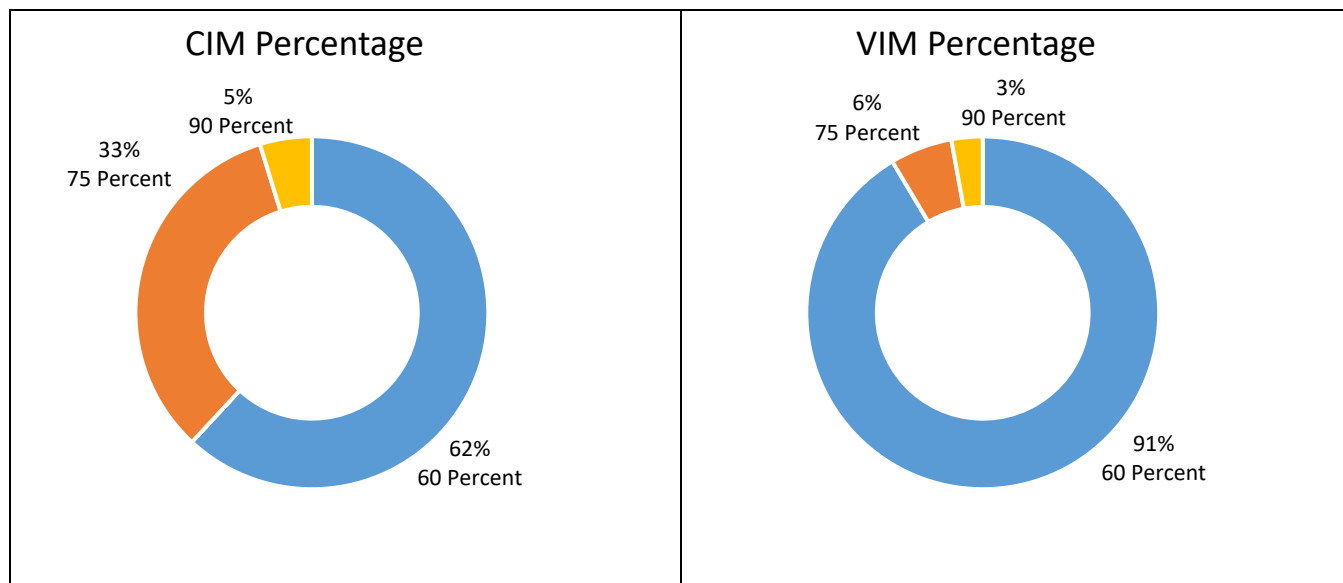
Fifty-six Cashless Debit Cards (21 for CIM and 35 for VIM) were processed for the period 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022, including orders and agreements that were still awaiting Centrelink action as at 31 December.



Graph 6: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by duration 1 October 2022 – 31 December 2022

Graph 7: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by duration 1 October 2022 – 31 December 2022

Although initially (March 2021) 66% of VIM applications entered into were for a 3-month duration, the VIM chart above for quarter 58 shows that 74% were entered into for a 6-month duration, 20% entered into for a 12-month duration and 3% entered into for both a 3 and 9 month durations.



Graph 8: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by percentage 1 October 2022 – 31 December 2022

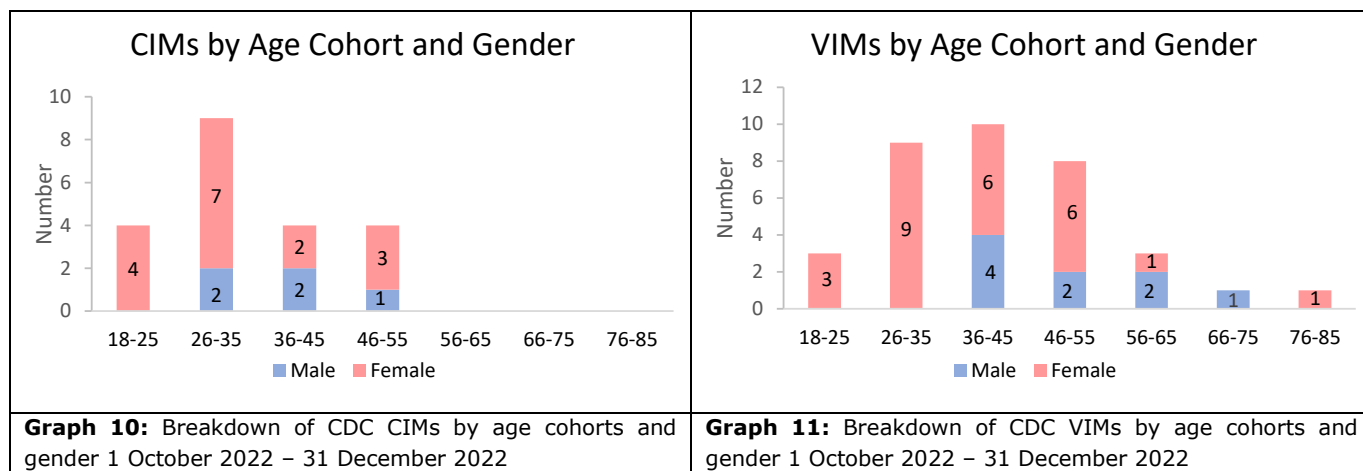
Graph 9: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by percentage 1 October 2022 – 31 December 2022

This quarter saw 62% of CIM orders issued at 60 percent, 33% at 75 percent and 5% at 90 percent. The preference by clients to enter into a VIM at 60 percent remains the popular option with 91% of VIM agreements entered into at 60 percent for the quarter.

This quarter female community members accounted for the majority of CIMs with 76 percent relating to female clients. Again, no community member older than 65 years was conditionally income managed by the FRC during the quarter.

The majority of community members voluntarily participating in voluntary income management this quarter were from the 36 to 45-year age group. Females accounted for 74 percent of the VIMs. Overall females accounted for 75 percent of all CDCs (voluntary and conditional) in quarter 58.

Reasons for applying for the CDC were primarily to budget (49 percent), to pay bills (43 percent), to save for something they needed (43 percent) and to buy food (37 percent). Circumstances given by voluntary income management participants when applying for the CDC were primarily to support themselves (63 percent), they liked the Cashless Debit Card (40 percent) and they needed to support their families (37 percent). Please note, a client may choose one or more options to reflect their individual reasons and circumstances for participating in voluntary income management.



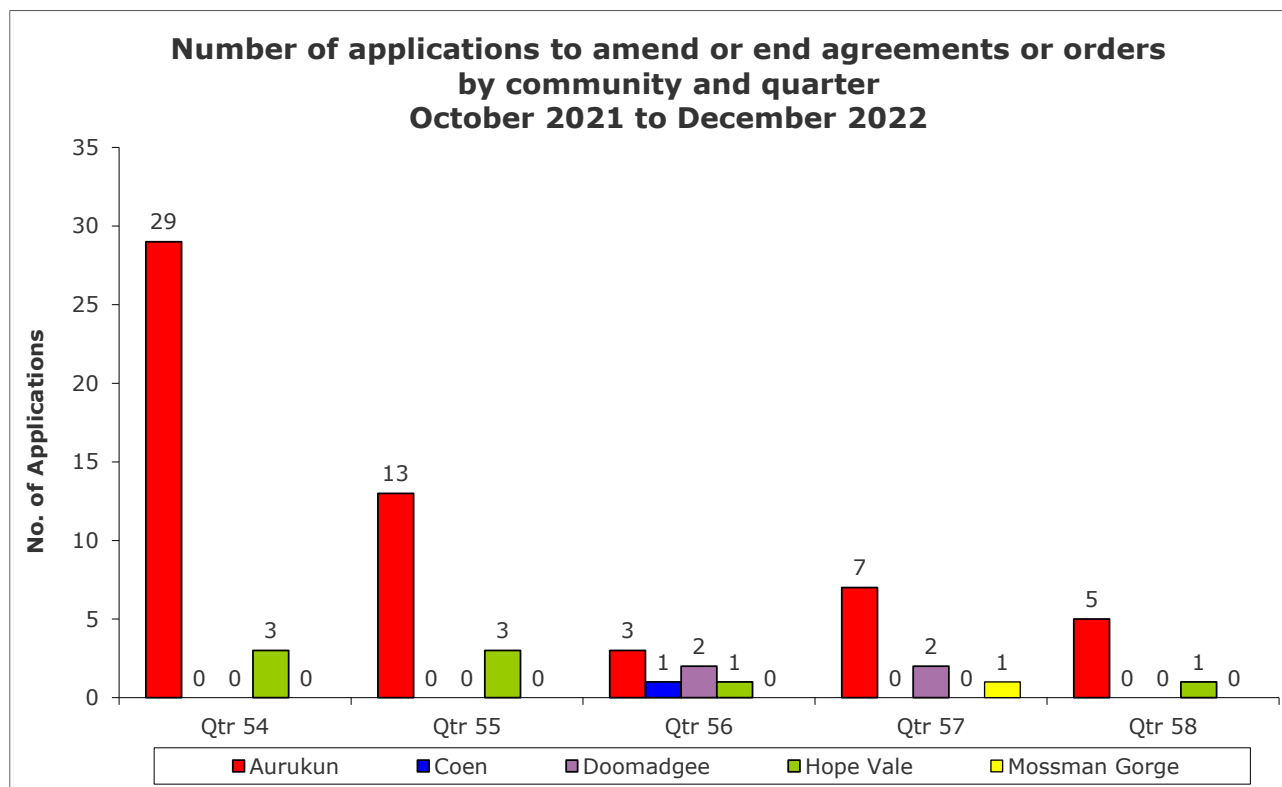
Case Management

Commissioners are guided by the FRC Act, sections 4 and 5, to encourage community members to engage in socially responsible ways, and in doing so, make appropriate use of community support services. The Commissioners use the referral pathways available in each community to strengthen the client’s resilience to face the challenges they experience, and to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children and vulnerable people through broad-based counselling and education. After conference and for the duration of a case plan referral, the FRC registry liaises with clients and support services to monitor the client’s progress against meeting case plan goals. Where appropriate, clients are encouraged to make an application to amend or end their case plan to ensure their evolving needs are met. Commissioners then consider each application to ascertain whether the client has made sufficient progress to justify approving the application and in doing so must consider whether any detriment might impact the welfare of relevant children and/or vulnerable persons. As at 31 December 2022, 227 clients were being case-managed through a current non-voluntary case plan.

Applications to amend or end Agreements or Orders inclusive of Voluntary Agreements

Applications to amend or end an agreement or order are considered an important means of ensuring that FRC decisions remain applicable to the changing needs and circumstances of clients. This mechanism affords clients an opportunity to apply to the Commission to amend or end their agreement or original order by providing their reasons for making the application. Commissioners view the hearing of the applications as an opportunity to engage with clients.

Six applications relating to 6 clients (5 female and 1 male) to amend or end an Agreement, Order or Voluntary Agreement were received in quarter 58. 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 12: Applications to amend or end agreements or orders by community and quarter 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022

Application decisions

Each application follows a transparent process and is considered by the Commissioners on its own merit whilst observing the principles of natural justice. A timely decision on the application is made under the FRC Act pursuant to section 99 for a family responsibilities agreement (FRA) or order, or section 109 for a voluntary agreement, and may include either agreeing or refusing to amend or end an agreement or order, or if the Commissioners deem the application for an FRA or order frivolous or vexatious, dismissing the application. For an application received under section 97 of the FRC Act, if the Commission fails to make a decision within two months of receipt of the application section 101 of the FRC Act determines that the failure is taken to be a decision by the Commission to refuse to amend or end the FRA or order. For an application to amend or end a voluntary agreement section 109(2) of the FRC Act states: "The Commissioner must amend or end a voluntary agreement as requested by the person, unless the Commissioner is satisfied the amendment or ending would be detrimental to the interests, rights and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable persons living in a welfare reform community area". The opportunity afforded in hearing these applications is utilised by the Commissioners to encourage clients to continue to address any remaining challenges and to exercise personal responsibility in their lives.

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 one amend/end application for a Family Responsibilities Order (to end a CIM) was decided in quarter 58 with the application accepted by the FRC.

Five amend/end applications for voluntary agreements were decided in the reporting period with all applications made by clients accepted by the FRC. A breakdown of the type of applications is as follows:

- 4 Applications were accepted and voluntary income management agreements ended and
- 1 Application was accepted and the voluntary income management agreement amended, increasing from 60% to 90% for the remaining period of the voluntary agreement.

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 10: FRC client population by gender and age 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022

Information for the quarter	Female Count	Male Count		Female Average age	Male Average age
Clients for whom a notice was received ¹⁰	412	260		37	38
Clients conferenced ¹¹	171	95		36	37
Clients referred through Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ¹²	84	47		36	37
Clients placed on CIM ¹³	16	5		33	39
Clients referred through a Voluntary Agreement for a case plan ¹⁴	6	2		41	38
Clients who chose to participate in VIM ¹⁵	26	9		39	49
Clients who submitted an amend/end application ¹⁶	5	1		55	60

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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 786 people as at 30 June 2021^{17,18}.

Coen: The township of Coen had an estimated resident adult population of 182 people as at 30 June 2021^{17,19}.

Doomadgee: The community of Doomadgee had an estimated resident adult population of 933 people as at 30 June 2021^{17,18}.

Hope Vale: The estimated resident adult population of Hope Vale was 660 people as at 30 June 2021^{17,18}.

Mossman Gorge: The Mossman Gorge community had an estimated resident population of 100 people as at 30 June 2021^{17,20}.

¹⁷ Note: Australian Statistical Geography Standard 2021 boundaries used are local government areas for Aurukun, Doomadgee and Hope Vale, and statistical areas level 1 (SA1s) of 31501139616 for Coen and 30604116408 for Mossman Gorge.

¹⁸ 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 rebased (to 2021 Census) Estimated Resident Population (ERP) data by age and sex at the Local Government Area level for 30 June 2021.

¹⁹ Note: Adults 18 years and over provided by QGSO, Queensland Treasury, based on the ABS unpublished preliminary rebased (to 2021 Census) ERP data by age and sex at the Statistical Area level 1 for 30 June 2021.

²⁰ 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 rebased (to 2021 Census) ERP data at the Statistical Area level 1 for 30 June 2021.

2. Future Direction and Challenges

New Local Commissioner training week

At the FR Board meeting held 4 November 2021, the Commission presented a paper to board members requesting approval to recruit further Local Commissioners in each community. The request was made as the Commission had on frequent occasions experienced difficulty in securing the attendance of three Local Commissioners to meet the requirements of holding s50A conferences. Additionally, the Commission identified the need for greater diversity amongst the pool of Local Commissioners in regard to gender, age, clan affiliation and expertise. The FR Board endorsed the recruitment of new Local Commissioners and 12 new Local Commissioners for the communities of Aurukun, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge were subsequently appointed by the Governor in Council for the period 5 May 2022 to 30 June 2023. The new Local Commissioners commenced induction and training early in the 2022-23 financial year.

In the interests of providing a more focused and intensive training experience, the new Local Commissioners were hosted at a training conference in Cairns during the week commencing 17 October 2022. Each Commissioner received a Handbook which incorporated relevant guidelines and legislation governing their functions, powers and suitability requirements. The Handbook provides the framework upon which the Commissioners are expected to perform their functions. The Commissioners were informed on how the FRC was established, the organisational structure of the Commission including the administrative functions necessary to provide them with the requisite information to make decisions. Further, Commissioners were advised of the processes following their decision-making such as the monitoring of case plans, communication and collaboration with service providers and strategic partners, the supervision of income management and their role in representing the FRC inside and outside of their communities.

Local Commissioners and FRC staff were then provided an update by DSS staff on legislative changes abolishing the CDC and commencing enhanced Income Management, and what the legislative changes established by the passage of the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Repeal of Cashless Debit Card and Other Measures) Bill meant for the future of income management. Feedback was sought from the Commissioners as to the appearance of the new enhanced Income Management card and an appropriate name to carry the card forward.

In closing the conference, Commissioner Williams, Deputy Commissioner Curtin and Registrar McLeod addressed the new Local Commissioners on the importance of professionalism in performing their functions as decision-makers, the primary principle of ensuring that actions taken are in the best interests and wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons, and that in carrying out their functions the Commissioners must observe the principles of natural justice. Further, the Commissioners were advised of their duty to avoid and/or declare a conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest in their decision-making in order to ensure that the considerable powers exercised under the FRC Act are done so with integrity and transparency.

FRC Future Directions Review

The FRC understands that the final report on the 'Family Responsibilities Commission Future Directions Review 2022', commissioned by the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership to inform the Queensland Government's decision-making on the future of the FRC, has been provided to the Queensland Government. In line with the FR Board's functions under the FRC Act 2008, it has been invited to provide advice to the Minister on the future operations of the FRC, guided by the findings and recommendations of the final report. To date, the FRC is yet to receive information about the outcome of the review.

Strategic planning process

Planning began this quarter for the development of a new Strategic Plan which will set the Commission's strategic direction, key performance indicators, and form the foundation for the development of individual performance plans for the next 4 years.

Development of the strategic plan has been delayed, primarily because of the 'Family Responsibilities Commission Future Directions Review 2022' conducted by Abt Associates. The outcome of the review remains unknown, and consequently any impacts on the Commission's strategic direction and operations is also undetermined. Although the Review concluded in August 2022, the Commission has received no information regarding the outcome of the review, making it difficult to conduct significant forward planning.

Development of a new strategic plan will necessarily require the input of all Commission staff and Local Commissioners and will be a significant project. The Agency Planning Requirements published by the Department of Premier and Cabinet provide that:

Planning is the responsibility of everybody within an agency. To plan effectively, responsibility should not rest solely with planning officers. The role of planning officers is to facilitate the development of the strategic plan and operational plans.

The Commission's Strategic Plan was due to expire in 2022. Due to the delay referenced above, and to facilitate an effective planning process to develop a new plan, the Executive Management Team has endorsed to extend the life of the Strategic Plan. To date the review process has seen the current Strategic Plan extended to June 2023 and updated to reflect the new objectives stated in the 'Queensland Government's objectives for the community'.

To facilitate a thorough and inclusive planning process, an all-staff workshop day will be held in January 2023, to be followed by individual team discussions. Consultation will then be extended to Local Commissioners in the FRC communities and be summarised at the Local Commissioner Development Week to be conducted in Cairns from 15 May 2023.

Elevated school response strategy

This quarter (term 4 of the school year) saw both the Aurukun and Doomadgee Local Commissioners reflect their concern with the low level of school attendance. Although school attendance is historically lower in term 3 across many community schools, low attendance continued (and worsened) in term 4 for Aurukun, whilst it improved slightly in Doomadgee, though still below 50 percent. Low attendance was influenced by multiple factors.

Doomadgee

Doomadgee State School low attendance was exacerbated by continuing staffing shortages in both the teaching departments and the Student Attendance Officers. The school has, as a result, had limited capacity to undertake proactive community engagement activities to address attendance issues. A large number of students were disengaged from school and unfortunately the night school was not operating to encourage students back into the educational environment.

The Doomadgee Local Commissioners commenced an 'elevated school response' strategy to assist in encouraging students to re-engage. The Case Management and Monitoring Team closely examined school non-attendance notices received and filtered them for priority based on attendance rates, client history and whether clients named on school attendance notices had also been the subject of a child safety notification. The strategy involved the Local Registry Coordinator and Local Commissioners visiting families at home to discuss issues impacting children and offering transport (where required)

to get children to school. The support offered was dependent upon the family situation and included the Local Commissioners talking to parents and disengaged students. The Local Commissioners enjoyed participating in this response as it allowed them to interact with community members outside of the conference setting. Initial reported gains in attendance during term 1 for the Doomadgee State School are welcomed and Local Commissioners are buoyed by their efforts and those of the community as a whole in partnering with the FRC to re-engage students in the learning process.

Aurukun

During term 4, 92 education notices received for non-attendance were deemed invalid and unable to be considered for conference. The problem arose in the datasets from One School where a roll marking anomaly occurred and students were marked incorrectly for attendance over several weeks during the term. The unreliability of One School data received prompted the Commissioners to focus on notices received for DVO matters and Court matters of significance. Increased Family Responsibilities Orders (500 percent from the previous quarter), increased agreements for case plans (107 percent from the previous quarter) and increased referrals to wellbeing support services, (134 percent from the previous quarter) are reflective of conferencing prioritisation. Although the roll marking anomaly unfortunately created a missed opportunity to hold parents accountable for not sending their children to school, the matter has since been remedied and data is now being reliably provided.

There is little doubt that the community unrest which occurred during this quarter contributed to the historic school non-attendance rate of 28.4 percent for the primary school sector (the lowest non-attendance rate dating from term 1 2008). The Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service reported attacks on their staff and property which resulted in routine community visits and outreach home visits from the primary healthcare centre suspended until further notice. The situation was monitored on a daily basis and the health service was liaising closely with government agencies and the police during the period. Counselling and support was provided to their staff following the incidents. The community unrest resulted in a 'Code Black' being declared by the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service with no doctors flying into Aurukun. The Aurukun Police were chauffeuring medical patients to and from the hospital and many services suspended flights into the community.

Aurukun Local Commissioners, identifying that school attendance had not improved from term 3, began formulating their elevated school response in November for practical application in the new 2023 school year. Local Commissioners planned to adopt similar strategies to the Doomadgee Commissioners and will travel on the school bus in the mornings to encourage children to board the bus. The Local Commissioners will also visit the Aurukun School Principal along with the Local Registry Coordinator to discuss and prioritise families for home visits and the first two conference sessions for the 2023 year will be comprised of those clients notified to the Commission for non-attendance and non-enrolment.

Queensland Government Coordinator - Aurukun

As reported in Quarterly Report No 56, The Queensland Government Coordinator for Aurukun ceased his contract at the end of June 2022. The Commission is unaware whether a replacement Coordinator has been appointed, or whether recruitment is in progress. The Queensland Government Coordinator role in Aurukun is a role of some significance and is a vital service for the community, particularly in regard to community unrest and in the coordination of services. The Commission looks forward to this position being filled to assist with consistent and appropriate service delivery in the community. In the meantime, and in the absence of a Queensland Government Coordinator, the Queensland Police Officer-in-charge has taken on the coordination of some local support service and agency meetings to ensure that communication and coordination of activities are maintained.

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)
- Ms Jody Broun 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 of the Commission attributable to the quarter (1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022) totalled \$1,106,622. This income consisted of:
 - \$619,750 Queensland Government funding
 - \$450,000 Australian Government funding
 - \$36,442 interest received
 - \$430 sundry income

The balance of available funds in the bank as at 31 December 2022 is \$3,833,661.

Expenditure:

- Expenditure for the quarter (1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022) was \$1,059,398.

Table 11: Expenditure in quarter 58

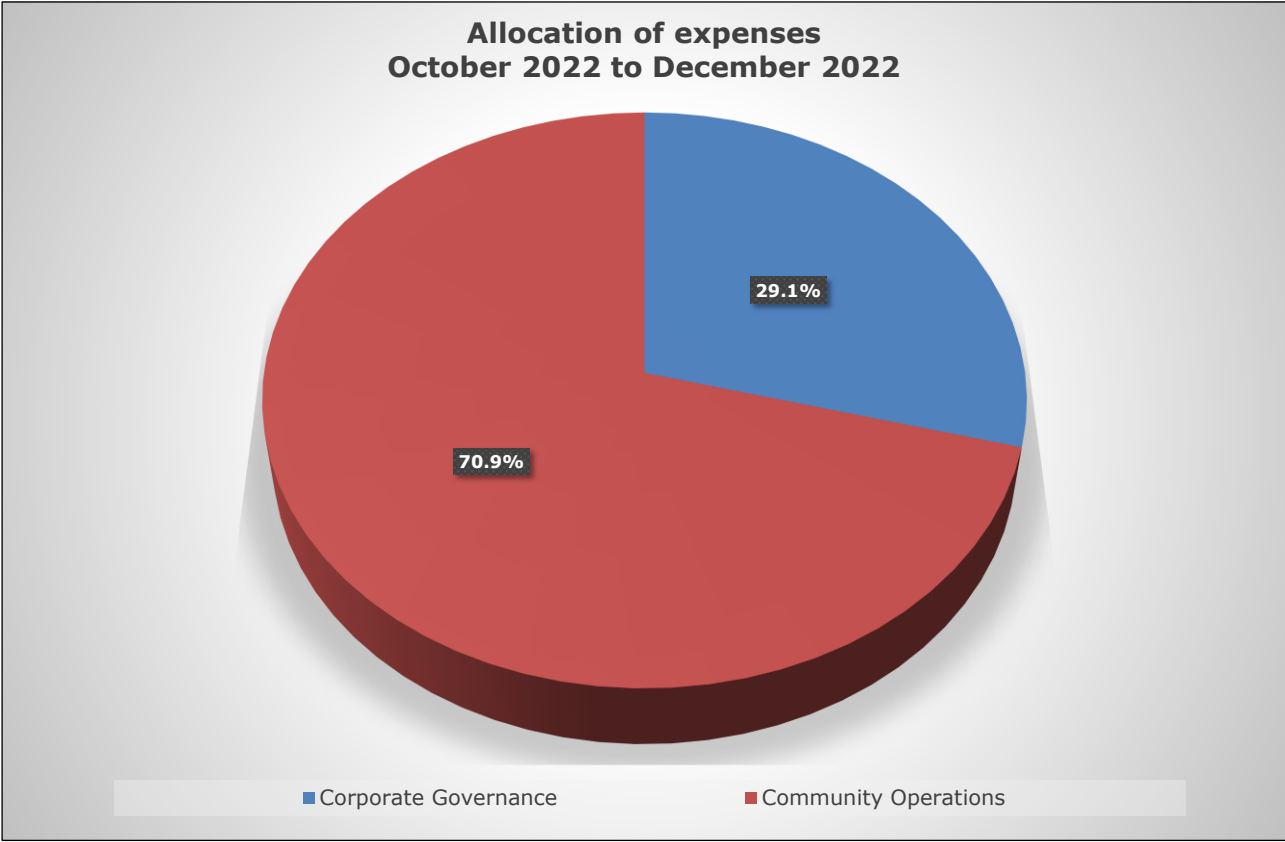
1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022	Expenditure Qtr 58	1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022	Expenditure Qtr 58
Employee salaries – FRC staff	537,776	Internet & IT	64,573
Employee salaries – Local Commissioners	96,175	Motor Vehicle	11,347
Employee on costs – FRC staff	116,825	Property	63,205
Employee on costs – Local Commissioners	15,292	Travel	59,045
Other employment costs	37,046	General Operating	42,051
Communications	4,082	Other expenses	11,981
		Total	\$1,059,398

The expenditure of the FRC can be categorised as follows:

- Community operations** – further broken down into:
 - On-the-ground community operational expenses including the operational expenses** 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 agreements and orders.
 - Support and facilitation expenses** including costs associated with facilitating the holding of conferences and hearings in the five communities, providing support to the Local Commissioners and Local Registry Coordinators to hold conferences and hearings, assisting with the on-going monitoring of case plans for clients through the provision of data and other information and processing income management where considered necessary.
- Corporate governance** includes finance, statistical reporting, corporate governance, training and other administrative functions to ensure the effective and efficient operations of the Commission.

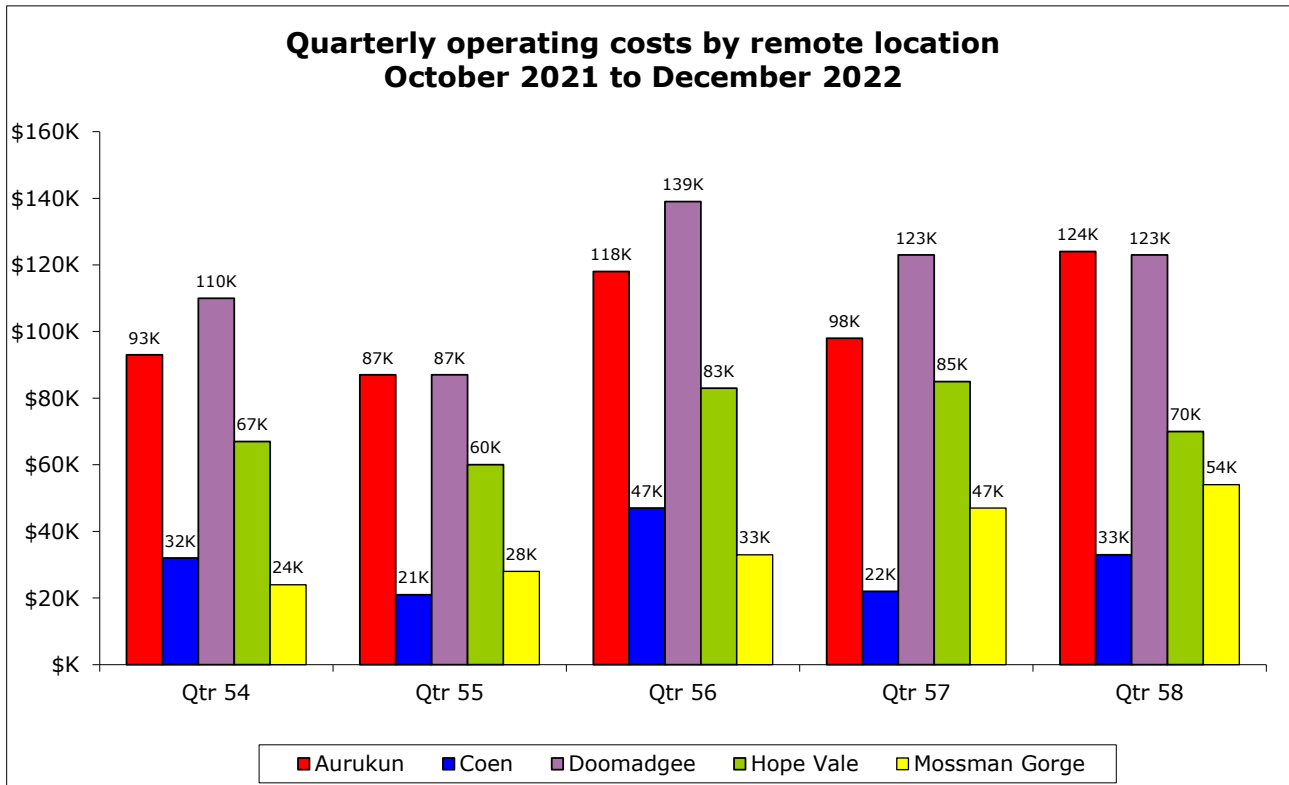
The functions of corporate governance and conference and hearing facilitation are conducted primarily in the registry office in Cairns with frequent visits to community by staff. Community operations are conducted by Local Registry Coordinators and Local Commissioners, resident in their respective communities,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

As can be observed in Graph 13 below which displays the allocation of FRC costs across the core functions in quarter 58, the largest allocation during the reporting period is in relation to community operations (70.9 percent).



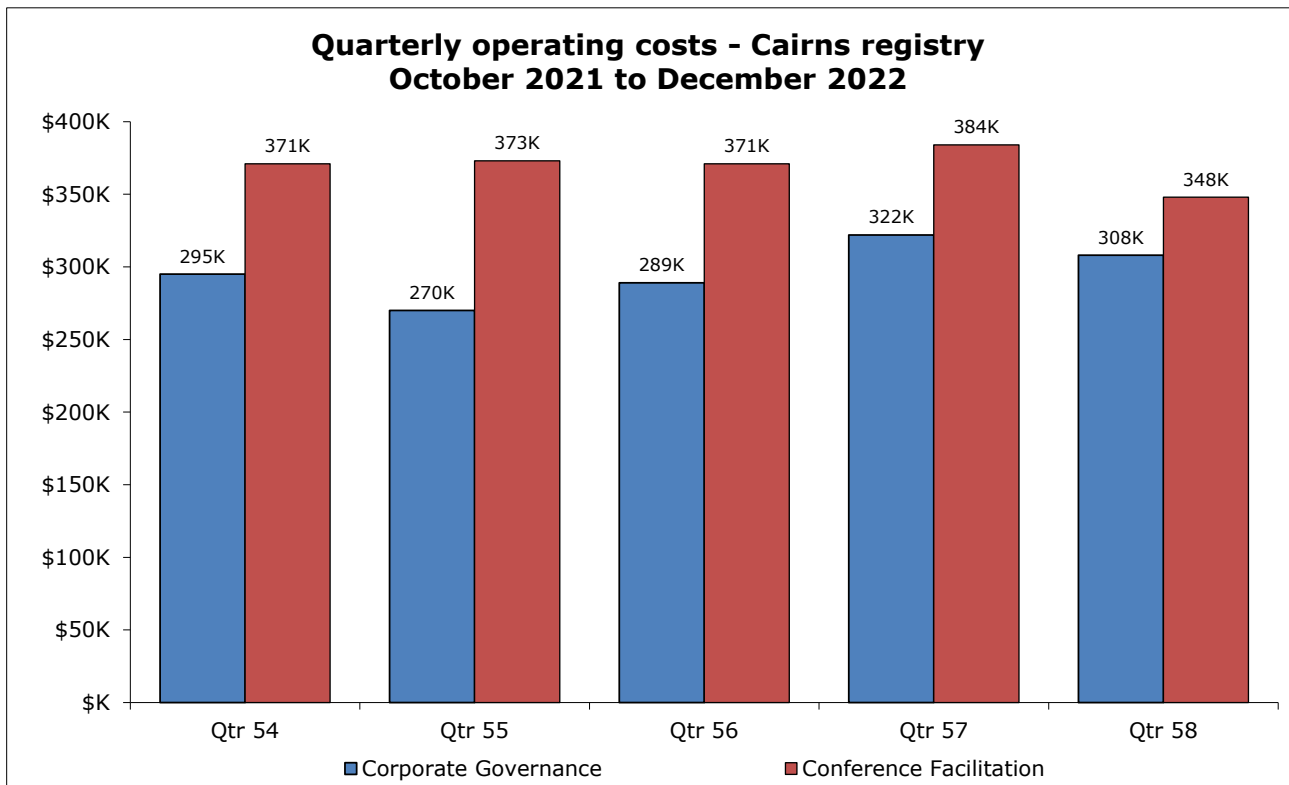
Graph 13: Allocation of expenses 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022

Regional operational expenditure by location and quarter.



Graph 14: Operating costs by remote location 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022

Cairns Registry expenditure for quarter 58 compared to the previous four quarters.



Graph 15: Quarterly operating costs Cairns 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022

APPENDIX A



**SITTINGS CALENDAR 2022
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION
1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022**



Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
4 July						
11 July		12	13	14	Public Holiday	Fri 15th - Cairns Show Day Cooktown – Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
18 July	Public Holiday – MG Only		20	21		Mon 18th - Mossman Show Day Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
25 July						29-30 Quamby Rodeo Estimates: Tuesday 26/07/2021 – Friday 29/07/2021
1 August		2	3	4		Thu 4th – Aurukun Day Public Holiday Estimates: Tuesday 2/08/2021 – Thursday 4/08/2021
8 August			10	11		11-14 Mount Isa Mines Rodeo Cooktown – Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
15 August			17	18		Aurukun Cape B Circuit
22 August		23	24	25	Public Holiday – DM Only	Fri 26th - Doomadgee Day Public Holiday 26-28 Camooweal Drivers Camp Festival
29 August			31	1	Student Free Day	
5 September						Cooktown – Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
12 September		13	14	15		Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
19 September						
26 September						
3 October	Public Holiday					Mon 3rd - Queen's Birthday Cooktown – Circuit
10 October		11	12	13		Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
17 October		18	19			New Local Commissioner Training Week
24 October			26	27		
31 October		1	2	3		Cooktown – Circuit

Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
7 November			9	10 10 10		Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
14 November		15	16	17		
21 November			23	24 24		
28 November		29 29	30 30	1		Cooktown – Circuit
5 December			7	8 ½ day		Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit Mossman schools finish 9/12/2022
12 December						
19 December						
26 December	Public Holiday	Public Holiday				Mon 26 th & Tue 27 th Christmas Day and Boxing Day, 28, 29, 30 Office closed for XMAS

LEGEND

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

OFFICE	CONTACT NAME	Phone	Mobile	Facsimile
Cairns – Commissioner	Tammy Williams	4081 8413	0447 739 137	4041 0974
Cairns – Deputy Commissioner	Rod Curtin	4081 8400	0419 647 948	4041 0974
Cairns – Registrar	Maxine McLeod	4081 8412	0409 461 624	4041 0974
Cairns – Executive Officer (Finance)	Tracey Paterson	4081 8411	0429 495 353	4041 0974
Cairns – Manager (Compliance and Policy) (Tue, Wed, Thu morning)	Camille Banks	4081 8407	0400 355 040	4041 0974
Cairns – Manager (Case Management and Monitoring)	Anne Crampton	4081 8414	0458 041 191	4041 0974
Cairns – Senior Advisor (Statistics and Research)	Michelle Synott	4081 8404		4041 0974
Cairns – ICT Administrator	Mark Doktor	4081 8406	0427 954 870	4041 0974
Cairns – Manager (Coordination)	Sandi Rye	4081 8410	0438 195 342	4041 0974
Aurukun Local Registry Coordinator	Bryce Coxall	4060 6185	0428 985 106	4041 0974
Acting Coen Local Registry Coordinator	Kate Gooding	4081 8410	0417 798 392	4041 0974
Doomadgee Local Registry Coordinator	Brenden Joinbee	4745 8111	0418 666 204	4041 0974
Hope Vale Local Registry Coordinator	Josephine Pinder	4060 9153	0408 482 026	4041 0974
Acting Mossman Gorge Local Registry Coordinator	Kate Gooding	4081 8410	0417 798 392	4041 0974