

Family Responsibilities Commission

Report to the Family Responsibilities Board

Quarterly Report

No. 60

April 2023 to June 2023



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 Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) is a key mechanism to support welfare reform community members and their families to restore socially responsible standards of behaviour and re-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 April to June 2023.

Quantified in the table below are the activities undertaken by the Commission during quarter 60 with comparisons shown to the previous quarter.

Table 1: Activity from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023

Activity for the quarter	Qtr 59	Qtr 60
Total number of notices received by the Commission ²	2,390	2,079
Number of notices within jurisdiction	1,614	1,408
Number of notices not within jurisdiction	776	671
Number of clients notified to the Commission from notices within jurisdiction	787	714
Conferences		
Conferences conducted	278	250
Number of clients served to attend conference	244	207
Attendance percentage for conferences	68%	70%
Non-attendance percentage with acceptable (reasonable) excuse for conferences	53%	38%
Conference outcomes		
Agreements to attend community support services	56	51
Orders made to attend community support services	38	41
Referrals to service providers from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ³	116	113
Agreements for Conditional Income Management (CIM)	0	0
Orders made for CIM	13	17

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 59	Qtr 60
Conferences for domestic violence matters	44	61
Referrals from domestic violence conferences	30	30
CIM's from domestic violence conferences	2	6
Amend/end decisions for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders		
Number of amend/end decisions for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders	2	2
Accepted	50%	50%
Refused	50%	50%
Voluntary Agreements		
Voluntary agreements for a voluntary case plan (VCP)	19	15
Voluntary referrals to service providers	20	17
Voluntary agreements for Voluntary Income Management (VIM)	28	24
Amend/end decisions for Voluntary Agreements		
Number of amend/end decisions for Voluntary Agreements	10	5
Accepted	90%	100%
Refused	10%	0%
Other activity		
Applications to Amend or End received	12	7
Information as at the last day of the quarter		
Number of clients case-managed through current non-voluntary case plan	222	214
Number of clients subject to a current CIM	33	28
Number of clients on a current VIM	82	66

Quarterly trends

The above statistics for quarter 60 reflect an increase again in conference attendance compared to quarter 59, increasing from 68% in quarter 59 to 70% in quarter 60, indicating an increased understanding by clients of the help the FRC can offer through referrals to support services. Even though the number of conferences reduced by 28 due to the cancellation of three conference sitting days in Aurukun the number of agreements to attend community support services only reduced by 5 (9%) and the number of referrals only reduced by 3 (3%), whilst the number of orders to attend community support services increased by 3 (8%) and the number of orders for CIM increased by 4 (31%). The number of domestic violence conferences increased by 17 (39%) as a result of the increased number of domestic violence notices received in the previous quarter with referrals from domestic conferences remaining unchanged.

Statutory appointments

Reappointments July 2023 – June 2026

On 29 June 2023 the Commission was advised by Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (DTATSIPCA) the Governor in Council had approved the reappointment of Commissioner Williams as the Commissioner for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026. Further, to support the Commissioner in her role, Mr Rodney Curtin was reappointed as

Deputy Commissioner, and the following current Local Commissioners for the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge were reappointed for the same period:

Aurukun: Mr Edgar Kerindun OAM, Ms Doris Poonkamelya OAM, Ms Ada Woolla OAM, Ms Dorothy Pootchemunka, Ms Vera Koomeeta OAM, Ms Keri Tamwoy and Mr Dereck Walpo.

Coen: Ms May Kepple OAM, Ms Elaine Liddy OAM, Ms Alison Liddy and Ms Maureen Liddy.

Doomadgee: Mr Christopher Logan, Ms Elaine Cairns, Ms Kaylene O'Keefe, Ms Eleanor Logan, Mr Guy Douglas, Ms Isabel Toby, Ms Dawn Aplin, Ms Wendy Taylor, Ms Lila Cairns and Ms Virginia Collins.

Hope Vale: Ms Priscilla Gibson, Ms Doreen Hart OAM, Ms Cheryl Cannon, Ms Erica Deeral, Ms Selina Kerr-Bowen, Mr Robert Gibson and Ms Kathryn Gibson.

Mossman Gorge: Ms Loretta Spratt OAM, Mr George Ross-Kelly, Ms Daphne Creek, Ms Zara Ryan, Mr Jarrod Kulka and Ms Julie Williams.

This three-year period is the longest term of appointment that has been granted to the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner and the Local Commissioners, since the beginning of the Welfare Reform trial. Given the ongoing impacts of uncertainty about the FRC's future, this term of relative stability is welcomed.

Mr Noel Pearson, Founder of Cape York Partnership representing the Cape York Institute (CYI) and Ms Jody Broun, Chief Executive Officer, National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) were reappointed to the FR Board for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026. The Governor in Council appointed Ms Clare O'Connor, Director-General of DTATSIPCA as the chair of the FR Board from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026.

New Local Commissioner appointments

On 29 June 2023 the Commission was also advised the Governor in Council had approved the appointment of two more new Local Commissioners for Coen, Ms Naomi Hobson and Ms Ramana Walker for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026. The appointment of new Local Commissioners in Coen is warmly welcomed by the existing Coen Local Commissioners and the FRC team. Having additional Local Commissioners will allow the hardworking Coen Commissioners to be relieved as needed and inject new perspectives into conferencing and other work in the Coen community.

All staff cultural capability training

On 26 June 2023, all staff travelled to the Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre to undertake cultural capability training. FRC staff, Commissioner Williams and Deputy Commissioner Curtin had the pleasure of undertaking a cultural tour guided by Local Commissioner Jarrod Kulka. Along with learning more about the Kuku Yalanji people's special relationship with their rainforest country, valuable discussions were had about how the FRC's work can be better guided by First Nations perspectives.

Strategic planning process

Since late 2022, the FRC has undertaken a holistic review of the strategic priorities of the organisation for the next four years and beyond. The development of a new Strategic Plan has set the Commission's strategic direction and key performance indicators and forms the foundation for the development of individual performance plans for the next four years.

Through a series of workshops, held in the first half of 2023 and finalised in quarter 60 FRC staff, Local Commissioners and the Executive Management Team (EMT) have, for the first time, collaboratively determined the FRC's strategic priorities. The Strategic Plan document reflects input from the whole FRC team, and the FRC will continue to apply this co-design approach in all operations to give not only staff and Commissioners, but FRC clients, more agency in how the organisation supports them.

The Strategic Plan outlines the FRC’s strong commitment to contributing to Closing the Gap on life outcomes for FRC clients. It signals the FRC’s continuing focus on exploring avenues of supporting families outside the traditional conferencing model. The FRC intends to capitalise on the increasing voluntary engagement of clients with the FRC to support them to move beyond stabilising their circumstances and take up opportunities to learn, work and flourish.

The new Strategic Plan takes effect from 1 July 2023 with the challenges and opportunities outlined in the Strategic Plan set out below, reflecting many of the challenges experienced over the past reporting year, and the FRC’s outlook for the coming year.

Our Challenges
Maintaining legitimacy and improving levels of engagement and personal responsibility without a clear authorising environment
Sustaining, renewing and broadening the pool of Local Commissioners
Supporting a stronger commitment from service provider partners for suitable, available and accountable services for clients
Strengthening resilience and wellbeing in staff and Local Commissioners to meet evolving challenges
Protecting our information assets

Our Opportunities
Embedding the FRC as a partner in the co-design and decision-making of Government
Expanding our impact to new communities and with new triggers targeting areas of need
Increasing voluntary engagement, particularly through increasing options for VIM
Harnessing the evolution of the Local Commissioners’ role to increasingly support clients and communities outside of conference
Increasing recognition of the FRC’s model of self-determination, through the FRC’s local Indigenous-led decision-making, and the cultural capability of the registry

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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 30 June 2023.

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 60, 603 clients (84%) were notified to the Commission with only one type of trigger notice. The remaining 111 clients (16%) received more than one type of trigger notice.

Table 2: Number of clients by number of different types of agency notices received 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023

Type of Different Types of Agency Notices Received	Number of clients
1	603
2	96
3	15
4	0
Total	714

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

- 57% received a school attendance (EQ) notice
- 12% received a Magistrate Court (MAG) notice
- 7% received a child safety and welfare (CS) notice
- 6% received a domestic violence order (DVO) notice
- 2% received a domestic violence breach (DVB) notice.

The remaining sole trigger notices received for Commission clients during the quarter were 2 clients with a District court notice (DIS), 1 client with a Housing Tenancy Breach notice (HT) and 4 clients with a school enrolment notice (SEN).

Table 3 shows the combination of trigger notices received for the 111 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 April 2023 to 30 June 2023⁴

Type of Agency Notice/s	Number of clients
CS,DIS,DVB	1
CS,DVO	1
CS,DVO,EQ	1
CS,DVO,MAG	2
CS,EQ	32
CS,EQ,MAG	4
CS,MAG	4
DVB,DVO	2
DVB,DVO,MAG	4
DVB,EQ,MAG	2
DVB,MAG	12
DVO,EQ	4
DVO,EQ,MAG	1
DVO,MAG	13
EQ,HT	1
EQ,MAG	24
EQ,SEN	3
Total	111

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, consisting 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 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 6.

Table 4: Number of voluntary agreements (where a client has agreed to a voluntary case plan or voluntary income management) entered into from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023⁵

Voluntary Agreements			
	VCP	VIM	Total
Total	15	24	39

Table 5: Number of decisions by agreement (where a client has agreed to a case plan or conditional income management) entered into from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023⁵

Decisions by Agreement			
Community	CP	CIM	Total
AU	26	0	26
CO	3	0	3
DM	10	0	10
HV	8	0	8
MG	4	0	4
Total	51	0	51

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 April 2023 to 30 June 2023⁵

Decision by Order									
Community	CCP	CCP & CIM Concurrently	CCP, Rescheduled	CIM	No Further Action	No Further Action, Rescheduled	Recommend Support Service	Reprimand	Total
AU	0	0	0	8	20	0	3	0	31
CO	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
DM	27	0	1	2	14	0	4	0	48
HV	3	1	0	2	20	1	0	1	28
MG	5	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	10
Total	35	5	1	12	54	1	10	2	120

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 April 2023 to 30 June 2023⁵

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	1	2

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 April 2023 to 30 June 2023⁶

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

During quarter 60 the number of interactions highlighted in tables 4 to 8 related to a total of 196 clients (127 female and 69 male). To clarify the variability of client interactions, the following may occur during the reporting period:

⁵ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 6.

⁶ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on page 6.

- 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 quarantining 60%, 75% or 90% of their welfare payments 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 60 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 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 support our assertion:

- 39.3% 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, 31% of clients specifically entered into a voluntary agreement;
- 30.1% 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;
- 1.0% 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 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:

- 17.9% of clients were ordered to attend a support service under a case plan;
- 6.1% of clients were placed on a CIM order;
- 2.6% of clients were placed on a CIM order and ordered to attend a support service.

Notices

In quarter 60 the Commission received 2,079 agency notices⁷. Some individuals may have been the subject of more than one agency notice. Of that figure 1,408 notices (68%) relating to 714 clients were within the Commission's jurisdiction, and 671 notices (32%) were outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

Table 9: Notices in jurisdiction by type and community 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023

Type of Notice	AU	CO	DM ⁸	HV	MG	Total
Supreme Court notices	0	0	0	0	0	0
District Court notices	6	0	0	0	0	6
Magistrates Court notices	328	3	0	75	10	416
Domestic Violence Breach notices	28	0	0	15	1	44
Domestic Violence Order notices	39	3	0	25	3	70
School Attendance notices	208	15	345	136	33	737
School Enrolment notice	0	1	7	0	0	8
Child Safety and Welfare notices						
Child Concern Reports	29	2	56	15	7	109
Finalised Child Protection Investigations	7	0	9	0	0	16
Housing Tenancy notices	0	0	0	1	1	2
Total	645	24	417	267	55	1408

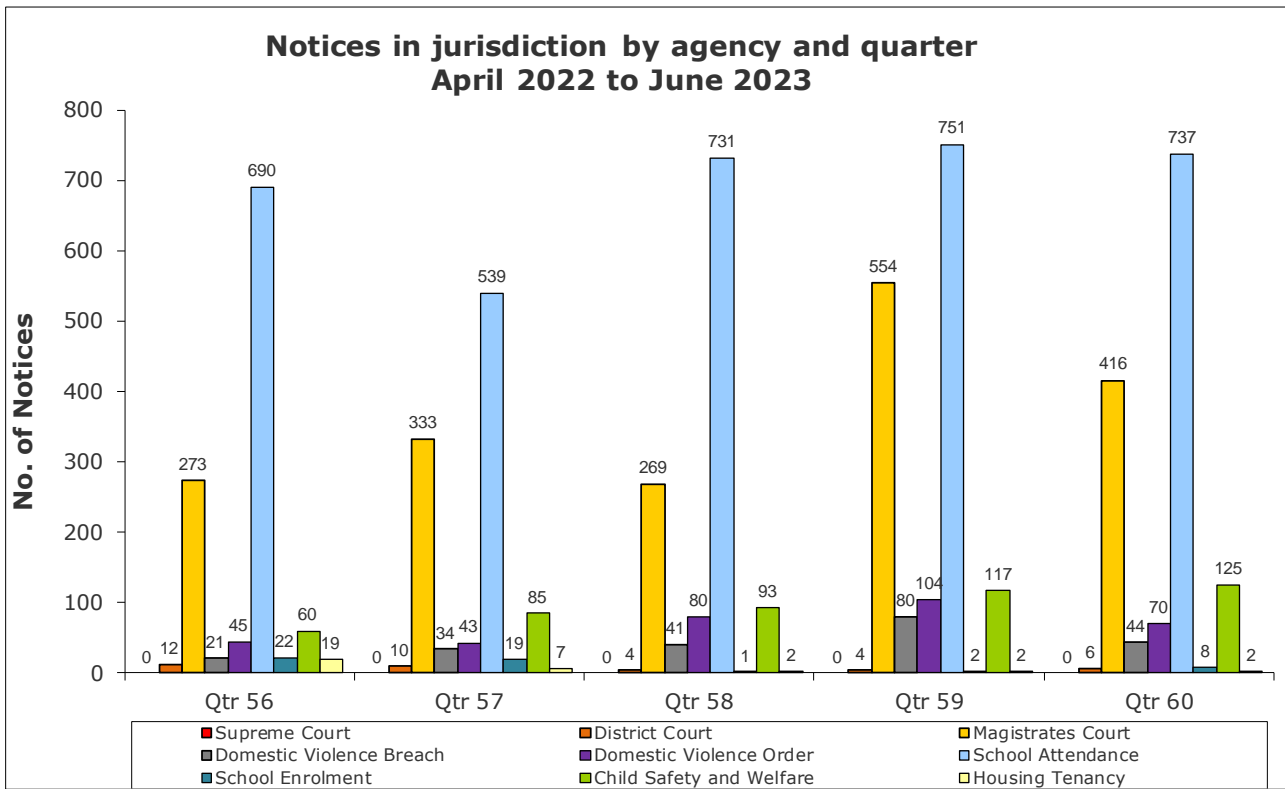
Further details of notices within jurisdiction for each community are set out below:

- Aurukun received 645 notices relating to 268 clients (155 female and 113 male)
- Coen received 24 notices relating to 19 clients (10 female and 9 male)
- Doomadgee received 417 notices relating to 241 clients (169 female and 72 male)
- Hope Vale received 267 notices, relating to 159 clients (92 female and 67 male)
- Mossman Gorge received 55 notices relating to 27 clients (19 female and 8 male).

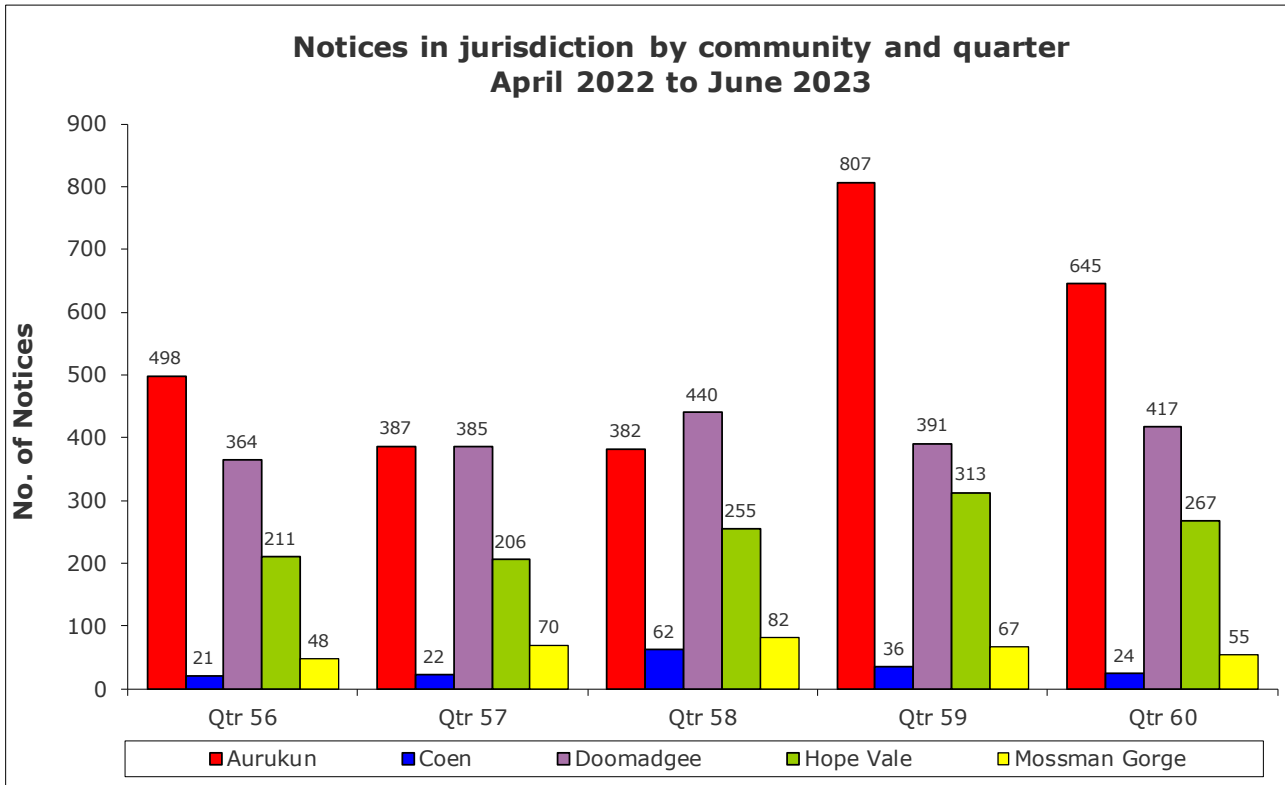
For quarter 60, 46% of clients received more than one notice. Frequently this illustrates multiple child school absences for the one family, or multiple Magistrates Court notices relating to one incident. This may also be suggestive of the complexity of behaviours experienced by a significant proportion of our clients. Conversely, it is important to note the majority of FRC clients (54%) have received only one notice during the reporting period. Thirty-seven 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.



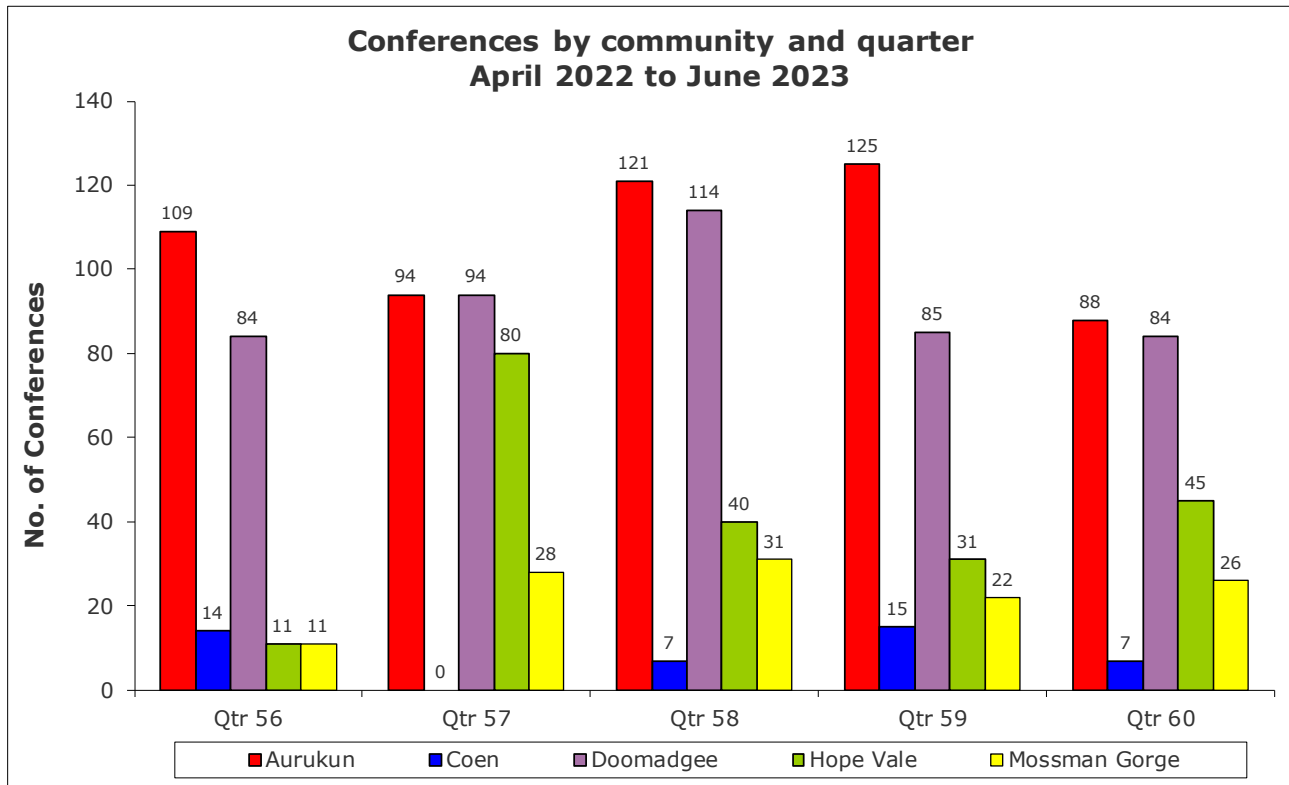
Graph 1: Notices in jurisdiction by type and quarter 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2023



Graph 2: Notices in jurisdiction by community and quarter 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2023

Conferences

In quarter 60 250 conferences⁹ were held across the five communities (relating to 207 clients served to attend conference). Attendance at conference increased from 68.0% in quarter 59 to 70.4% in quarter 60.

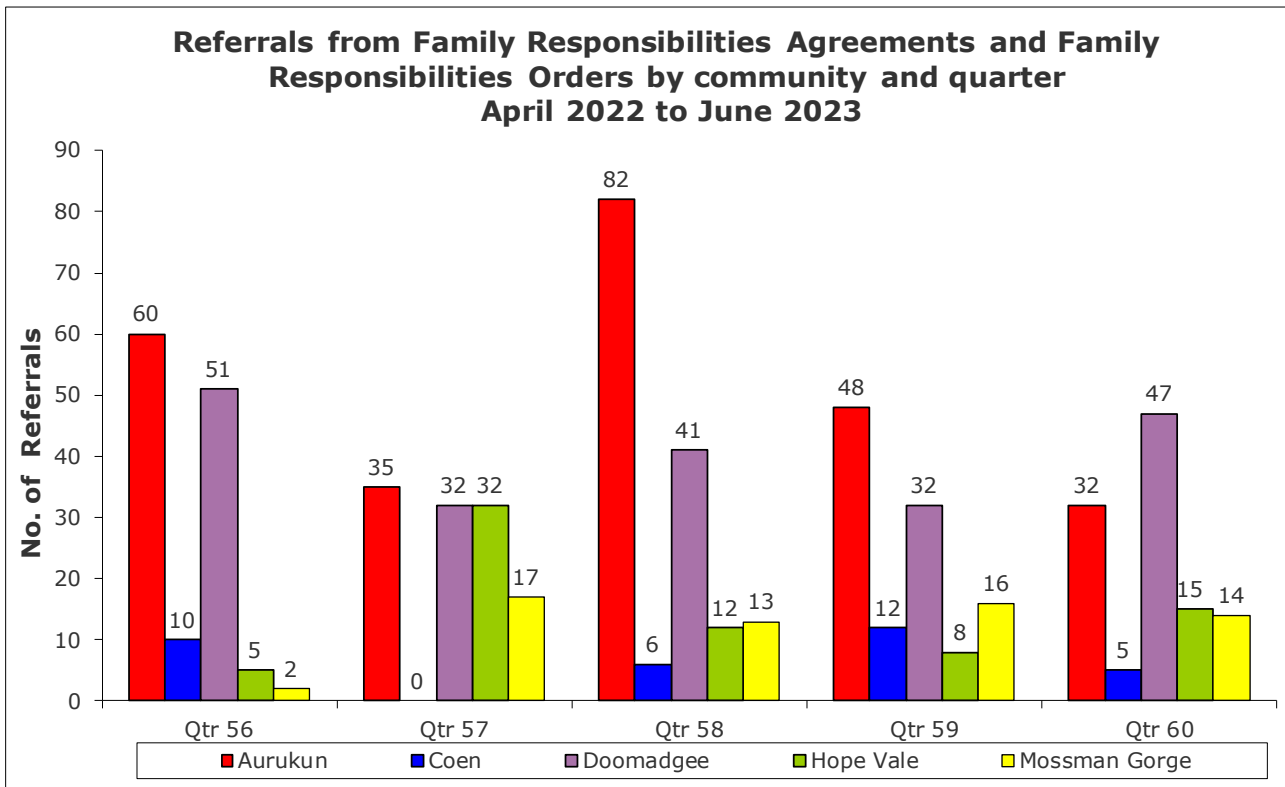


Graph 3: Conferences by community and quarter 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2023

Referrals from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders

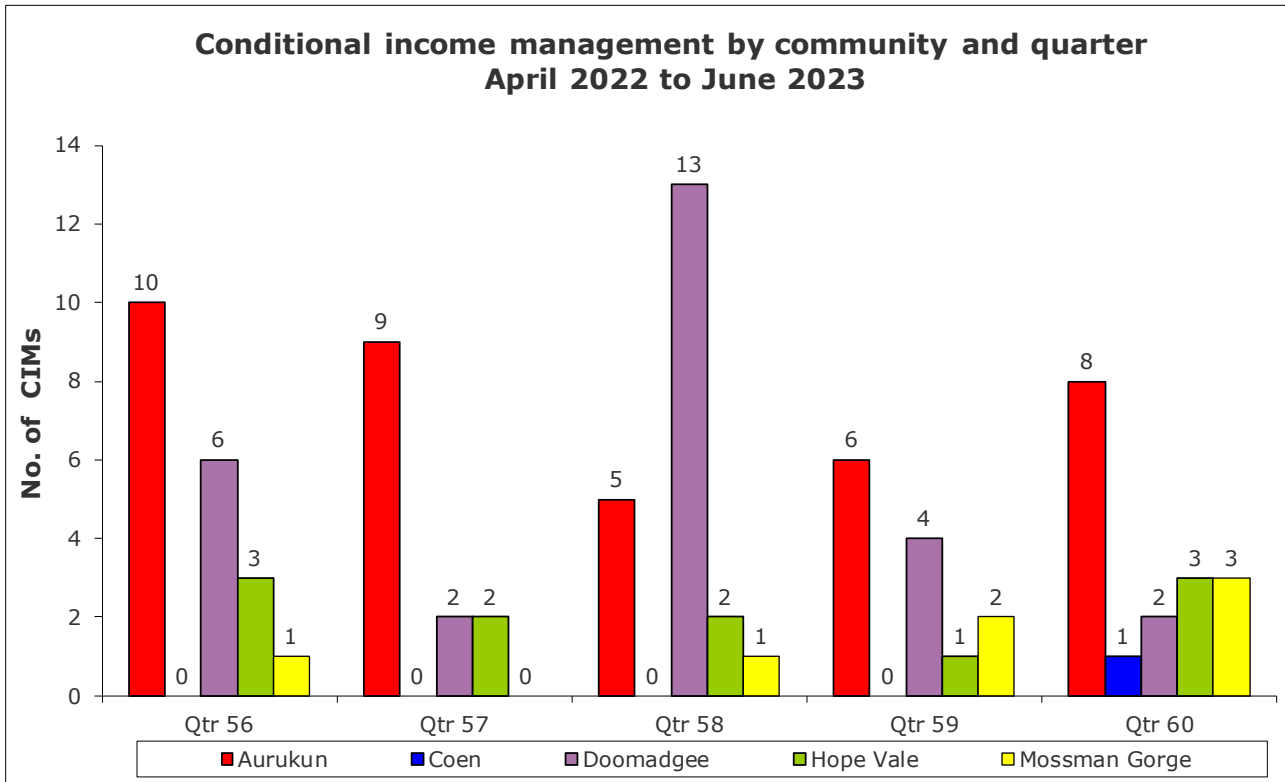
A total of 113 referrals (to service providers from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements (FRAs) and Orders) relating to 92 clients were made in quarter 60. The Local Commissioners continue to raise concerns regarding the availability of appropriate perpetrator intervention programs suitable for client 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.

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 4: Referrals by community and quarter 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2023

Conditional Income Management from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders



Graph 5: Conditional income management by community and quarter 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2023

Local Commissioners continue to use Conditional Income Management (CIM) as a decision of last resort. A total of 17 new CIMs (orders) relating to 17 clients were made in quarter 60 with 70% set at 60% quarantining of welfare payments (see graph 8) and 82% set for a 6-month duration (see graph 6).

As at 30 June 2023 there were 28 clients subject to a current CIM who were responsible for 37 children in their care (21 of whom were school aged children). Of the 28 clients 50% were income managed at 60% whilst duration ranged from 75% for a 6-month duration and 18% for a 12-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.

Voluntary self-referrals from clients to the Commission

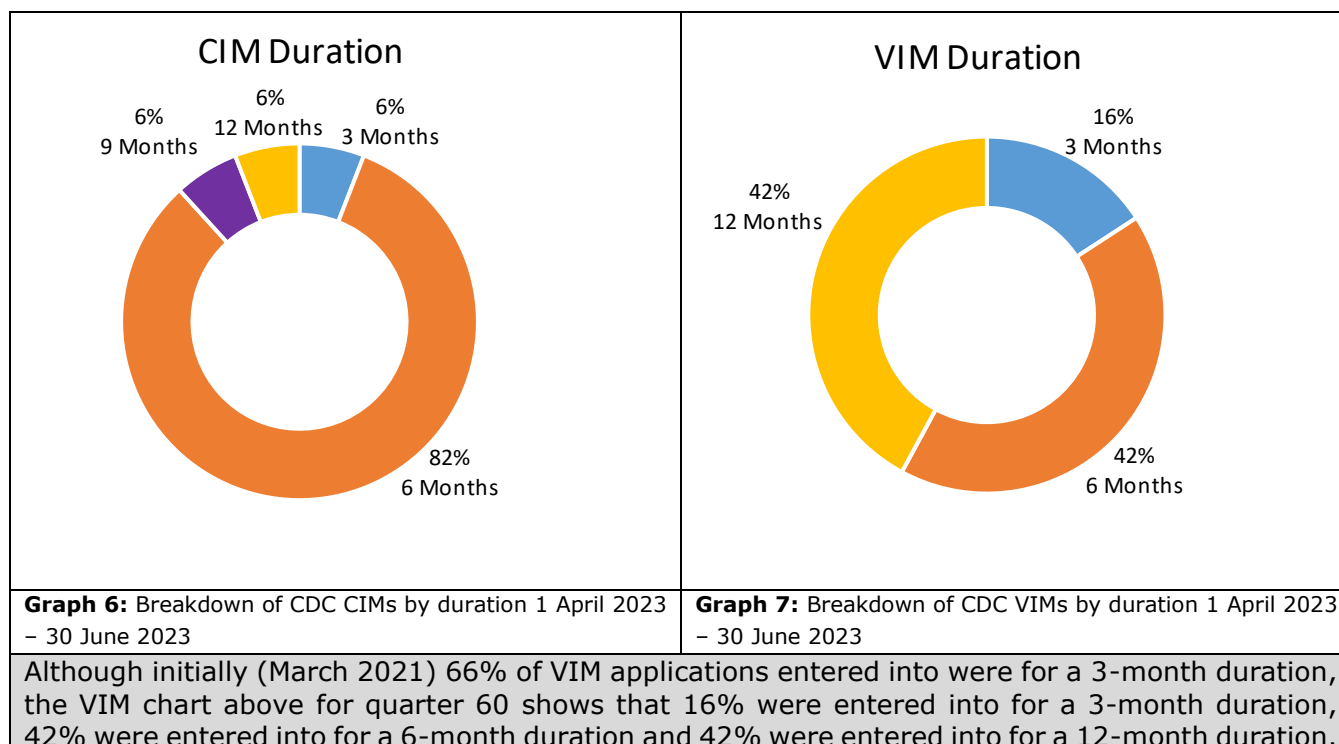
The FRC Act sets out a process under which a community member can voluntarily seek help from the Commission for a referral to a community support service through a voluntary case plan (VCP) or be subject to voluntary income management (VIM). During quarter 60, 15 VCPs were entered into for 17 community support services under a case plan relating to 15 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*.

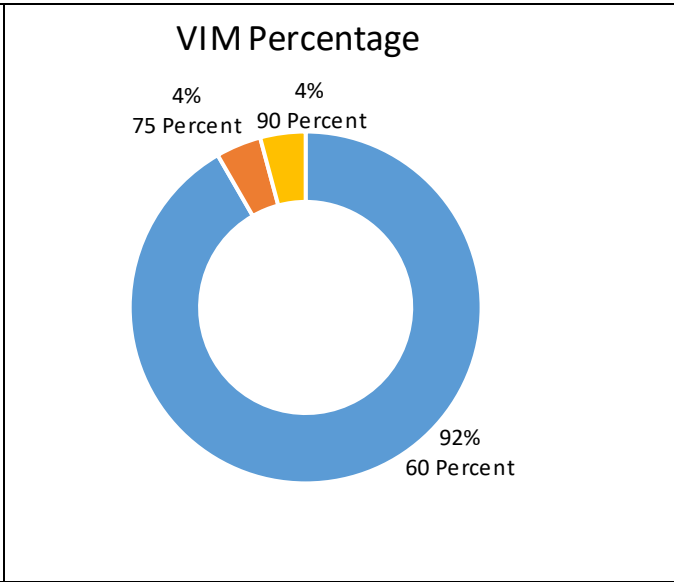
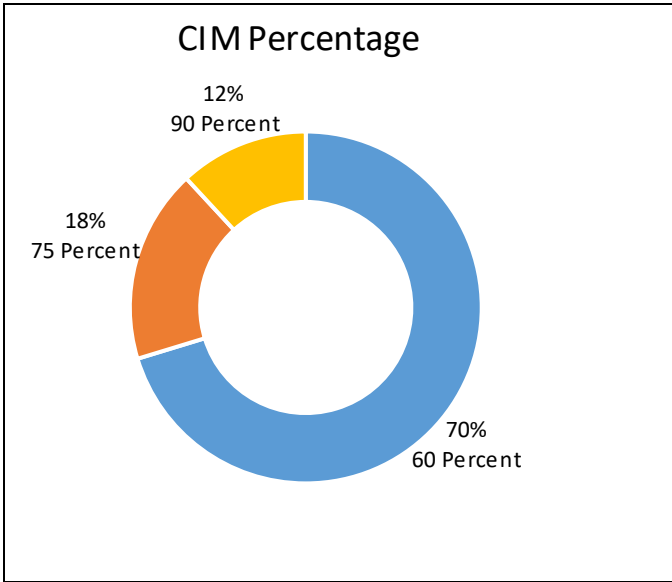
Voluntary Income Management

During this reporting period the Commission processed 24 VIM agreements with 92% of agreements quarantining 60% of welfare payments (see graph 9) and 42% set for a duration of both 6 months and 12 months (see graph 7). As at 30 June 2023 there were 66 clients on a current VIM agreement who had 50 children in their care (32 of whom were school aged children).

Status of the SmartCard in FRC Communities for quarter 60

Forty-one SmartCards (17 for CIM and 24 for VIM) were processed for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023, including orders and agreements that were still awaiting Centrelink action as at 30 June.





Graph 8: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by percentage 1 April 2023 – 30 June 2023

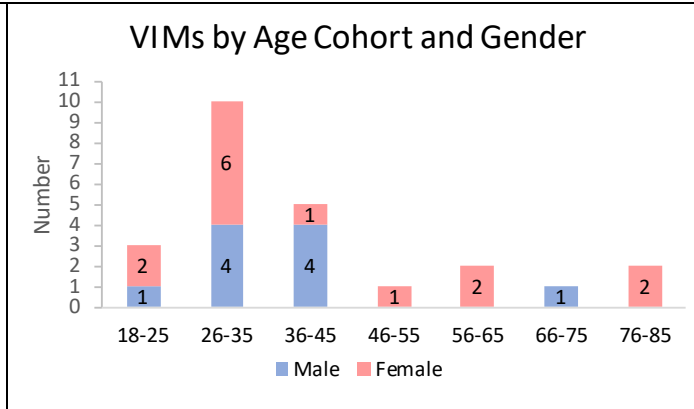
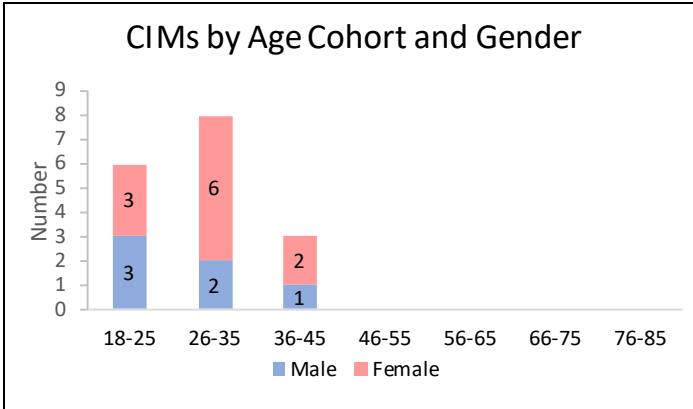
Graph 9: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by percentage 1 April 2023 – 30 June 2023

This quarter saw 70% of CIM orders issued quarantining 60% of a client’s welfare payment, 18% quarantining 75% of a client’s welfare payment and 12% quarantining 90% of a client’s welfare payment. The preference by clients to enter into a VIM at 60% remains the popular option with 92% of VIM agreements entered into at 60% for the quarter.

This quarter female community members accounted for the majority of CIMs with 65% relating to female clients. No community member older than 45 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 26 to 35 year age group. Females accounted for 58% of the VIMs. Overall females accounted for 61% of all SmartCards (voluntary and conditional) in quarter 60.

Reasons for applying for the SmartCard were primarily to buy food (75%), to budget (63%), to pay for bills (58%) and to save for something they needed (38%). Circumstances given by voluntary income management participants when applying for the SmartCard were to support themselves (63%), they liked the SmartCard (63%), they needed to support their families (21%) and they needed to support their children (8%). Please note, a client may choose one or more options to reflect their individual reasons and circumstances for participating in voluntary income management.



Graph 10: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by age cohorts and gender 1 April 2023 – 30 June 2023

Graph 11: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by age cohorts and gender 1 April 2023 – 30 June 2023

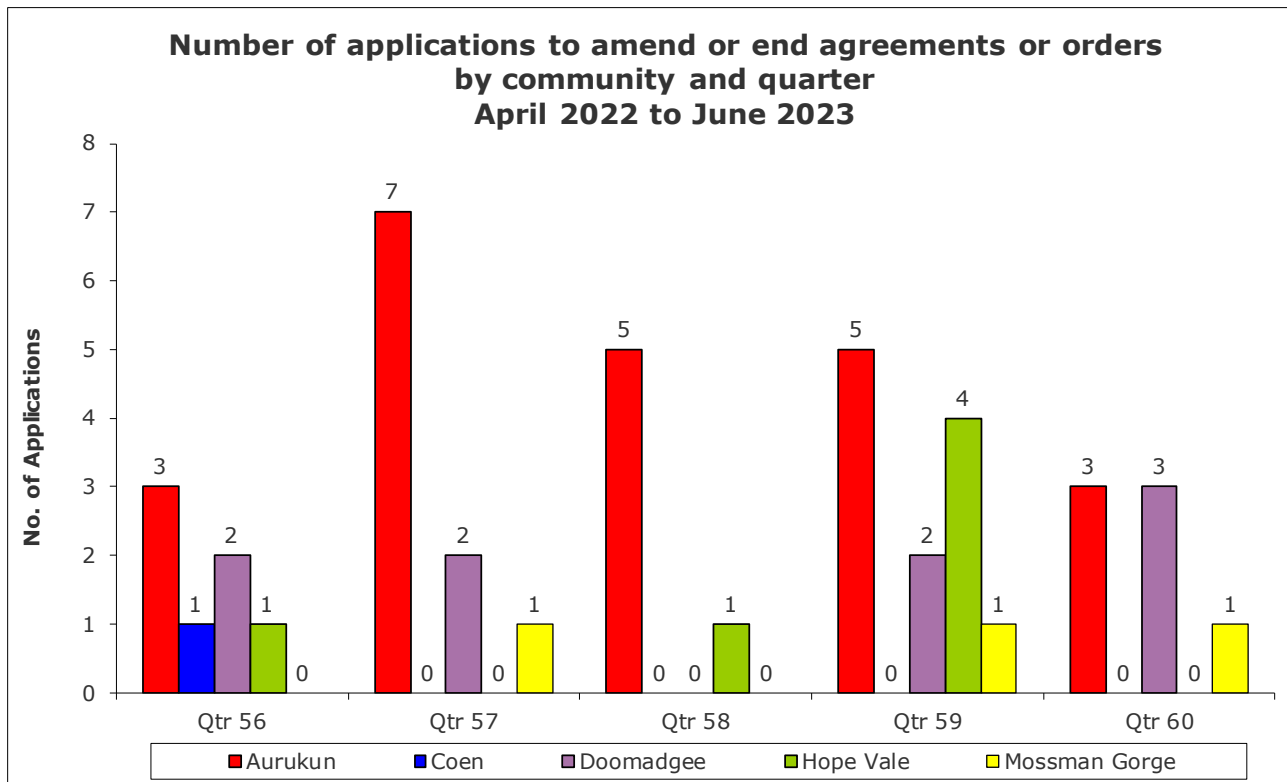
Case Management

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 30 June 2023, 214 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.

Seven applications relating to 7 clients (5 female and 2 male) to amend or end an Agreement, Order or Voluntary Agreement were received in quarter 60. 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 April 2022 to 30 June 2023

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 2 amend/end applications for a Family Responsibilities Order (to end a CIM) was decided in quarter 60 with one application accepted and one application refused 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 decisions of the applications is as follows:

- 5 Applications were accepted and voluntary income management agreements ended.

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 April 2023 to 30 June 2023

Information for the quarter	Female Count	Male Count		Female Average age	Male Average age
Clients for whom a notice was received ¹⁰	445	269		37	38
Clients conferenced ¹¹	136	71		36	37
Clients referred through Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ¹²	55	37		35	36
Clients placed on CIM ¹³	11	6		31	26
Clients referred through a Voluntary Agreement for a case plan ¹⁴	9	6		33	34
Clients who chose to participate in VIM ¹⁵	14	10		43	37
Clients who submitted an amend/end application ¹⁶	5	2		46	36

Estimated resident populations:

Aurukun: The community of Aurukun had an estimated resident adult population of 795 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,18}.

Coen: The township of Coen had an estimated resident adult population of 201 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,19}.

Doomadgee: The community of Doomadgee had an estimated resident adult population of 918 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,18}.

Hope Vale: The estimated resident adult population of Hope Vale was 652 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,18}.

Mossman Gorge: The Mossman Gorge community had an estimated resident population of 101 people as at 30 June 2022^{17,20}.

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.

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 ABS unpublished preliminary Estimated Resident Population (ERP) data by age and sex at the Local Government Area level for 30 June 2022.

¹⁹ 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 2022.

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 ERP data at the Statistical Area level 1 for 30 June 2022.

2. Future Direction and Challenges

Transition to enhanced Income Management (eIM)

As reported in quarter 59, clients who had a CDC in FRC communities transitioned to eIM (the SmartCard) on 6 March 2023. The SmartCard has the same technical functionality as the CDC and clients can use the card at any outlet where there is an eftpos terminal and for shopping online. However, the policy settings attached to the SmartCard do not allow the purchase of tobacco, in contrast to the previous CDC. Local Registry Coordinators have reported that the inability to purchase tobacco products using the SmartCard has resulted in clients on VIM not wishing to renew their VIM agreements. Whilst the Commission encourages and supports clients to pursue healthy habits, it is noted that this may explain a decline in the number of VIM agreements in the last quarter of the financial year when compared to previous quarters.

The new Strategic Plan builds on the FRC's ongoing work to increase voluntary engagement with the Commission. The plan specifically identifies the opportunity to increase options for VIM. When applying to end VIM agreements, a reason often cited by clients is that they would like to have access to more cash. Offering a greater range of options for the percentage of income to be managed, may encourage more people to take up or renew their VIM Agreement. For example, an option of 30 per cent of income quarantined on a SmartCard may still provide a useful tool, while leaving people more cash to spend on discretionary items. The FRC considers this may encourage greater personal responsibility by allowing for a high degree of agency over financial affairs, while still providing protection for a certain amount of money. The FRC will continue to consult with clients and partners to develop and implement measures that may assist in increasing personal responsibility and protecting children and other vulnerable people.

After the discontinuation of the CDC in other parts of Australia, and reports of subsequent increases in alcohol fuelled violence, interest in the FRC model as an alternative started to be shown by other jurisdictions, particularly by the Northern Territory and South Australia. The FRC remains willing to share the insights gained over 15 years of operation, of what is increasingly being recognised as a nuanced and effective model to rebuild social norms through self-determination.

Intensive Case Management (ICM) framework

Since its inception, the ICM framework has further developed to become an integral part of the FRC's work. ICM has proven to be a successful strategy building trusting and supporting relationships with both clients and service providers outside the more formal conference setting. Following a formal review of the ICM framework in early 2023, the goal of the ICM framework is now to provide oversight of case plan compliance by service provider/s and the client, and determine whether the case plan and its goals remain suitable and adequately address issues of concern to the Commission. Adjustments have been made to further clarify the timing of the phases of case management within the framework and improve data collection. Alongside the Manager (Coordination) Local Registry Coordinators have begun to develop their case management capabilities and institute a reflective practice.

The ICM framework is yet to be evaluated in more detail, but anecdotal evidence from clients is that they highly value the more intensive support to access and attend services. Local Commissioners also report that the more frequent and intensive interactions with clients outside of conference seemed to reinforce the supportive nature of FRC interventions, and increased clients' willingness to access services and work towards their goals.

Elevated School Response (ESR) strategy

The issue of poor school attendance rates and educational outcomes for children in First Nations communities, requires a targeted response to identify and overcome complex barriers prohibiting engagement and attendance affecting families.

Disappointing school attendance data towards the end of 2022 reflected the ongoing concern of Local Commissioners about low levels of school attendance, particularly in the Aurukun and Doomadgee communities. This prompted the FRC to design, following feedback from Local Commissioners and clients, and deliver in partnership with local schools, an ESR strategy to identify and case-manage FRC clients whose children are not attending school, or not attending on a regular basis.

The ESR uses an active case management approach to clients who have come to the Commission's attention through the receipt of a notice from the Department of Education in relation to student absences. Most clients are experiencing a suite of chronic issues with intersections between education, child safety and domestic violence.

Participation in ESR predominately follows a conference, in circumstances where a client may have entered into a FRA or been subject to an order and agreed to participate in the ESR program to overcome barriers to school engagement and attendance. Parents may also self-refer to the Commission for assistance and enter into a VCP to be an ESR participant. Clients entering an FRA, order, or VCP are subject to time limited case plans which automatically expire after a period determined by the FRC Act (3 to 12 months). However, clients can agree to a secondary case plan in certain circumstances.

A key part of ESR involves Local Commissioners visiting identified families at their homes, or at family members' homes to engage and initiate connection to school or an education stream appropriate to their needs.

Local Commissioners discuss barriers and offer possible strategies to families to overcome these. Where there has been long term disengagement and disconnection, the FRC applies a multi-disciplinary approach involving other service providers to jointly support clients who are ESR participants to overcome challenges.

Prior to Term 1 2023, the Local Commissioners and Local Registry Coordinators in Aurukun and Doomadgee each developed a response strategy specific to their communities. In Aurukun, for example, the initial focus was on long-term disengaged young people, whilst in Doomadgee, families that already had a case plan referral to School Attendance Officers were prioritised.

Quarter 60 saw Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge implement ESR strategies in Term 2 of 2023. Mossman Gorge's strategy included responding to the wishes of the community by aiming to reduce behavioural issues on the school bus, as well as improving school attendance. Hope Vale's ESR strategy included targeting the early years as well as school aged children, and focussed on families whose children were eligible to start kindergarten and Prep.

More detailed analysis of school attendance data of the students and families targeted by the ESR is ongoing, however early indications are encouraging. The program has also received positive feedback from school staff observing that school attendance 'always increases on the weeks that the FRC and the Local Commissioners are engaging ESR clients and their children'.

Youth crime and the Childrens Court 'trigger'

Media stories about the volume and severity of youth crime have been prevalent over the past year. The Local Commissioners in FRC communities like much of the wider Queensland community, have grave concerns for the trajectory of young people committing crime and the impacts of these crimes on the vulnerable members of their communities.

The Local Commissioners cite disengagement from school, lack of access to appropriate bridging programs, insufficient job-readiness training and vocational education and ineffective interactions with the criminal justice system as reasons for the apparent increase in youth crime in communities.

Local Commissioners and Local Registry Coordinators continue to work with schools, support services, police and youth justice to support young people and their families to make changes to the many factors which impact on antisocial and offending behaviour. However, allowing the FRC to begin receiving Childrens Court notices again could make a significant difference in tackling the complex causes of youth crime in FRC communities.

The Commission has made a number of representations to the Queensland State Government and to the FR Board on 'reinstating' the Childrens Court trigger. It is of course a matter for the Queensland Government to amend relevant legislation in order to restore the ability of the FRC to receive the Childrens Court trigger as intended by the FRC Act. However, in the context of what is a significant challenge and also a great opportunity to make a real impact on the trajectory of young people in FRC communities, those representations are worth repeating in this report.

The benefits to the communities within the FRC's jurisdiction should the Commission be able to recommence conference in relation to the Childrens Court trigger include:

- the opportunity to facilitate greater parental/carer responsibility for the young person's offending
- supporting the child within a legislative framework which can mandate the provision of support services to assist the family and divert the child from a future of court interactions and juvenile detention.

The FRC would be able to provide a holistic and family intervention which is lacking in other jurisdictions where parents are not mandated to shoulder responsibility for their children's offending behaviour. Until legislative amendments are made to restore the FRC's ability to receive Childrens Court notices the Commission will continue to work with partners in community, support evidence-based interventions for disengaged young people and promote employability skills training.

Upgrade of Internet Services at the Aurukun Office

In response to the discontinuation of the existing internet service, the Aurukun office successfully transitioned to a new service provider in May 2023. The upgrade offers increased speed and reliability at a more economical cost, ensuring uninterrupted operations with enhanced communication capabilities. The installation was completed with minimal operational disruption and aligns with our strategic goal of utilising advanced technology to optimise service delivery, thereby reinforcing our commitment to efficient and effective community service at a reduced cost.

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 April 2023 to 30 June 2023) totalled \$1,119,990. This income consisted of:
 - \$622,250 Queensland Government funding
 - \$450,000 Australian Government funding
 - \$47,718 interest received
 - \$22 sundry income.

The balance of available funds in the bank as at 30 June 2023 is \$3,771,215.

Expenditure:

- Expenditure for the quarter (1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023) was \$1,118,368.

Table 11: Expenditure in quarter 60

1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023	Expenditure Qtr 60	1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023	Expenditure Qtr 60
Employee salaries – FRC staff	564,153	Internet & IT	58,255
Employee salaries – Local Commissioners	87,375	Motor Vehicle	9,358
Employee on costs – FRC staff	86,291	Property	29,122
Employee on costs – Local Commissioners	9,802	Travel	46,911
Other employment costs	110,502	General Operating	41,887
Communications	4,065	Other expenses	70,647
		Total	\$1,118,368

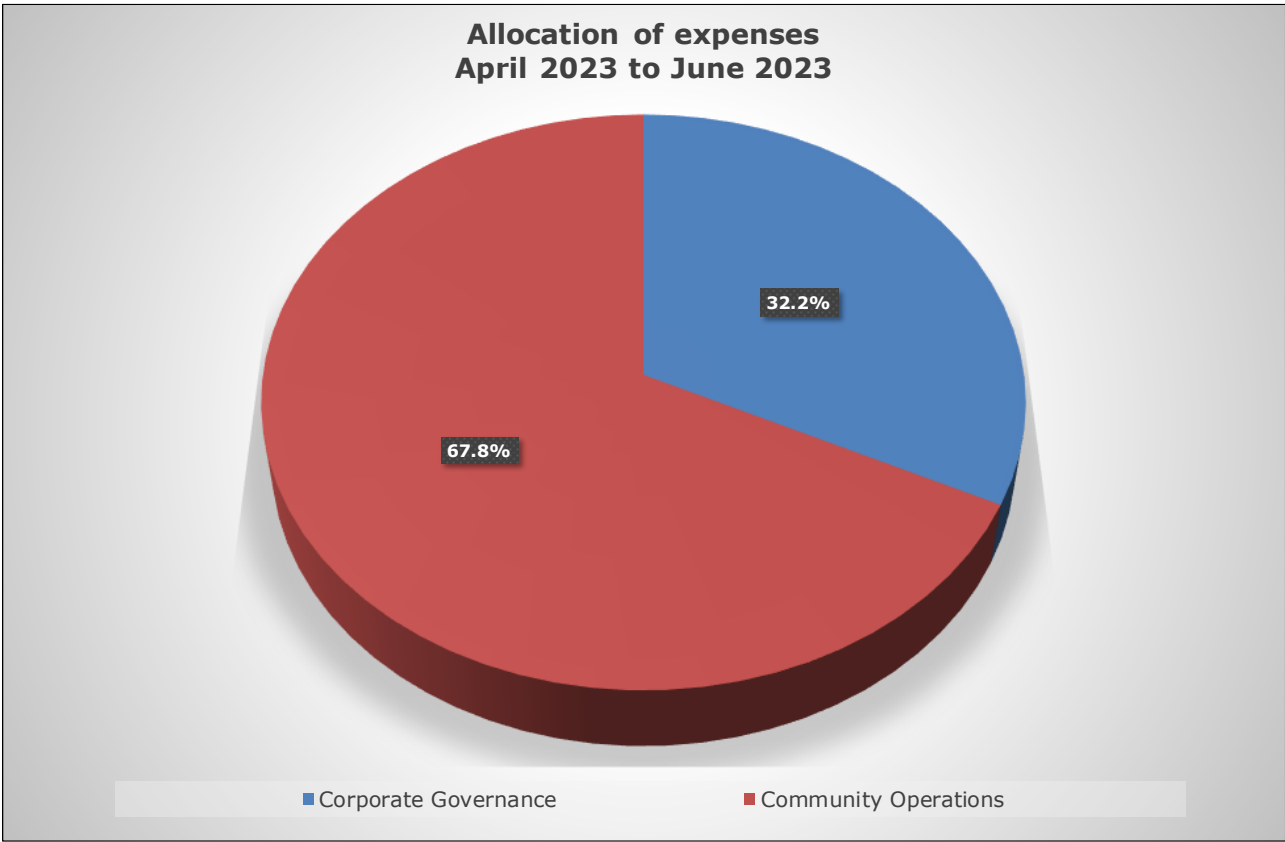
The expenditure of the FRC can be categorised as follows:

- 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 orders and agreements.
 - 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 orders and agreements.
- Corporate governance** includes finance, statistical reporting, corporate governance, compliance, 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

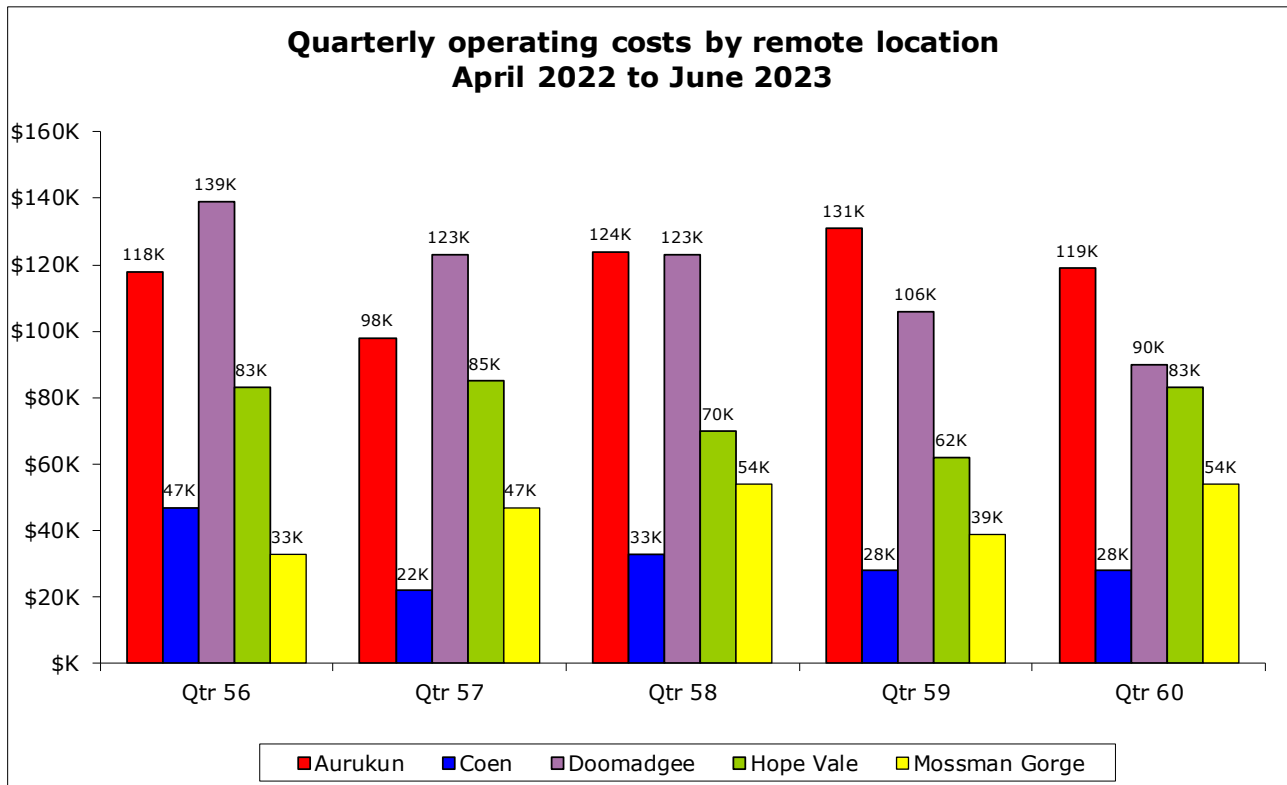
communities, who are paid as sessional sitting Commission members for conferencing, serving notices, meetings and professional development.

As can be observed in Graph 13 below which displays the allocation of FRC costs across the core functions in quarter 60, the largest allocation during the reporting period is in relation to community operations (67.8%).



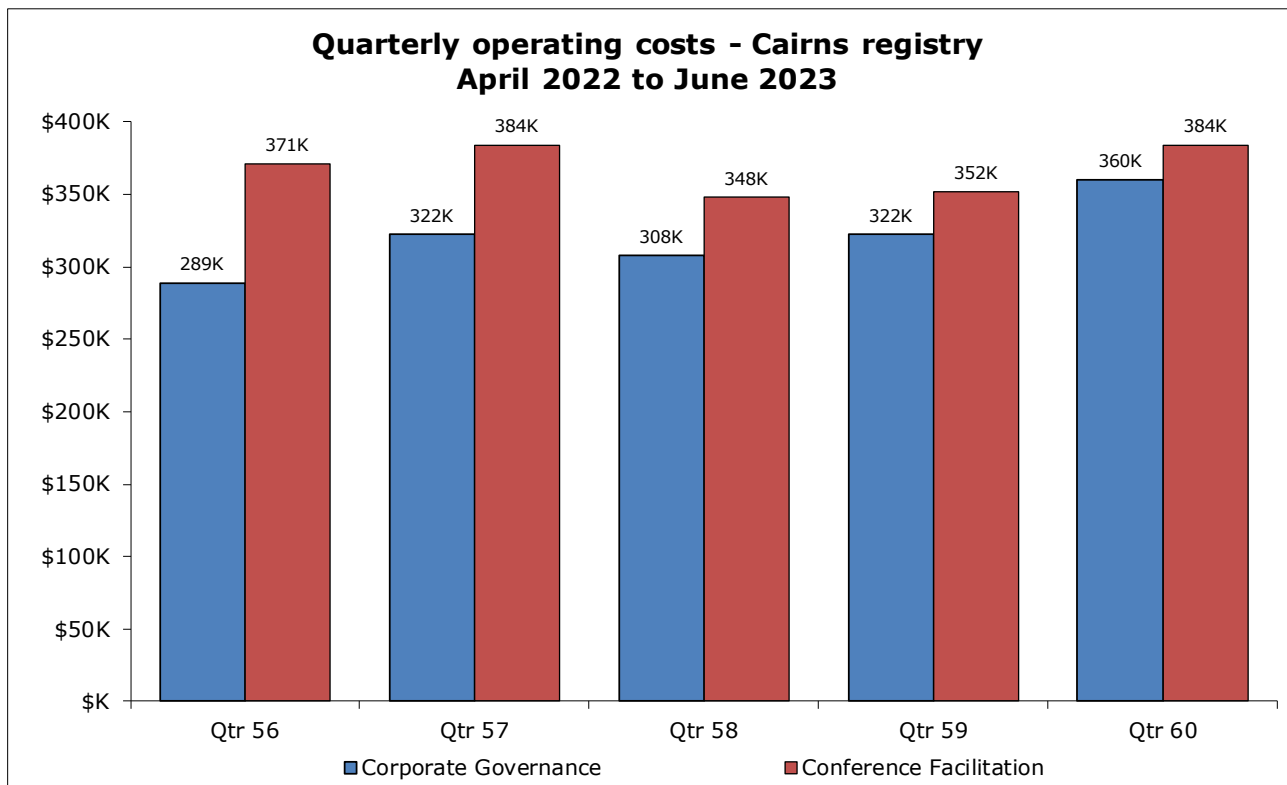
Graph 13: Allocation of expenses 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023

Regional operational expenditure by location and quarter.



Graph 14: Operating costs by remote location 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2023

Cairns Registry expenditure for quarter 60 compared to the previous four quarters.



Graph 15: Quarterly operating costs Cairns 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2023

APPENDIX A



**SITTINGS CALENDAR 2023
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION
1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023**



Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
2 January	Public Holiday					Mon 2nd – New Year's Day
9 January						Cooktown – Circuit
16 January						Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
23 January				Public Holiday		Thursday 26th Australia Day
30 January		31	1	2		
6 February		7	8	9 9		Cooktown – Circuit
13 February		14 ICM	15	16 16		Aurukun Cape B Circuit
20 February			22	23 23		Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
27 February		28 ICM 28	1	2		
6 March			8	9		Cooktown – Circuit
13 March						Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
20 March		21	22	23 23		Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
27 March		28	29 29	30		
3 April					Public Holiday	Cooktown – Circuit 7th – Good Friday
10 April	Public Holiday					10th – Easter Monday
17 April		18	19	20 20		Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
24 April		Public Holiday				Tuesday 25th – Anzac Day
1 May	Public Holiday		3	4 4		Monday 1st – Labour Day

Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
8 May		9 9	10	11		Cooktown – Circuit
15 May						Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
22 May			24 24	25		
29 May		30 ICM 30	31	1		
5 June			7	8 8 8		Cooktown – Circuit
12 June		13 ICM 13	14	15		Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee – Gulf Circuit
19 June		20	21			23-24 Mount Isa Show
26 June						

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)	Nicola Gibbon	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
Acting Aurukun Local Registry Coordinator	Cara Marks	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