

Family Responsibilities Commission

Report to the Family Responsibilities Board

Quarterly Report

No. 65

July 2024 to September 2024



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 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 July to September 2024.

Quantified in the table below are the activities undertaken by the Commission during quarter 65 with comparisons shown to the previous quarter.

Table 1: Activity from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024

Activity for the quarter	Qtr 64	Qtr 65
Total number of notices received by the Commission ²	1,872	1,806
Number of notices within jurisdiction	1,280	1,225
Number of notices not within jurisdiction	592	581
Number of clients notified to the Commission from notices within jurisdiction	667	698
Conferences		
Conferences conducted	201	176
Number of clients served to attend conference	172	153
Attendance percentage for conferences	76%	61%
Non-attendance percentage with acceptable (reasonable) excuse for conferences	40%	34%
Conference outcomes		
Agreements to attend community support services	64	36
Orders made to attend community support services	19	16
Referrals to service providers from Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ³	98	60
Agreements for Conditional Income Management (CIM)	0	0
Orders made for CIM	4	12

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 64	Qtr 65
Conferences for domestic violence matters	38	25
Referrals from domestic violence conferences	34	13
CIM's from domestic violence conferences	0	1
Amend/end decisions for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders		
Number of amend/end decisions for Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders	0	2
Accepted	N/A	100%
Refused	N/A	0%
Voluntary Agreements		
Voluntary agreements for a voluntary case plan (VCP)	58	13
Voluntary referrals to service providers	61	14
Voluntary agreements for Voluntary Income Management (VIM)	33	13
Amend/end decisions for Voluntary Agreements		
Number of amend/end decisions for Voluntary Agreements	6	7
Accepted	83%	57%
Refused	17%	43%
Other activity		
Applications to Amend or End received	7	9
Information as at the last day of the quarter		
Number of clients case-managed through current non-voluntary case plan	175	126
Number of clients subject to a current CIM	13	14
Number of clients on a current VIM	63	51

Quarterly trends

Quarter 65 presented a very challenging time for the Commission with an unprecedented shortages of Registry staff and availability of Local Commissioners. This resulted in fewer conferences held and client engagement activities undertaken.

Twelve Conditional Income Management (CIM) orders were issued in the reporting period after the Commission was satisfied that as a decision of last resort, it was in the best interest and wellbeing of children to do so. 8 of these CIM orders were attributable to school attendance matters.

It should be noted however, that CIM orders were issued to only 8.5% of clients the FRC interacted with in the quarter. Almost half (46.2%) of client interactions during the quarter resulted in some form of agreement with the FRC.⁴ As a subset of this number, 38% of clients specifically entered into a voluntary agreement.

⁴ Including clients who self-referred to the FRC for a VCP or a VIM; entered into a Family Responsibilities Agreement or successfully applied to end or amend their decision by order or agreement.

Annual Report

During quarter 65, much work occurred in the drafting and publishing the Commission's 2023-24 Annual Report which is required to be provided to the Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts by 31 October 2024.

FRCQ Website

The FRC's ICT Team upgraded its public-facing website, including updates to its hosting and content management system. This update included introducing multi-factor authentication to increase protection for the website content.

Estimates Hearings

During the quarter, Commissioner Williams and members of the Executive Management Team prepared for and attended the public estimates hearing of the Community Support and Services Committee on 31 July 2024.

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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 September 2024.

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 65, 626 clients (90%) were notified to the Commission with only one type of trigger notice. The remaining 72 clients (10%) received more than one type of trigger notice.

Table 2: Number of clients by number of different types of agency notices received 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024

Type of Different Types of Agency Notices Received	Number of clients
1	626
2	62
3	10
4	0
Total	698

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

- 65% received a school attendance (EQ) notice
- 14% received a Magistrates Court (MAG) notice
- 5% received a domestic violence order (DVO) notice
- 4% received a child safety and welfare (CS) notice
- 1% received a District Court (DIS) notice
- 1% received a domestic violence breach (DVB) notice.

The remaining sole trigger notice received for Commission clients during the quarter was 1 client with a school enrolment notice (SEN).

Table 3 shows the combination of trigger notices received for the 72 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 July 2024 to 30 September 2024⁵

Type of Agency Notice/s	Number of clients
CS,DVB,MAG	1
CS,DVO,EQ	1
CS,EQ	18
CS,EQ,MAG	4
DIS,DVB	1
DVB,DVO,MAG	3
DVB,EQ,MAG	1
DVB,MAG	8
DVO,EQ	3
DVO,MAG	11
EQ,MAG	21
Total	72

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 of community members 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. Progressively throughout the 16-years of Commission operations, most clients are showing a willingness to accept support and demonstrate a degree of insight into their behaviours.

Shown on the next page 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 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 are demonstrating early insight into the affect those actions have on others.

Table 4: Number of voluntary agreements (where a client has agreed to a voluntary case plan or voluntary income management) entered into from 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024⁶

Voluntary Agreements			
	VCP	VIM	Total
Total	13	13	26

⁵ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on the Table of Contents page.

⁶ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on the Table of Contents page.

Table 5: Number of decisions by agreement (where a client has agreed to a case plan or conditional income management) entered into from 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024⁶

Decisions by Agreement			
Community	CP	CIM	Total
AU	19	0	19
CO	1	0	1
DM	9	0	9
HV	7	0	7
MG	0	0	0
Total	36	0	36

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 July 2024 to 30 September 2024⁶

Community	CCP	CCP & CIM Concurrently	CCP, CIM, Rescheduled	CCP, Rescheduled	CIM	CIM, Rescheduled	No Further Action	Recommend Support Service	Reprimand	Total
AU	2	3	1	0	1	0	4	15	1	27
CO	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
DM	4	0	1	1	3	1	1	22	0	33
HV	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	6
MG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	4	3	1	4	1	9	37	1	68

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 July 2024 to 30 September 2024⁶

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	1	1	0	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 July 2024 to 30 September 2024⁷

Decisions of Voluntary Amend/End Applications				
Community	VIM Amend	VIM End	VIM No Further Action	Total
Total	2	2	3	7

During quarter 65 the number of interactions highlighted in tables 4 to 8 related to a total of 130 clients (97 female and 33 male). To clarify the variability of client interactions, the following may occur during the reporting period:

- A client may be placed on a case plan at the beginning of the quarter to one service provider and then referred to another service provider later in the same quarter.
- A client may be placed on a CIM order 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.

⁷ Refer to the descriptions of abbreviations on the Table of Contents page.

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 65 reinforce the Commission's belief that a cohort of our clients are displaying a willingness to change and taking personal responsibility for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their families. The following highlights for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024 support our assertion:

- 46.2% 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, 38% of clients specifically entered into a voluntary agreement;
- 34.6% 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;
- 0.8% of clients were issued with a reprimand with or without a decision for no further action or recommendation to attend a support service.

There also 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 this cohort of clients:

- 6.9% of clients were ordered to attend a support service under a case plan;
- 3.1% of clients were placed on a CIM order;
- 5.4% of clients were placed on a CIM order and ordered to attend a support service.

Notices

In quarter 65 the Commission received 1,806 agency notices⁸. Some individuals may have been the subject of more than one agency notice. Of that figure 1,225 notices (68%) relating to 698 clients were within the Commission's jurisdiction, and 581 notices (32%) were outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

Table 9: Notices in jurisdiction by type and community 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024

Type of Notice	AU	CO	DM ⁹	HV	MG	Total
Supreme Court notices	0	0	0	0	0	0
District Court notices	15	0	0	1	0	16
Magistrates Court notices	233	23	0	54	9	319
Domestic Violence Breach notices	11	1	0	17	0	29
Domestic Violence Order notices	27	4	0	21	1	53
School Attendance notices	197	30	344	152	26	749
School Enrolment notice	0	0	1	0	0	1
Child Safety and Welfare notices						
Child Concern Reports	21	0	12	7	0	40
Finalised Child Protection Investigations	10	0	1	7	0	18
Housing Tenancy notices	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	514	58	358	259	36	1225

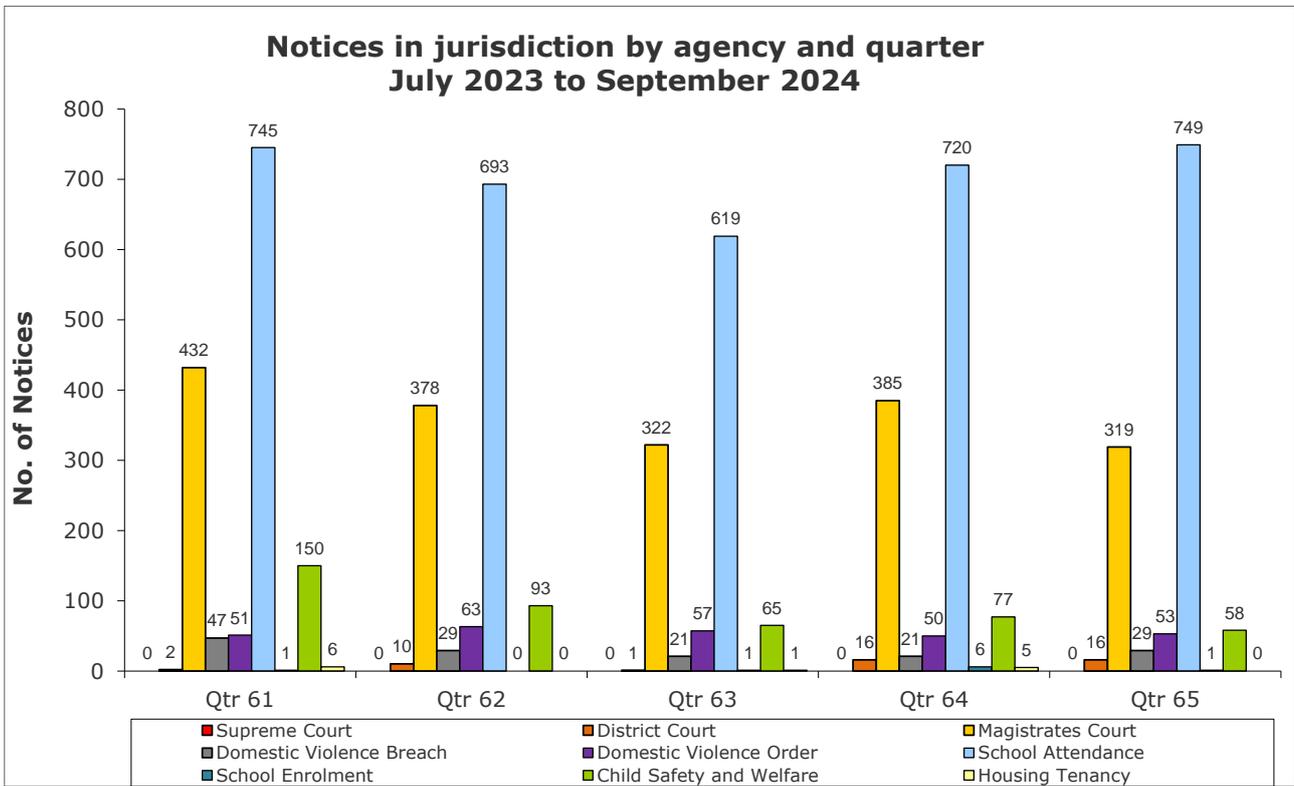
Further details of notices within jurisdiction for each community are set out below:

- Aurukun received 514 notices relating to 261 clients (165 female and 96 male)
- Coen received 58 notices relating to 36 clients (20 female and 16 male)
- Doomadgee received 358 notices relating to 217 clients (157 female and 60 male)
- Hope Vale received 259 notices, relating to 160 clients (96 female and 64 male)
- Mossman Gorge received 36 notices relating to 24 clients (12 female and 12 male).

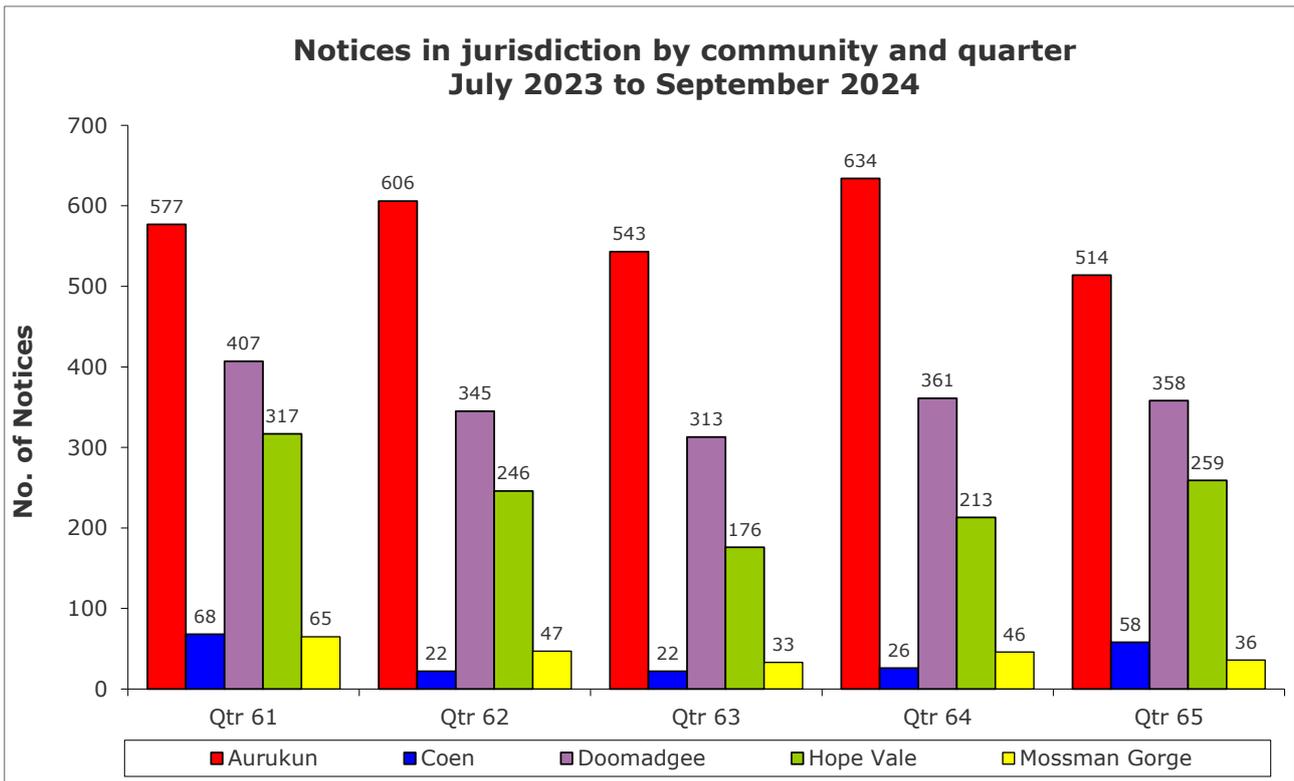
For quarter 65, 41% of clients received more than one notice. This is a drop from 44% of clients in the previous quarter who received more than one notice. Frequently this illustrates multiple child school absences for the one family, or multiple Magistrates Court notices relating to one incident. This 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 (59%) have received only one notice during the reporting period. Twenty-six new clients were added to the Commission's database during the quarter.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.



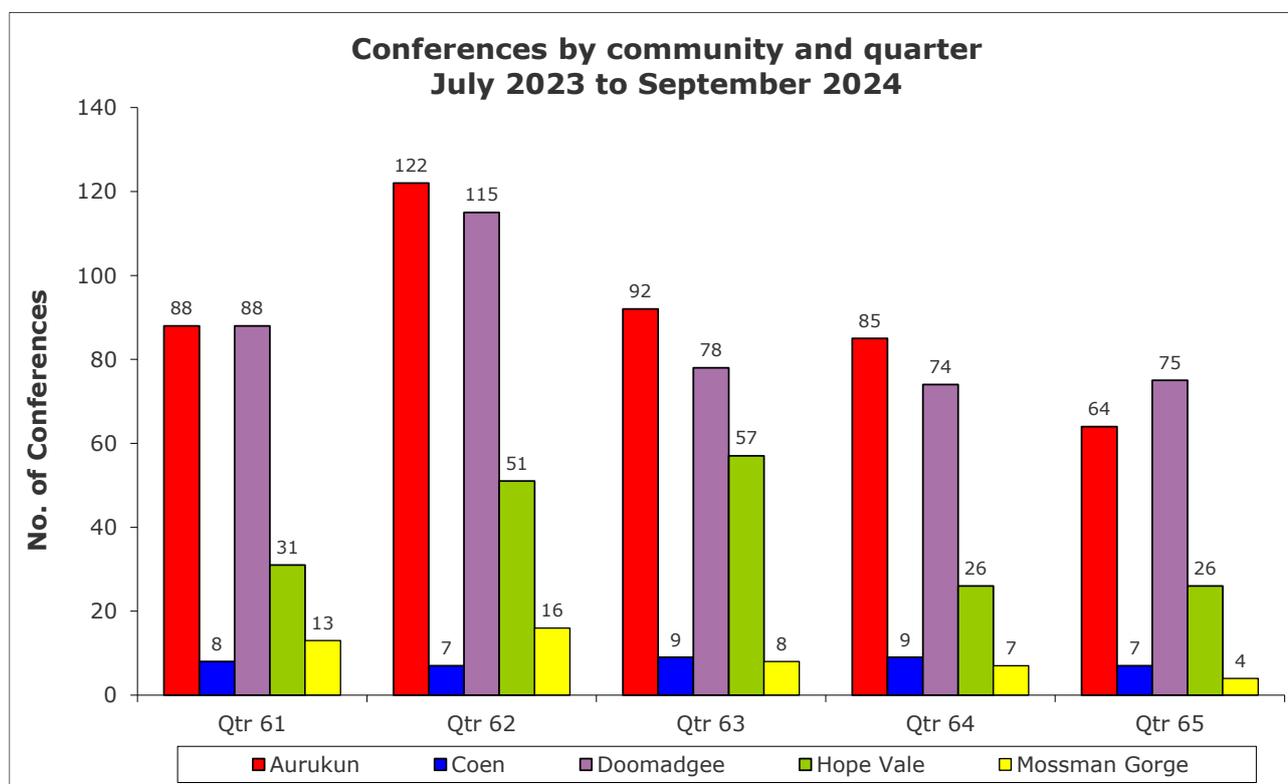
Graph 1: Notices in jurisdiction by type and quarter 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2024



Graph 2: Notices in jurisdiction by community and quarter 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2024

Conferences

In quarter 65 176 conferences¹⁰ were held across the five communities (relating to 153 clients served to attend conference). Attendance at conference decreased from 76.1% in quarter 64 to 61.4% in quarter 65; in part this can be attributed to Sorry Business, community unrest, and the FRC being short-staffed and not having its usual resources available to assist client attendance at conference.

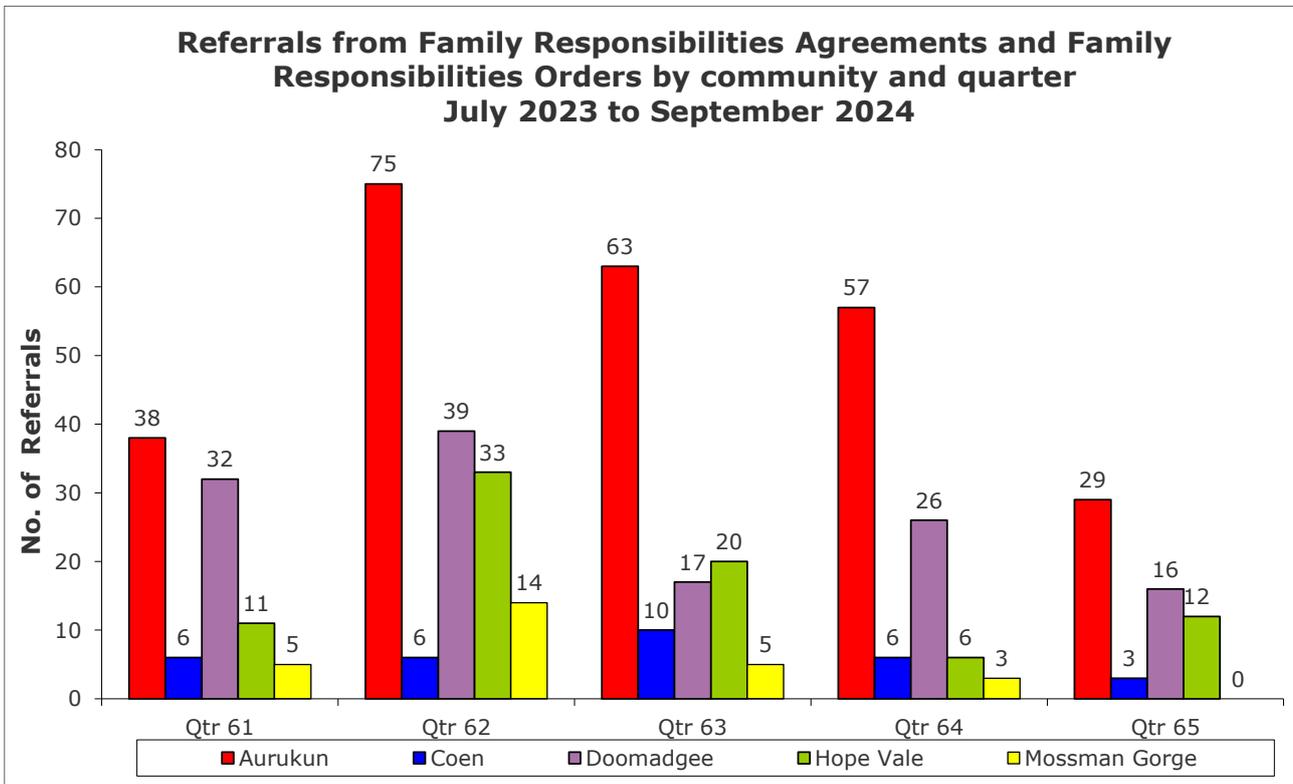


Graph 3: Conferences by community and quarter 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2024

Referrals from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders

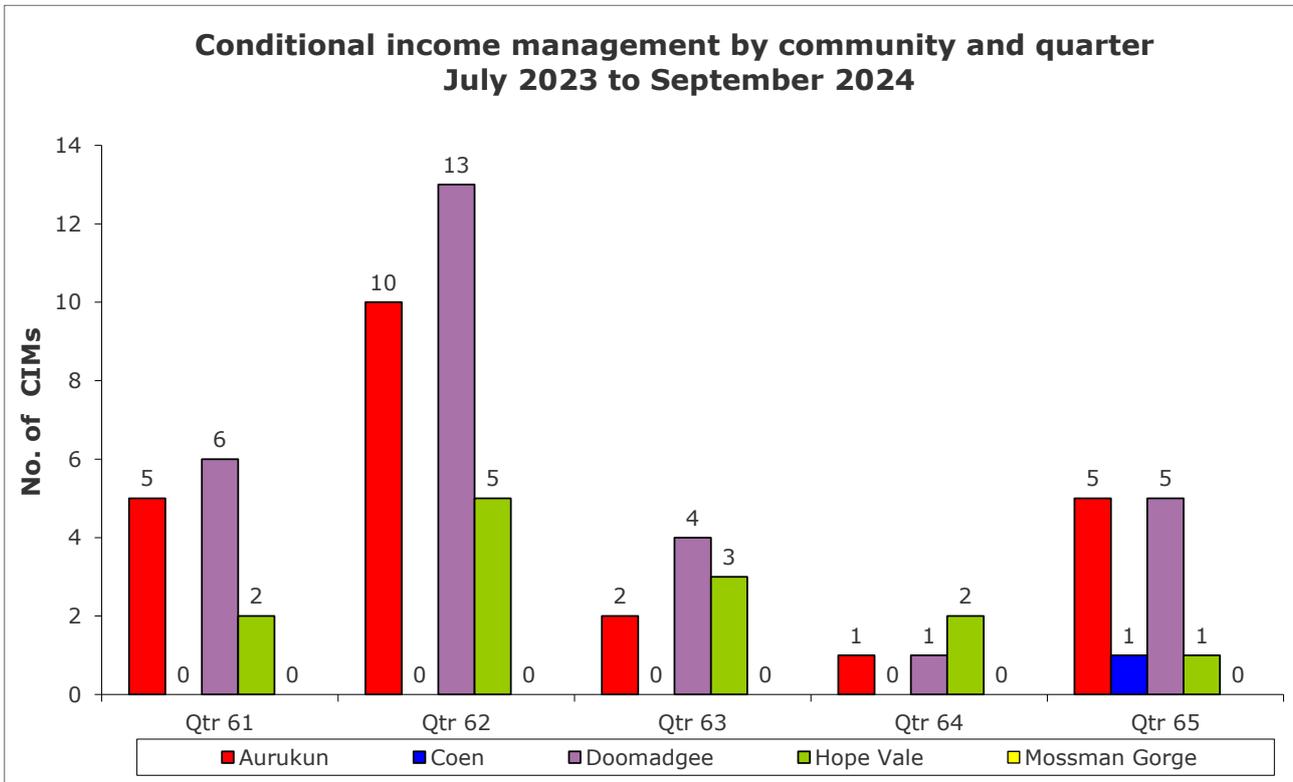
A total of 60 referrals (to service providers from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements (FRAs) and Orders) relating to 52 clients were made in quarter 65. The Local Commissioners continue to raise concerns regarding the availability of appropriate perpetrator intervention programs suitable for client 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.

¹⁰ 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 July 2023 to 30 September 2024

Conditional Income Management from 'Family Responsibilities' Agreements and Orders



Graph 5: Conditional income management by community and quarter 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2024

Local Commissioners continue to use Conditional Income Management (CIM) as a decision of last resort. A total of 12 new CIMs (orders) relating to 12 clients were made in quarter 65 with 59% set at 75% quarantining of welfare payments (see graph 8) and 84% set for a 6-month duration (see graph 6).

As at 30 September 2024 there were 14 clients subject to a current CIM who were responsible for 32 children in their care (22 of whom were school aged children). Of the 14 clients 14% were income managed at 60%, 57% were income managed at 75% and 29% were income managed at 90% whilst duration ranged from 7% for a 3-month duration, 86% for a 6-month duration and 7% for a duration of 12 months. 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

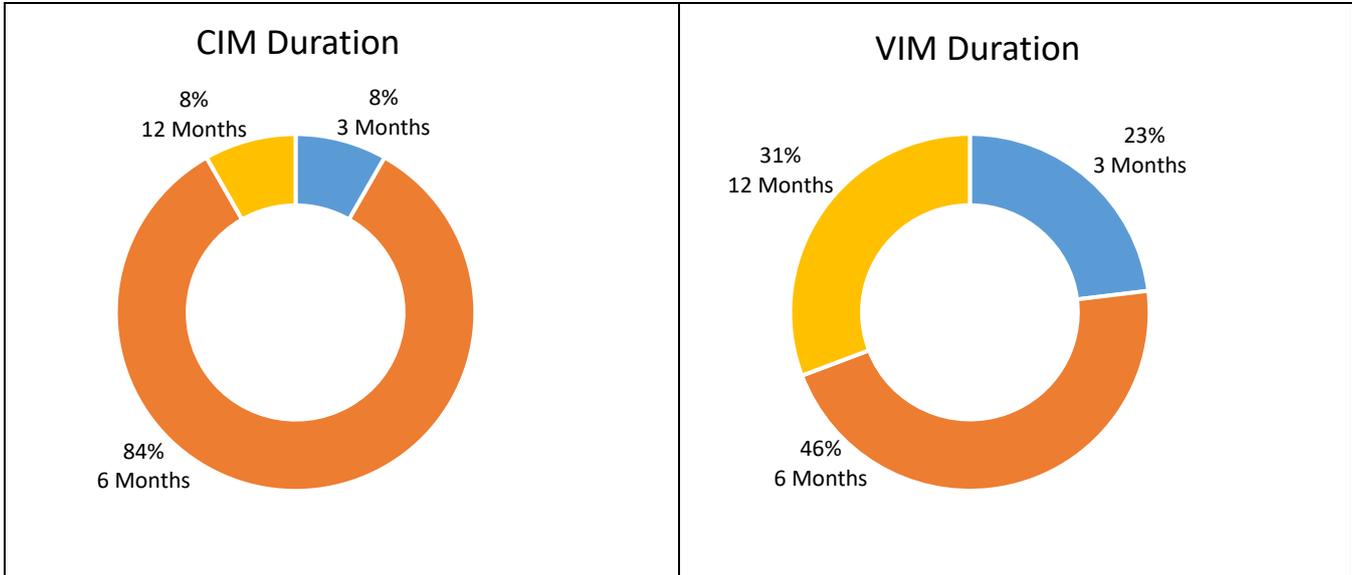
The FRC Act sets out a process under which a community member can voluntarily seek help from the Commission for a referral to a community support service through a voluntary case plan (VCP) or be subject to voluntary income management (VIM). During quarter 65, 13 VCPs were entered into for 14 community support services under a case plan relating to 13 clients.

Voluntary Income Management

During this reporting period the Commission processed 13 VIM agreements with 69% of agreements quarantining 60% of welfare payments (see graph 9) and 46% set for a duration of 6 months (see graph 7). As at 30 September 2024 there were 51 clients on a current VIM agreement who had 59 children in their care (33 of whom were school aged children).

Status of the SmartCard in FRC Communities for quarter 65

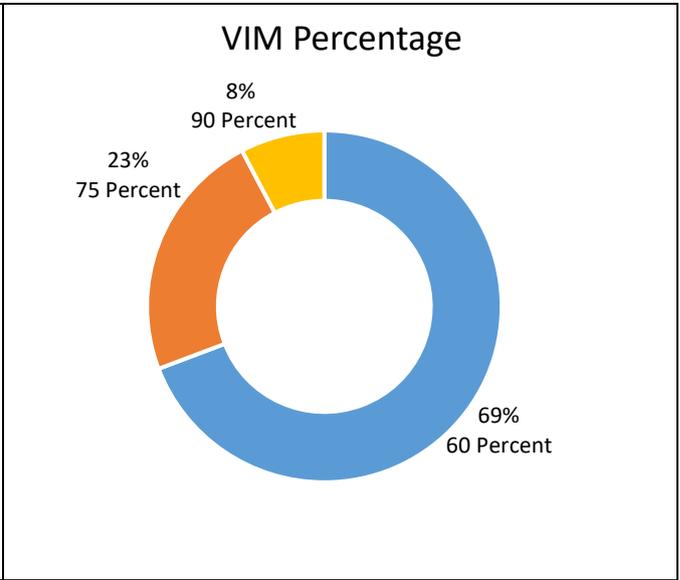
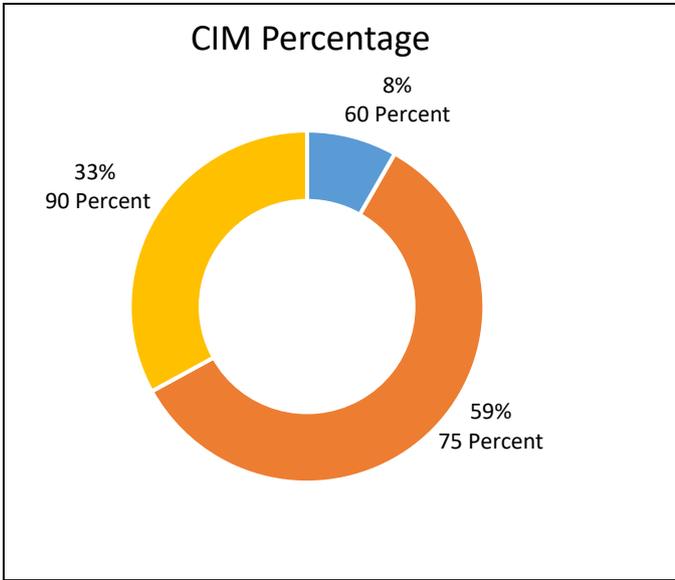
Twenty-five SmartCards (12 for CIM and 13 for VIM) were processed for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024, including orders and agreements that were still awaiting Centrelink action as at 30 September.



Graph 6: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by duration 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024

Graph 7: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by duration 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024

Although initially (March 2021) 66% of VIM applications entered into were for a 3-month duration, the VIM chart above for quarter 65 shows that 23% were entered into for a 3-month duration, 46% were entered into for a 6-month duration and 31% were entered into for a 12-month duration.



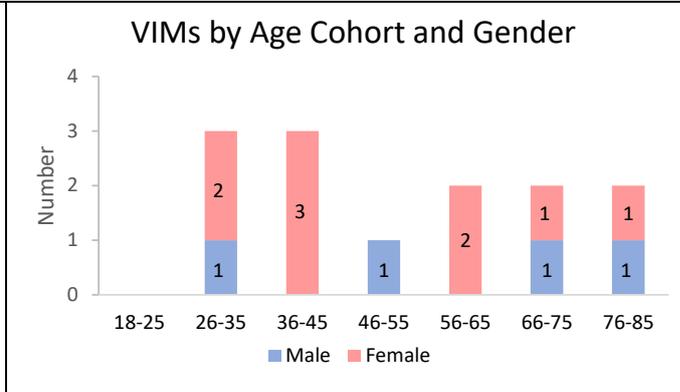
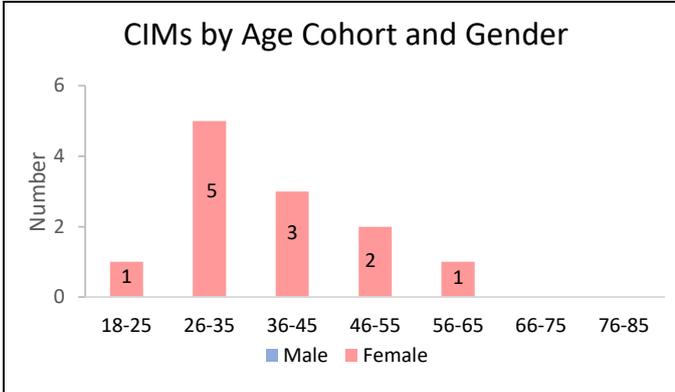
Graph 8: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by percentage 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024

Graph 9: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by percentage 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024

This quarter saw 8% of CIM orders issued quarantining 60% of a client’s welfare payment with 59% quarantining 75% of a client’s welfare payment and 33% quarantining 90% of a client’s welfare payment. The preference by clients to enter into a VIM at 60% remains the popular option with 69% of VIM agreements entered into at 60% for the quarter.

This quarter female community members accounted for all of the CIMs. 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 26 to 35 year age group and the 36 to 45 year age group. Females accounted for 69% of the VIMs. Overall females accounted for 84% of all SmartCards (voluntary and conditional) in quarter 65.



Graph 10: Breakdown of CDC CIMs by age cohorts and gender 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024

Graph 11: Breakdown of CDC VIMs by age cohorts and gender 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024

Reasons for applying for the SmartCard were primarily to save for something they needed (85%), to budget (69%), to buy food (69%), to pay for bills (69%) and to protect their payments (23%). Circumstances given by voluntary income management participants when applying for the SmartCard were to support themselves (85%), they needed to support their families (31%), they needed to support their children (46%) and they liked the SmartCard (38%). Please note, a client may choose one or more options to reflect their individual reasons and circumstances for participating in voluntary income management.

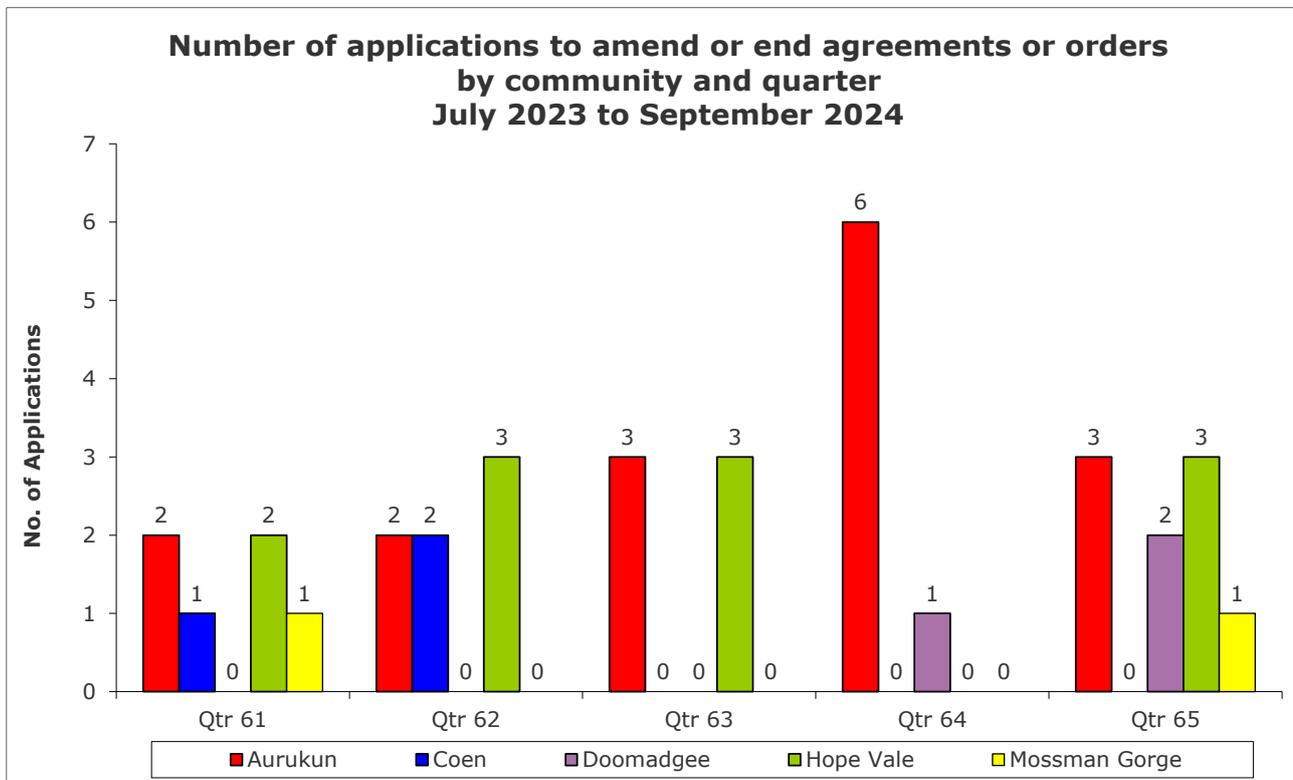
Case Management

Commissioners are guided by the FRC Act, sections 4 and 5, to encourage community members to engage in socially responsible standards of behaviour, 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 September 2024, 126 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.

Nine applications relating to 8 clients (8 female and 0 male) to amend or end an Agreement, Order or Voluntary Agreement were received in quarter 65. 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 July 2023 to 30 September 2024

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 (1 to amend a CIM and 1 to end a CIM) were decided in quarter 65 with the applications accepted by the FRC.

Seven amend/end applications for voluntary agreements were decided in the reporting period with 4 of the 7 applications made by clients accepted by the FRC. A breakdown of the accepted decisions of the applications is as follows:

- 2 Applications were accepted and voluntary income management agreements ended.
- 2 Applications were accepted and voluntary income management agreement amended from 75% to 60% for the remaining period of the existing 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 July 2024 to 30 September 2024

Information for the quarter	Female Count	Male Count	Female Average age	Male Average age
Clients for whom a notice was received ¹¹	450	248	37	38
Clients conferenced ¹²	111	42	37	39
Clients referred through Family Responsibilities Agreements and Family Responsibilities Orders ¹³	35	17	36	36
Clients placed on CIM ¹⁴	12	0	38	0
Clients referred through a Voluntary Agreement for a case plan ¹⁵	9	4	33	29
Clients who chose to participate in VIM ¹⁶	9	4	49	57
Clients who submitted an amend/end application ¹⁷	8	0	42	0

Estimated resident populations:

Aurukun: The community of Aurukun had an estimated resident adult population of 808 people as at 30 June 2023^{18,19}.

Coen: The township of Coen had an estimated resident adult population of 204 people as at 30 June 2023^{18,20}.

Doomadgee: The community of Doomadgee had an estimated resident adult population of 918 people as at 30 June 2023^{18,19}.

Hope Vale: The estimated resident adult population of Hope Vale was 667 people as at 30 June 2023^{18,19}.

Mossman Gorge: The Mossman Gorge community had an estimated resident population of 102 people as at 30 June 2023^{18,21}.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Average age of a CIM client for the quarter is calculated at the first conference date held where the client was placed on a CIM during the quarter.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Average age of a VIM client for the quarter is calculated at the start date of the agreement where the client was placed on a VIM during the quarter.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Note: Australian Statistical Geography Standard Edition 3, July 2021 – June 2026 boundaries for local government areas of Aurukun, Doomadgee and Hope Vale, and statistical areas level 1 (SA1s) of 31501139616 for Coen and 30604116408 for Mossman Gorge.

¹⁹ Note: Adults 18 years and over provided by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office (QGSO), Queensland Treasury, based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) unpublished preliminary Estimated Resident Population (ERP) data by age and sex at the Local Government Area level for 30 June 2023.

²⁰ 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 2023.

²¹ 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 2023.

2. Future Direction and Challenges

Childrens Court 'Trigger' reinstated by the *Queensland Community Safety Act 2024*

The FRC has reported numerous times in the quarterly reports and other reports on the need to operationalise the Childrens Court 'trigger' again. It is with great pleasure that we can report that during quarter 65, the Queensland Parliament passed an amendment to the FRC Act, as part of the Queensland Community Safety Bill (the Bill) to reinstate the Childrens Court trigger.

Since the issue was again raised with the Family Responsibilities Board at their board meeting on 20 February 2024, the Commission worked closely with the then Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (DTATSIPCA), to advocate within government for the reinstatement of the Children's Court trigger.

This work occurred in tandem with the FRC's public submissions to the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee, and then to the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee. The submissions argued for an amendment to be made to the FRC Act as part of the Community Safety Bill (the Bill) that progressed some of the initiatives identified by the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee. With the support of Kathy Parton, (then) Deputy Director-General, and Clare O'Connor, (then) Director-General of DTATSIPCA, along with former Minister Leeanne Enoch, the amendments requested by the FRC were included in the Bill which was debated and passed on 22 August 2024.

The Explanatory Notes to the Bill acknowledge that the amendments represent the reinstatement of an existing power, and that they are in accordance with the original policy intent of the Childrens Court trigger. The Explanatory Notes also set out that reinstatement of court advice notices for young offenders will enable the FRC to intervene effectively and provide the support or referral of services to families of repeat offenders to address environmental factors that may have contributed to the young person's offending behaviour.

The FRC has begun work to implement the necessary administrative and operational changes that are required to start receiving and dealing with Childrens Court advice notices. The FRC wishes to ensure that all Local Commissioners have the opportunity to receive appropriate training, and to ensure the readiness of service providers, other community stakeholders and clients for this change in the FRC's operations.

The Commission particularly wishes to acknowledge the work of DTATSIPCA officers under the leadership of Kathy Parton to ensure the amendments were included in the Bill in a very short time frame. The FRC also acknowledges the important part played by the Alliance of Guguu Yimithiir People of Hope Vale, by resolving to support the reinstatement of the Childrens Court trigger and promoting that resolution.

The Local Commissioners have also shown unwavering commitment and determination to see this critical issue through to its resolution. The resilience they have shown to keep taking opportunities to advocate for the youth justice trigger, year after year, in the service of their young people, cannot be understated. Their continuing strength and resolve on this issue demonstrates real local authority and self-determination at work. The FRC also acknowledges the ongoing work of all FRC staff to continue promoting and working towards this important amendment.

The amendment to the FRC Act is the culmination of more than 8 years of advocacy, negotiations and hard work by FRC staff, Local Commissioners, and community stakeholders to seek a legislative resolution to the issue that has, since 2016, rendered the FRC unable to properly support young offenders and their families. The Commission looks forward to effectively implementing the Childrens

Court trigger in each of the 5 FRC communities to assist in changing the trajectory of the lives of young people.

Hearing of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into Compulsory Income Management

As noted in the quarter 64 report, the Commission made a detailed submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (PJCHR) Inquiry into Compulsory Income Management. The Commissioner was invited to appear as a witness to the inquiry at a public hearing on 5 July 2024.

Commissioner Williams and Camille Banks, Manager, Compliance and Legal Policy, travelled to Canberra to appear at the hearing in person. The PJCHR, Chaired by Mr Josh Burns MP, asked questions regarding the FRC's process, the proportion of income management administered by the FRC that is voluntary, as opposed to conditional, the measures of success of the FRC, and the availability and effectiveness of support services. Providing evidence at the hearing was an important opportunity for the FRC to explain the FRC's model and demonstrate the positive results that have been achieved with the FRC's proportionate and locally applied model of income management.

During the remainder of the hearing, several witnesses made reference to and showed interest in the FRC's unique model of income management. The FRC's submission and testimony to the inquiry was highlighted as an alternative to other models of income management that have blanket application.

Incident Reporting Form and Process

In July 2024, the FRC implemented a new Incident Reporting Form and Process. The new framework recognises the level of importance the FRC places on incident management and ensures a greater level of line management involvement commensurate with responsibility and accountability.

The new framework also allows for:

- more robust data capture and reporting
- trend and root cause analysis
- an improved level of confidentiality
- tighter controls and improved responses
- clearer language and reduced risk of misinterpretation or misunderstanding
- a guided step by step form including simple tick box options.

Managers and staff received training on the new form and process, and additional training will be rolled out to Local Commissioners in the coming months.

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. During quarter 65 the FR Board's membership consisted of the following members:

- Ms Clare O'Connor Director-General, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (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 July 2024 to 30 September 2024) totalled \$1,246,266. This income consisted of:
 - \$660,500 Queensland Government funding
 - \$515,000 Australian Government funding
 - \$70,746 interest received
 - \$20 sundry income.

The balance of available funds in the bank as at 30 September 2024 is \$ 7,451,546.

Expenditure:

- Expenditure for the quarter (1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024) was \$1,197,049.

Table 11: Expenditure in quarter 65

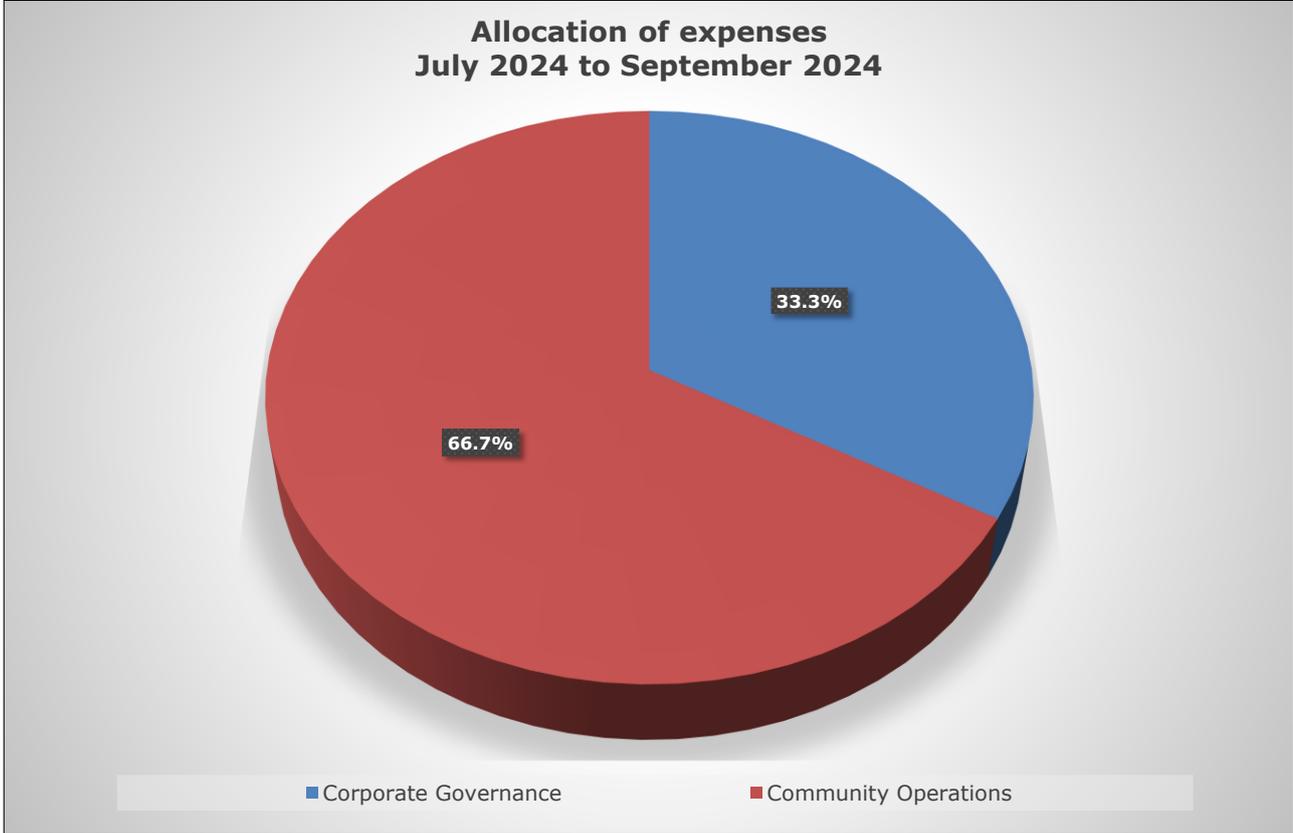
1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024	Expenditure Qtr 65	1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024	Expenditure Qtr 65
Employee expenses – FRC staff	\$772,112	Travel	\$81,469
Employee expenses – Local Commissioners	\$91,192	IT and Communications	\$29,915
Other employment costs (Agency)	\$62,523	Property	\$73,015
Other supplies and services	\$86,823	Total	\$1,197,049

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, IT, training and other administrative functions to ensure the effective and efficient operations of the Commission.

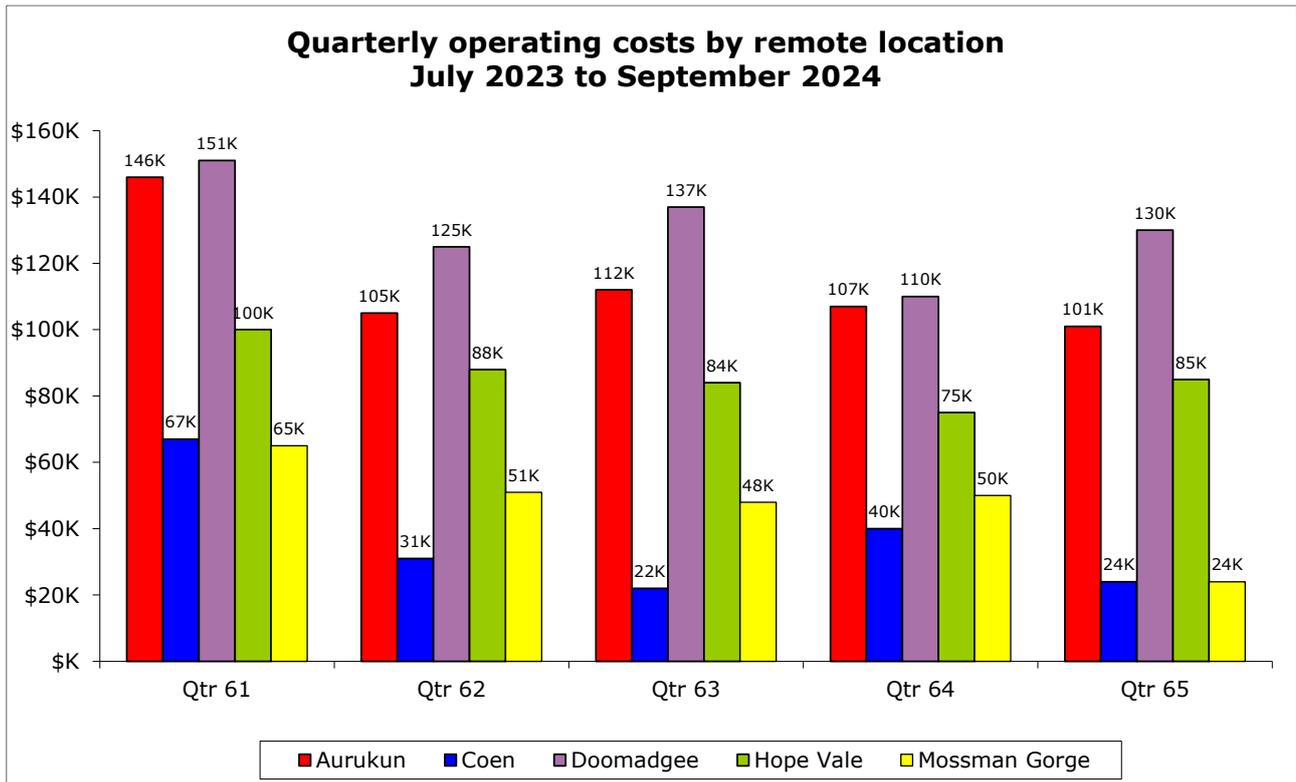
The functions of corporate governance and conference and hearing facilitation are conducted primarily in the registry office in Cairns with frequent visits to community by staff. Community operations are conducted by Local Registry Coordinators and Local Commissioners, resident in their respective communities, 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 65, the largest allocation during the reporting period is in relation to community operations (66.7%).



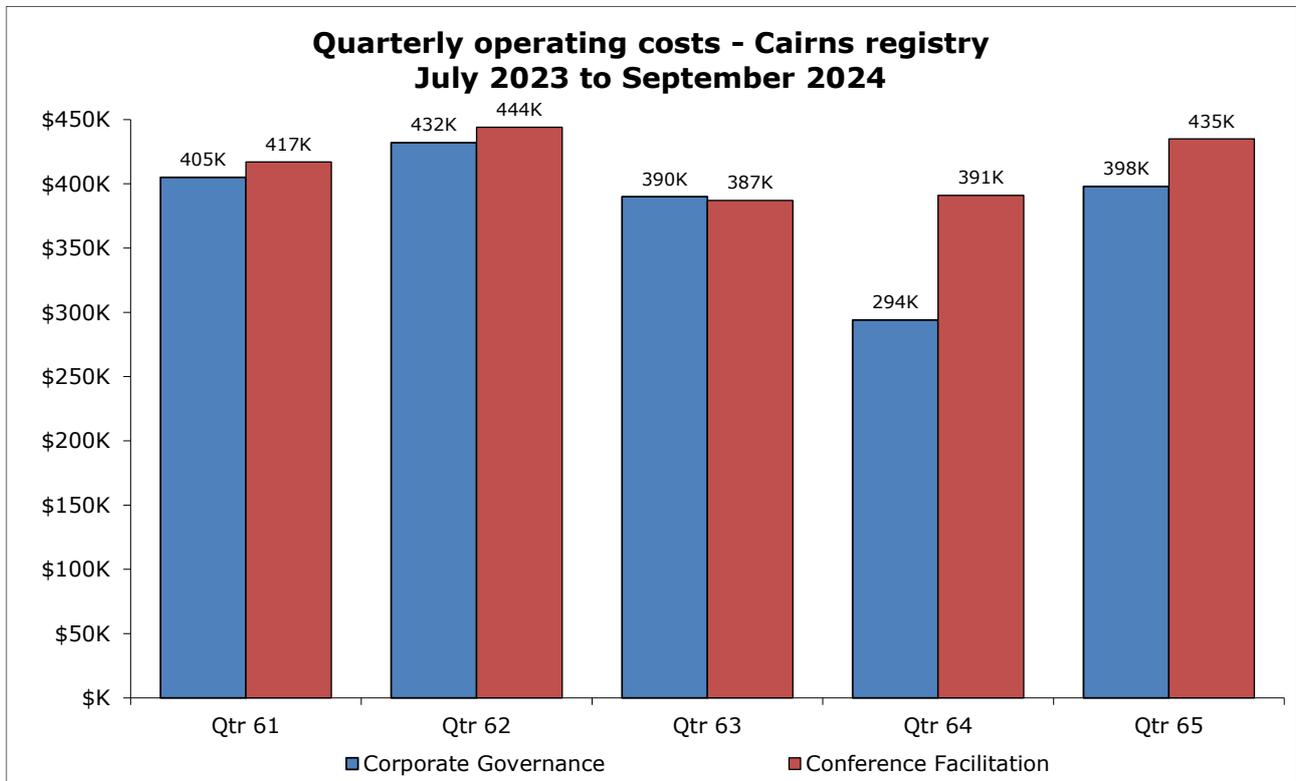
Graph 13: Allocation of expenses 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024

Regional operational expenditure by location and quarter.



Graph 14: Operating costs by remote location 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2024

Cairns Registry expenditure for quarter 65 compared to the previous four quarters.



Graph 15: Quarterly operating costs Cairns 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2024

APPENDIX A



**SITTINGS AND CLIENT ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR 2024
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION
1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024**



Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
1 July						Cooktown Circuit Hope Vale Circuit
8 July	8 CE	9 CE 9 CE	10 Conf 10 Conf 10 CE	11 Conf 11 CE	Special Holiday – DM Only	12 NAIDOC Day - DM Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit
15 July		16 Conf	17 Conf	18 CE	Show Holiday	19 Cairns Show Day Doomadgee Gulf Circuit
22 July	22 CE Show Holiday – MG Only	23 CE 23 CE	24 Conf 24 Conf	25 Conf 25 ½ day CE		22 Mossman Show Day
29 July	29 CE 29 CE	30 Conf 30 CE	31 Conf			Estimates: Friday 26/07/2024 – Thursday 1/08/2024
5 August	5 CE	Special Holiday – AU Only 6 CE 6 ½ day Conf	7 Conf	8 Conf		6 Aurukun Day Special Holiday Estimates: Tuesday 6/08/2024 – Thursday 8/08/2024 8-11 Mount Isa Mines Rodeo Cooktown Circuit
12 August	12 CE	13 Conf	14 CE 14 Conf	15 ½ day CE		Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee Gulf Circuit
19 August	19 CE 19 CE	20 CE 20 CE	21 Conf	22 Conf		
26 August	26 CE	27 Conf 27 CE	28 Conf 28 Conf	29 ½ day CE	Special Holiday – DM Only	Doomadgee Day Special Holiday
2 September	2 CE	3 Conf	4 ½ day CE	5 ½ day CE		Cooktown Circuit Hope Vale Circuit
9 September			11 CE	12 ½ day CE		Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit Doomadgee Gulf Circuit
16 September			Special Holiday – AU Only			18 Aak Ngamparam Special Holiday - AU
23 September	23 ½ day CE	24 Conf	25 Conf	26 ½ day CE		
30 September	30 Training Day	1 Training Day	2 Training Day			Cooktown Circuit Hope Vale Circuit
7 October	Public Holiday	8 CE	9 Conf	10 Conf		7 King's Birthday Public Holiday
14 October	14 CE	15 Conf 15 CE	16 Conf 16 Conf			Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee Gulf Circuit
21 October	21 CE	22 Conf 22 CE	23 Conf 23 Conf			
28 October	28 CE	29 Conf 29 Conf	30 Conf 30 Conf	31 CE ½ day		

Week Beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Other
4 November		5 CE	6 CE 6 Training Day	7 Training Day		Cooktown Circuit
11 November				Youth Justice Training ½ day		Aurukun Cape B & Coen Cape A Circuit Doomadgee Gulf Circuit
18 November	18 CE 18 CE	19 CE	20 Conf	21 Conf 21 CE		
25 November		26 Conf 26 Conf	27 Conf 27 Conf			
2 December	2 CE	3 Conf 3 Conf	4 Conf 4 ½ day Conf	5 ½ day CE 5 CE		Cooktown Circuit Hope Vale Circuit
9 December		10 CE 10 CE	11 CE	12 ½ day Conf		Aurukun Cape B Circuit Doomadgee Gulf Circuit Mossman schools finish 13/12/2024
16 December						
23 December			Public Holiday	Public Holiday		Public Holidays 25 Christmas Day and 26 Boxing Day, 27, 30, 31 Office closed for XMAS
30 December			Public Holiday			1 New Year's Day Public Holiday

LEGEND

	Office Days/School Holidays
	Public/Bank 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 – Acting Registrar	Helen Weedon	4081 8412	0409 461 624	4041 0974
Cairns – Executive Officer (Corporate)	Wayne Massey	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	Cara Marks	4060 6185	0428 985 106	4041 0974
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		4060 9153	0408 482 026	4041 0974
Mossman Gorge Local Registry Coordinator	Kate Gooding	4081 8410	0417 798 392	4041 0974