

Family Responsibilities Commission

*Report to the Family Responsibilities Board and
the Premier of Queensland*

Quarterly Report

No. 3

January – March 2009



*Report prepared by the Family Responsibilities Commission under the
leadership of Commissioner David Glasgow*

Executive summary

After nine months of operation, the Commission has seen some very pleasing changes in the communities it visits.

For example, in Aurukun, community members and Local Commissioners report that the community is a much quieter and nicer place to live since the closing of the Three Rivers Tavern. This is evidenced by a 44.25 per cent decrease in the number of defendants listed before the Aurukun Magistrate Court circuit, as reported by the Coordinating Magistrate in Cairns. Statistics show that for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 April 2008 a total of 678 defendants were listed before the court in comparison to 378 defendants for the same period in the 2008/09 year. There is also evidence of school attendance rates improving in Aurukun with an increase from 46.1 per cent attendance in the first term of 2008 to around 56.1 per cent at the end of term one, 2009.

Local Commissioners report that the level of respect they now receive is much higher than prior to the commencement of the Commission. They are regularly called upon to advise on matters relating to their respective communities and are actively involved in improving community life in areas such as crime reduction, education and health.

Each community is now actively supporting the principles of welfare reform and there has been much stronger support from the Hope Vale Shire Council as a result of a series of meetings held between the Local Commissioners and Councillors of Hope Vale in February 2009.

Primary School attendance rates in Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge remain high and whilst attendance rates at Aurukun are still well below the state average, there has been an increase as mentioned above. There is still unacceptably low attendance of high school aged students in Hope Vale, though this matter is being actively pursued by both the Commission, State and Australian Governments and outcomes will be reported in future reports.

The Commissioner is concerned that, on occasions, he has had to remind service providers and members of the public service of the obligation to not only adopt, but proactively support, the principles of welfare reform and the Commission's role in the communities. Where such action has been necessary, in most cases there have been positive responses with appropriate changes made. There has been consultation with the relevant departments and organisations to ensure matters of concern to the Commission are promptly addressed.

Some matters remain to be resolved with respect to the relationships between the Commission, School Attendance Case Managers and the Department of Education and Training in Aurukun. Further work is also to be done with Cape York Partnerships regarding the performance of Family Income Management services. Discussions are continuing with the responsible agencies.

Up to 31 March 2009, a total of 1250 agency notifications were received that were within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Of that figure 496 Magistrates Court notifications accounted for 39.68% of the total number received and 412 School Attendance notifications accounted for 32.96% with the remaining 342 notifications received (27.36%) comprising of Child Safety and Housing notifications.

Conference numbers continue to grow in Aurukun with 68 held in March. The increase in conferences in February and March reflect the concerted effort of the Commission, as directed by the Board, to prioritise school attendance and child safety matters. Conferences in Hope Vale remain steady with approximately 45 conferences held per month but there remains a large number of clients who fail to attend, resulting in rescheduling of conferences or orders made to conditionally manage the client's income.

At this stage of the Commission's operations it is still too early to comment on any trends resulting from the work of the Commission, however, a comprehensive analysis will be reported upon in the Commission's first Annual Report due in October 2009 and further expanded on in the formal Implementation Review of the Commission, with that report to be delivered to the tripartite partners in late 2009.

Table of contents

1. Context	4
2. Partners / service providers	5
3. Business operations	6
4. Activities / achievements	9
5. Data summary and trends	13
6. Observations / future direction	16
7. Appendices	18

Abbreviations:

ACMs	Attendance Case Managers
ACMF	Attendance Case Management Framework
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CYP	Cape York Partnerships
CYWR	Cape York Welfare Reform
FRC	Family Responsibilities Commission
IT	Information Technology
Also:	
	Family Responsibilities Board (the Board)
	Family Responsibilities Commission (the Commission)
	<i>Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008</i> (the Act)
	Family Responsibilities Commission Registry (the Registry)
	Mr David Glasgow, Family Responsibilities Commissioner (the Commissioner)

Family Responsibilities Commission Cape York Welfare Reform Trial

Report to 31 March 2009

1. Context

The Cape York Welfare Reform (CYWR) trial aims to enable people to transition from passive welfare dependence to engagement in the real economy. This includes increasing individual responsibility through engagement in labour markets (i.e. real jobs) and private property (i.e. home ownership) and limiting the role of governments (federal, state and local) in people's lives to align with that provided by governments in mainstream Australia.

Welfare reform is also about social development. The loss of traditional cultural values and practices has adversely impacted on the social development of Cape York communities (Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge). The CYWR trial aims to rebuild basic social norms that are the fabric of any society - such as sending children to school, abiding by the law, and taking care of one's family or house.

A key plank of the CYWR trial was the establishment of the Family Responsibilities Commission (the Commission). The *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (the Act) was passed in the Queensland Parliament on 13 March 2008 and sets out the statutory obligations of the relevant Queensland departments to notify the Commission where a parent/carer is not meeting the pre-determined obligations. For example:

- The Department of Education and Training must submit a School Attendance Notice to the Commission if a child is absent for three full, or part, days of a school term without reasonable excuse, or where a child of compulsory school age is not enrolled to attend school.
- The Department of Communities, Child Safety Services must submit a Child Safety Notification where the Chief Executive becomes aware of an allegation of harm or risk to a child.
- The Magistrates Court must submit a Court Offence Notice if a person is convicted of an offence.
- The Department of Communities, Housing Services, or the provider of public housing, must submit a Tenancy Breach Notice if they believe that the tenant has breached their public housing tenancy agreement.

The Commission receives agency notifications from the departments mentioned above. Once received, a process is followed where it is determined if the person is within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Upon determination of jurisdiction, the matter is then referred to the Local Commissioners for a decision about whether to order the person to attend a conference.

A conference proceeds where the client may be encouraged to enter in an agreement, or an order is made to refer the person to community support services. The matter is then case managed by the Commission for the period of the order/agreement. Where a person does not comply, show cause proceedings are initiated and the client is ordered to appear before the Commission to explain reasons for non-compliance and if necessary an order for Conditional Income Management (CIM) may be made.

2. Partners / service providers

The Commission has been in operation for a period of nine months and during that time key relationships have been developed between the Commission staff and service providers in the four CYWR communities.

As a result of attendance at a conference, clients either enter into agreements or are directed to attend relevant community support services such as Wellbeing Centres to address alcohol and/or drug misuse, gambling, parenting or health related issues; Family Income Management (FIM) to assist with budgeting and meeting priority needs of the individuals and families; or School Attendance Case Managers to ensure children attend school.

Where a client enters into an agreement or a direction is made, as mentioned above, a case plan is developed. The case plan could include a number of referrals to community support services. Service providers are required to report in writing to the Commission each month, to advise if the client has engaged with the provider and the progress they are making in their case plans.

As a result of the progress reports received, a client's case is analysed to establish whether they are meeting their obligations under the agreement or direction. If not, the Commission's Principal Case Manager recommends that show cause proceedings be initiated.

A total of 441 referrals have been made in the period 1 July 2008 – 31 March 2009 relating to 203 individuals. The Commission is now in the process of case managing those clients to establish whether they are complying with agreements or directions and whether "show cause" proceedings should be initiated where the client is not complying.

As at 31 March 2009, 666 monthly progress reports were outstanding. This is a cumulative figure over the past 9 months and it should be noted that an individual client can be the subject of several reports.¹

A number of issues have been identified that have led to such a large number of monthly progress reports being outstanding, including:

- Difficulties the Wellbeing Centres and Cape York Partnerships (CYP) have encountered in engaging and retaining suitable staff.
- The strategies service providers use to engage and work with the Commission's clients.

This has resulted in client progress not being reported consistently. Discussions have taken place with the relevant management of the service providers and strategies to resolve this issue are being developed. CYP and Royal Flying Doctors Service (as auspice body for the Wellbeing Centres) are currently implementing processes to address the arrears in monthly progress reporting. CYP and Royal Flying Doctors Service have also instigated procedures to record clients on the day of conference to ensure there are no further arrears. CYP and Royal Flying Doctors Service have strategies in place to address this, including ensuring staff are being recruited and that staff are working with clients appropriately to enable progress to be monitored. The numbers of outstanding client progress reports will be closely monitored by the Board.

Another issue is differing views between the Commission and some service providers (e.g. the Wellbeing Centres) as to the method of engaging and prioritising clients referred by the Commission. This issue has also been addressed and similarly further discussions are taking place with the management of the service providers to develop and enforce mandatory internal processes across the four CYWR communities to ensure a mutually agreeable solution.

¹ For example, if a client was referred in August 2008 and no reports had been received by the Commission seven months later on 31 March 2009, seven reports for the same client would be counted as outstanding.

3. Business operations

Operational

In meeting obligations under Part 3 of the Act, the FRC Registry (the Registry) commenced operation in Cairns on 1 July 2008 with a local Registry office now operating in each of the four CYWR communities.

The Registry is managed by the Registrar; with a further eight staff members providing corporate and operational support to the Commissioner and Local Commissioners. The Commission has a Local Coordinator residing in each of the communities.

Staff development and training will be a strong focus for the Registry in 2009 and subsequent years.

Significant logistical difficulties due to the inefficiencies of the current database are being addressed with a thorough business analysis conducted in March 2009. As a result, recommendations for the creation of a new database have been accepted and work is currently underway to develop and implement a new database system.

A continued focus on streamlining internal policy and procedures will result in robust and responsive managerial support of the Commission, communities, staff and service providers.

Financial

The budgeted inflow of funds consists of a Commonwealth Grant of \$3.5 M over four years and \$9.4 M from the Queensland State Government until the expiry of the Act on 31 December 2011. These funds will be supplemented by interest on the Commissions investments and its operational bank account.

Since its inception, the Commission has faced continual challenges in managing its budget to effectively service these remote locations. There have been numerous challenges associated with staff and office accommodation, transport, communications and logistics.

Income:

- The budget for the year 2008/09 is estimated to be \$3.765 M. This includes Queensland Government funding of \$2.5 M, Australian Government funding of \$1 M, \$0.169 M estimated in Interest and \$0.096 M funding received from the Service Procurement Fund to offset the Principal Case Manager's salary and on-costs.

Expenditure:

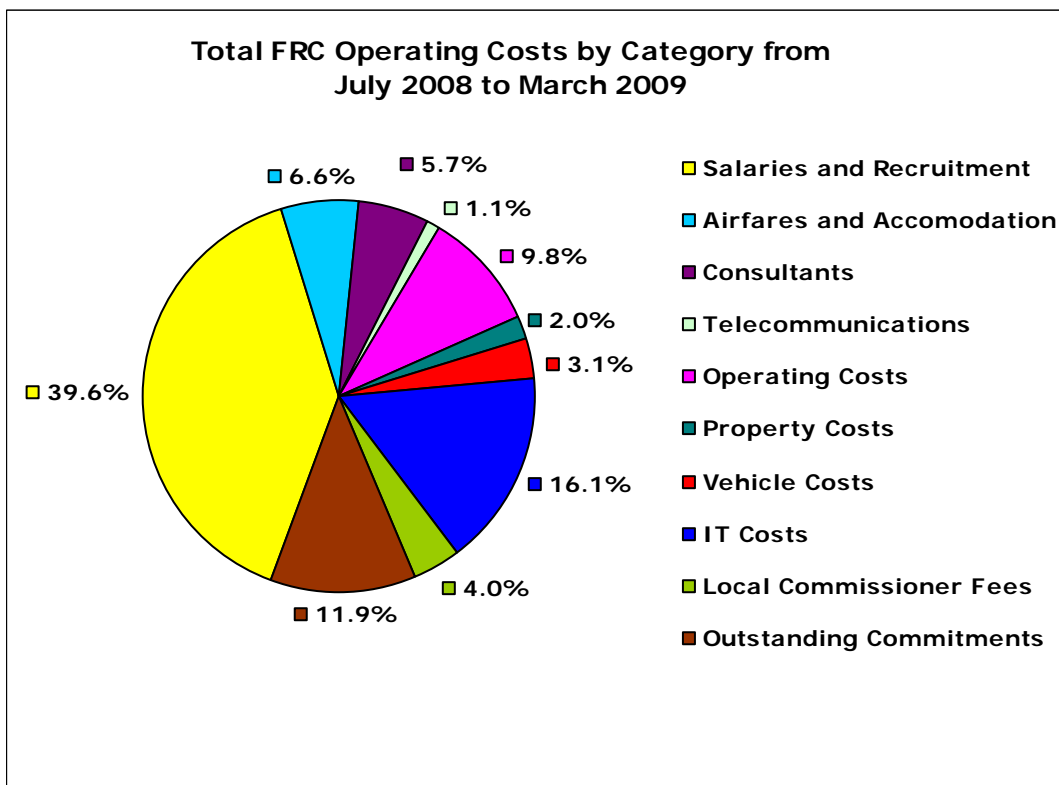
- The estimated expenditure for the period 1 July 2008 to 31 March 2009 is approximately \$2.562 M (Table 1).

Salaries, recruitment costs and information technology (IT) costs represent 67 per cent of total expenditure. This reflects the challenges encountered in establishing the Commission within this timeframe and location. Expenditure during the period was as follows:

Expenditure 1 July 2008 to 31 March 2009	Amount
Salaries and recruitment	1,015,251.84
Airfares and accommodation	169,067.97
Consultants	147,169.43
Telecommunications	27,659.60
Operating costs	250,282.15
Property costs	51,085.83
Vehicle costs	80,011.73
IT costs	413,087.09
Local Commissioner fees	103,034.70
Outstanding commitments	305,841.68
Total Expenditure	\$2,562,492.02

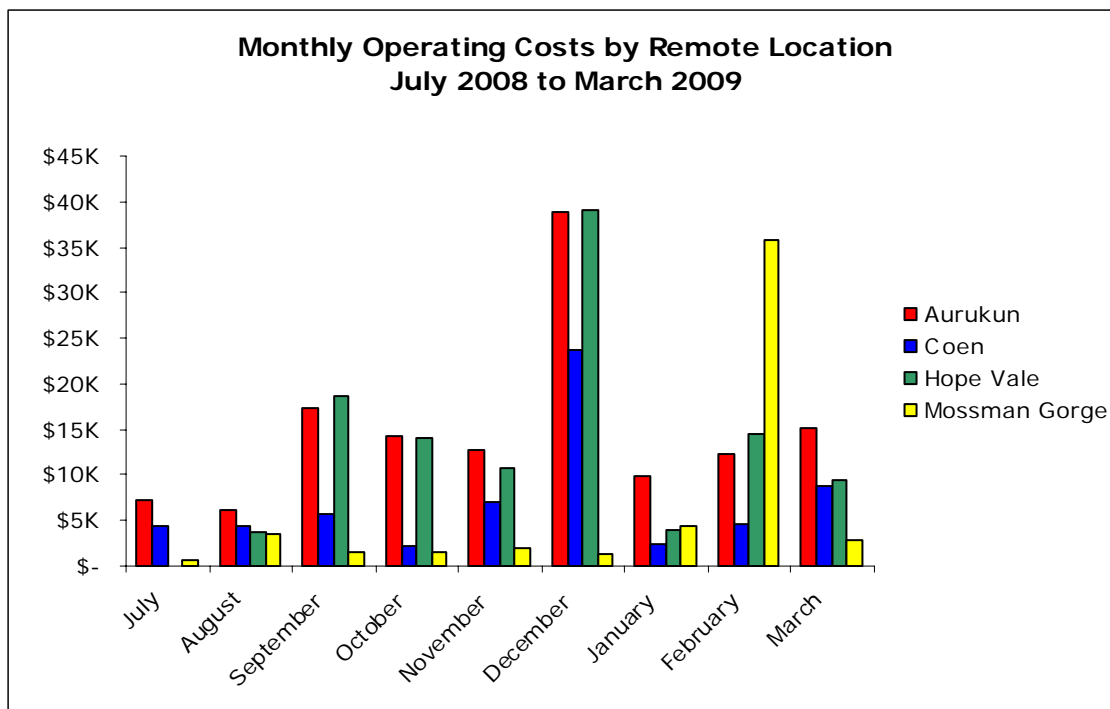
Table 1: Expenditure 1 July 2008 to 31 March 2009

The Commission’s total operating costs in categories by percentage of total expenditure is represented below:



Graph 1: Operating costs 1 July 2008 to 31 March 2009

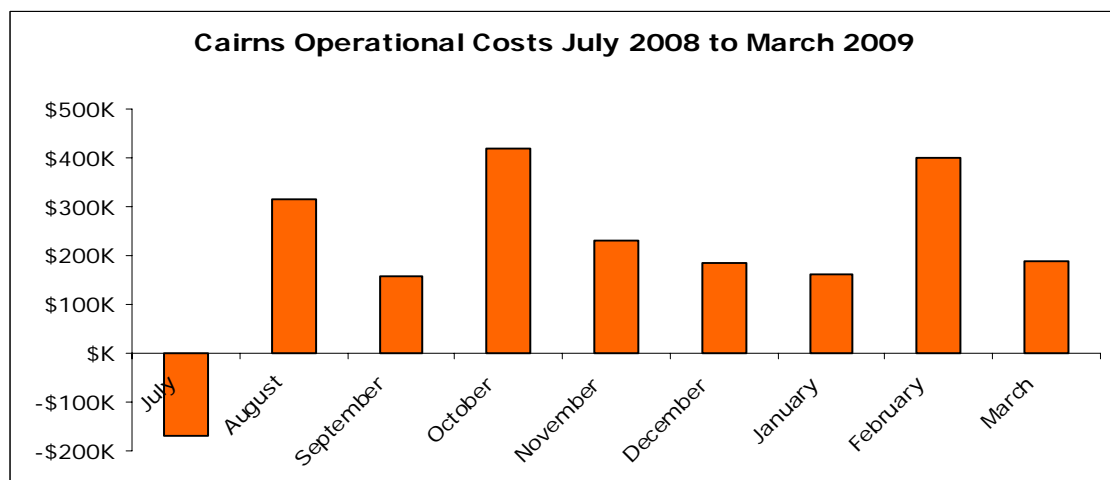
Regional operational expenditure is categorised below by location per month. These figures exclude Local Coordinator's salary costs, which are incorporated in the Commission's global operating costs. These figures include Local Commissioner's fees, totalling \$103,034.70.



Graph 2: Operating costs by remote location July 2008 to March 2009

(Note: The increased costs for Aurukun, Coen and Hope Vale in December 2008 reflect the provisioning of these remote offices with office equipment, furniture and vehicles. In February 2009, the Mossman Gorge office refurbishment costs are recorded. The operational costs attributed to the Aurukun and Hope Vale offices reflect the higher number of conferences held in these communities when compared with number of conferences held in Coen and Mossman Gorge).

Cairns office operational costs (below) in July 2008 reflect the inclusion of the 2007/08 accrued expenses. The spike in expenses in October 2008 is due to the settlement of accrued expenses transferred from the previous financial year. The spike in February 2009 is due to accrued IT acquisitions and ongoing IT service costs for the period from July 2008 to February 2009. Much of this expenditure relates to costs incurred by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in establishing the Commission.



Graph 3: Operating costs, Cairns July 2008 to March 2009

4. Activities / achievements

Conferences

The objective of the Commission, as set out in the Act, is primarily to hold conferences with community members and accordingly to encourage clients (families and individuals) to engage in socially responsible standards of behaviour whilst promoting the interests, rights and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable persons living in the four CYWR communities.

The Commission commenced operation on 1 July 2008 and commenced conferencing on 12 August 2008. During the first three quarters of operation the Commission received 1757 agency notifications, some of which related to more than one person. 507 notifications received were outside the Commission's jurisdiction and therefore could not be dealt with. A total of 590 notices to attend have been issued for 572 conferences. As a result of conferences held 180 agreements have been entered into and 23 directions have been made to attend community support services.

106 notifications did not proceed to conference (for various reasons), 63 notifications are currently under enquiry and 82 are currently being monitored pending action from individuals or carers. 175 notices to attend conference are currently in the process of being served and brought before the Commission.

Conditional Income Management

Conditional Income Management (CIM) orders have been made in 59 circumstances, usually due to the client failing to attend two scheduled conferences. Commissioner Glasgow reports some community members are now requesting voluntary conditional income management. Figures show that currently less than five people ² have taken up this opportunity, with more expected in the future.

Conditionally Income Management (CIM)	No of Individuals
Currently CIM	34
Currently with Centrelink to be CIM	6
CIM period Expired	4
Currently waiting on client to be removed from CDEP	13
CIM Order revoked	2
Total CIM Orders	59

Table 2: Clients Conditionally Income Managed as at 31 March 2009

Case management

Up to 31 March 2009, 203 clients were being case managed. The availability and quality of services in the communities varies significantly and hence impacts on the number and types of referrals that can be made at present.

² Actual number not stated to ensure any individuals cannot be identified.

Case management options	Individuals	Referrals
Child Safety	8	8
Education Queensland	14	20
FIM	112	115
School Attendance Officer	32	35
WBC – Anger Management	18	19
WBC – ATODS	95	97
WBC – Domestic Violence	13	13
WBC – Parenting Program	29	30
WBC – Men’s Group	48	49
WBC – Women’s Group	10	10
Other	45 ³	45
Total	424	441

Table 3: Clients and referrals to service providers as at 31 March 2009

The 666 pending service provider reports impacts on the Commission’s ability to review the progress of referred clients and to bring clients before the Commission again to show cause. The direct impact has been that clients requiring assistance have not received the help they need and a loss of credibility within the communities concerning the commitment of service providers to meet CYWR expectations. As identified earlier, strategies are being developed to address these issues.

Community	Status	Totals	
Aurukun	Reports expected	861	
	Reports received	483	
	Pending	378	378
Coen	Reports expected	121	
	Reports received	68	
	Pending	53	53
Hopevale	Reports expected	312	
	Reports received	121	
	Pending	191	191
Mossman Gorge	Reports expected	95	
	Reports received	51	
	Pending	44	44
Total Pending			666

Table 4: Outstanding service provider progress reports as at 31 March 2009

Due to the lack of progress reports, the Commission has encountered difficulties identifying those clients required to be reviewed by the Commission and to show cause. Once a client has failed to attend the relevant community support service in three consecutive months a recommendation may be made to the Registrar and Commissioner to initiate show cause proceedings. If proceedings are instigated, the client is served with a “Show Cause Notice” giving them at least 28 days notice to attend a Show Cause hearing. It is anticipated that once service providers improve the quantity and quality of progress reports, a large number of clients will be identified as non compliant and will be required to show cause; increasing conference numbers in the next 12 months. To enable the expected increase workload to be managed a 0.5 FTE Deputy Commissioner has been factored into the budget to allow further conferences to be held.

³ Category of Other refers to such services as ITEC, Disability Services, Community Justice Group and “Strong Black Women’s Group” to name a few.

As at 31 March 2009, a total of three show cause hearings have been completed in Aurukun and Hope Vale. These matters resulted in two client's previous agreements being revoked and new agreements entered into. The third matter resulted in a conditional income management order (at a rate of 75 per cent of Centrelink income for a period of 12 months) being made as the client failed to attend as ordered. There are a further 19 show cause matters to be completed in Aurukun, Hope Vale and Coen.

Notices

Up to 31 March 2009, the Commission received a total of 1757 agency notifications⁴ of which 1250 were within jurisdiction relating to 558 community members (23% of the total population of the four communities). This comprises:

▪ 412 School Attendance notices	33.0%
▪ 333 Child Safety notices	26.6%
▪ 496 Magistrates Courts notices	39.7%
▪ 9 Housing Tenancy notices	0.7%
1250 Total Notices	100%

As well as the 1250 notifications within the Commission's jurisdiction, 507 Magistrates Courts, School Attendance, Child Safety and Housing notices were processed as not within jurisdiction because people are either (a) not residents of the communities as prescribed in the Act or (b) not welfare recipients.⁵

Details for each community are as follows:

- **Aurukun** notices comprise approximately **56.48 per cent** of the total notices:

- 243 School Attendance notices,
- 187 Child Safety notices,
- 276 Magistrates Courts notices.

37 Magistrates Courts notices, 16 Child Safety notices and 37 School Attendance notices were processed as not within jurisdiction.

263 conferences have been held in Aurukun.⁶

- **Hope Vale** comprises **30 per cent** of the total notices:

- 147 School Attendance notices,
- 88 Child Safety notices,
- 3 Housing Tenancy notices,
- 137 Magistrates Courts notices.

130 Magistrates Courts notices, two Child Safety notices, three Housing Tenancy notices and 64 School Attendance notices were processed as not within jurisdiction.

204 conferences have been held in Hope Vale.⁶

⁴ Counting rules are that an agency notification is counted on the basis of number of "clients" on the notification, for example: a child safety notification relating to two parents is counted as 2 notifications.

⁵ 383 of the 507 notices processed as "not within jurisdiction" are Magistrates Courts notifications. The Magistrates Court system prevent the identification of Commission clients who reside within the Commission's gazetted areas of jurisdiction, because data systems and/or boundaries differ from the Commission's.

⁶ 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.

- **Coen** comprises **6.40 per cent** of the total notices:

- 11 School Attendance notices,
- 34 Child Safety notices,
- 2 Housing Tenancy notices,
- 33 Magistrates Courts notices.

10 Magistrates Courts notices and one Child Safety notice were processed as not within jurisdiction.

34 Conferences have been held in Coen.⁶

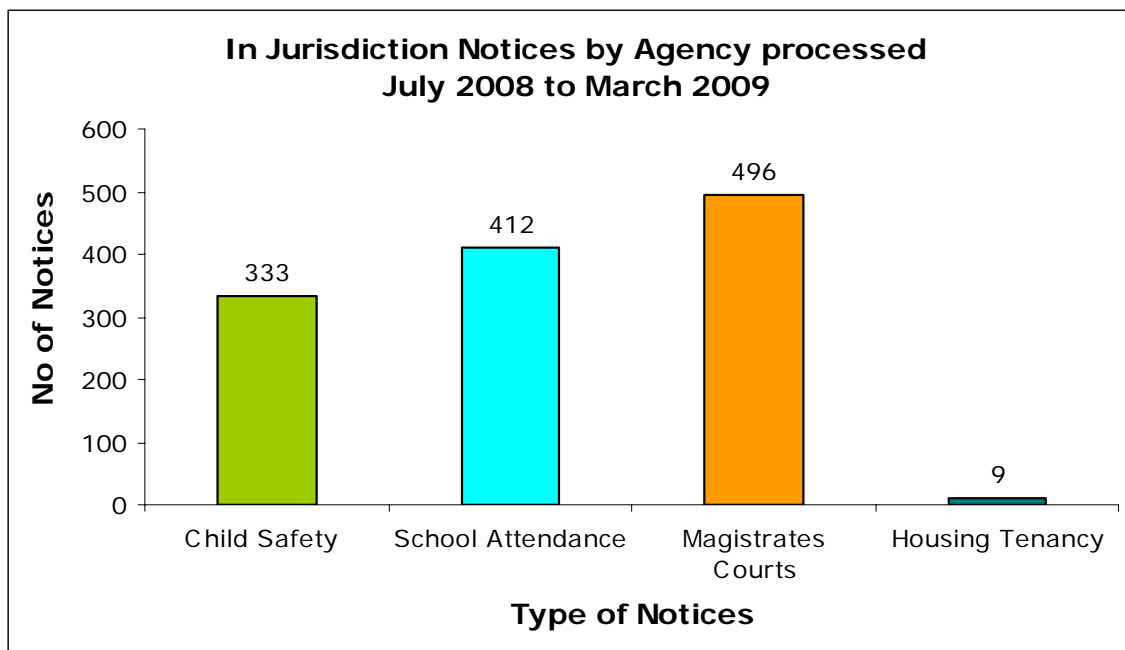
- **Mossman Gorge** comprises **7.12 per cent** of the total notices:

- 11 School Attendance notices,
- 24 Child Safety notices,
- 4 Housing Tenancy notices
- 50 Magistrates Court notices.

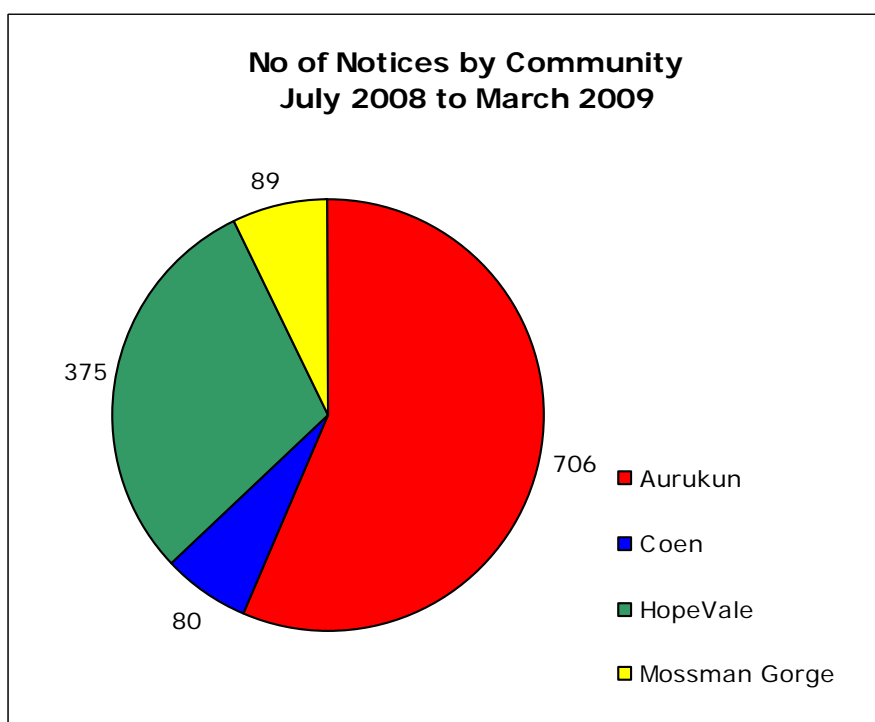
206 Magistrates Courts notices and one Child Safety notice processed as not within jurisdiction.

71 Conferences have been held in Mossman Gorge.⁶

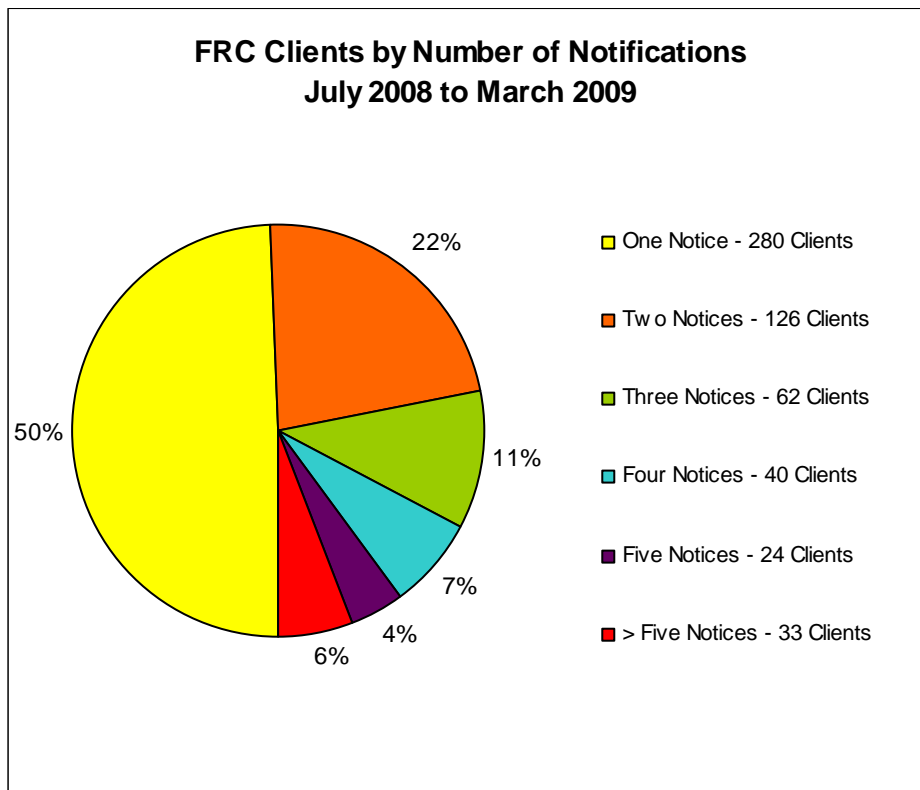
5. Data summary and trends



Graph 4: Notices by agency processed July 2008 to March 2009

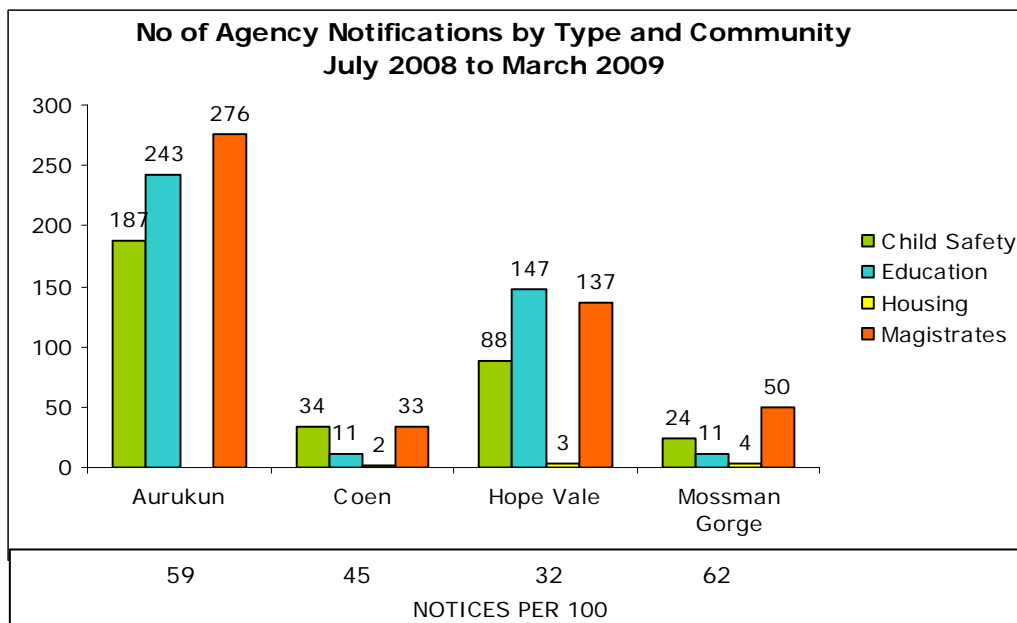


Graph 5: Notices by community July 2008 – March 2009



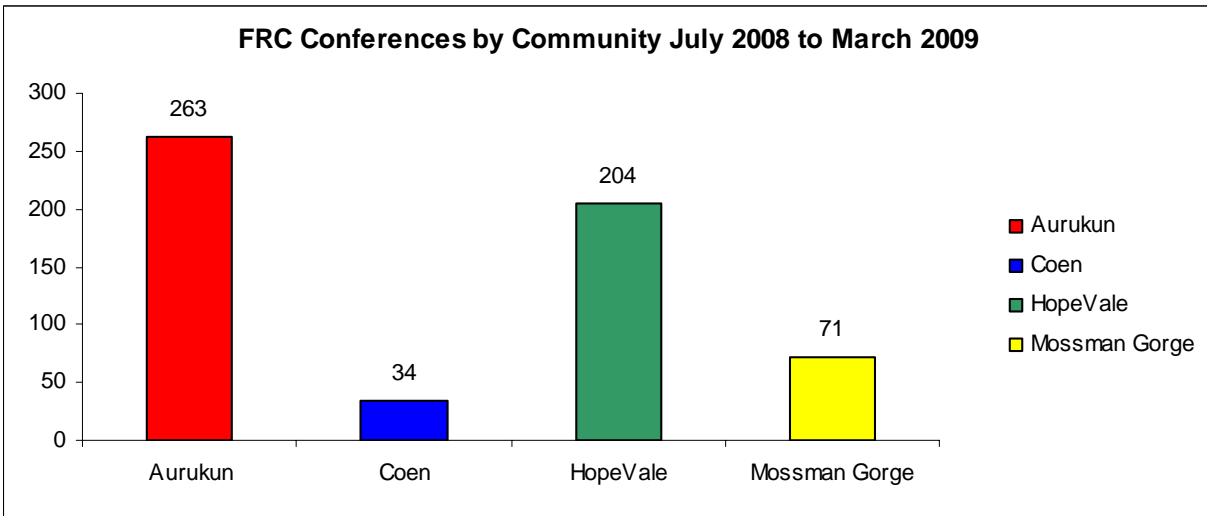
Graph 6: Clients by number of notifications July 2008 to March 2009

Note: Counting rules stipulate that where for example, multiple charges are received they are counted as individual notifications or each child's absences are counted as one notification so if three children from the one family were absent, that is counted as three notifications.

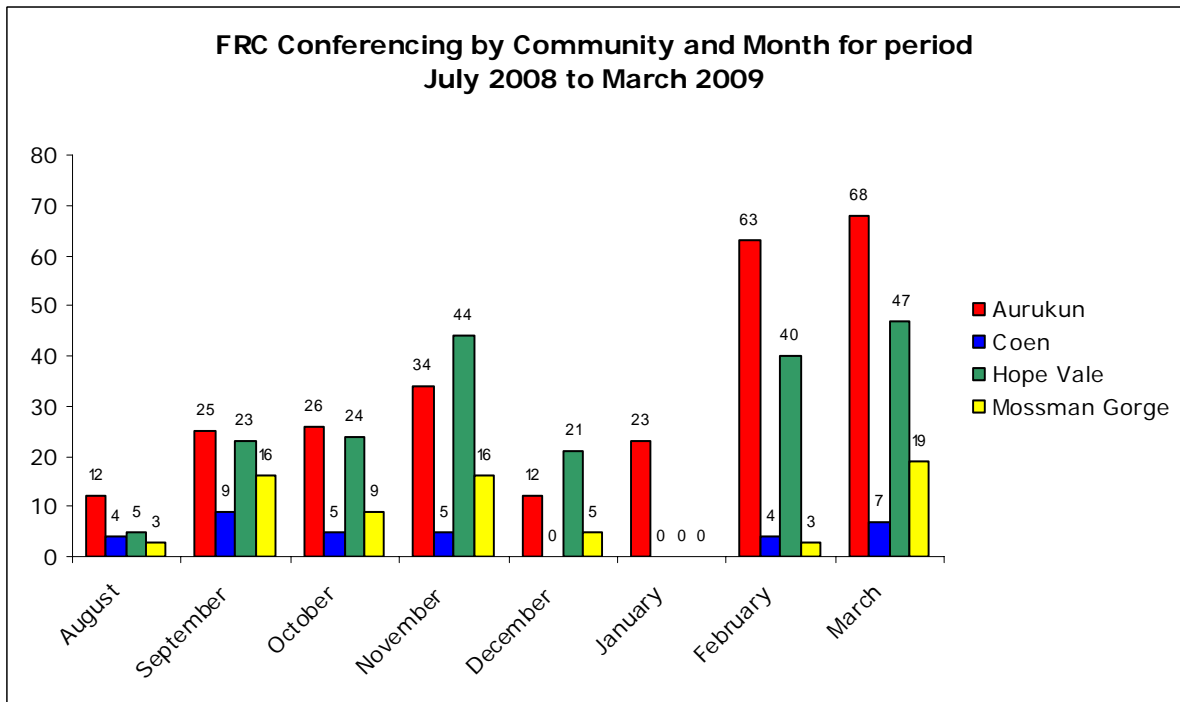


Graph 7: Notifications by type and community July 2008 – March 2009

* School Attendance Case Managers have not been in place in Aurukun for the entire period which may contribute to an understatement of school attendance notifications for the period.



Graph 8: Conference by community July 2008 – March 2009



Graph 9: Conference by community and month July 2008 – March 2009

6. Observations / future directions

Observations

The Commission takes a proactive approach to addressing the issues that arise around its ability to refer clients to appropriate services in each community. One of the achievements of the Commission is the positive relations the Commission staff in Cairns and in the four CYWR communities have made with stakeholder agencies in government and in the communities.

- Commissioner Glasgow advises that positive changes in communities are beginning to be experienced. For example, school attendance is seen to be improving particularly in Aurukun. Further to this there have been fewer matters listed in the Magistrates Court in Aurukun.
- Challenges identified relating to engagement of the Commission's clients by service providers are being addressed through a collaborative approach between the Commission and relevant service providers. The next quarter will see an integrated approach to clients being actively engaged which will result in better outcomes for clients.
- Elders and respected people appointed as Local Commissioners have gained an enormous amount of confidence and are now more actively involved in resolving issues that affect their communities such as standards of education, health and crime reduction. For example, at the request of one of the Government Champions for Aurukun, a Local Commissioner and the Local Coordinator assisted with re-establishing the Community Justice Group. The Local Commissioner temporarily held the position of Community Justice Group Coordinator and was actively involved in providing advice to the Magistrates Court regarding community members that appeared before the court, whilst the Local Coordinator provided training and support due to having previously held the position in another community.
- Local Commissioners in Hope Vale identified that their community members had a high level of distrust of Child Safety Services due to their statutory obligations of removing children at risk of harm from the community when an approved local carer could not be located. A meeting was held attended by Local Commissioners and staff from Child Safety Services. This resulted in a better understanding of Child Safety's and the Commission's obligations which is expected to also increase the awareness of the broader community.
- The Commission is now positively received in all communities by Councils and local leadership groups where previously an element of uncertainty existed in some communities. For example, Hope Vale Shire Council and the Local Commissioners have now met twice to discuss the Commission's position within the community and the support that the Council would give the Commissioners to ensure they are able to meet the objectives of the CYWRs.
- The Local Commissioners of Hope Vale met with the Hope Vale Community Justice Group to resolve concerns relating to their roles and responsibilities. This resulted in a strategy that now sees the two organisations working alongside one another, rather than in opposition.

Related Observations

In performing the Commission's functions, the Commissioner and Local Commissioners become aware of matters that are not directly related to the Commission but affect a community member's ability to care for family members. For example, a number of clients or family members of clients that have been dealt with by the Commission have a disability. As a result of coming to the attention of the Commission, clients were able to be advised to seek assistance from Disability Services Queensland for services/support they were not receiving.

Currently community members on aged pensions are not able to have their welfare payments either conditionally or voluntarily income managed due to restrictions in the Social Security Act. Submissions for amendments will be put forth at the spring sittings of the Commonwealth Parliament that, if accepted, will then allow those receiving aged pensions to be income managed.

The leadership of Local Commissioners and their positive role in working with individuals and service providers is becoming increasingly evident. An example of where the Local Commissioners were able to assist a client of the Commission is a person who was required to attend a Commission conference in September 2009 due to child safety notifications relating to alcohol abuse, neglect of children and overcrowding in the house - which in turn lead to large consumption of alcohol and noise disturbances. At the conference, the client agreed to look after the home better, have it declared a "dry house", and attend community support services such as the Wellbeing Centre and FIM, as well as a number of personal responsibility actions such as enrolling younger children in kindergarten.

Eight months on and the client is doing extremely well. The house was declared a dry house, and only the children who are regularly attending kindergarten live there now. The person is progressing very well with counselling and support services and has recently signed up for Pride of Place, having already received a lawn mower and garden supplies. Support provided by the "old people" is now appreciated and relied on.

Future directions

- The greatest challenge faced by the Commission is to determine how many clients are complying with their agreements or orders. This will be an on-going focus of the Commission throughout the life of the trial and progress will be reported in future quarterly reports.
- Qualitative information from the Local Commissioners about their role, examples of achievements, and a comprehensive analysis of the Commission's outcomes and trends following the first 12 months of operation will be outlined in the Annual Report, to be delivered in October 2009. This will be further expanded in the formal FRC Implementation Review to be conducted by an independent evaluator - due by the end of 2009.
- A significant challenge faced by the Commission is the collection and retention of data and client information. The current system is not effective. To overcome this problem work has now commenced on the creation and implementation of a new database system to alleviate the problems currently being experienced.
- Another significant challenge is the management of the flow of information between many agencies; including State, Commonwealth and non-government organisations, ensuring that the needs of the Commission are met without breaching privacy laws.



SITTING CALENDAR
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION
1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009



WEEK COMMENCING	Commissioner	COEN Mon/Tues	AURUKUN Wed/Thurs or Tues/Wed/Thurs	MOSSMAN GORGE Mon	HOPE VALE Tues/Wed	OFFICE CAIRNS
5 JANUARY	DRG-	-	-	-	-	All week
12 JANUARY	DRG-	-	-	-	-	All week
19 JANUARY	DRG-	-	-	-	-	All week
26 JANUARY	DRG-	-	27,28,29	-	-	26,30
2 FEBRUARY	DRG-	-	-	2	3,4	5,6
9 FEBRUARY	DRG-	9,10	11,12	-	-	13
16 FEBRUARY	DRG-	-	-	16	17,18	19,20
23 FEBRUARY	DRG-	-	24,25,26	-	-	23,27
2 MARCH	DRG-	-	-	2	3,4	5,6
9 MARCH	DRG-	9,10	11,12	-	-	13
16 MARCH	DRG-	-	-	16	17,18	19,20
23 MARCH	DRG-	-	24,25,26	-	-	23,27
30 MARCH	DRG-	-	-	30 March	31 March and 1 April	30 March and 3 April
6 APRIL	DRG-	6,7	8,9	-	-	
13 APRIL	DRG-	-	-	-	-	Training Week
20 APRIL	DRG-	-	21,22,23	20	-	23,24
27 APRIL	DRG-	-	-	-	28,29	1 May
4 MAY	DRG-	-	-	-	6	4,5
11 MAY	DRG-	11	12,13	-	-	14,15
18 MAY	DRG-	-	-	18	19,20	21,22
25 MAY	DRG-	-	27,28	-	-	25th BOARD BRISBANE
1 JUNE	WC	-	-	1	2,3	4,5
8 JUNE	WC	-	9,10,11	-	-	8,12
15 JUNE	WC-	-	-	15	16,17	18,19

SITTING CALENDAR

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION

1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009

WEEK COMMENCING	Commissioner	COEN Mon/Tues	AURUKUN Wed/Thurs or Tues/Wed/Thurs	MOSSMAN GORGE Mon	HOPE VALE Tues/Wed	OFFICE CAIRNS
22 JUNE	WC-	22,23	23,24,25	-	-	26
29 JUNE	WC-	-	-	29	30 th & 1 July	2,3
6 JULY	WC	-	-	-	-	Training week
13 JULY	DRG-	-	-	-	-	ESTIMATES BRISBANE
20 JULY	DRG-	-	-	20	21,22	23,24
27 JULY	DRG-	27,28	28,29, 30	-	-	31
3 AUGUST	DRG-	-	-	3	4,5	6,7
10 AUGUST	DRG-	-	-	-	-	All Week
17 AUGUST	DRG-	-	-	17	18,19	20,21
24 AUGUST	DRG-	-	27,28	-	-	25th BOARD BRISBANE
31 AUGUST	DRG-	-	-	31 August	1,2 Sept	3,4 Sept
7 SEPTEMBER	DRG-	7,8	8,9,10	-	-	11
14 SEPTEMBER	DRG-	-	-	14	15,16	17,18
21 SEPTEMBER	DRG-	21	22,23,24	-	-	25
28 SEPTEMBER	DRG-	-	-	-	-	Training Week
5 OCTOBER	DRG-	-	-	5	6,7	8,9
12 OCTOBER	DRG-	12,13	14,15	-	-	16
19 OCTOBER	DRG-	-	-	19	20,21	22,23
26 OCTOBER	DRG-	-	27,28,29	-	-	26,30
2 NOVEMBER	DRG-	-	-	2	3,4	5,6
9 NOVEMBER	DRG-	9,10	11,12	-	-	13
16 NOVEMBER	DRG-	-	-	16	17,18	19,20
23 NOVEMBER	DRG-	-	24,25,26	-	-	23,27
30 NOVEMBER	DRG-	-	-	30 Nov	1,2 Dec	3,4 Dec
7 DECEMBER	DRG-	7,8	9,10	-	-	11
14 DECEMBER	DRG-	-	-	14	15,16	17,18
21 DECEMBER	DRG	-	-	-	-	All Week

Governance

Part 12 of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* provides for the establishment of the Family Responsibilities Board (the Board).

The 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 Board must meet at least every three months and each member must be present at each meeting. The Board's membership consists of:

- Mr Ken Smith Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Mr Noel Pearson Director, Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership
- Dr Jeff Harmer Secretary, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Glossary of terms

ATODS - alcohol tobacco and other drugs services:

ATODS, services were provided in the communities by Queensland Health on an outreach or fly in/fly out basis prior to the implementation of the CYWR trials. The referrals made to ATODS by the Commission occurred during the transition period from ATODS to the Wellbeing Centres. The ATODS services provided by Queensland Health to the CYWR trial communities have since been transitioned to the Wellbeing Centres, which are full time and community based.

Wellbeing Centre:

These centres are currently operated by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and are the primary referral agency for the Commission. The Wellbeing Centres provide:

- a holistic, systemic and community-based approach to treating drug and alcohol addiction and related mental health co-morbidities, family violence and gambling,
- clinical assessments, formal and informal counselling, support for individuals and their families, and support for community-driven activities that build community capacity,
- support for restoring social norms and empowering individuals to take responsibility for making positive choices about their health and wellbeing.

Each Wellbeing Centre is staffed with a co-ordinator, counsellor and one or more community support workers. Staff will also be supported by a part-time medical practitioner and senior Indigenous health worker, along with team leaders.

New infrastructure has been built to support the Wellbeing Centres in each community. In Aurukun and Coen the centres and staff housing are completed. In Mossman Gorge the new Wellbeing Centre has recently been completed. In Hope Vale the staff housing has been completed with the centre expected to be completed by end May 2009. In the meantime Wellbeing Centre services are being delivered through the health clinic in Hope Vale.

FIM – Family Income Management:

Family Income Management (FIM) is a voluntary, confidential and free service that is specifically designed to meet the particular needs of Indigenous individuals and families, and provide them with the education, information and ongoing support needed to manage their own money.

FIM provides support and assistance including referrals and access to financial institutions, products and services. It also provides general information, education and ongoing support to individuals and families about improving the outcomes for children from the expenditure of Family Payments.

FIM operates in Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge and has been operating in a number of Cape York communities since 2001.

Attendance Case Management Framework:

The Attendance Case Management Framework (ACMF) was developed by the Every Child is Special (ECIS) Unit to support student attendance. The ACMF uses Professor Herbert C Kelman's behavioural change model which identifies three stages leading to behavioural change: compliance, identification, and internalisation. ACMF works with students, parents, schools and the broader community to set the expectation of 100 per cent attendance and to build and sustain it as a "social norm".

Under the ACMF, Attendance Case Managers (ACM's) aim to follow up every absence, on the day, to work with families to resolve the reason behind a child's unexplained absence or lateness and to develop strategies to avoid reoccurrences. ACM's also refer parents to support services like FIM or alcohol addiction support as required. Such quick response reduces the incidence of parents being called before the Commission on student attendance-related issues.

ACMs use positive reinforcement to publicly and privately acknowledge 100 per cent attendance. They also work with schools to limit disruptions and maximise student core learning time, and work with the wider community to help them develop strategies to support the 100 per cent attendance expectation.

Statistical Information:

For the period 1 July 2008 – 31 March 2009

Type of Notice	Individual's with FRC trigger notifications		Individual has been subject to FRC triggers before	
	Individuals	Notices	Individuals	Notices
School Attendance	196	412	103	311
Child Safety	237	333	57	153
Tenancy	8	9	1	1
Magistrates Court	277	496	103	323
Total	718	1250	264	788

Table1: Agency Notifications

Outcomes first trigger notification	Individuals	Notices
No action	134	156
Warning	1	1
Referral to services/agreement	180	313
Direction to services/order	23	35
Compulsory Income Notices to Centrelink	57	85

Table 2: Conferences and Outcomes from first trigger notification

Case management options	Individuals
Total number of clients being case managed	203
Total number of clients on agreements	176
Total number of client referrals to service agencies	441
Total number of clients on Voluntary Agreements	4
Total number of clients on Decisions/Orders	23
Total number of clients being Conditionally Income Managed	34

Table 3: Case management options

Cape York Welfare Reform and the Family Responsibilities Commission

The Australian and State Governments have committed to the CYWR trial to restore social norms in the four Indigenous communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, all of who agreed to participate in the trial.

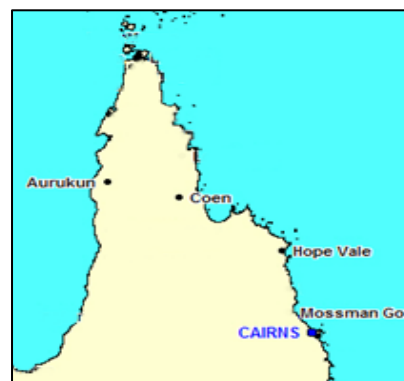
The necessary legislation has been passed by the Queensland and Australian Parliaments to introduce most elements of the framework, and \$100 million has been earmarked for the reforms. The trial will run until 1 January 2012. The communities are:

Aurukun

Aurukun is on the western coast of Cape York and is approximately 900 kilometres northwest of Cairns, and about 200 kilometres south of Weipa. The community had an estimated resident population of about 1,160 people at 30 June 2007.

Coen

The township of Coen is about halfway between Cairns and the tip of Cape York. It is not a discrete Aboriginal community and is part of Cook Shire. The community had an estimated resident population of about 270 people at 30 June 2006.



Hope Vale

Hope Vale is situated on the Cape York Peninsula and is 46 kilometres northwest of Cooktown. The estimated resident population of Hope Vale was about 840 people at 30 June 2007.

Mossman Gorge

Mossman Gorge is a small Aboriginal community 75 kilometres north of Cairns, 4 kilometres from Mossman (the nearest town), and approximately 25 kilometres by road from Port Douglas. It is not a discrete Aboriginal community and is part of the Cairns Regional Council area. The community had an estimated resident population of about 160 people at 30 June 2006.

For more information on the communities, view the Quarterly Reports at:

www.indigenous.qld.gov.au

Role of the Commission:

Any person who is a welfare recipient living in one of the four CYWR communities and has committed a 'trigger' event (see next page), can be referred to the Commission.

A person is a welfare recipient if the person, or their partner, receives certain welfare payments including; Newstart, Parenting Payments, Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY, age and service pensions or carer payments. A person is also a 'welfare recipient' if he/she is participating in CDEP.

Trigger events are:

- the person's child is absent from school three times in a school term, without reasonable excuse,
- the person has a child of school age who is not enrolled in school without lawful excuse,
- the person is the subject of a child safety report,
- the person is convicted of an offence in the Magistrates Court,
- the person breaches his or her tenancy agreement – for example, by using the premises for an illegal purpose, causes a nuisance or fails to remedy rent arrears.

What does the Commission do?

When the Commission receives a referral it may choose to meet with the person at a conference to discuss the matters that have led to the notification. Conferences are held in an informal setting to ensure the best outcome. The person will be encouraged to come to an agreement with the Commission about an appropriate response to the issue that has led to their referral. If the person is unwilling to agree on a course of action, the Commission may order a certain course of action.

The Commission may:

- decide that **no action** is necessary,
- issue a **warning** to the person about the behaviour that is expected of them,
- suggest or require the person's **attendance** at community support services,
- recommend the person get **financial advice** from Family Income Management,
- require that the person's income be managed by Centrelink for a period of between three to 12 months.

How the Commission process works

