

# **Meeting with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner**

**Held on 30 November 2011**

**Report No. 10**  
**Community Affairs Committee**  
January 2012

## Community Affairs Committee

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### Acknowledgements

The committee thanks those who briefed the committee, gave evidence, and participated in the meeting. In particular, the committee acknowledges the assistance provided by the Family Responsibilities Commission.

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## Chair's foreword

The Community Affairs Committee meets formally with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner once a year in order to monitor and report to the Parliament on the Commission.

This is a report of the committee's first formal meeting with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner.

The meeting, held on 30 November 2011, enabled the committee to examine a range of issues relating to the performance of the Commissioner's functions and the operations of the Commission, including matters reported in the Commission's 2010-11 annual report.

I thank the Family Responsibilities Commissioner, Mr David Glasgow; outgoing Registrar, Ms Tammy Sovenyhazi; and incoming Registrar, Mr Robert White, for meeting with the committee and responding to the committee's requests for information in a timely and comprehensive way. Thanks also to the Commission staff who assisted in providing information to the committee.

I thank my fellow committee members for their involvement in the meeting process and staff from the committee secretariat and Hansard for assisting the committee in its work.

The committee looks forward to meeting with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner again in 2012.



Paul Hoolihan MP  
Chair

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1** **14**

The committee recommends that the independent evaluation report on the Commission's work until 31 December 2011 is completed and published by 30 June 2012.

**Recommendation 2** **14**

The committee recommends that the independent evaluation report takes into account the effectiveness of capacity development activities in the communities.

**Recommendation 3** **14**

The committee recommends that the independent evaluation report examines the issue of information exchange between agencies where it impacts on the Commission's work in the communities.

**Recommendation 4** **14**

The committee recommends that the Commission ensures that a clearly defined exit strategy based on the findings of the independent evaluation report is developed so that the exit strategy planning is finalised and implementation commenced by no later than 30 September 2012.

## 1 Community Affairs Committee

1. The Community Affairs Committee is a portfolio committee established by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 16 June 2011. The committee's primary areas of responsibility include: Child Safety; Youth Justice; Community Services; Multicultural Affairs; Housing; Women; and Sport.
2. The committee also has oversight responsibility for the Family Responsibilities Commission and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.
3. With respect to each Commission, the committee has the following functions:
  - to monitor and review the performance by the Commissioner of the Commissioner's functions
  - to report to the Legislative Assembly on any matter concerning the Commissioner, the Commissioner's functions or the performance of the Commissioner's functions that the committee considers should be drawn to the Legislative Assembly's attention
  - to examine the annual report tabled in the Legislative Assembly and, if appropriate, to comment on any aspect of the report
  - to report to the Legislative Assembly any changes to the functions, structures, and procedures of the Commission that the committee considers desirable for the more effective operation of the Commission or the Act which establishes it.
4. The committee has adopted the following processes to fulfil its obligations to monitor, review and report on the Commissions:
  - hold at least one public meeting per year with each of the Commissioners
  - time the meetings so that they follow the tabling of the Commissioners' annual reports (around November)
  - where time permits, ask written questions on notice and require written answers to those questions at a reasonable time before the meeting
  - at any public meeting with each Commissioner ask follow up questions without notice
  - liaise with the Auditor-General, where appropriate, in relation to published reports of the Commissions
  - report to Parliament on the outcomes of the oversight process.



## 2 Family Responsibilities Commission

5. The Family Responsibilities Commission (the Commission) is an independent statutory body established under the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (Qld) as part of Cape York welfare reform. The Commission commenced operation on 1 July 2008 and was due to cease operation on 1 January 2012.<sup>1</sup> However, on 19 August 2011, the then Queensland Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, the Honourable Curtis Pitt MP, with the Federal Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Honourable Jenny Macklin MP, announced the extension of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial until 31 December 2012 after consultation with the local communities.<sup>2</sup>
6. The Commission has the lead role in the Cape York Welfare Reform trial, which focuses on 'restoring local authority and socially responsible standards of behaviour' in the four communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.<sup>3</sup>
7. The main objectives of the Commission are:<sup>4</sup>
  - provide effective and efficient client services and influence the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour at the individual, family and community level
  - strengthen collaborative cross agency partnerships to support local Indigenous authority and influence the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour at the individual, family and community level
  - enhance community engagement and promote understanding of the Commission's role to support local Indigenous authority and promote the wider acceptance of socially responsible standards of behaviour so that each Welfare Reform community is a more caring and safer place to live.
8. The Commission achieves these objectives through the following strategies:<sup>5</sup>
  - supporting Local Commissioners in their role
  - continually improving performance through strong governance and management of resources
  - developing and supporting staff
  - processing agency notifications, conducting client conferences and undertaking case planning, monitoring and Show Cause as required
  - building and maintaining partnerships with partner agencies and community support services based on a mutual understanding of agency mandates and the importance of cooperative, collaborative and coordinated service provision
  - staff of the Commission, partner agencies and community support services recognising the importance of timely and lawful information sharing to enable quality case management
  - keeping the Commission's service delivery closely aligned with the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* and wider Cape York Welfare Reform objectives
  - promoting understanding of the Commission's mandate to deal with matters in a way which supports local Indigenous authority, encourages positive social norms and which promotes the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable persons of the community

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<sup>1</sup> Family Responsibilities Act 2008 (Qld) s.152.

<sup>2</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 9.

- promoting understanding of the Commission as part of the Welfare Reform trial and as part of a wider service network aimed at enabling individuals and families to improve the quality of their lives.
9. The Commission's work applies to all community members who are welfare recipients<sup>6</sup> who reside or have lived in the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge for at least 3 months since 1 July 2008.<sup>7</sup>
10. The Commission receives agency notices from a range of government departments, including the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) and (Housing and Homelessness Services),<sup>8</sup> authorities and the Magistrates Courts if:<sup>9</sup>
- a person's child is absent from school three times in a school term without reasonable excuse
  - a person has a child of school age who is not enrolled in school without lawful excuse
  - a person is the subject of a child safety report
  - a person is convicted of an offence in the Magistrates Court, or
  - a person breaches his or her tenancy agreement.
11. After receiving agency notices the Commission assesses each notification to determine whether the person is within the Commission's jurisdiction. If a person is within its jurisdiction, the Commission may decide to hold a conference with the person.<sup>10</sup>
12. The primary objective of holding a conference is to encourage clients (individuals and families) to engage in socially responsible standards of behaviour. Local Commissioners, who are elders or respected members of each community,<sup>11</sup> are responsible for determining the conferencing priorities for the next sittings. School attendance matters are given priority, as was agreed at the Family Responsibilities Board meeting on 27 October 2008.<sup>12</sup> During the conference, the person is 'encouraged to come to an agreement with the Commission to take a course of action appropriate to the issues that have led to their attendance before the Commission.'<sup>13</sup>
13. If the person is unwilling to reach an agreement, the Commission may decide to:<sup>14</sup>
- take no further action in relation to the notification
  - reprimand the client
  - recommend the client attend an appropriate community support service
  - decide to enter into an agreement with the client to attend an appropriate community support service under a case plan
  - direct the client to attend an appropriate community support service under a case plan for not more than 1 year, or
  - give the Centrelink secretary a notice requiring that the client be subject to income management for at least 3 months but no more than 1 year.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Welfare recipient' is defined in the *Family Responsibilities Act 2008* (Qld) s.8.

<sup>7</sup> *Family Responsibilities Act 2008* (Qld) s.7.

<sup>8</sup> *Family Responsibilities Commission, Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (Qld) Part 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (Qld) s.47; *Family Responsibilities Commission, Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (Qld) s 50.

<sup>12</sup> *Family Responsibilities Commission, Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> *Family Responsibilities Commission, Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (Qld) s.69; *Family Responsibilities Commission, Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 50.

14. If the Commission reasonably believes that a person has not complied with their compulsory case plan requirements to attend a community support service, Show Cause recommendations are made by the person's Principal Case Manager.<sup>15</sup> The Commissioners then assess the client in conference proceedings and determine what action, if any, will be taken to assist the client to fulfil their responsibilities.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 (Qld) ss. 81-89.

<sup>16</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 51.



### 3 Meeting with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner

15. The committee first met informally with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner on 7 September 2011.
16. Prior to the first formal meeting with the Commission in November 2011, the committee provided the Family Responsibilities Commissioner with written questions on notice and considered the Commissioner's written responses. Questions on notice and answers are included in this report at [Appendix A](#).
17. The committee held its first formal meeting on 30 November 2011 with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner. The meeting provided the committee with an opportunity to discuss matters relating to the performance of the Commissioner's statutory functions and included consideration of the Commission's 2010-11 annual report. A transcript of the meeting is included in this report at [Appendix B](#).
18. During the meeting the committee asked the Commissioner follow-up questions. Matters discussed included:
  - school attendance rates
  - a strategy for carers of children with ongoing poor attendance rates
  - service provision and the fly-in/fly-out model
  - staffing at Wellbeing Centres in communities
  - impact on service provision following the completion of the Commission's work on 31 December 2012
  - the Commission's exit strategy
  - decrease in the number of client service referrals from 2009-10 to 2010-11
  - overcrowding and housing issue: working with the Department of Communities and monitoring of the issue
  - sharing of information between government departments
  - progress of active family pathways strategy
  - availability and use of teleconferencing facilities in the communities.



## 4 Committee Comments

### 4.1 Overview

19. The Commission received 3,669 agency notifications in 2010-11, compared to 4,364 in 2009-10, a decrease of 16 percent. Of the agency notifications received in 2010-11, 2,736 (75 percent) were within the Commission's jurisdiction. The number of clients subject to agency notifications was 763 in 2010-11, down from 833 in 2009-10.<sup>17</sup>
20. The Commission held 1,745 conferences in the four communities and entered into 83 Family Responsibility Agreements and made 147 Family Responsibility Orders with case plans that required clients to attend a range of support services. In 223 cases, the Commission made Conditional Income Management Orders.<sup>18</sup>

### 4.2 School Attendance

21. School attendance notifications increased from 1,225 in 2009-11 to 1,418 in 2010-11.<sup>19</sup>
22. A comparison of school attendance rates in the four communities is shown in Table 1.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 1: School attendance data**

School Attendance Data	Term 2 2008 (percent)	No of students	Term 2 2009 (percent)	No of students	Term 2 2010 (percent)	No of students	Term 2 2011 (percent)	No of students
Aurukun (overall)	37.9	198	63.2	222	57.7	185	70.1	217
Aurukun primary	44	148	68.8	177	64.7	143	73.2	184
Aurukun secondary	19.8	50	40.3	45	32.7	42	51.5	33
Coen	96.8	35	93.6		92.2	45	86.6	42
Hope Vale	87.6	144	86.9		83.5	124	78.6	114
Mossman Gorge	60.9	33	81.6		79.1	26	79.5	29

23. The committee notes the Commission's comment that 'caution should be used when examining the percentage changes in attendance in both Coen and Mossman Gorge communities' because they have low numbers of students and 'a small numerical change can result in a large percentage difference in overall attendance figures.'<sup>21</sup> For this reason, the committee sought additional information on the number of students attending each of the schools, which was not provided in the Commission's annual report. This information has been included in the table above.

<sup>17</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, pp. 44-45 and Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2009-10*, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>19</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 44 and Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2009-10*, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 45; M Rabbit, Director and Cabinet Legislation & Liaison Officer, Ministerial and Executive Services Unit, Department of Education and Training, Correspondence, 2 December 2011, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 45.

24. The Commissioner stated that school attendance rates in Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge were close to the state average, with particularly good attendance for children in pre-prep to year 3. However, the Commissioner acknowledged that school attendance rates decrease in the latter years of schooling.<sup>22</sup>
25. During 2010, a significant decrease in the school attendance rate in Aurukun was identified and on 28 October 2010 the Family Responsibilities Board 'endorsed the Commission to commence an intense focus on school attendance.' This led to weekly sittings in Aurukun from 26 October 2010 to 16 December 2010 and weekly meetings between the Commissioner, Local Commissioners and the Local Coordinator with the Principal of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy and School Attendance Case Managers. The result of the sittings, meetings, and additional conferences and consultation with parents/carers was an increase in school attendance from 54.1 percent in term 3 2010 to 64.8 percent in term 4 2010 and 73.9 percent in term 1 2011.<sup>23</sup>
26. The committee commends the Commission and its colleagues, as well as the parents and carers on their efforts to increase school attendance in the four communities and particularly in Aurukun.
27. The Commissioner advised the committee, however, that there were a core group of carers/parents who continued to have problems with school attendance for their children. For these carers/parents, the Commission's strategy in 2012 is to have Local Commissioners and School Attendance Case Managers visit the house and ask the carers/parents to have the children ready within a specified time and then take them to school. This will be done on an ad hoc basis. The Commission has begun this strategy and has recorded some success anecdotally. The Commissioner acknowledged that increasing the current school attendance rates by another 10 percent 'is going to need a lot of hard work.'<sup>24</sup>
28. The committee notes improvements in school attendance rates in junior schooling and the ongoing issues with poor attendance for secondary schooling. The committee looks forward to the Commission's progress report on its strategy to improve school attendance rates during 2011-12.

### 4.3 Capacity development in local communities

#### *Fly-in/Fly-out model of service provision*

29. The Commissioner has stated that the key to successful service provision within the four communities is 'regular and personal engagement with clients.'<sup>25</sup> However, the Commission has acknowledged that it is often difficult to find suitable staff to live in the communities for extended periods of time, although there are some exceptions.<sup>26</sup>
30. The Commissioner has identified a number of challenges arising from the current fly-in/fly-out model of service provision. These include:<sup>27</sup>
- lack of service delivery on a full-time basis

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<sup>22</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Answer to Question on Notice No. 3.

<sup>26</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 58; Answer to Question on Notice No. 3.

- clients lacking confidence in service provider staff because of the difficulty in forming relationships when staff do not reside in the community
- the importance to the client of service provider staff being part of the community
- lack of continuity of service for clients because service provider staff are often assigned to communities at short notice
- community concern regarding housing stock allocated to service providers, which is often empty, in communities that suffer from overcrowding and a lack of suitable housing.

*Service provision, referrals and advocacy*

31. Following each conference, the Commission may refer clients to community support services. The committee notes that the availability and provision of such services is fundamental to achieving the objectives of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (Qld). The Commission made 374 referrals for clients to community service providers in 2010-11, a significant decrease from 583 in 2009-10.<sup>28</sup> The committee sought an explanation for this decline and was initially advised that the Commission considered it 'inappropriate to comment' given that the Commonwealth Government has commissioned an independent evaluation upon the expiry of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* on 1 January 2013.<sup>29</sup>
32. However, when pressed on this point at the public hearing, the Commissioner provided further details about the decrease in client service referrals from 2009-10 to 2010-11. He indicated that the lack of staffing at the Aurukun Wellbeing Centre resulted in the Commission being requested not to refer clients for a period of time during 2010-11. There was also some indication that clients were uncomfortable with staff members at the Wellbeing Centre, as some had expressed concern about having to meet with 'particular people'. The Commissioner advised that these people have since moved on.<sup>30</sup>
33. Furthermore, during this period, the Commission referred the carers of all children in Aurukun to the School Attendance Case Managers via meetings rather than through written referral documents. The Commissioner attributed the absence of completed written case plans for all parents/carers to the fact that the parenting group in Aurukun was not operating for a number of weeks due to unavailability of professional staff. The Commissioner went on to note that there were several Indigenous staff working but that the parenting group had ceased to operate without professional staff.<sup>31</sup>
34. The Commissioner raised the point that there are also unintended consequences of school absences and child safety notifications for other children in the family when expectant mothers travel to Cairns at least a month prior to their expected delivery date. The committee notes that in such situations this requires resources from the Commission and other agencies to locate these children. The Commission indicated that it did not believe it was necessary to establish a tracking process to deal with this situation and has instead responded to this challenge by attempting to ensure that expectant mothers make advance

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<sup>28</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, pp. 44, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Answer to Question on Notice No. 5.

<sup>30</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 5.

arrangements to place children in school in Cairns so that their school attendance is not adversely affected and that all agencies are kept informed of the children's whereabouts.<sup>32</sup>

35. The Commissioner expressed some frustration about the privacy barriers preventing the exchange of information between service delivery agencies such as Education, Health and Housing. The committee notes the Commissioner's remarks that information flows between agencies all occur through him. For example, 'Under our act we set up memorandums of understanding with all the departments. At one stage I can tell you that information was coming to me from Housing and it was going straight to Health. But it was not going from Housing to Health; it was going from Housing to me to Health.'<sup>33</sup>
36. The committee expressed concern about the adverse implications of these information silos and commends the Commission for the practical improvements in communication made possible through the contribution of the local coordinators and the introduction of school nurses.
37. At the public hearing with the committee, the Commissioner outlined some important examples where, in the course of conducting a family conference, the Commission became aware that people were not receiving basic services to which they were entitled. The Commission either intervened directly to advocate on the person's behalf or it supported the individual to pursue the matter with the agency concerned.<sup>34</sup>
38. The committee considers that these examples expose a number of important issues for the people participating in the Cape York Welfare Reform trial. The committee acknowledges that the Commission has by inference adopted a capacity development approach in much of its work but the committee has formed the view that this work would be greatly strengthened through the development of detailed capacity development strategies. These matters should be considered as part of the evaluation of the Commission and its transitioning arrangements. Capacity development would potentially be of significant benefit when responding to some of the documented issues such as:
- enhancing the consistency of service provision by developing local capacity for service delivery
  - expanding the range of services offered locally to address some of the gaps in service provision
  - equipping local leaders to perform advocacy functions on behalf of their community.

#### 4.4 Exit strategy

39. The Cape York Welfare Reform trial, of which the Family Responsibilities Commission is part, was extended in August 2011 until 31 December 2012. The Commission has begun to consider an exit strategy in the lead-up to the completion of its work, including meeting with the Director-General of Communities. The Commission expects to have an exit strategy articulated by June 2012. The Commissioner has stated that his main concern is the impact on the communities of the Commission's departure.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> D. Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> D. Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 4.

*Resolution of issues within the Commission's exit strategy*

40. The committee raised serious concerns with the Commissioner about the proposed arrangements and overall timing for the implementation of the Commission's exit strategy.<sup>36</sup> In response, the Commissioner indicated that he shared these concerns and had commenced discussions with the Director-General of the Department of Communities, raising a range of issues in anticipation of the Commission winding up at the end of 2012 including:
- what to do with 300 clients who are on income management at 31 December 2012
  - the work of Local Commissioners who operate under the *Family Responsibilities Act 2008*
  - the departure of staff from local communities and the possible resulting gap in service provision if local capacity has not been developed
  - ongoing support for clients who are attending programs, including those in the counselling process
  - the expiration of all agreements between the Commission and other agencies
  - the development of a plan to mainstream some of the responsibilities presently within the Commission's jurisdiction, e.g. schools in the communities accepting responsibility for school attendance
  - when transitional processes should commence.
41. The committee noted that despite a deficit of \$0.923M in the 2010-11 financial year, this was offset by a surplus of \$3.77M carried forward from 2007-08, which resulted in retained equity at 30 June 2011 of \$1.258M. The Commission has stated that it forecasts a surplus of \$0.127M for the fiscal period 2011-12.<sup>37</sup> The committee would like the Commission to clarify how that surplus will be utilised as part of its exit strategy prior to 31 December 2012.<sup>38</sup>
42. The committee believes that the main difficulty with the exit strategy will be the attempted resolution of the contradiction between the objective of the Commission, as a 'short, sharp intervention' to assist with improving the attitudes and behaviour of people within the communities,<sup>39</sup> and how this interfaces with the way the Commission's work has become embedded in the delivery of recurrent State and Federal service delivery programs.
43. The resolution of this issue may be addressed in the independent evaluation of the Commission, which the Commissioner indicated has now commenced. The Family Responsibilities Commission Board was hopeful that the evaluation report 'would be available before 30 June' 2012. However, the Commissioner has stated that it 'may be closer to August next year.'<sup>40</sup>
44. As both the report on the independent evaluation of the Commission's achievements and its exit strategy are not yet available, the committee is unable to comment at this time on the progress of the Commission or its transitional planning for the completion of its operations. However, the Committee believes that a well-developed exit strategy is essential to ensuring continuing progress within the four communities and that the exit strategy must reflect and, where necessary, incorporate the findings of the independent evaluation of the Commission.

<sup>36</sup> M Choi, Committee Member, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Family Responsibilities Commission, *Annual Report 2010-11*, p. 88 and Answer to Question on Notice No. 4.

<sup>38</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> D Glasgow, Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Public Hearing Transcript*, Brisbane, 30 November 2011, p. 9.

45. The Committee is therefore deeply concerned about the likely impact of the delay in the finalisation of the evaluation report and considers this situation to be unsatisfactory. The committee considers it to be essential that the report on the independent evaluation of the Commission's work up until 31 December 2011 is completed and published by 30 June 2012 so that the Commission can design and commence implementation of its exit strategy in a timely manner based on the evidence and findings of the independent evaluation report.

**Recommendation 1**

The committee recommends that the independent evaluation report on the Commission's work until 31 December 2011 is completed and published by 30 June 2012.

**Recommendation 2**

The committee recommends that the independent evaluation report takes into account the effectiveness of capacity development activities in the communities.

**Recommendation 3**

The committee recommends that the independent evaluation report examines the issue of information exchange between agencies where it impacts on the Commission's work in the communities.

**Recommendation 4**

The committee recommends that the Commission ensures that a clearly defined exit strategy based on the findings of the independent evaluation report is developed so that the exit strategy planning is finalised and implementation commenced by no later than 30 September 2012.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Written Responses to Questions on Notice



**Family Responsibilities Commission – Response to Questions on Notice****Question 1**

**What was the consultation process within each of the communities for the recent review of the School Attendance Guidelines and what is the degree of compliance with these specific changes in the guideline in each of the communities since the revisions were introduced?**

Commission's response:

- The consultation process was undertaken by Cape York Partnerships with specific focus on absence from school due to funerals.
- The outcome of the consultation was reported to the Commission which informed the amendments to the existing guidelines.
- Anecdotally the schools report that parents and carers are more frequently reporting reasons for absence in accordance with the guidelines.
- Additionally, we are advised that families, where possible, try to hold funerals on Fridays or Saturdays to minimise the impact on school attendance.

**Question 2**

**The table on page 45 of the Family Responsibilities Commission 2010-11 Annual Report shows trend data for school attendance form 2008-11 for the four communities. The annual report then makes the statement that cautions should be exercised when drawing conclusions because a small numerical change can result in large percentage differences in the smaller communities of Coen and Mossman Gorge. In the interests of transparency, can the Commission please provide the committee with a revised version of this table that includes the total number of students in each community alongside the attendance percentage so that the committee can consider the matter directly for itself?**

Commission's response:

- The Commission receives school attendance data from the Department of Education and Training (DET) for publication in the Commission's quarterly and annual reports.
- DET do not normally provide data to the Commission in regard to school enrolment numbers in each of the communities
- The Commission has sought the requested data from DET and unfortunately DET are unable to provide this data in the required timeframe. We suggest this data would be best sought directly from DET.

**Question 3**

**On page 58 of the annual report the comment is made that the Commission actively encourages service providers to interact with the community and the fly in fly out model of service provision prevents individual staff from forming relationships with clients and the community. Could the Commission please provide the committee with further information outlining its difficulties with this model?**

Commission's response:

Successful service provision in Indigenous communities is heavily reliant on regular and personal engagement with clients. Personal relationships must be built in order to achieve sustainable outcomes, and engagement must be of a standard which encourages and nurtures relationships of trust and reliability.

- The current fly-in/fly-out model of service delivery fails to provide sustained and permanent staff who are available on a fulltime basis for clients.
- The provision of service which is not a 5 day week service can inhibit the development of relationships and professional client management, bringing disillusionment and disappointment to both clients and the service provider staff.
- If service provider staff are not based in the community, they do not become part of the community as they are not available for after hours and weekend activities.
- It has been reported that service provider staff are frequently assigned to meet the resourcing needs in other communities at short notice and as a result lose continuity with clients.
- The fly-in/fly-out model also causes concern to the communities as there is housing stock allocated to service providers which is frequently seen empty, in communities with significant overcrowding and a lack of suitable housing.

**Question 4**

The Commission's financial overview for 2010-11 indicates that there was a deficit of \$0.923M this financial year and that this was offset by the surplus of \$3.77M carried forward from 2007-08, resulting in a combined surplus of \$1.258M. What are the forward projections for the Commission's operating result for the 2011-12 financial year?

Commission's response:

- The retained equity at 30 June 2011 was \$1.258M.
- The Commission forecasts a surplus of \$0.127M for the fiscal period 2011-12.
- The forecast net equity at 30 June 2012 is \$1.385M.

<b>Forecast 2011-12</b>	
<b>Income</b>	
Grants and other contributions	4,411,633
Other revenue	45,000
<b>Total income</b>	<b>4,456,633</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Employment expenses	2,862,850
Supplies and services	1,371,491
Grants and subsidies	0
Depreciation and amortisation	53,667
Finance/borrowing costs	0
Other Expenses	41,500
Losses on sale/revaluation property, plant and equipment and investments	0
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>4,329,508</b>
<b>Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>127,125</b>

<b>Plus: Retained equity from 2010-11</b>	<b>1,258,000</b>
<b>Forecast: Retained equity at 30 June 2012</b>	<b>1,385,125</b>

<b>2011-12 funding sources</b>	
Operating; Jul - Dec 2011	1,373,218
Principal Case Manager; Jul - Dec 2011	62,626
Additional wages/oncost; AFPs & GLO; Jul - Dec 2011	208,769
One off funding; Aurukun 2010 additional sittings	134,456
Balance one off funding; hardware/software upgrade	32,564
Operating; Jan - Jun 2012	1,600,000
Federal funding Jan - Dec 2012	1,000,000
Interest & sundry	45,000
	<b>4,456,633</b>

**Question 5**

**Client service referrals decreased in 2009-10 from 583 to 374 in 2010-11. At the moment, the data provides an aggregate picture of the total decline in the demand for services. Can the Commission please quantify for the committee the proportion of this declining demand that can be attributed to:**

- a. the Commission's achievement of its objectives**
- b. lack of available services to receive referrals**
- c. poor client satisfaction with available services.**

Commission's response:

- A full and independent evaluation has been commissioned by the Commonwealth Government upon expiry of the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* on 1 January 2013.
- The Commission advises that given that an independent evaluation is to be carried out in the near future, the Commission considers it inappropriate to comment on the above question.

**Question 6**

**Could you please provide further information on how the Commission records and responds to situations where there are multiple notifications within a single household for different individuals and also where the notifications are for different notification types?**

Commission's response:

- The Commission has reported that for the period July 2010 to June 2011, 20 percent of the Commission's clients received more than five notifications.
- The nature of many of the notices received by the Commission in relation to community members is that multiple individuals may be required to participate in a conference to achieve a successful outcome for the client (i.e. additional tenants, parents, care givers, grandparents, perpetrators and other relevant persons). Each notice is therefore judged on its own merit and a determination made as to whether the conferencing procedure should expand to include other individuals to provide clarity on the client's circumstances.
- Due to the above, and also the fact that several individuals in a house may have notices which are relative to each other, the Commission prefers in many circumstances to deal with the entire household (subject of course to the sensitivity of the clients issues).
- A record is created by the Commission of each person conferenced (whether relevant person or client).

**Question 7**

**How does the Commission balance the legitimate need for Active Family Pathways to address new barriers or goals for clients and the overall objective of preventing ongoing welfare dependence?**

Commission's response:

- The Active Family Pathways framework works collaboratively with selected clients who have faced long term challenges and complex issues.
- The clients discuss realistic goals with the Commissioners and AFP Officers, such as basic housing issues or correcting Centrelink entitlements.
- In the AFP framework the clients work towards addressing significant disadvantage that will move them along a continuum of development to a point of achieving average social norms. The aim is to bring the client to a level equivalent to the majority of Australians on welfare dependence and afford them the same opportunities.
- By addressing the chronically disadvantaged client base, the Active Family Pathways is providing assistance to decrease long term welfare dependency of the client and family members.

**Question 8**

**During 2010, Local Commissioners in Coen indicated they were using teleconferencing in the conferencing process. Can the Commission please advise:**

- a. **Which communities have teleconferencing facilities?**
- b. **How often have they been used for conferencing in the past financial year?**
- c. **How well is teleconferencing accepted in each of the communities?**

Commission's response:

- a. Aurukun, Coen, Mossman Gorge and Hope Vale.
- b. Two days of sittings in Coen and three days of sittings in Aurukun.
- c. The Commission and community members do not view teleconferencing as the optimal method of conducting conferences. Indigenous clients are more responsive to personal engagement and communication is strongly influenced and conveyed through body language and visual cues which cannot be transmitted through telephone or video link. However, teleconferencing has proven to be a useful tool in maintaining sitting schedules in situations where weather has prevented travel (i.e. cyclones/seasonal flooding) or (as has previously occurred) an airfield has been closed for maintenance. In those circumstances conferencing is able to be conducted via telephone (especially in circumstances where the Commissioner and client are already well known to each other).

**Question 9**

**In Coen Local Commissioners report, they discuss the issues and implications arising from overcrowded housing during the wet season.**

- a. Who is monitoring and responding to the impact of this with respect to:**
- i. housing densities**
  - ii. increased notifications in various categories for these households**
  - iii. housing stock maintenance costs.**

Commission's response:

- The Commission is not the most appropriate agency to respond to these questions as it does not monitor or record issues specific to Housing.
- The most appropriate agency to comment is Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services).

**Question 10**

**What improvements does the Commission believe the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy has made to the educational outcomes at Hope Vale State School in its first full school year?**

Commission's response:

- The Commission is not the most appropriate agency to respond to these questions and does not monitor or record issues specific to educational outcomes.
- The most appropriate agency to comment is Department of Education and Training.
- The Commission can advise that the Hope Vale Commissioners report there are less children on the streets during school hours, children are requesting access to books and actively reading, and poorly behaved children are demonstrating improved behaviour and respect for authority.

**Question 11**

**Mossman Gorge community is not presently subject to alcohol restrictions under the Liquor Act 1992. The committee notes the comments by the Local Commissioners about the benefits associated with the declaration of dry houses within the community. How many dry houses are there in the community at present and what function do they perform?**

Commission's response:

- Mossman Gorge community presently has six dry houses. The number of dry houses is constantly changing as community members leave and arrive and household compositions alter.
- Community members report that dry houses provide tenants with control over their homes and those entering their homes. Community members are able to tell troublesome visitors and family members there is no drinking permitted inside the fence and that the Queensland Police Service will enforce the dry house declaration. This allows a non-confrontational approach for the tenant to advise troublesome visitors that drinking and parties in their home are not welcome, especially for the older community members named on the lease.
- Dry houses are also considered safer areas for children and the vulnerable from alcohol induced violence. When the parties start, community members can visit a dry house and have some quiet.
- The Commission, Queensland Police Service and respected community members were very proactive in supporting community members to apply for a dry house at the commencement of CYWR and took the time to explain that the process was free, only required registration with the Clerk of the Court and did not involve attending Court.
- The Queensland Police Service continue to support dry houses, assisting with signage and providing information to all community members on the legislation (rules) of the dry houses and tenants.

**Question 12**

**Aurukun increased in the number of conferences between late October and December 2010 to resolve the declining school attendance rates at a total cost of \$134,456. How effective has this strategy been in arresting this decline over the past year?**

Commissioner's response:

School/Community	2010				2011		
	Term 1 (%)	Term 2 (%)	Term 3 (%)	Term 4 (%)	Term 1 (%)	Term 2 (%)	Term 3 (%)
Western Cape College - Aurukun	65.9	57.7	54.1	64.8	73.7	70.1	58.8
<i>Aurukun - Primary</i>	71.3	64.7	62.4	72.7	75.4	73.2	62.6
<i>Aurukun - Secondary</i>	45.1	32.7	29.0	38.5	56.2	51.5	37.7

- The above table displays school attendance from term 1 2010 to term 3 2011. Term 4 2010 (highlighted in green) covers the period during which the extra sittings were conducted to boost attendance rates.
- As school attendance historically fluctuates from one term to another (i.e. traditionally the first term of each year has a higher attendance rate than subsequent terms), it is best for comparison to view like term with like term. When viewed from that perspective, each term has increased in attendance when comparing 2010 to 2011.
- The overall impact on Aurukun of the additional conferences in Term 4 can be assessed from the previous Term 3 (54.1), through Term 4 (64.8) and subsequently Term 1 (73.7).
- During this period Commissioner Glasgow, Local Commissioners and the Local Coordinator participated in weekly meetings with the Principal of the CYAAA and School Case Managers. Parents/carers were conferenced in some cases multiple times and collaboration was intensified between all concerned parties.
- One factor affecting school attendance percentages is the manner in which absences are recorded. Late arrivals are recorded as an absence and included in the above data although the Commissioners may elect not to conference the client in those circumstances.
- Commissioners report that positive changes are occurring which are not reflected in statistical data. Parents are becoming more involved in preparing their children for school and are exhibiting a concern which was previously lacking.

## **Appendix B**

# **Transcript of Meeting with the Family Responsibilities Commissioner**





# **COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

## **Members present:**

Mr P.A. Hoolihan MP (Chair)  
Ms F.S. Simpson MP  
Mr M.W. Choi MP  
Mr P.J. Dowling MP  
Mr A.P. McLindon MP  
Mr J.D. O'Brien MP

## **Staff present:**

Dr K. Munro (Research Director)  
Ms M. Telford (Principal Research Officer)  
Ms S. Cash (Executive Assistant)

## **HEARING FOR THE OVERSIGHT & EXAMINATION OF THE FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2011**

**Brisbane**

## WEDNESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2011

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### **Committee met at 11.34 am**

**CHAIR:** Good morning all. I declare this hearing for the oversight and examination of the Family Responsibilities Commission open. Thank you for your interest and for your attendance here today. The committee has resolved to allow television and media coverage of today's hearing.

The Community Affairs Committee has an oversight responsibility under schedule 6 of the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly for monitoring and reporting on the Family Responsibilities Commission. Before proceeding further, I would like to introduce the members of the committee present today: Ms Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochydore and deputy chair of the committee; Mr Michael Choi, the member for Capalaba; Mr Peter Dowling, the member for Redlands; Mr Aidan McLindon, the member for Beaudesert; and Mr Jason O'Brien, the member for Cook. My name is Paul Hoolihan. I am the member for Keppel and I am the chair of the committee.

The Community Affairs Committee is a committee of the Queensland parliament and as such represents the parliament. It is an all-party committee which adopts a non-partisan approach to its proceedings. Although the committee is not swearing in witnesses, I remind all witnesses that this hearing is a formal process of the parliament. As such, any person intentionally misleading the committee is committing a serious offence. I also remind witnesses that Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings. I therefore ask you to please identify yourself when you first speak and to speak clearly and at a reasonable pace. It is the committee's intention that the transcript of the hearing be published. The findings of the committee will be the subject of a report to the parliament. A copy of the committee's report will be forwarded to witnesses. Before we commence, may I ask that mobiles and pagers be switched off or put on silent mode, please. Thank you.

### **GLASGOW, Mr David, Family Responsibilities Commissioner, Family Responsibilities Commission**

### **SOVENYHAZI, Ms Tammy, Registrar, Family Responsibilities Commission**

### **WHITE, Mr Robert, Registrar, Family Responsibilities Commission**

**CHAIR:** I would like to welcome you, Commissioner Glasgow, and call on you as the commissioner. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr Glasgow:** Thank you. My name is David Robert Glasgow, I am the Commissioner for Family Responsibilities and with me today is my registrar, Tammy Sovenyhazi, who is retiring, as you are aware, and the new registrar, Mr Rob White. Firstly, I offer my apologies for being late. That was unfortunate, due to a delayed aircraft leaving late from Cairns—almost two hours late. I bring to you and to your members the greetings of the commissioners of the four communities in which we sit and particularly to you and Peter the good wishes of the commissioners from Coen, who I sat with on Monday, and from Aurukun, who I sat with yesterday.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr Glasgow:** I am reminded of your comments and the time they had with you some time ago. Unfortunately, the trip that was arranged for Dr Flegg was postponed. Because of the Qantas strike he was unable to attend, and that trip is to take place some time in the new year when it can be arranged.

The commission has continued since that time to sit regularly, and I am sitting this week in Aurukun. I will be returning there tomorrow morning. Interestingly enough, today the commissioners are sitting alone and they will continue to carry out their tasks. There are about 23 conferences today. I am going back tomorrow, particularly because there are conferences still to do but it is also the speech night for the Aurukun school and Friday is a similar speech night for the Coen school, which we will see.

Because of the time constraints, I would prefer to allow the committee members to ask me questions. In the meantime, since we last met our annual report and the quarterly report have been presented. We have more updated figures which are to 30 September, which are current. They went before the board at our last board meeting, which was on the 25th—last Friday. Once the report is adopted it will go to the minister and in due course the minister will table that and the matter will become public.

I do have some information. We can give to you more updated information in relation to our business for the last quarter. Perhaps, Mr Chairman, your members would like to go through either the questions or other matters they have for us. In view of the time constraints, that may be a more practical way.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, and thank you for the good wishes of the commissioners from Coen and Aurukun. It was quite enlightening to see the commissioners themselves and how they work with you for the benefit of their own community. As you know, we had a number of questions on notice. I will leave it open to the committee to lead off.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you very much. We appreciate the difficulties when flights are delayed. It is great to have you and the registrar staff here. We note from the answers to the questions on notice that one of the issues has been around school attendance and some of the changes in respect of how absences are reported. Could you give us an indication as to how you see the school attendance issue being impacted by the role of the commission? Can you get a better handle on why this issue continues to be such a difficult issue, despite some of the interventions?

**Mr Glasgow:** I think if we put the communities in perspective, the communities of Hope Vale, Mossman Gorge and Coen are really doing quite well. They are close to state average, which is very good for an Indigenous community, particularly in view of the fact that the attendance rules are rigidly enforced. I think we have mentioned in the answer that people who are half an hour late are marked absent for the morning and children who leave in the afternoon and the roll is checked in the afternoon are marked absent. That is a cumulative thing, so as soon as the three days come up we get a notice.

In Aurukun it has been a particularly difficult time, because we started from such a low ebb. It was in the high 30s and, from some figures, I would say in the 40s. Because it is a school which runs from pre-prep through to year 10, we see what has happened with the approach of a number of parents and carers and children to the responsibility of attending school. Particularly towards the later years, that regularity is diminished in many cases—and it does not occur in several. It has been part of the accepted behaviour patterns. If we now look at what has happened since the academy has been there and particularly some of the new tests that are coming out and the NAPLAN results, the attendance rate from pre-prep up to year 3 is spectacularly good and it is hoped that that will continue through the system.

There is a core of people in Aurukun who we have income managed who really are not responding. They have been income managed for a number of years—some of them for a number of years; some of them for over 12 months—and they really have not responded to all of the work that is being done. We have a plan for that in the new year and I would like to talk to you about that briefly, but later. We have identified a core group of children. The other thing we have noticed very clearly from the beginning is that quite a number of the children are not with a parenting group. Particularly those in the age group of about year 5 onwards, the majority of them seem to be with carers. They may have been carers from birth; they may have been grandparents and people of that persuasion.

**CHAIR:** These are not problem children, are they, Commissioner?

**Mr Glasgow:** Not necessarily.

**CHAIR:** They are just children who do not have a parent in that residence?

**Mr Glasgow:** That is right. Or they may have parents who have new partners and other children and those parents do not necessarily live together so grandma is looking after them.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** How large is this core group that you are talking about?

**Mr Glasgow:** We are identifying that now. A lot of those people who live with grandparents have the best school attendance, so I am not saying that is a problem. We have identified about 50 children coming from groups of families who have been income managed. We have taken those people and identified the children associated with those families. Some of them have quite good attendance, I have to say, but the majority of those are intermittent attenders or might do three days a week and are always absent on a Friday and a Monday, when mum and dad go to Weipa or something like that. School case managers go to those houses, but we seem to have lost any sort of influence over them to the extent of worrying them if they are brought in before us.

What we plan to do in the new year—and we have started it already—is on days when we have a bit of a lull we will get a couple of the commissioners and one of our case managers to go out to the house, wake the house, tell them 'we will be back in half an hour so have the children ready' and take them to school. The commissioners are doing that on an ad hoc basis and have had some success, but in many of the houses the carers are late sleepers or they are party people and so consequently the children have got out of the routine of going to school.

We have had a couple of very spectacular results of children who have not been going to school who have actually clicked in. We are doing this in conjunction with the school case managers. Rather than have them nominated to come in on a regular basis—and they either do turn up diligently or they do not turn up—we thought it might be better to use the commissioners' time to go out and do this, certainly in the new year, and we have done a little bit this term. It is a slow process, and we are finding anecdotally, from talking to the commissioners, that fewer children who do not go to school have mates to play with so there is an incentive to go to school. If you look at the figures between grade 1 and grade 7, that attendance rate is getting close to 70 per cent. I know it is very low, but it is a hell of a lot better than it was.

When you see the kids in the school, when they are getting reading levels they never had before they get a lot of parental interest and involvement, because a number of those parents cannot read, either. But having seen that, there is that interest to go to school. The school needs to produce an interest for the children to go. We can only do so much. If it is an uninteresting place, kids are not going to stay. We also have to look at the behavioural problems of those kids who really have not learned or do not really want to be there but have been forced to go there and how they affect other children. It is particularly they who induce children to leave after lunch. I know that is a longwinded explanation, but it seems to me that getting to the next stage—the next 10 per cent—is going to need a lot of hard work. The other thing, in finishing answering your question, is that the attendance rate of those in grades 8, 9 and 10, although they are reduced in number, is pretty abysmal so they are bringing down the total.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Commissioner, if someone is being income managed, how do they afford to get to Weipa and back on a weekend if you are managing most of their income, which is up to 70 per cent I assume?

**Mr Glasgow:** Yes.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Particularly for these long-term cases.

**Mr Glasgow:** Yes.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** How can they logistically do that?

**Mr Glasgow:** Well, it is not everybody in the house who is income managed; it is usually the carer and those people who are bona fide carers or those who are partly responsible. So, for instance, if the mother is caring for the children and the father is living elsewhere, we may get him on income management, too, because he is not providing enough financial support, but she may be living with another partner who is working or living with another partner who is not income managed who has no direct responsibility for the child, so there are funds. I really do not know how they do it, but there is always someone to car-pool and go out of the community to Weipa and presumably people who bring grog back into the community, although that is getting less and less.

**CHAIR:** Can I go to question 3 about fly-in fly-out models. I agree that you have identified the reasons that model of service delivery is not optimal. What plans does the commission have to address some of the issues in this final phase? I know that from the time we were there there had been a change in the wellness centre at Aurukun, which had a permanent staffer, from before, when there had been people who had been flying in and out. How are you going to address that fly-in fly-out model?

**Mr Glasgow:** We have no control over the service providers. What we really try to do is encourage them to listen to the local people. The wellbeing centres have had advisory committees where that message is being given quite regularly, and it seems to be finally getting through to the administration. Having said that—and that comment is quite critical—getting people who are prepared to live in the communities for this period of time has been a great difficulty for some service providers, and yet others, like the department of health and education, seem to get the teachers and the nurses to go there. I know that nursing is sometimes very difficult and they have to have contractors come in because they have to be there all the time, but I have tried to encourage them to use a little bit of creative thinking about the conditions for people to live there. For instance, our coordinator has been there for three years. We have always said that she has a right to come out one week in six, although she never does—not enough.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** She is a special case, though.

**Mr Glasgow:** Yes, I agree; she is. But she makes a life in that community. She and her partner will go fishing and they seem to be part of the community. If they are not at a house opening, people want to know where they are. Last year, for instance, there was no-one from the wellbeing centre at the school awards, which are on Thursday night, and I was really unimpressed with that because they had flown out on the Thursday afternoon when it was so easy to go out on a plane the next day. So we have tried to get through, in a gentle way, that their acceptance by people would be greater. I think that has happened, certainly with Joe Cashen now managing Aurukun. He has taken that on board. And we have a man up there now, who is not married, who is from Scotland. I find difficulty understanding him sometimes, but he is a very good—

**Ms SIMPSON:** With your surname?

**Mr Glasgow:** Yes. He is a very good, practical man who lives there. He was accepted the moment he came there and made it clear he was living there and was going fishing and doing things, but he still gets his time out. I think that is what is needed to be seen. I have said to them that it is a little different if you break your leg as it really does not matter which doctor you get to check it because you know it will be whatever doctor flies in. It is a little more difficult if you are sitting down with someone explaining to them why you spend time belting up your missus and you are going through a consultation process. If you do not get the confidence of those people or they change too rapidly, no-one is going to sit and be confident doing it, particularly if we are forcing them to go to these services. The females sitting around the table and at the back will be amused with this, but it is very difficult to get males to any of these consultation processes or even to look after their own health. So to get to somebody regularly and build up the confidence in it is a difficult thing to do. We have been trying to encourage that.

They have certainly done that in Coen and they have done it in Hope Vale, but with each of those processes it is relatively easy to do something. Coen is a town and Hope Vale is a 40-minute drive from Cooktown, where you can go and relax. The isolated community is the one that needs to be looked at, and I think that needs to be looked at by government in the provision of all services—to allow people to get out reasonably regularly and to participate in other things. I am mindful that there has been a significant improvement in the last four or five months. In fact, my coordinator and Joe Cashen have become fairly good friends about the process. Once you build up that local contact, I think a lot of things move from that.

**Mr CHOI:** Commissioner, I think we all accepted that it is probably a lot better if service providers stay within the community, but if your commission is likely to cease operating in December 2012 how will that affect some of the service providers? I am trying to understand the impact of that in 12 months time.

**Mr Glasgow:** I am very mindful of an exit strategy from the commission. We have already had a meeting in the week that we were to meet with your committee. We met with the director-general of our department and put to her a lot of the issues that you would be thinking about now, because we hope that, if we do finish at the end of next year, by June next year we would know what the strategies were going to be—and you could think of them off the top of your head. What do you do with 300 people on income management at 31 December? What do you do with our commissioners? How do you extricate all your staff? What happens to all the people in the counselling process? What happens to our agreements? Our act is quite clear: they all cease.

That, I think, is part of government policy, and we have asked the department to look at those issues—even down to the practicalities of what happens to our office and how you produce an annual report after 31 December and a quarterly report if all our positions cease. I think once those matters are addressed, Mr Choi, they will be looked at sensibly. The concern I have is the impact you were referring to, of us departing the communities. When you go back and read the report on which this was based, it was all to be a short, sharp intervention to see what this would do and then see whether there were changes in the attitude of people and whether we had established the forms that were maintainable.

The other issue I say, for instance, to the people in Hope Vale, where the school attendance is pretty good, realistically, is: if that was a school in Bundaberg or Cairns, would you have three case managers going around and checking everyone every day, or would the school be obliged to do its own thing? Eventually, when those services are withdrawn, the school is going to have to do those things—as it does in every other place. We would look to see what would happen after the commission ceased, whether there is a transition out of that. My concern is: if there is a transition, when does it start? Does it start in July and we transition out so people are aware of that? We have some obligations to all the people where we deliver the services or where we conference.

I have some ideas about that, but I think it really starts with government policy. Government should be saying, 'This is how we see those matters developing,' and we will take that on board. I am mindful all the time that I sit on a very narrow fence and I try not at any time to put forward my views as to how I interpret things. It should be the government's policy because this is a government act. We are implementing government policy and we enter board policy. The board policies that are laid down are clearly that our priority is to get children to school and to protect children, and that is where we are directed. Towards the end I would expect, firstly, the government would raise issues about the practicalities of the wind-up and the board would consider those matters certainly before June so we would know how to implement them.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Can I ask some more questions around school attendance? David, I was interested when you were outlining before that you had had a look at some of the circumstances where different caring arrangements were in place. Could you inform us as to whether data in regard to the caring arrangements for children versus attendance is something that you track? I background this slightly with the fact that, as I understand it, the education department did not track school attendance of children in care—that is, children living with a foster parent or in some other care arrangement. You are dealing with a range of families—some who would have different caring arrangements that do not necessarily involve children in care—but you would have some children in care situations as well. Is that data that you are able to correlate between those different parenting and care arrangements and attendance?

**Mr Glasgow:** We actually do not formally correlate those, but the reality on the ground is that the commissioners know where everyone basically is on a fairly regular basis. Now that we have the safe houses in the communities we usually know where people are. They are more up to date than the education department, simply because if children place themselves overnight or they place themselves from family to family, in a matter of days they know where they are. Quite often we will receive the school notices and the commissioner will say, 'Well, they are not there. They have actually gone to Cairns. This lady has gone down there to have a baby.' Those issues affect attendance, of course. If any mother is due to have a child, at least a month before the child is born she goes to Cairns. What we are trying to do now is to make sure that, when they take children down there, there are arrangements made to place them in school because if they do not do that then that affects school attendance.

Quite often it becomes a bit complicated. If mum does not make arrangements at home, the children could be placed around the communities and if they are not placed with people who are more persistent in getting children to school, some good school attendance can drop away. The school case managers follow that up. If they go to Cairns that has been a bit of a problem for us, but now we liaise with the school nurse and the medical centre, so we generally know when people are going so that can be followed through and the case managers follow that up in Cairns. Cairns is a big community, so they can disappear in the sense that we have to track them to see where they actually are.

In relation to those children who are in the care of Child Safety Services, those who remain in the community, we know fully where they are. When they are removed from the community that is a different matter, because it may not necessarily be appropriate for us and the commission to know where they are at a particular time until things are resolved. Generally speaking we do, and generally speaking Child Safety Services will arrange to take the children off the school roll and enrol with another school. One of our commissioners is a representative of the recognised entity in the community, Commissioner Ada Woolla, so she keeps tabs on that pretty much.

Really, we are talking about 230 children and, whilst that might seem a lot, everyone knows everyone's business and we did not find it necessary to set up a tracking device. We pretty well find them. For example, we had a mother who took a couple of kids from Hope Vale down to the Cairns show. It was a preschooler and three others. They disappeared off the radar and no-one knew where they were, but our commissioners found them. They found two of them in Mossman Gorge and the other two we knew where they were. Three have now come back to the community and the other one is with mum. It took about six weeks for us to get the notices that they were missing. What we have asked the school case managers to do is to not wait necessarily for Education's bureaucracy to get that through but to let us know so that they can follow them up themselves. In Cairns it is a bit difficult, but we did manage to find them in Mossman Gorge. So it is not as critical a role as we think. It could be, but I am always interested in looking.

The other thing is that I want to make sure that, rather than set up something that is going to disappear when we close, we have a practical thing that the commissioners can do, if there is a role for the commissioners. It may be that government decides when this case management system is finished that some of these commissioners can take some role in relation to the school, and that would be ideal because they are full of knowledge about where everybody is and where people are moving from so they would be able to inform the school.

But, again, I work within the act and I am happy to enforce all the things I can do, but, as with the chairman's comment about fly-in, fly-out, I can only influence and hopefully get people to change their minds. Then who is to say I am right? I think I am right, but I try to get what the commission is saying.

**CHAIR:** Can I go off a little bit on a tangent? We asked in question 5 about client service referrals and the decrease. You did answer that there is to be an independent evaluation. I suppose it may well be being a victim of one's own success, but what is your current assessment of reasons for the recorded decline in client service referral?

**Mr Glasgow:** In the year that we are talking about here we had a period of time when there were severe staffing levels in the Aurukun Wellbeing Centre and we were asked not to refer. Then we looked around at who could do it in the meantime. I am not sure of the period, but we were asked for a period of time to do that. The other thing was that there was some reaction by people having to go to particular people at the wellbeing centre who are no longer there. We got that. We did not know whether those reactions were correct or not, whether they just did not like being told or put through the system.

There needed to be more emphasis by the wellbeing centres on actually going out and getting the people to come in. They use the term 'engagement'. As you know, we set up a process where each of the commissioners wrote down how they thought it should be done in their respective communities, and we published that. We provided that to people as a guide. To give you examples of differences, in Aurukun you do not go into the yard; you go to the fence and you call out. In Hope Vale you can go to the door, but you do not go inside the house. So there are different ways of approaching it. We try to make that available to people—and we do make it available to service providers—without putting it in their face, so to speak. We did have that problem.

The other issue, too, when we were doing that fairly heavy period in Aurukun where I was sitting every week, is that we just went through every carer of every child. As far as I was concerned, even though they did not have an agreement, they were all referred to the school case managers, and rather than do formal documentation they were told to go and we followed them up and we managed them by bringing them in every fortnight and doing that rather than having formal documents. We thought that that was a good try, rather than have formal documentation for that period of time because we were doing everybody. What was the point of having everyone on a case plan when you only needed a few?

At one stage the parenting group in Aurukun—from the beginning of this year—was just not operating. There was no staff. There were some Indigenous staff but there were no professional staff, and that went on for some weeks—quite a few weeks. We have had a similar incident in the last couple of months where one lady had a heart attack and is trying to come back and she is not well enough to come back and the other was involved in a skirmish which was not of her making. So for a period of time both were out of the community for nearly eight weeks. In Coen the lady got sick. She was not there when you visited. I think that had been in the seventh week. There was no point in building up huge referral lists. That was more recently, but in the last year we were really trying to see the people that we referred to find out whether they were actually getting some decent benefits, to get that response back and to lower, if you like, the case loads so that people actually got some benefit.

I think you will find that in the last few months, because of the confidence we have in these people and also because we are bringing people in to show cause and we are income managing quite a few, we are saying, 'Well, to get your money back you've got to go and do these things.' So yesterday I probably referred the best part of 10 people to various multiple services. It was an interesting day in Aurukun yesterday. There was a blue going on which involved quite a number of people. Actually, one of the adults took it into the school and was chastising, for want of a better word, a young child from another family. The police put that to rest very quickly. A number of people involved in the fight were supposed to come in to us and they did not show up, so they will all find that they will have a BasicsCard in the next few days. If they are too diverted to be involved in fighting and not interested in coming in to talk about their children's school attendance or their own behaviour, that is the best way of doing it.

Now, what happens when they get a BasicsCard is usually initially they are quite angry and they want to know why they got it and then when they calm down they want to know how to get off it. So we are developing a case plan now to say, 'Well, these are the four things you have to do. You have to go down and do the Ending Family Violence program.' 'Why do I need it?' 'Well, you were out there fighting the other day.' We are going to put them through a number of things. I think I sent a number to do that and to substance abuse counselling and empowerment and said, 'Well, you go and do these things and then come back here and show us you are a reasonable member of the community'.

That fight started over one brother chastising another brother for not sending his kids to school. It has been resolved by the police now. Unfortunately the justice group coordinator has been out of the community so it could not be mediated. But it just blew out and now it is the two families having a shot at each other. So hopefully today our commissioners will be mediating it. It shows how below the surface things can get out of hand very quickly. When it starts involving kids that really gets my hackles up, and so it did for the police and they have done something about it. I think we will find now that the confidence is there with the wellbeing centres there will be more referrals. We are also mindful that we have got a year to go, so we want to make sure that they get in and get their services quickly.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Could I ask a question? Have you got another question, Paul?

**CHAIR:** No. I was going to go off on another tangent.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I was going to take it over to the housing issue. In question 9 we asked about monitoring and responding to the impact of housing densities, increased notifications, various categories for these households and housing stock maintenance costs. The commission replied that it was not the most appropriate agency to respond to these questions as it does not monitor or record issues specific to housing; the most appropriate agency is the department of housing. I wanted to follow up this question because obviously overcrowding and housing is an issue. Are you able to explain to us what you are doing to work with the Department of Communities on this because you must have a sense of where this is at in respect of the issue being worked through with the department?

**Mr Glasgow:** It is obvious in these communities, and particularly in Aurukun more than the others, that there is a great degree of overcrowding. There have been a number of houses—I think 27 in all—built since we have been there. That has assisted greatly. Housing went in with Commonwealth government funding and placed everybody on tenancy agreements. They signed up everyone bar two. One was deceased and one could not be contacted; he was working outside and was using the house as a bit of a depot more than a rental. They have officers on the ground there. Their rental arrears are the lowest they have been ever. Surprisingly, even in Hope Vale they have really gone down.

There are a few recalcitrants and we bring them in. In fact, we had a couple yesterday. It is mainly to do with the assessment of the household and some people taking a view of, 'I'll pay all the rent because I want to control who lives in this house. So therefore I'm doing that,' or others who should be contributing are not contributing. Some of them are just obviously bloody-minded and others really need to be confronted. So yesterday we had two of them in in relation to the arrears. When we do that, we ring Housing, because they are in the community, and they come down and immediately have a meeting in a little adjacent room. They came back and said, 'We've reached agreement,' so they will put them on an agreement and their Centrelink benefits are all organised.

Firstly for rental, that seems to be under control. In relation to maintenance, there is a lot of maintenance going on in the communities. I have been looking at the houses. I walk the communities each morning and evening and there is a lot of maintenance going on. There are a lot of contractors in there. In fact, it is very hard to get accommodation. We flew in from Coen last night. My AFP officer went down to get his accommodation and it had been double-booked, so he stayed in the police station for the night. So there is a lot of work going on there.

In relation to construction of new dwellings, I am not party to that and that is what I am referring to. That is really what government is doing. There is a recognition by all agencies of the need. In Hope Vale certainly there is a substantial amount of housing being built there. I think the member for Cook has been up there regularly—and so have I—and quite a number of houses have been built there. The subdivision has been completed. I think it is finalised in relation to the block. The place looks tremendous. I have never seen that look so well. I do not think it has the huge amount of overcrowding that is in other areas.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Obviously, access to appropriate housing is so important to the success of any program. In relation to the issue of who monitors overcrowding and the housing, do you have any role in monitoring the amount of overcrowding?

**Mr Glasgow:** Not really, but it was interesting yesterday. In the case that I mentioned, the two people who were on the lease have moved out of that house and are caring for elderly people who were not being cared for properly in their house which the elderly people rent from Housing. They are paying a substantial part of the rent in the house they are not in. Other people have moved into that house—a family—and are not contributing, so we got them in to contribute. But it is a bit of a moving feast. Whilst Housing initially, in 2010, had a list of everyone in the houses, people move from place to place and you will often find a person will be paying rent for a house they are not living in and there are good and logical reasons they have shifted. There may be good reasons they have shifted, but there may be something that should be attended to. There may be assaults or threats. Actually, within Housing at one stage in 2010 there was a full recognised register of who was living in each house. In fact, I actually encouraged Health Brisbane

to get hold of that. I was travelling back on a plane one day with an RFD nurse who had been treating some kids for scabies and saying how good it would be if you knew where all the kids lived. I said, 'Housing's got all that data and how many children are in the house. So if you are dealing with two, you should be able to ring Housing and ask how many kids are in the house. If there are seven, you go to the house and sort it out.' I think there needs to be a bit more free flow of information between departments on that, and I think it has started to happen.

**CHAIR:** How much of that information is siloed?

**Mr Glasgow:** Quite a lot initially. And there are good, valid reasons within each department for it not being exchanged. At the end of the day, what is wrong with Health knowing who lives in a house? If you did, you would know how many people are living in there and how many toilets there are and whether it is a good and safe environment for children. There needs to be a greater degree of cooperation. When we initially started, the Premier said to me that we really need to get away from this privacy 'silo' mentality, but it is taking a while. It is not only Queensland; I talk to people in other states and territories and it exists everywhere.

**CHAIR:** The inference I drew from what you said is that it still exists and it exists to a fairly large degree. I would have thought that, for you to be able to carry out your own responsibilities, at least you should have some entry to the silo.

**Mr Glasgow:** I have complete entry. What we did when we started was under our act we set up memorandums of understanding with all the departments. At one stage I can tell you that information was coming to me from Housing and it was going straight to Health. But it was not going from Housing to Health; it was going from Housing to me to Health. I was setting that up so people knew it was there. There are degrees of information. The best way to explain it is if the nurse and the teacher share a house and the nurse knows that they are treating David Glasgow for a hearing problem, it is not a problem to say, 'How's he going at school? Has his hearing improved?' It is a bit different saying, 'Here are his health issues.' We have now overcome that with the establishment of the school nurse. In the early days, people were doing that to the extent that they were able to do it. I think there needs to be a lot more of that, and the coordination centre that has been set up through local coordinators is a way to do it. The service provider meetings are the way to at least set up the strategy for that.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Can I add to that. As I understand it—and I will stand corrected if my memory is not correct—the department of housing no longer publishes the figures for Indigenous overcrowding in their reports. So the issue about how that is actually tracked is a very valid one. I would be very interested as to what information is available for the commission. You mentioned that in about 2010 you had some figures about overcrowding and it is possible the department still has these statistics, but I am not—

**Mr O'BRIEN:** They did an audit.

**Mr Glasgow:** That was the audit. They would always know who is on the lease in the houses. It is difficult to get people to come on to the lease because once they come on to the lease they have to declare their income and then they have to contribute to rent, so there is a disincentive to doing that. Generally speaking, Housing would have a fairly anecdotal knowledge of how many people live in a house because they visit these houses—but only those houses that are problems. If someone is paying the rent and there is not a problem with the house and it is being looked after, why would Housing go there except to do their annual inspections? If there is not a complaint, they would not do that. They might know that three people are on the lease, but they might not know that there are seven people living in a house.

Initially they did this audit, in a sense, by putting everybody on leases and finding out how many people are in the house and trying to encourage everyone to become tenants or co-tenants. But there are a number of people who, for varying reasons, have said, 'No, I've had problems with him. I don't want him to be the tenant. My wife or partner and I want to be the tenant. He can stay here as long as he behaves but I want to be able to say, "Out!"' The practicality of knowing exactly is there. I do not think they would have all that data necessarily at any one time, but someone must have it. We get what we want because if we are looking at a whole group of children living in a house we will find out who lives there. We will find out either from Housing or the commissioners because they will tell us who is living there at the moment, and that does move. We will try to get all those people in to discuss that problem about delivering those children to school on a regular basis.

**Ms Sovenyahzi:** The department of housing do generally maintain their waiting lists of people who are waiting for housing. It likely depends on the community members putting their names on the waiting list. That is how they somewhat judge if there is overcrowding. Coen is an example of that, where there is usually fairly significant overcrowding in the wet season when people come in from the outstations but then in the dry season it seems to be not too bad because the people are back out. It is generally the waiting lists that they use as an indicator.

**CHAIR:** We asked some questions about Active Family Pathways and you mentioned in your answer that the aim is to bring clients to a level equivalent to the majority of Australians afforded the same opportunities. Without compromising any confidentiality, can you give us an idea of some case studies where there has been success achieved at that?

**Mr Glasgow:** I am pausing so I do not identify communities, because if you identify communities you identify the people.

**CHAIR:** Look, I do not want anything—

**Mr Glasgow:** We have had incidents of dealing with a lady who had a large number of children not attending school. When she agreed to come under the process, we went and had a look at her house and found the toilet was not functioning. There was some suggestion—and I am not saying it is true—that because she was in arrears in rent, the toilet was not going to be fixed until there was a reasonable arrangement for that. When we approached Housing, Housing obviously denied that. Although we are still struggling with her to get all the kids to school on a regular basis, she is now up to date with her rent—in fact, in advance with her rent—and she has done some small amount of personal development work. She has actually relocated one of the children to other people and she has now got the people in the house contributing. We still do not have particularly good school attendance, but it is improving.

In another instance in another community, we found a lady who had been going to the wellbeing centre and was being counselled but we found all through the northern winter, which is cold for us—not necessarily for you people but it is cold for us—she was without hot water and the kids were delayed going to school and she was using another house. We were frustrated about that because, as you know in these communities, it is from here to the other side of the street from one building to another. So why particular counsellors could not go across and talk to the housing authority, who organises the house, or why this lady did not have enough confidence to tell us she had a problem with her hot-water system I do not know. Our AFP took the lady over to the housing authority and got the hot-water system fixed within a couple of days.

It is just giving people the confidence and letting them know that they have some rights as well. Quite often people will go to a place and be told it cannot be done, and neither you nor I would tolerate that. Sometimes people react rather vociferously or violently to that, so they do get shoved out. But we were trying to show them a way of dealing. The lady who has organised the housing now is regarded by Housing as a great tenant. They are trying to do things with Pride of Place with her. We still have the problem with the school attendance. Okay. There are others like that and we are hopeful of doing more than that, but it is really not managing them; it is really getting them to the services and getting them through those first couple of steps so they are confident enough to go. You saw the empower building in Aurukun. There was one fellow they were very proud of who cannot read or write but who does his internet banking because they have taught him how to use the computer, so he comes in and does his own banking. So there is that skill level that is coming up by people using the services and being comfortable with the services and not being frightened of them.

I noticed at the airport when I was leaving last night on my charter there was a sign up there for a job for the post office. The post office is not operating because they do not have someone reliable to run the post office. That is to turn over in the system, but they are the sorts of things we get worried about because if the post is not there, people are not getting the mail and they are not getting things going. It is a constant thing. The council tries to get on top of it but it changes. We would say, 'Have you got your Centrelink payments?' 'No.' 'Why haven't you got your Centrelink payments?' 'They want my tax file number.' 'Well, get your tax file number.' 'Well, I waited on a 1300 number for 20 minutes and it dropped out several times.' You only have to be up there to know that your own mobile phones drop out. We might get the tax file number for them by giving them our phone so they can get the number so they can take the next step.

I do not think that is handfeeding people. That is just getting something done. That is what we are trying to do and then to back off and say, 'You have done that,' and hopefully other people come along and say, 'How did she do that?', and we will show them how they did it. Our idea particularly is that when we finish, if that AFP system is working, the local service providers can take it over and someone can organise it themselves. So it is getting the service providers to say, 'Let's task the 10 people in this community who need it. Let's see what we can do to advance them and see where we go.'

**CHAIR:** We did ask about teleconferencing and you outlined that. I have a personal dislike as a mediator of teleconferencing. How many of the communities have videoconferencing and at what level?

**Mr Glasgow:** All of them have them. Whether they are working or not is another issue. I am not too worried about that, because I think skype is pretty good now. Quite frankly, if we have to do it we will skype rather than worry about it, because we have waited for people to come along and fix this and fix that.

When the Telstra privatisation happened, I recall as a magistrate a lot of money was spent in prisons. Part of that funding was to put in communication systems and we certainly had them established. There are teleconferencing facilities available for families to teleconference with prisoners and there are also for Cleveland. It does not happen very much—or as much as it could—because it is not coordinated by any particular body. But we have access to those facilities when we need them.

As I said, there is a reluctance by the commissioners to do that, but I said to the board last Friday that my intention in the next year is to spend a lot of time encouraging commissioners to sit alone—the three of them together—and for me to go up and be there in case I am needed. But I think they have the skills. Certainly in Hope Vale and Aurukun they have those skills, and I do not think that it would be long before they could do it in Coen and Mossman Gorge. That is when I think those teleconferencing facilities might be necessary so that I am available or a deputy is available.

**CHAIR:** When you say 'teleconferencing', though, you are dealing with skype—

**Mr Glasgow:** By telephone, yes.

**CHAIR:** A lot of the Indigenous approach is by body language. That was why teleconferencing, to talk to a telephone, is a little bit disembodied.

**Mr Glasgow:** It is unnerving for them. I have seen them. They will often come into my office and say, 'I have a problem with Centrelink. The money has not come through and they have run out of money. So we will give them the phone and they will sort it out. But even then it takes a lot of time and they do not see a face. I think our success has been largely that there is a face. Certainly, they face the commissioners. I think when they start to sit—like today, I got a message as I was coming in the cab that things are proceeding quite well—there is a tentative nature, but they have the capacity, and you build better capacity by confronting the problems and I think that they will do well.

There was one issue, if I may raise. The independent evaluation is something that I have been very concerned about. It was raised by me at the board. The difficulties in organising that have now been overcome and there is a meeting, I think, set down for 14 December or thereabouts where out of that will come the finalisation of that. They have engaged the organisation to do it. It is just some procedural matters. The board was hopeful that that would be available before 30 June. It may be closer to August next year but that certainly is underway.

**CHAIR:** Does anyone else have anything? That brings our questions to an end.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Yes, thank you very much for your assistance.

**Mr Glasgow:** Finally, could I say that Jason O'Brien has been to the communities and has seen them operating, because they are in his electorate. I invite any of the members if they are in the area. I really wish them to come and they are more than welcome to come and visit us. I would like to see you, Mr Chair, in Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

**CHAIR:** That is two that I have not been to.

**Mr Glasgow:** There was competition between the communities when they had found that you and Peter had been to the others. So perhaps in the new year or sometime in the year ahead it might be ideal if you could spare the time.

**CHAIR:** Thank very much for the invitation. The time for questions has expired. I would like to thank you for your attendance today at the public hearing. We have some valuable information and it will help us in our examination. I would like to thank the Parliamentary Service staff who assisted. I would like to thank you and your staff, Commissioner. I would like to wish Tammy all the best in her 'retirement' and I would like to welcome Rob White as your registrar. We are heading into a new year. There is only 12 months left and hopefully this committee will have a fair bit of input with you over that time. I would like to catch up on those places that I have not been to. That is presupposing that I remain as chair of the committee. Thank you very much for everything, and I wish you and all of your staff all the best for the coming Christmas season. I declare the hearing closed.

**Committee adjourned at 12.36 pm**