

In the field

ORIC local officer reports



ORIC local officers



ORIC staff Des Cavanagh, Joe Mastrolembo and Horace Nona change a tyre in Western Australia

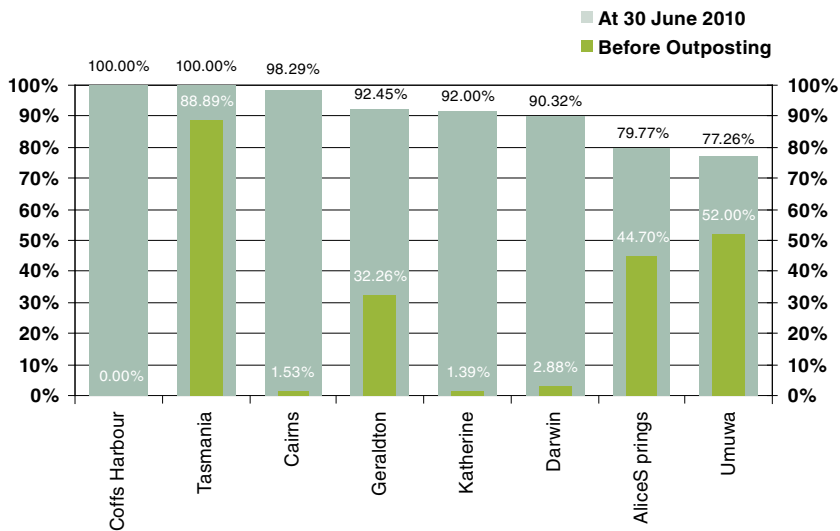
Due to the success of the initial outposting trials in 2008–09, ORIC’s local officer network was expanded in 2009–10 to Alice Springs and Katherine (NT), Cairns (Qld), Coffs Harbour (NSW), Geraldton (WA), Hobart (Tas) and Umuwa (SA).

The key objectives of the ORIC local officers are to:

- » guide groups with the governance of their corporations
- » help corporations with their reporting compliance
- » promote the role of the Registrar and the benefits of the CATSI Act in the region
- » promote the long-term sustainability of corporations.

The impact of local officers in improving compliance levels in regional areas can be seen in the following graph.

Figure 10: Impact of local officers on compliance levels in regional areas



Christian Lugnan—based at Coffs Harbour, NSW

New corporation proves deadly

One of the newest corporations in the Coffs Harbour region has got a pretty deadly name—Deadly Sista Girlz Aboriginal Corporation. Initially a small group of energetic Aboriginal women from the Coffs Harbour area wanted to lose some weight and gain fitness through regular exercise. Before too long, there were over 50 women regularly exercising by doing such activities as aerobics, Zumba classes, belly dancing, boxing, surfing, ski paddling, aqua aerobics and gym circuits to name a few.

As the group grew, funding was needed, which meant that a separate legal entity was required—and the new corporation was established in February 2010. They have been supported by the local Aboriginal medical service, Galambila, as well as many other local Coffs Harbour businesses and individuals along the way. Recently they were successful in gaining funding through the Australian Government to run more programs and activities.



To keep the ladies motivated and on track, a regular newsletter is produced profiling individuals and recent activities, providing healthy tips and other information.



The group of women are seen as role models in their families and communities. They have even inspired some of the local men to get more active and involved in community activities.

As an end of year reward, the women worked towards attending the National Deadly Awards in Sydney in September, where no doubt they all looked, well, deadly!

Caroline Joske—based at Umuwa, SA



Things humming along at Mimili

The community of Mimili is located on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands in far north-west South Australia. The community is a designated remote service delivery site and things are generally humming, with new housing and police services.

A new community council corporation has been registered with ORIC. ORIC's local officer, Caroline Joske has been working with the key family groups in the community who each nominate a director to the corporation. The membership register has been established, with members of the community confirming their family group affiliation as they sign up to apply for membership. The directors and members are looking forward to participating in ORIC's annual general meeting training in October and will hold their AGM in mid November.



Similarly, the Mimili art centre has recently registered with ORIC and is preparing to participate in the annual general meeting training and conduct its first AGM. Artworks from Mimili Maku Arts are selling like hot cakes, with a major exhibition at Desert Mob, in Alice Springs taking place in early September.



Shoppers swarm around the Mimili Maku market stall in Alice Springs

Chris Jones—based at Geraldton, WA

Back on track post special administration

Burringurrah is a remote Aboriginal community in the Shire of Upper Gascoyne, approximately 480 kilometres east of Carnarvon in Western Australia. The community sits on a 45 000-hectare reserve excised from the Mt James pastoral lease.



Burringurrah Community Aboriginal Corporation (BCAC) was incorporated in 1999 to service the community of approximately 70 to 120 people. Community facilities include a school, with approximately 40 students ranging from pre-primary to high school level, a general store, a 25-metre swimming pool, a police station, a telecentre/training facility, administration offices, a women's centre, and a sports oval.

In March 2009 BCAC asked ORIC for some assistance to deal with governance problems and a special administrator was appointed to improve the operation and management of the corporation. The corporation was handed back to the members on 1 October 2009.

During the special administration period the corporation held an AGM and elected new directors and developed a new rule book in line with the CATSI Act and the wishes of the community at that time.

ORIC's local officer, Chris Jones visited the community regularly during and after the special administration. The newly appointed board largely composed of very young and inexperienced members so ORIC was able to assist in building the capacity of the directors and in securing funding for the corporation.

Joanne Collins—based at Hobart, TAS

Forging relationships face to face

Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation (CHAC) in Smithton, north-western Tasmania is an extremely high-performing organisation with over 300 members. While all of the programs delivered by CHAC are well run, the delivery of their employment programs is particularly successful, and has been for a number of years.





CHAC has been nominated for a community achievement award from Awards Australia in the Tasmanian community of the year category. The number of programs and services CHAC provides for the Aboriginal and local community were one reason for the nomination as well as its work in tackling family violence and youth issues.

CHAC was incorporated in 1994. The corporation is managed by six directors, four of whom have undertaken business governance courses. CHAC has operated out of a community-owned building for a number of years. Staffing at CHAC includes nine full-time and seven part-time employees. These employees deliver a wide range of programs to both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community in north-western Tasmania.

Joanne Collins, who works in the Registration and Reporting section of ORIC, was based in Hobart from March to July 2010. 'Working as the Hobart local officer provided me with the opportunity of meeting groups face to face and building key relationships with our corporations, Indigenous Coordination Centre and FaHCSIA state office staff and other government agencies', Joanne says. 'It truly has been a worthwhile experience.'

Allan Sambono—based in Katherine, NT

Changing the corporation's rule book

While working as the local officer for the Katherine and Darwin regions I was asked to chair the Merrepen Arts Aboriginal Corporation annual general meeting (AGM) at Daly River. Corporation members were amazed to see how simple the whole process can be for making changes to their rule book. In this case the change was to allow the manager to spend up to \$2 000 before seeking spending approval from the directors. 'I explained the procedures for making changes to the rule book, the membership asked relevant questions, there was discussion and then agreement was reached on a spending limit, said Alan Sambono.



The membership was pleased with their efforts, and rightly so.'

Roseanne Mirto—based in Cairns, QLD

Making a difference at a local level



It wasn't all tropical breezes and sunsets for Roseanne Mirto during her 11-month stint as local officer in Cairns. During this time she assisted corporations in the Cairns region with reporting requirements, making rule changes, holding AGMs and a host of other matters.

As well as people coming into the office, a lot of Roseanne's business came from word of mouth. Roseanne even received a call from the Australian Taxation Office, asking about the deregistration process.

One of the things Roseanne found most rewarding was getting to know colleagues and members of corporations alike. She developed good working relationships with staff at the Cairns Indigenous Coordination Centre, sharing expertise and information. She also formed good working relationships with native title support officers in the region, some of whom she's kept in contact with. 'Building relationships is really what it's all about,' said Roseanne. 'Once you've established that trust with others, it all flows on from there. It's very satisfying knowing that you've been able to help make things a bit easier for people.'



Pam Collier—based in Alice Springs, NT

Providing support

During the five months that Pam spent as the Alice Springs local officer her main focus was helping corporations to improve their reporting compliance, providing training for members and supporting new corporations.



In particular Pam assisted remote stores to register under the CATSI Act and provided governance training for directors.

Pam was also invited to attend and offer support at a number of general meetings and directors' meetings. She enjoyed Alice Springs so much that she has now joined a local Aboriginal organisation that operates in the Alice Springs region.

