



Queensland
Small Business
Commissioner

Annual Report 2024–25

Queensland Small Business
Commissioner



Queensland
Government

About this report

This annual report provides information about the Queensland Small Business Commissioner's (QSBC) non-financial performance for 2024–25. It aligns with the QSBC objectives and functions as outlined in the *Small Business Commissioner Act 2022*.

View the report online

This report is available online:
qsbc.qld.gov.au/about/

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Providing feedback

For enquiries or feedback about this annual report, or to request a printed copy, contact the QSBC by phoning 1300 312 344 or email **strategy@qsbc.qld.gov.au** or post to PO Box 15483, City East Qld 4002.

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Letter of compliance

3 September 2025

The Honourable Steven Minnikin MP
Minister for Customer Services and Open Data
and Minister for Small and Family Business
1 William Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Minister Minnikin

I am pleased to submit for presentation to the Parliament the Annual Report 2024–2025 for the Queensland Small Business Commissioner.

This complies with the requirement under section 20 of the *Small Business Commissioner Act 2022*, that the Commissioner must prepare and give to the Minister, within 3 months after the end of each financial year, an annual report on the functions performed, and activities carried out, by the Commissioner during the financial year.

This report is prepared on the basis of the current administrative arrangements for this office applying for the whole of the 2024–25 financial year. That is, it reflects the structure, operations and performance of the office as it now exists.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dominique Lamb'.

Dominique Lamb
Small Business Commissioner

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Profile

The Small Business Commissioner (the Commissioner) is a statutory position that reports directly to the Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business (the Minister).

The Commissioner and supporting office are collectively referred to as the Queensland Small Business Commissioner (QSBC) throughout this report.

The QSBC is established under the *Small Business Commissioner Act 2022* (SBC Act) with two main objectives to:

- enhance the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland
- reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses.

The Queensland Government committed to refocusing the QSBC on red tape reduction and dispute management for small business. This commitment was delivered in the first 100 days, with a new Ministerial Statement of Expectations issued to the Commissioner in December 2024.

To meet these statutory objectives and renewed focus, the QSBC collects and reports on red tape that unnecessarily restricts small and family businesses; provides advice on existing and proposed legislation and regulation; delivers professional, efficient and cost-effective dispute management services; provides small businesses with a central point of contact in government to access information, support and advice; and advocates on behalf of small business and works collaboratively to enhance business conditions.

The QSBC complies with the Queensland Government's governance and accountability requirements, which are administered on the QSBC's behalf by the Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business (the department). This is a new State Government department arising from the merger of small business functions from the former Department of Employment, Small Business and Training on 1 November 2024.

The Commissioner

Dominique Lamb was appointed as the Commissioner under the SBC Act on 23 December 2022, following a merit-based recruitment process.

The supporting office

In addition to the Commissioner, the QSBC has a budgeted supporting office of 14 permanent full-time public service officers, structured as an Advocacy team and an Assistance team.

The QSBC received corporate services and other support from the department throughout 2024–25.

Jurisdiction

Under the SBC Act, the main functions of the QSBC are to:

- provide a central point of contact in relation to matters affecting small businesses
- provide information and advisory services to the public about matters relating to small businesses
- assist parties in reaching an informal resolution for small business disputes, including by facilitating the exchange of information between the parties
- provide alternative dispute resolution services and administer a mediation process for small business disputes
- advocate on behalf of small businesses to the State, the Commonwealth, another State, or a local government; or any other entity involved in administering a matter relevant to small businesses
- work collaboratively with the equivalent of the Commissioner in other States or the Commonwealth to enhance conditions for small businesses
- perform functions conferred on the Commissioner under another Act
- carry out other activities to further the objects of this Act, as directed by the Minister.

The SBC Act provides that the QSBC can administer an alternative dispute resolution service and low-cost mediation process for

eligible small business disputes (being other small business lease disputes, and small business franchise disputes referred from the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman) and administer a low-cost mediation process for retail tenancy disputes under part 8 of the *Retail Shop Leases Act 1994* (RSL Act).

The SBC Act sets out the conditions under which the QSBC can dismiss an application for mediation (AFM) made under the SBC Act. This includes AFMs which do not relate to a small business dispute; are frivolous or vexatious; have not been made in good faith; or have otherwise not been properly made.

The RSL Act outlines that prior to making an application to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) for a retail tenancy dispute, a party to the dispute must go through the QSBC's mediation process. It also outlines that the Commissioner must appoint a mediator to mediate the dispute as soon as practicable after receiving an AFM from a party

to a retail tenancy dispute. There are no provisions for the Commissioner to dismiss an AFM made under the RSL Act.

The Small Business Commissioner Regulation 2022 (SBC Regulation), and the Retail Shop Leases Regulation 2016 (RSL Regulation) allow for mediations to be delivered via teleconference or videoconference and sets the fee for mediation (paid in equal shares by the parties to the dispute). The SBC and RSL Regulations also provide for the Commissioner to waive all or part of the mediation fee payable by a party if the Commissioner is satisfied the payment of the fee would cause, or would be likely to cause, the party financial hardship; and waive all or part of the mediation fee for a class of parties for a particular period, if the Commissioner is satisfied the waiver will promote access to mediation by the parties.

Under the SBC Act, the QSBC must provide an annual report to the Minister within three months of the end of each financial year.

Commissioner's message

I am pleased to present the QSBC's Annual Report 2024–25. The QSBC has continued to deliver for Queenslanders, providing a vital service for the 495,487 small and family businesses in Queensland.

Our vision is to create an operating environment that helps Queensland small and family businesses thrive.

The Queensland Government's objectives for the community—in particular, creating a better lifestyle through a stronger economy by backing small and family business—have guided our approach and decision-making.

Highlights

The 2024–25 year has seen the QSBC work with a new Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business (the Minister).

The Machinery of Government changes, effective 1 November 2024, also provided us the opportunity to work with the new Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business (the department) and collaborate on priorities and actions outlined in the Small and Family Business First Action Statement.

We had a key role to play in delivering on one of the Government's election commitments—refocusing the QSBC on red tape reduction and dispute management for small and family business. In support of the Premier's commitment to refocus the QSBC, we worked closely with the Minister and the department to implement this within the first 100 days.

In February 2025, we launched an online Red Tape Examples form, providing businesses with a direct channel to share their red tape experiences and ideas for improvement. By 30 June 2025, we had received 327 examples, offering valuable insights into the regulatory barriers impacting small businesses. These findings were shared with the Minister through a monthly Red Tape Reduction Opportunities Report. We also participated in several reviews of existing and proposed legislation and regulation to advocate for streamlined, right

sized, 'small business friendly' regulation and operational approaches.

During 2024–25, the QSBC assisted small and family businesses, commercial lessors and small business stakeholders on more than 2,700 occasions (up 13% from last financial year).

Notably, 71% of disputes accepted by the QSBC reached an agreement through informal resolution or mediation, in an average of 36 days. This service helps keep small businesses out of lengthy and costly court processes. Had these parties chosen to pursue more formal legal pathways this could have taken an average of 86 weeks to be finalised and cost the parties in the order of \$130,000.

Throughout a year marked by significant natural disasters across many parts of the state, we promoted access to mediation for small businesses by waiving the mediation fee payable for parties located in the impacted areas. In total, 206 fee waivers were applied for businesses impacted by the North and Far North Tropical Low, Tropical Cyclone Alfred, and the Western Queensland Surface Trough—providing free mediation at a time of heightened financial and emotional stress.

We grew the reach of our Small Business Friendly (SBF) Program this year—increasing membership to 66% of local councils which represents 97% of small businesses across Queensland. We also delivered the fifth annual SBF Program conference in Brisbane where we announced the annual SBF Award winners. These awards recognise the commitment, innovation, and exceptional efforts of councils in the SBF Program.

We also undertook a review of the SBF Program in collaboration with SBF members and small business representatives. This resulted in a new SBF Commitment being developed, a requirement for each participating council to develop a Small Business Action Plan, and a more streamlined approach to annual reporting.

We launched a podcast series, Small Business Big Stories, in conversation with Queensland small business owners. Each episode delves

into the challenges, triumphs, and unique journeys of entrepreneurs, offering valuable lessons and practical advice for anyone navigating the small business landscape.

We also continued to strengthen our engagement with small businesses and expand our advocacy influence by participating in a range of state and federal-level committees, publishing regular e-newsletters and social media content, and meeting with small businesses throughout regional and remote Queensland.

Opportunities for the future

I will continue to lead the QSBC in fulfilling its obligations under the SBC Act. I remain committed to delivering on the QSBC's refocus on red tape reduction and dispute management and will continue to explore opportunities to enhance the regulatory and broader operating environment for small businesses and to minimise the time and costs associated with resolving small business disputes.

I am dedicated to representing the interests of Queensland's small businesses across all tiers of government, actively contributing to the shaping of policies and legislation that impact this vital sector.

Our key priorities for 2025–26 include:

- Build on the momentum of our red tape reduction initiatives by continuing to gather feedback from small businesses, chambers of commerce, and peak bodies, and advocating for practical and evidence-based reforms to streamline regulatory processes
- Enhance our dispute resolution processes by leveraging technology, continuing

professional development, and refining case management systems to further reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes

- Deepen our engagement with small businesses in regional, rural and remote areas to better understand their unique challenges and ensure they have equitable access to QSBC and whole of government services and resources
- Strengthen partnerships with government agencies, industry bodies, and other stakeholders to ensure small business perspectives are embedded in policy development and legislative reviews
- Continue to develop and promote accessible self-help resources, including dynamic translations, to empower small businesses with the tools they need to navigate challenges independently
- Explore opportunities to integrate digital solutions, such as automation and artificial intelligence, to improve service delivery, streamline processes, and enhance the customer experience
- Collaborate with Small Business Friendly Program member councils to implement the new SBF Commitment, support the development of Small Business Action Plans, and foster innovation in supporting small businesses.

I look forward to continuing to collaborate with government, industry, and Queensland small and family businesses.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dominique Lamb'.

Dominique Lamb
Small Business Commissioner

Performance

Activity snapshot 2024–25

The QSBC assisted small businesses on 2,776 occasions (13% increase*):

1,575	Enquiry requests (22% increase*)
52	Advocacy activities (3% decrease*)
671	Engagement activities (2% increase*)
478	Dispute requests (5% increase*) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 173 requests for dispute assistance (RFDA) 305 applications for mediation (AFM)

Dispute management highlights:

103	Informally resolved by QSBC prior to mediation
145	Provided free or low-cost mediation (20% increase*)
151	Provided assistance and/or were referred
71%	Disputes accepted by the QSBC were able to reach an agreement via informal resolution or mediation ¹ (4 percentage points increase*)
22	Average number days to schedule a mediation ²
36	Average number of days to close the dispute ³ (5% / 2-day decrease*)
\$87,846	Average amount in dispute (estimated by applicant)
92%	Customer satisfaction rating (4- or 5-star rating)

Red tape reduction and advocacy highlights:

327	Red tape examples collected
29	Consultations and/or submissions undertaken
411	Meetings and/or committees attended by the Commissioner
14	Roundtable meetings chaired by the QSBC ⁴

Engagement highlights:

94,226	Unique web page views on qsbc.qld.gov.au (76% increase*)
58	New self-help factsheets published on qsbc.qld.gov.au
4,865	Subscribers to monthly e-newsletters (15% increase*)
7,201	Followers on QSBC social media platforms (21% increase*)

¹ Excludes disputes that were provided information and/or were referred, not accepted or were dismissed by the QSBC.

² Average number of days from when the dispute is lodged with the QSBC until when notice is provided to the applicant that a mediation conference has been scheduled.

³ Average number of days from when the dispute is lodged with the QSBC until when it is closed by the QSBC after informal resolution or mediation, or after the applicant withdrew the dispute, or after the QSBC rejected or dismissed the dispute.

⁴ Includes SBIR, SBRR, SBLR, SBF Member Roundtable.

Enhancing the operating environment for small business

Throughout 2024–25, the QSBC worked to enhance the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland, through advocacy, collaboration, engagement activities and the provision of information and advisory services.

In December 2024, the QSBC was refocused on reducing red tape for small business.

The QSBC supported the reduction of red tape that unnecessarily restricts small and family business

Red Tape Reduction

The QSBC strategically refocused its efforts on reducing red tape for small and family businesses. The QSBC is uniquely positioned to help address these challenges by working closely with stakeholders and government agencies to identify opportunities to streamline processes and enable businesses to thrive.

A key initiative was the launch of the QSBC's online Red Tape Examples form in February 2025. The form provides a direct channel for small businesses, chambers of commerce, and peak bodies to share their regulatory experiences and practical ideas for improvement. By 30 June 2025, the QSBC had received 327 examples of red tape, offering valuable insights into consistent issues such as customer service quality, the scale of regulatory burdens, and the need for small-business-friendly regulation. These findings were analysed and shared in monthly Red Tape Reduction Opportunities Reports to the Minister, which highlighted key trends, case studies, and actionable recommendations.

The QSBC also strengthened its collaboration with key stakeholders to drive red tape reduction. Regular meetings with the new Queensland Productivity Commission (QPC), the department, and regulators have facilitated the sharing of insights gathered from small business engagement activities.

The red tape examples also helped inform the QSBC's advocacy work, with the QSBC

consulting on several reviews of existing and proposed legislation and regulation—ensuring that small business perspectives are considered in the development of streamlined and right sized regulatory frameworks.

Engagement with Queensland's small business community has been central to the QSBC's contribution to red tape reduction. The QSBC updated the terms of reference for its small business roundtables to include a focus on identifying practical opportunities to reduce regulatory burdens.

By maintaining a strong focus on collaboration, advocacy, and practical solutions, the QSBC is delivering on its commitment to identify red tape reduction opportunities to help create a more supportive environment for Queensland's small and family businesses.

The QSBC was a champion for small businesses in Queensland, advocating to all levels of government, and collaborating with industry and government on issues that impact small businesses

Small Business Friendly Program

The SBF Program was established in Queensland by the QSBC in October 2020. The program recognises that councils interact with small businesses in many ways including development approvals, permits and licenses, local procurement, disaster recovery and, economic development. The program aims to enhance the operating environment for small businesses at the local government level by providing participating councils with the framework, network, and tools to create tangible outcomes and practical improvements for their small business community.

In 2024–25, a further two local councils joined the SBF Program, bringing the total number of participating councils to 51—representing 66% of all councils and 97% of the small business

population in Queensland. A list of all SBF Program members is available at Appendix 1.

The QSBC also undertook a review of the SBF Program in collaboration with current members to ensure the program was as streamlined and effective as possible. As a result of the review, the SBF Charter was replaced by an updated SBF Commitment, alongside a requirement to deliver a Small Business Action Plan. Councils have begun recommitting to the SBF Program by signing the new Commitment document.

On 29 May 2025, the QSBC delivered the fifth annual SBF Program conference in Brisbane. The conference was attended by over 120 delegates from councils, chambers of commerce and the Queensland Government.

The SBF Award winners were announced at the conference—recognising the commitment, innovation, and exceptional efforts of councils in the SBF Program. The 2025 winners were:

- Member of the year: Rockhampton Regional Council
- Regional Member of the Year: Balonne Shire Council
- Initiative of the Year: Livingstone Shire Council.

On 28 May 2025, the QSBC convened a pre-conference SBF Member Workshop where participants explored the SBF Program Commitments, delving into practical ways members can give life to their commitments and create effective Small Business Action Plans.

The QSBC also hosted five roundtable meetings with SBF Program members throughout the year, to facilitate the sharing of information and learnings between participating local councils.

National Small Business Commissioners forum

The Commissioner collaborated as part of the National Small Business Commissioners (NSBC) forum. Participants included small business commissioners of New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, and Western Australia together with the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO).

In 2024–25, the Commissioner attended all three of the scheduled NSBC meetings and collaborated on a range of small business matters including federal red tape and regulatory concerns, small business insolvencies, insurance accessibility, postage and freight challenges, small business friendly programs, and broader economic impacts on small businesses.

The QSBC also regularly collaborated with ASBFEO and interstate commissioners' offices via a National Strategy Group, which focused on national small business policy and advocacy matters, and a National Assistance Group, which focused on best practice for small business assistance and dispute matters.

Small business roundtables

In 2024–25, the QSBC continued to convene the Small Business Industry Roundtable (SBIR), Small Business Regional Roundtable (SBRR), and Small Business Lessor Roundtable (SBLR). Participants shared valuable insights from their respective industries and regions to help inform the QSBC's advocacy and red tape reduction work. Additionally, these roundtables provided an effective channel for disseminating information about government services and support programs, enhancing accessibility and awareness among stakeholders.

The SBIR, comprised of representatives from industry associations and peak bodies, met on three occasions in 2024–25. The SBRR, comprised of leaders from regional chambers of commerce and tourism associations, met on three occasions. The SBLR, comprised of representatives from commercial and industrial property management organisations, met on three occasions.

Committees

In 2024–25, the Commissioner (or nominated proxy from the QSBC) participated in a range of committees to advocate for small business interests, including the:

- ASIC Queensland Regional Liaison Committee (member)
- Brisbane City Council Small Business Roundtable (member)

- Council of Small Business Organisations Australia's Member and Stakeholder Roundtable (observer)
- Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland Advisory Council (member)
- Federal Regulatory Agency Group (observer)
- Food Production (Safety) Act 2000 Review Steering Committee (member)
- General Goods and Services Industry Reference Group (member)
- Insurance Council of Australia Business Advisory Council (member)
- National Assistance Group (member)
- National Retail Queensland Retail Crime Committee (observer)
- National Small Business Commissioners Forum (member)
- National Strategy Group (member)
- Queensland Chiefs Working Group (member)
- Queensland Government Procurement Committee (member)
- RegTech Advisory Board (member)
- Safe Retail Precincts Pilot Reference Group (member)
- Small Business and Franchising Consultative Committee (observer)
- Small Business Friendly Program Members Roundtable (chair)
- Small Business Industry Roundtable (chair)
- Small Business Lessor Roundtable (chair)
- Small Business Regional Roundtable (chair).
- Draft Responsible Public Procurement Guide for Queensland Government Procurement—Queensland Government Procurement
- Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2024—Office of Industrial Relations (Qld)
- Independent review of the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman—The Treasury (Cwlth)
- Information standard for country of origin labelling for seafood in hospitality settings—Department of Industry, Science and Resources (Cwlth)
- Inquiry into creating a dynamic and resilient economy—Australian Productivity Commission
- Insurance price monitoring—Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Personal Insolvency Consultation on Minimal Asset Procedure—Attorney-General's Department (Cwlth)
- Procurement and Supply Chain Program Blueprint—Games Venue and Legacy Delivery Authority
- Proposal to mandate cash acceptance by businesses supplying essential goods and services—The Treasury (Cwlth)
- Reducing red tape for Queensland councils—Local Government Red Tape Reduction Taskforce (Qld)
- Review of ACCC Compliance and Enforcement Priorities—Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Review of the Ethical Procurement Compliance Framework—Queensland Government Procurement
- Tobacco and Other Smoking Products and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025—Queensland Health
- Unfair trading practices - design of proposed general and specific prohibitions—The Treasury (Cwlth)

Submissions and consultations

Throughout 2024–25, the QSBC participated in more than 29 consultations and/or submissions with a range of government agencies and other entities involved in administering matters relevant to small businesses. This included addressing small business red tape concerns and providing advice on existing and proposed regulation and regulation, including:

- Consideration of a licensing regime for the franchise sector—The Treasury (Cwlth)
- Construction Productivity Inquiry—Queensland Productivity Commission
- Draft Night Life Economy Commissioner Bill 2024—Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

The QSBC provided a dedicated central point of contact for small businesses in Queensland to seek assistance, information and advice

Central point of contact

The QSBC provided a dedicated QSBC hotline for small businesses (1300 312 344), which was available Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 4.30pm. In addition to the hotline, small businesses were able to lodge assistance requests via the QSBC website. In 2024–25, the QSBC received 1,575 small business enquiries, a 22% increase compared to 2023–24.

The QSBC website (qsbq.qld.gov.au) provides self-help information, links to key resources and support, and small business data insights. In 2024–25, the QSBC website received more than 94,000 unique web page views—a 76% increase compared to last financial year.

The website information was supplemented by monthly QSBC e-newsletters sent to more than 4,800 subscribers, and regular social media updates shared with over 7,200 followers. These functions provided subscribers and followers with timely access to key information and helped raise awareness of emerging small business matters and supports.

Engagement activities

The QSBC participated in hundreds of events and engagement activities across Queensland throughout 2024–25, including more than 400 Commissioner meetings with small business owners and key stakeholders. Notable events included:

- Council of Small Business Organisations Australia's national summit (presenter)
- Global Empowering Women Organisation's symposium (presenter)
- GovReady's small business procurement workshop (presenter)
- Hong Kong-Australia Business Association's awards gala (attendee)
- Insurance explained event (presenter)
- Ipswich City Council's new business breakfast (presenter)

- Local Buy's advancing Queensland procurement conference (presenter)
- Master Electricians Australia's women in contracting event (presenter)
- Mentoring for Growth's end of year event (attendee)
- Queensland Farmers Federation's national agriculture day event (attendee)
- Queensland Social Enterprise Council's world social enterprise day event (presenter)
- Remote Area Planning and Development Board's roadshow through Windorah, Birdsville, and Bedourie (presenter)
- Somerset Regional Council's disaster preparedness and emergency services expo (presenter)
- TAFE Queensland's industry consultation webinar (presenter)
- Townsville Chamber of Commerce's raising regions conference (presenter)
- Tropical Innovation Festival's regional roadshow (presenter).

The QSBC launched a podcast series, Small Business Big Stories, hosted by the Commissioner in conversation with Queensland small business owners. Ten episodes were released in 2024–25 and are available on the QSBC website and other popular podcast platforms.

The Commissioner also participated in multiple media opportunities, with a particular focus on informing the public about emerging small business issues and available government supports.

The QSBC also travelled extensively throughout Queensland to meet with small business owners and stakeholders to understand their unique needs and share information on available government supports.

Some of the regions visited in 2024–25 included: Banana, Barcoo, Boulia, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cloncurry, Diamantina, Douglas, Flinders, Gladstone, Gold Coast, Gympie, Hinchinbrook, Ipswich, Livingstone, Logan, Longreach, Mackay, Mareeba, McKinlay, Moreton Bay, Mount Isa, Redlands, Richmond, Rockhampton, Scenic Rim, Somerset, Sunshine Coast, Tablelands, Townsville, Whitsundays.

Reducing the time and costs associated with resolving disputes

Throughout 2024–25, the QSBC helped reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses, by assisting parties in reaching informal resolutions, administering a mediation service, and providing responsive assistance services.

In December 2024, the QSBC was refocused on dispute management for small business.

The QSBC delivered professional, efficient and cost-effective dispute management support services for small businesses

Dispute management

Throughout 2024–25, the QSBC worked to refocus and strategically enhance its dispute management services to better support small and family businesses across Queensland.

A key focus was strengthening collaboration with dispute management partners and support agencies to ensure effective referral pathways and best practice case management. Over the year, the QSBC engaged with a number of agencies such as the Department of Justice, QCAT, Office of Fair Trading (Qld), the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Qld), Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Office of the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management (Qld), and ASBFEO. These engagements, alongside active involvement in the Whole of Government Dispute Resolution Community of Practice and Artificial Intelligence Community of Practice, enabled the QSBC to identify and implement best practice improvements to its dispute resolution support services.

The QSBC also prioritised continuous improvement of its dispute resolution processes through targeted consultations with mediators and stakeholders. Engagement sessions with the QSBC's expert mediator panel led to several key enhancements, including updates to mediation application forms, the introduction of a function for applicants to upload leases,

and the development of a new resource on seeking legal advice.

Throughout the year, QSBC dispute assistance staff undertook professional development in Mediation, and Mental Health First Aid. This continuous upskilling reflects the QSBC's commitment to ensuring small businesses are provided the best support possible throughout the dispute resolution process.

To address the increasing service demand and empower small businesses with self-agency in resolving disputes, the QSBC significantly expanded its suite of accessible resources. 58 new resources have been added, including guides on understanding outgoing in non-retail leases and interim or injunction orders in lease disputes. Additionally, 40 dynamic translation videos of key QSBC fact sheets were published in Simplified Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Japanese, covering essential topics such as leasing and mediation. These initiatives, combined with updates to website content to streamline the dispute application process, have made it easier for small businesses to access the information and tools they need.

The QSBC facilitated informal resolution of small business disputes

Informal dispute assistance

Small business disputes that were lodged with the QSBC were allocated to a dedicated Business Liaison Officer. The assistance provided was tailored to the nature of the request and the needs of the applicant. Where possible, the officer attempted to facilitate an informal resolution through the exchange of information between the parties, providing self-help factsheets, guidance on communication and negotiation, reality testing of solutions and helping to identify potential areas of agreement.

In 2024–25, the QSBC informally resolved 103 disputes prior to mediation. A further 94 dispute applicants were provided with information and assistance and did not need to progress to mediation.

If the matter was not resolved informally, or if the dispute was outside the jurisdiction of the QSBC, the parties were guided through the next steps, which may consist of progressing to the QSBC's mediation service (where eligible) or to another support service or agency with appropriate jurisdiction.

The QSBC provided mediation for eligible small business disputes

Mediation conferences

Throughout 2024–25, the QSBC delivered 145 free or low-cost mediation conferences for a range of commercial leasing disputes involving small businesses.

While parties to a retail tenancy dispute under the RSL Act can apply for mediation directly, the parties to a small business lease dispute under the SBC Act must attempt to informally resolve the dispute before they can progress to mediation.

Parties to eligible disputes made under the SBC Act or RSL Act were provided low-cost mediation (\$371 split equally between the parties).

The SBC and RSL Regulation allows for the Commissioner to waive all or part of the mediation fee payable by a party or a class of parties due to financial hardship or to promote access to mediation. In 2024–25, the Commissioner used this provision to waive the fees payable for 206 parties located in areas impacted by the North and Far North Tropical Low in January 2025, Tropical Cyclone Alfred in March 2025, and the Western Queensland Surface Trough in March 2025.

Mediations administered by the QSBC were delivered over the phone or through a video-conferencing platform where possible, with face-to-face mediations only held in extenuating circumstances—making the service accessible across Queensland.

Where agreement could not be reached during mediation, the parties to a commercial tenancy dispute were referred to QCAT, where eligible. All parties to disputes that could not be resolved at mediation were encouraged to seek legal advice about their further options.

Mediators

The QSBC maintains a register of mediators to administer mediations under the SBC Act and RSL Act. All QSBC mediators are accredited under the National Mediation Accreditation Standards and have experience in relation to commercial leasing matters.

The QSBC referred parties to appropriate dispute resolution services and small business support services

Referral pathways

Disputes outside the QSBC's jurisdiction were referred to a dispute resolution service with appropriate jurisdiction, including ASBFEO, QCAT, Office of Fair Trading, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, the Dispute Resolution Branch (Department of Justice), and the Queensland Ombudsman.

Small businesses who required specialist support were referred to a range of free or low-cost programs. Where appropriate, the QSBC connected the small business with the service provider directly via a warm referral process, to ensure an efficient handover.

One of the most common referral pathways was to the free Small Business Financial Counselling program. The financial counsellors assisted QSBC clients to understand their financial position and help them prepare documentation to help with informal resolution negotiations and mediations.

In 2024–25, the QSBC made a range of referrals, including more than:

- 200 referrals to the Mentoring for Growth program
- 230 referrals to the Small Business Financial Counselling Service
- 180 referrals to the Small Business Wellness Coaches
- 600 referrals to the Bond Law Clinic
- 70 referrals to the Small Business Debt Helpline
- 40 referrals to the NewAccess for Small Business program
- 40 referrals to the National Tax Clinic program.

Directions from the Minister

Under section 18 of the SBC Act, a statement of expectations was issued to the Commissioner by the Minister on 17 December 2024. This statement outlined the Minister's expectations for the QSBC to refocus on red tape reduction and dispute management for small and family business.

In response, the Commissioner provided the Minister with a statement of intent on 7 January 2025.

During 2024–25, the Minister did not give the Commissioner any written directions under section 17 of the SBC Act.

Financial statements

The 2024–25 year reflects the part year effect of Machinery of Government changes, which transferred small business functions from the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to the Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business, effective 1 November 2024. Accordingly, caution should be exercised when comparing financial years.

The financial statements for the QSBC from 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2025 are included

in the Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business Annual Report 2024–25.

The financial statements for the QSBC from 1 July 2024 to 31 October 2024 are included in the Department of Trade, Employment and Training Annual Report 2024–25.

Separate financial statements are not required for the QSBC in this report.

Appendix 1: Small Business Friendly Program members

Small Business Friendly (SBF) Program members, as of 30 June 2025:

Balonne Shire Council	Logan City Council
Banana Shire Council	Longreach Regional Council
Barcaldine Regional Council	Mackay Regional Council
Barcoo Shire Council	Maranoa Regional Council
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council *	Mareeba Shire Council
Brisbane City Council	Moreton Bay City Council
Bulloo Shire Council	Mount Isa City Council
Bundaberg Shire Council	Murweh Shire Council
Burdekin Shire Council	Noosa Council
Burke Shire Council	Paroo Shire Council
Cairns Regional Council	Quilpie Shire Council
Carpentaria Shire Council	Redland City Council
Cassowary Coast Regional Council	Richmond Shire Council
Charters Towers Regional Council	Rockhampton Regional Council
Cloncurry Shire Council	Scenic Rim Regional Council
Cook Shire Council	Somerset Regional Council
Douglas Shire Council	South Burnett Regional Council
Flinders Shire Council	Southern Downs Regional Council
Fraser Coast Regional Council	Sunshine Coast Regional Council
Gladstone Regional Council *	Tablelands Regional Council
Gold Coast City Council	Toowoomba Regional Council
Gympie Regional Council	Townsville City Council
Hinchinbrook Shire Council	Western Downs Regional Council
Ipswich City Council	Whitsunday Regional Council
Isaac Regional Council	Winton Shire Council
Livingstone Shire Council	

* The council joined the SBF Program in 2024–25.

Appendix 2: Glossary of terms

AFM	Application for mediation—an application made to the QSBC for mediation of a retail tenancy dispute under the RSL Act, or a small business lease dispute under the SBC Act
ASBFEO	Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman
Commissioner	The person appointed as the Small Business Commissioner in Queensland
Department	Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business
Dispute	<p>A collective term that captures all of the following types of disputes that fall under the jurisdiction of the QSBC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retail tenancy dispute • small business lease dispute • small business franchise dispute <p>The QSBC can also provide assistance to informally resolve other types of small business disputes, such as unpaid invoices, contractual disputes, business-government disputes; but does not have the jurisdiction to provide mediation for these other types of disputes</p>
Mediation	A confidential mediation conference administered by the QSBC involving parties to a dispute, who work with an impartial third-party mediator nominated by the QSBC to resolve the dispute and reach agreement
Minister	Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business
NSBC	National Small Business Commissioners Forum
QCAT	Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal
QSBC	Queensland Small Business Commissioner (a collective term for the Commissioner and supporting office)
RFDA	Request for dispute assistance—an application made to the QSBC to seek initial assistance to informally resolve a dispute
Retail tenancy dispute	A dispute about a retail shop lease as defined under the RSL Act
RSL Act	<i>Retail Shop Leases Act 1994</i>
RSL Regulation	Retail Shop Leases Regulation 2016
SBC Act	<i>Small Business Commissioner Act 2022</i>
SBC Regulation	Small Business Commissioner Regulation 2022
SBF Program	Small Business Friendly Program
SBIR	Small Business Industry Roundtable
SBLR	Small Business Lessors Roundtable
SBRR	Small Business Regional Roundtable
Small business	The Small Business Commissioner considers a small business to be any business that a reasonable person would consider to be small regardless of structure, turnover or number of employees (generally equivalent to <20 full-time equivalent employees)
Small business franchise dispute	A dispute about a franchise agreement as defined under the SBC Act
Small business lease dispute	A dispute about a small business lease, other than a retail shop lease, as defined under the SBC Act

