

2024-25

Annual Report

Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal

About QCAT's annual report

The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal's (QCAT) annual report summarises its performance for 2024-25 and meets accountability requirements under the *Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2009*.

This annual report is accessible at <https://www.qcat.qld.gov.au/about-qcat/publications>.

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Interpreter services



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Letter of compliance

30 September 2025

The Honourable Deb Frecklington MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity.
1 William Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Attorney-General,

I present the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal's Annual Report 2024-25.

This annual report complies with the Tribunal's requirements under the *Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2009* and the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'K' followed by a horizontal line and a long, sweeping tail.

Hon. Justice Kerri Mellifont
QCAT President

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President's message

What a difference a budget injection can make

The June 2024 budget announcement by government, which saw QCAT being allocated some crucially needed funds to assist QCAT to get through some of its incredible workload, has started to produce noticeable benefits.

In the 2024-25 reporting year, through the incredible hard work and dedication of its members, adjudicators, and staff, QCAT scheduled 31,431 proceedings (an increase from 24,978 in the previous year) and heard and determined 28,060 cases (an increase from 26,934 in the previous year). Its overall clearance rate has increased by six per cent, thus achieving a clearance rate of 98 per cent. Wait times in some lists have also started to decrease. Of particular note, the skill, knowledge and specialised expertise of the members in the child protection space has been utilised very effectively in compulsory conferences, with the consequence that only 11 matters out of 217 applications needed to go to hearing.

At the time of writing this report, QCAT has almost reached full recruitment under the budget injection, with one more Ordinary Member position to be filled by Government and, in the coming months, a number of Adjudicator positions in respect of which the recruitment process is well under way. Once at full cohort, our expectation is that wait times to hearing and finalisation of matters will decrease, with a significant reduction in same within the next twelve to eighteen months. The extent to which this is possible is in part dependent on whether or not there are increases in lodgements, a trend which we are seeing in some areas, including “other civil disputes” (26 per cent), neighbourhood disputes (17 per cent), motor vehicle disputes (15 per cent), retail shop lease disputes (9 per cent), appeals (2 per cent) and guardianship (4 per cent across new applications, reviews of appointments and administrator compliance matters).

As to guardianship, the eight per cent increase in new applications equates to a very substantial sizeable increase in workload, not only in respect of hearing and determining the new applications, but also in respect of future reviews of appointments made and in respect of administrator compliance. It is clear that the workload in the guardianship jurisdiction will continue to increase due to both the number of matters and the rising percentage of those matters which are complex.

Without the budget injection from the June 2024 budget outcome, it would not be possible to keep wait times from rising much less decrease them. Without the ongoing efforts of the members, adjudicators, and Registry to continuously improve our processes, QCAT could not get through the huge amount of work it does within a comparatively small budget footprint. Some of the initiatives of the QCAT team are discussed in further detail in this report. It is my belief that those initiatives, together with QCAT soon being at full cohort, will be ‘game changers’ in respect of QCAT’s delivery of justice services to Queensland over the next 12 to 18 months.

Digitisation

There is an ongoing program of digitisation of QCAT matters. QCase, which has now been in place since April 2023, has the goal of improving efficiency and access to justice. There have been significant challenges with QCase since inception. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Ms Megan Houweling, at Reform and Support Services, Courts and Tribunal division (CAT), Department of Justice (DoJ), who has stepped in and has been working tirelessly with her team to seek to deliver necessary improvements to QCase. Her calm and unflappable manner and

focus on solutions, when confronted with any challenge, big or small, demonstrates her substantial subject matter expertise and her strong commitment to helping QCAT achieve effective digitisation.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Ben Hofstetter and Sophie Kirker who have both been amazing throughout this journey, and to Senior Member Traves and now Senior Member Lember for their hard work in this area, and their advocacy for QCAT.

Judicial Member McGill SC

Judicial Member John McGill SC completed his five-year appointment as a sessional member of QCAT in January 2025 and did not seek reappointment. During his five years as a judicial member, JM McGill worked tirelessly in the Tribunal's interests, and very often without rendering a sessional claim. Initially sitting in health disciplinary matters, over time he brought his knowledge and expertise to the Tribunal's civil jurisdiction, sitting particularly, but not solely, in hearing appeals from Magistrates sitting as QCAT decision makers.

In this role, JM McGill solved many knotty problems and shouldered a substantial workload. JM McGill developed, in a significant and positive way, several strands of jurisprudence in the Tribunal. To name but two, his views about the awarding of costs (arising from his approach to the construction of ss 100 and 102 of the QCAT Act) were endorsed by the Court of Appeal. His construction of the QCAT Act to determine when an application to review an administrative decision is 'made' pursuant to s 33 of the QCAT Act was a masterful exercise of sound legal analysis with a practically sensible outcome that has allowed the Tribunal to continue to meet its statutory objectives. JM McGill also gave generously of his time, with education sessions, including a memorable session which he delivered through video conference for the QCAT 2025 Biennial Conference. We thank him for his long and selfless association with the Tribunal, which has benefitted greatly from his legal expertise, his judicial experience, and his assiduity.

Gratitude

There are many people to thank.

QCAT delivers justice to tens of thousands of Queenslanders every year. Every person within QCAT plays a role in that, and I am thankful for the hard work and dedication of the staff, members and adjudicators to the very large task at hand.

I am very grateful to Chief Justice Bowskill and Senior Judge Administrator Justice Martin for facilitating the hearing of legal profession matters by judges of the Supreme Court and to each of those judges who have generously offered to do that work. So too am I grateful to President Stilgoe of the Land Court, and the Land Court members and registry who also generously give of their time and expertise to assist QCAT in the discharge of its functions. I am grateful for the harmonious working relationship we enjoy with Chief Magistrate Brassington, and Magistrates Court registry staff, and for the assistance and wisdom of Amanda O'Brien, Assistant Director-General and Principal Registrar, Supreme District and Land Courts Service.

I thank QCAT's Assistant Director-General and Principal Registrar Tracey De Simone for her ongoing efforts to lead the registry, an undertaking which is a very sizeable endeavour. I also want to thank those QCAT members, adjudicators and registry staff who have applied strategic and insightful thinking to reform of QCAT's work. There are too many to list without fear of accidentally omitting someone, but please know that your contribution is much valued. The triaging system implemented in guardianship has shown real benefits, and I believe that the implementation of jurisdictional teams, together with disciplined documentation of process, which

is underway within the Civil and Administrative Division (CAD), will be transformative to the way in which civil and administrative cases are dealt with at QCAT.

The creation and implementation of an external mediation project also has the potential to improve QCAT's ability to resolve disputes by way of alternative dispute resolution. I thank Senior Member Traves for her leadership in that area.

I am very grateful to each of the Senior Members, Brown, Aughterson, Browne, Fitzpatrick, Traves and Lember for their considerable efforts in assisting the Deputy President and me to manage the business of the tribunal.

Each day I think how lucky I am to have such an extraordinary Deputy President in her Honour Judge Geraldine Dann. I remain, as always, ever grateful for her incredible work ethic, her fine legal mind, and her wise guidance in matters of leadership and management. We are both very fortunate indeed to have the incredible support of retired judges who have chosen to contribute to the community by providing their services to QCAT as sessional members.

I have been very fortunate to have two very fine associates in the reporting period, Ms Kelly Pattenden and Ms Charis Holt, who have worked extremely hard to enable me to do the work I do, and who have always done so with a smile on their face and an energy which is infectious. So too have I been lucky to be supported by administrative staff within the judicial precinct of QCAT who work hard to make things run smoothly and happily in amongst the many competing demands which come the judicial precincts way: Jade Green (and warm congratulations to her much deserved recent promotion to management), Jessica Kelly and Nell Farrell. A special thanks to the Education Committee, and to Jade and to Ava Starrenburg for the considerable work they put into the biennial QCAT conference conducted over two days in February 2026. Thanks to their combined efforts, and the generosity of the speakers in giving of their time, including the Hon Justice Michael Lee and the Hon Justice Susan Brown, the conference was a great success.

I thank Ms Jasmina Jolic for her fine work as the immediate past Director-General of DoJ and wish her well in her future endeavours. Thank you also goes to Ms Brigita Cunningham, Deputy Director-General for her ongoing contribution to, and support of, QCAT.

QCAT's sincere gratitude goes to Perry Munro, Executive Director, Facilities Services Branch and Linda Herron, Director, Infrastructure Programs Facilities Services, DoJ for their continued efforts to see QCAT in accommodation suitable for purpose, and which will be able to house our entire expanded cohort, and with additional hearing rooms. They are an amazing (and amusing) team.

May I respectfully acknowledge and commend the current and immediate past President of the Queensland Law Society, Ms Genevieve Dee and Ms Rebecca Fogerty respectively, and the QLS CEO Mr Matt Dunn for their valued contribution to the work of QCAT and their support for proper resourcing. Submissions written by the QLS on this topic are of an extremely high quality, reflecting great thought.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the current and former Health Ministers, the Hon Tim Nicholls MP and Ms Shannon Fentiman MP, respectively, for their support of the Guardianship Hospital and Health Hearing Program, an important initiative which provides benefits to vulnerable people in significant ways.

Finally, a thank you to all of the authors who contributed sections of this report. Of course, the responsibility for any errors within the report, if any, remains with me.

Welcomes

QCAT congratulates the Hon Deb Frecklington MP in being appointed Attorney-General Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity, and I look forward to continuing a constructive and collaborative relationship with her in this important ministerial role.

A warm welcome also goes to Ms Sarah Cruickshank as the new Director-General of DoJ, and a thank you for the opportunities we have had thus far to meet and discuss QCAT. I very much look forward to continuing to work with Ms Cruickshank in the future.

Farewells

QCAT cannot operate without the extremely significant contribution sessional members make. We are fortunate to have our cohort of sessional members, many of whom jump in at late notice when needed. I particularly note with thanks the enormous contribution of Jeremy Golding, Clare Endicott, Jennifer Felton and Jim Allen for their years of service to QCAT and wish them all very well in their next chapters.

Thank you also to Alan Walsh for his years of dedicated service to QCAT as an adjudicator and his contribution to the law of minor civil disputes, and I wish him all the best to him in his future endeavours. I also thank Gabrielle Mewing and Derek Struik for their years of service as adjudicators, and note, with thanks, their continued role as sessional members.

Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT)

I have again continued to enjoy my role on the council of COAT, chaired by Malcolm Schyvens, President of TASCAT. COAT is the body through which Australasian tribunals come together to examine and compare ideas, working methods, organisation and management, member trainings and support programs.

This year we were able to send a number of delegates to the COAT annual conference in Melbourne. This conference is an important forum for professional development in Tribunal leadership, and delivery of Tribunal services. This year the COAT conference saw the continuation of subject matter meetings, an initiative commenced by QCAT last year. These subject matter meetings, and the conference, provide important opportunities for registry, members and registrars to meet their counterparts from interstate and New Zealand, exchange ideas for improvement and develop contacts for future engagement.

Conclusion

As I write this, the Ministerial review of the QCAT Act pursuant to section 240 of the QCAT is underway. The objects of that review are set out in section 240 and include deciding whether the QCAT Act is meeting its objects and whether provisions of the QCAT Act are appropriate for meeting its objects. More about the statutory review is said elsewhere in this report.

The objects of the QCAT Act are to establish an independent tribunal to deal with the matters it is empowered to deal with under the QCAT Act, or an enabling Act, to do so in a way that is accessible, fair, just, economical, informal and quick, to promote the quality and consistency of tribunal decisions, to enhance the quality and consistency of decisions made by decision-makers and to enhance the openness and accountability of public administration. Through dint of sheer hard work, QCAT has delivered on almost all of those statutory objectives, despite being chronically underfunded throughout its history. The one object which has proved beyond reach in some matters is to be 'quick'.

One cannot help but think that the objective of quick justice could also have been, and could be in the future, delivered by a Tribunal properly resourced to undertake the enormous breadth and quantum of work it does.

QCAT has decision-makers of exceptional skill and knowledge, with expertise in subject matters developed over years of specialist work. They demonstrate the type of collective experience and expertise spoken of with approval in many administrative law cases. QCAT has, within its registry staff, individuals who have acquired a corporate knowledge and operational expertise in Tribunal work of great depth and value. With the 2024 budget injection into QCAT and the expertise of QCAT decision-makers and registry staff, the ability of QCAT to deliver on all of the statutory objects has been increased, with the real benefits of that funding to crystallize over the next 12 to 18 months.

I look forward to doing the best I can to assist QCAT in achieving its mission in my remaining months as President.

Hon Justice Kerri Mellifont

A farewell message from the Deputy President

It has been my good fortune to serve as Deputy President of the Tribunal since late January 2022. My term will conclude at the end of February 2026.

During my term, I have come to know the members and adjudicators of the Tribunal as committed, clever, hardworking and courageous decision-makers who take their responsibilities to the people of Queensland very seriously. They are collegiately supportive of each other in an impressive way, given the enormous ongoing workload the Tribunal carries. I personally salute each of them.

I have observed the registry staff to be motivated by a desire to serve others and willing to propose and embrace change to try to achieve better outcomes. Over the last several years, they have worked tirelessly to develop registry processes and personal skills, in an environment of almost continuous change. I thank each one of them for their support and dedication.

Specifically, I acknowledge the support that I and the other judicial members have received from our professional and public panel assessors, who sit with us to advise us on questions of fact. Every time I hear a matter, I learn from them about their professional discipline, and I find their insights and approach to determining factual issues in the matters they are involved in of enormous assistance.

Whilst I have been at the Tribunal, it has been blessed with the support of a significant number of judicial members, who are retired judges, many of whom have sat hearing matters in the Health Practitioner list. Individually, their wisdom, experience, ability and patience, which I have observed firsthand on an almost daily basis, is remarkable. It has been an honour for me to work with them regularly and I personally thank each and every one of them for their support of the Tribunal's work and me personally.

Finally, I acknowledge the inspired and committed leadership of the President of the Tribunal, Justice Kerri Mellifont. Justice Mellifont is wholly dedicated to making QCAT a better place for the people of Queensland. Every decision she has taken has had that motivation front of mind. Whilst her vision is strategic, she brings to the workplace each day consistency of approach, an abiding commitment to problem solving and hard work and great personal warmth and empathy for the individual. It has been an honour to serve as Deputy President with her.

Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal

QCAT is an independent statutory Tribunal established by the *Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2009* (QCAT Act).

The Tribunal plays an integral role in the Queensland justice system. QCAT resolves and determines disputes, reviews and referrals in a wide range of jurisdictions, including but not limited to:

- civil disputes (including building disputes, tree disputes, community living disputes¹, retail shop lease disputes, disputes about the sale of motor vehicles, disputes about losses resulting from the actions of real estate and other agents and information privacy disputes)
- applications in relation to appointments of administrators and guardians (e.g., where an adult has impaired decision-making capacity)
- administrative review of government and statutory authority decisions (e.g., Queensland Building and Construction Commission, liquor licensing, blue cards, child protection, weapons licensing and racing)
- occupational regulation and discipline (e.g., referrals and reviews involving lawyers, health practitioners, police, teachers, veterinary surgeons and engineers)
- minor civil disputes (MCDs) (i.e., residential tenancy, minor debt, consumer and trader, motor vehicle property damage and dividing fence disputes)
- referrals by the Queensland Human Rights Commission (i.e., complaints of alleged unlawful discrimination, sexual harassment, vilification and victimisation).

The Tribunal also has an appeal jurisdiction.

In Brisbane, proceedings other than MCDs are heard by QCAT members at QCAT's premises at 259 Queen Street. Given QCAT's shortage of hearing rooms, sometimes hearings are conducted at the Land Court premises, and the Supreme and District Courts, through the generosity of the heads of jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, District Court, Land Court and Magistrates Court. In other areas of South-East Queensland (SEQ) and across regional and rural Queensland, QCAT members circuit to conduct hearings for proceedings other than MCDs. Regional sessional members also hear matters outside of Brisbane.

MCDs are heard in Brisbane by QCAT adjudicators, who also circuit to SEQ centres. In regional and rural areas, MCDs are heard by magistrates who are ordinary members of QCAT for MCDs.

¹ Community title schemes disputes, manufactured homes disputes and retirement villages disputes.

Objects and organisational values

QCAT has clear legislative objects and remit. The objects of the QCAT Act include having the Tribunal deal with matters in a way that is accessible, fair, just, economical, informal and quick; and promoting and enhancing the quality and consistency of Tribunal decisions.

QCAT's Strategic Plan 2023-25 sets out QCAT's four key organisational values, being:

- accessible
- trustworthy
- timely
- inclusive.

QCAT prides itself on the professionalism, integrity and impartiality of its staff and decision-makers and strives to provide quality of service.

Jurisdiction, powers and functions of the Tribunal

QCAT commenced on 1 December 2009, amalgamating 18 tribunals and 23 jurisdictions. Since then, its range of jurisdictions has been considerably expanded. QCAT's current legislative remit consists of:

- the QCAT Act
- the *Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Regulation 2019* (QCAT Regulation)
- the *Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Rules 2009* (QCAT Rules)
- more than 180 Acts, in addition to the QCAT Act, which confer jurisdiction on QCAT.

QCAT has three different types of jurisdiction: original, review and appellate.

QCAT's **original jurisdiction** covers three broad operational areas: human rights (e.g., applications to appoint guardians under the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000*); civil disputes (e.g., disputes about retail shop leases; residential buildings and MCDs of \$25,000 or under); and disciplinary (e.g., applications seeking disciplinary orders against solicitors under the *Legal Profession Act 2007*).

QCAT's **review jurisdiction** is conferred by enabling Acts and provides for QCAT to review administrative decisions made by government agencies and disciplinary bodies. The review is conducted by way of fresh hearing on the merits.

QCAT's **appellate jurisdiction** provides for the Tribunal to hear appeals against decisions made by non-judicial members in its original and review jurisdictions, as well as decisions of other entities under enabling Acts. When sitting in its appellate jurisdiction, it sits as the Appeal Tribunal, commonly referred to as QCATA.

The Tribunal

All Tribunal decision-makers are independent statutory appointees, appointed by Governor-in-Council on the recommendation of the Attorney-General.

Members generally sit across and hear proceedings in a range of jurisdictional areas. Adjudicators determine MCDs and some other matters. There is also a program, presently in abeyance, under which Justices of the Peace may sit as a panel of two (including one legally qualified JP) in MCDs where the claim is for \$5,000 or less.

Each senior member has an Associate appointed by the President under the *Queensland Civil and Administrative Act 2009*.

As at 30 June 2025, the Tribunal comprised²:

- the President, who is a Supreme Court Judge
- the Deputy President, who is a District Court Judge
- 6 full-time Senior Members
- 21 full-time Members
- 2 part-time Members
- 2 acting Members
- 5 full-time Adjudicators
- 2 part-time Adjudicators
- 4 acting Adjudicators
- 11 Judicial Sessional Members
- 9 Supplementary Judicial Members (including 4 Land Court Members)
- 73 Sessional Members (excluding Judicial, Land Court and Supplementary)
- 6 Associates to Senior Member
- Justices of the Peace
- All Queensland Magistrates (automatically appointed as members of QCAT to hear MCDs)

Details are contained in [Appendix 1](#).

The registry

The QCAT registry, led by the Assistant Director-General and Principal Registrar, provides administrative support for the Tribunal.

QCAT's registry is in Brisbane.

² The precise numerical composition of the Tribunal varied over the reporting period. The numbers of members reflect those in the position as at 30 June 2025.

Local Magistrates Courts act as the QCAT registry across regional and rural Queensland and in SEQ (excluding Brisbane). Outside Brisbane, Magistrates Courts registry staff accept QCAT applications and supporting documents, receive application fees and assign hearing dates.

QCAT's registry is comprised of the:

- Human Rights Division
- Civil, Administrative and Disciplinary Division
- Tribunal and Registry Services Division, and
- Corporate Services.

Registry workforce

QCAT's registry workforce comprises 223 full-time equivalent employees plus six associates to senior members.

The QCAT registry workforce is supplemented by Magistrates Court registry staff providing registry services for QCAT outside of Brisbane, as well as support from contingent labour from time to time.

The QCAT registry management team details are detailed in **Appendix 1**.

Code of conduct and QCAT culture

The QCAT registry staff are required to abide by the Queensland public service *Code of Conduct* that specifies behavioural and service standards.

Further to this, all who work within QCAT, whether President, Deputy President, Tribunal members and adjudicators or registry, are expected to seek to uphold workplace principles and behaviours that build a positive, professional and productive workplace. This approach is informed by four key principles and behaviours:

- growth and development
- integrity and respect
- diversity and inclusion, and
- trust and collaboration.

Diversity and inclusion

QCAT strives towards an inclusive environment, where diversity is celebrated rather than tolerated. We seek to give real effect to these organisational values by operating with a culture of respect and inclusivity and engaging with Queenslanders in a sensitive and culturally competent way. Within QCAT we value our people and the diverse perspectives and experiences that they bring.

QCAT's ongoing improvement approach aims to support the diversity and inclusion of Tribunal users. QCAT reviews business processes and practices to make reasonable adjustments where required and to enhance accessibility for Tribunal users, acknowledging their diverse perspectives and experiences.

Our approach reflects the Department of Justice's (DoJ) *Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Strategy 2023-27*, which aims for the Department to create an inclusive, diverse and equitable workplace where we belong, and diversity of thought is embraced.

QCAT also recognises that each of us play a crucial role in fostering cultural capability, and one powerful way to demonstrate this is through continuous learning and personal development. Actively engaging in short training courses can have a profound impact on our staff's ability to show empathy and understanding and is a positive step towards promoting reconciliation and cultivating a deeper respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

By way of one example of action taken in this area, all staff are now required to complete the SBS First Nations Course which is an authentic storytelling online course presented through a series of interviews and animations.

The course discusses the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including spirituality, family and kinship values; the impacts of colonisation, stereotyping and prejudice; and the trauma experienced by the Stolen Generations and the inter-generational trauma still being felt today. The course also seeks to impart tools to help the participant move forward in the reconciliation process as an individual and as part of DoJ.

Other practical diversity and inclusion steps QCAT has taken include:

- having staff update equity and diversity information to gain a clearer understanding of QCAT's diversity profile
- ensuring attraction, recruitment and selection processes are inclusive, accessible and target core capabilities, e.g., 67 per cent of QCAT staff are female
- supporting flexible working arrangements for people managing tertiary study, family commitments and other personal responsibilities, e.g., ten per cent of staff work part-time and all staff are encouraged to make use of flexible work patterns
- providing support services to registry staff and Tribunal members, including health and wellbeing support
- being represented on the DoJ Just Pride Working Group and the Queensland Public Sector LGBTIQ+ Steering Committee to support people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and allies
- being represented on the DoJ Just Ability Working Group to support people living with a disability.

Two First Nations trainees commenced at QCAT in May 2025. They will complete a Certificate 3 in Business Studies (Legal Services) whilst learning key capabilities from all areas of the QCAT registry to support their studies during their 12-month traineeship. The aim of providing traineeships is to attract more First Nations applicants to apply for advertised roles within QCAT. Along with creating career pathways, QCAT's workforce is enhanced by employing people with diverse backgrounds.

QCAT operations³

Funding

QCAT receives funding through government appropriation and through fees for service. In the reporting period, QCAT's total operating expense was \$41.092 M.

Government appropriation \$35.842 M
Revenue from fees for service \$5.243 M
Total operating expenses \$41.092 M*

**Figures accurate due to rounding.*

At a glance

22,164 cases finalised	79,231 calls managed	31,431 proceedings scheduled	73% user satisfaction	8,183 counter enquiries
98% clearance rate	22.10 minutes call response time	\$1,596 Average cost per matter	493 confirmed interpreter bookings	18,980 searches of QCAT records

Workload and outcomes

The improved funding allocation from the June 2024 Queensland budget has allowed QCAT to increase the number of matters heard and finalised. This has also seen the number of cases finalised (referred to as clearance rate) increased by more than six per cent. It is hoped this increase will have a further positive impact on backlogs and time-to-hearings in the next reporting period.

Further discussion about workload and outcomes can be found in the divisional reports for HuRD, CAD and the trends and forecast section.

³ Reporting as required by s232(1)(a), (b) and (c) of the QCAT Act

Table 1: Overview of operations.

Service performance criteria	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Cases lodged	31,657	30,631	26,820	29,120	28,575	28,588
Cases finalised	30,610	28,727	28,952	27,159	26,384	28,060
1300 calls managed	86,847	83,522	83,331	75,183	75,580	79,231
Call response time (average)	7.82 minutes	9.95 minutes	30.89 minutes	17.53 minutes	16.79 minutes	22.10 minutes
Search request of QCAT records	15,206	21,241	23,333	18,229	18,441	18,980
Counter enquiries	13,141	10,189	9,253	9,554	8,207	8,183
Proceedings scheduled*	19,929	19,400	16,334	15,184	24,978	31,431
Cost per matter (average)	\$866	\$945	\$1,033	\$1,133	\$1,301	\$1,596
Interpreter and translation services provided	329	563	641	452	473	493
Complaint rate	0.56%	0.52%	0.69%	0.75%	0.84%	0.65%
User satisfaction rating	82%	79%	79%	76%	73%	73%

*31,431 proceedings (that is, hearings of various types) scheduled exclude MCDs proceedings dealt with by Magistrates Courts outside of SEQ.

Clearance rate

QCAT achieved a clearance rate of 98 per cent in 2024-25, which was a six per cent increase on the previous year.

Figure 1 displays QCAT's clearance rates from 2020 through to 2025.

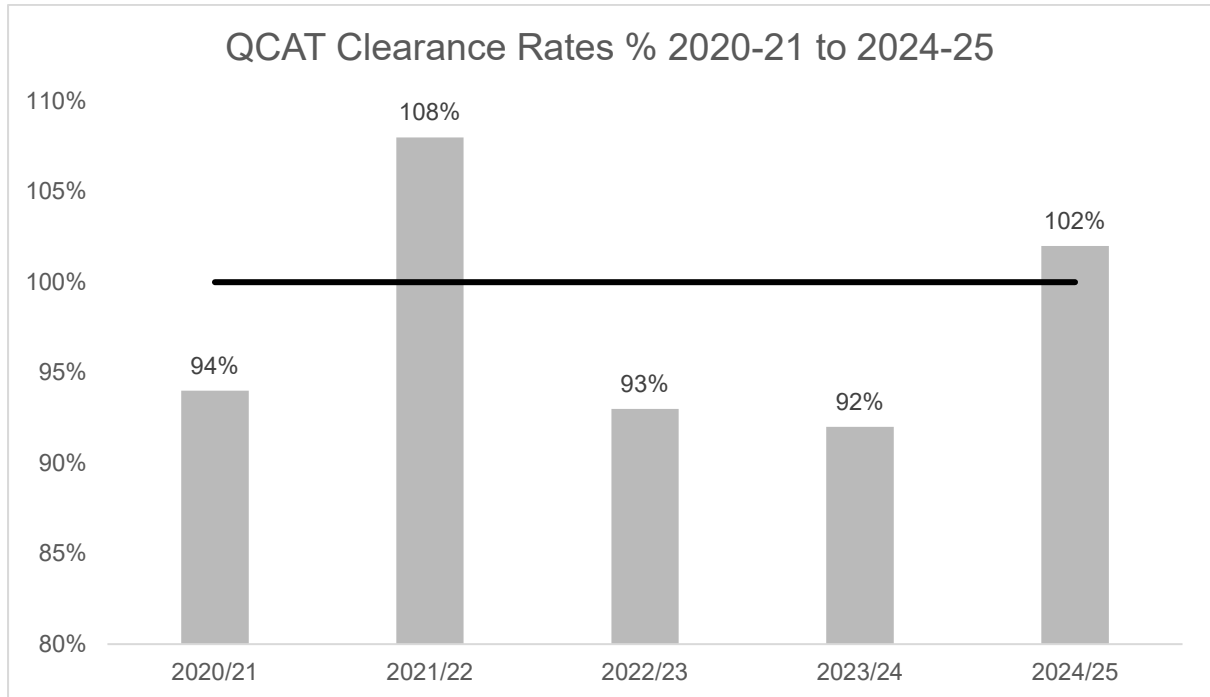


Table 2 details cases pending over the past five years.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	% difference in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24
Cases pending*	10,313	7,937	9,733	11,602	15,006	29% increase
Overall clearance rate	94%	108%	93%	92%	98%	6% increase

*This excludes MCDs applications that were received by Magistrates Courts.

Outcomes by jurisdiction

QCAT is required to report the number and nature of matters (lodgements), the number of matters finalised (clearance rates) and the number and nature of outstanding matters (pending at period end).

Table 3: Outcomes by jurisdiction.

	Lodgements			Clearance rates			Pending at period end		
	2023-24	2024-25	% Diff	2023-24	2024-25	% Diff	2023-24	2024-25	% Diff
Human Rights									
Children – Child Protection*	189	217	15%	132%	78%	-41%	98	153	56%
Guardianship	12,448	12,925	4%	96%	103%	7%	5,737	4,955	-14%
Civil									
Anti-discrimination	115	95	-17%	80%	81%	1%	138	156	13%
Building	459	446	-3%	82%	80%	-2%	547	633	16%
Children – Blue Card*	160	119	-26%	131%	160%	22%	267	197	-26%
Retail shop leases	70	76	9%	133%	114%	-14%	67	57	-15%
Minor civil disputes**	12,786	12,569	-2%	90%	94%	5%	2501	3,564	43%
Motor vehicles	265	306	15%	80%	69%	-14%	271	367	35%
Other civil disputes	80	101	26%	104%	98%	-6%	108	109	1%
Neighbourhood disputes	226	263	17%	114%	103%	-10%	287	283	-1%
Administrative and disciplinary									
General administrative review	899	746	-17%	73%	94%	29%	1093	1,138	4%
Occupational regulation	305	277	-9%	85%	96%	13%	374	375	0%
Appeals									
Appeal Tribunal	419	429	2%	82%	91%	11%	401	427	6%
Re-openings and renewals									
Re-openings	20	34	70%	90%	76%	-16%	9	18	100%
Renewals	2	3	50%	100%	100%	0%	0	0	0%

*Children list split into child protection and blue card matters.

**Excludes MCD applications received by QCAT and dealt with by Magistrates Courts outside of SEQ.

One of the largest QCAT jurisdictions is MCDs, details of which are in **Table 4** below. Starting in 2024-25, matters are reported as being either “Brisbane matters” (QCAT’s registry at 259 Queen St) or “Magistrates Courts” (those matters dealt with by courthouses across the state) to accurately reflect QCAT’s workload.

Table 4: MCDs broken down by Residential Tenancy & Other MCD matters.

	Lodgements			Clearance rates		
	2023-24	2024-25	% diff	2023-24	2024-25	% diff
MINOR CIVIL DISPUTES						
Brisbane	6,361	5,544	-13%	75%	107%	42%
Magistrates Courts	11,183	12,124	8%	100%	88%	-12%
Total	17,544*	17,668	1%			
Tenancy – urgent						
Brisbane	1,850	1,686	-9%	92%	116%	26%
Magistrates Courts	3,334	4,426	33%	99%	97%	-2%
sub-total	5,184*	6,112	18%			
Tenancy – non-urgent						
Brisbane	2,961	1,408	-52%	72%	130%	79%
Magistrates Courts	1,592	2,936	84%	98%	93%	-6%
sub-total	4,553*	4,344	-5%			
Other MCDs						
Brisbane	2,919	2,450	-16%	66%	88%	33%
Magistrates Courts	4,888	4,762	-3%	102%	77%	-25%
sub-total	7,807*	7,212	-8%			

**Incorrect figures were included in 2023-24 Annual Report and have been updated accordingly.*

Reserved decisions

As at 30 June 2025, QCAT had 198 outstanding reserved decisions, 19 more than at 30 June 2024, a figure which is hardly surprising given the significant increase in QCAT matters over the financial year. Of these decisions, 82 were outstanding for less than 90 days, 41 between 90 and 180 days, and 75 for more than 180 days. With the next Governor-in-Council appointment of an ordinary member, QCAT will be at full establishment of in-house ordinary members and it is expected that will assist in the overall reduction of outstanding reserved decisions.

Complaints

QCAT had a complaint rate of 0.65 per cent for 2024-25, with a total of 141 complaints received during the reporting year. The majority of complaints received concerned QCAT’s service delivery, policies and procedures. Over the past five years, the complaint rate has remained within the range of 0.5 per cent to 0.9 per cent (see Table 1).

Open data

The Queensland Government's Open Data Portal details the volume of 2024-25 QCAT application lodgements listed by postcode.

QCAT and the Magistrates Court of Queensland

QCAT's capacity to provide quality justice services throughout the length and breadth of Queensland depends on the support provided by Magistrates Court. Magistrates Court registries deliver frontline services, and Magistrates, in their role as QCAT members, hear and determine minor civil disputes outside of Brisbane.

In 2024-25, QCAT and the Magistrates Court continued to collaborate through various regular operational forums and formal committees through QCAT's membership of the newly established Court and Tribunals division (CAT). For example, QCAT registry staff sit on the CAT Board of Management and the CAT Directors' Service Delivery Working Group.

QCAT is also represented at an operational level on the Magistrates Court Service (MCS) Operational Managers Leadership Group (OMLG), which brings together AO8 level leaders from Supreme and District Courts, QCAT, MCS and Coroners Court.

The Business Transformation Office at QCAT continues to work in partnership with Magistrates Court registries in the introduction of QCase, a digital case management system for QCAT MCDs. This has involved consultation and joint project work with the Practice Improvement and Engagement Team within MCS, to identify and seek resolution of issues in common for registry staff and Tribunal users. A key focus is to ensure consistency in practise and approach in the registries across QCAT and Magistrates Court.

QCAT continues to communicate with registry personnel of regional Magistrates Courts through Microsoft Teams, which enables our registry personnel to provide real time assistance to Magistrates Court registry personnel in the regions.

QCAT is grateful for the significant support in the SEQ region where Magistrates Court registry officers have worked hard to continue facilitating QCAT's request for adjudicators to access rooms and facilities prior to 8.30am, particularly with the rollout of QCase state-wide.

Whole of Tribunal issues and initiatives

Budget outcomes and implementation plan

In the June 2024 budget QCAT received vital funding from the Queensland Government to help move towards achieving its statutory objectives in a sustainable way.

Over the year, QCAT has established and recruited for 40 additional registry positions, including leadership roles, and for ten Ordinary Member roles within the Tribunal.

It has also engaged in a careful analysis of registry structure, to seek to establish more efficient and effective spans of control, management and leadership. This work has included the creation of a new division in the registry called Tribunal and Registry Services (TARS); as well as a revision of position descriptions which now include clear leadership capabilities. The implementation of this strategic work will assist QCAT to decrease backlogs due to long-term underfunding, as well as provide additional career paths within QCAT.

This work, known as “The QCAT Uplift Project”, was undertaken in partnership with Reform and Support Services within the DoJ, along with significant consultation occurring across QCAT. Recruitment, induction and training are major priorities in 2025 along with locating appropriate, additional accommodation. At the end of this reporting period, work was well underway towards reconfiguring current accommodation for registry and Tribunal, and to the creation of additional hearing rooms. Additional accommodation and the additional hearing rooms will allow the scheduling of additional hearings, and thus assist QCAT to finalise more matters.

Our strategic opportunities

The QCAT Uplift Project provided an ongoing opportunity to improve QCAT's internal operations and deliver improved services to QCAT users. Through continued improvement in business and operational processes, and increased human resources, technology and infrastructure, QCAT was able to prioritise:

- improving efficiency and decreasing wait times
- increasing cultural safety and competence
- introducing and modelling values-led leadership to establish a safe and productive working culture
- continuing to monitor staffing structures to better manage workload and support staff wellbeing
- continuing to map and improve business and operational processes to integrate new technology.

People and culture

The leadership team has commenced a culture reset - a strategy to facilitate values-based discussions and workshops to support QCAT leaders and their teams to establish a safe working culture. Leaders and staff have access to core training and QCAT registry governance is being re-invigorated to promote teamwork and communication with the Tribunal.

QCAT is also working in partnership with the Department's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Programs & Partnerships to develop a plan for improving our cultural safety and competence and meeting our departmental obligations to contribute to the State-wide Reframing the Relationship Plan.

Staff leadership development

In 2024-25 QCAT commenced a comprehensive People Capability Development Program to seek to ensure that staff are equipped with necessary leadership skills QCAT believes that there is a link between quality leadership and sustained organisational performance.

Over 100 staff occupying AO4, AO5, AO6, AO7, AO8, Director and Assistant Director General roles have attended or will attend leadership training conducted by 2Inspire Training.

A key priority for QCAT leadership is to establish improved culture, quality assurance and accountability. The training offered by 2Inspire focuses on these elements in detail with opportunity for staff to engage in self-reflection to improve their approaches.

Providing consistent leadership learning and development will help to embed an understanding of the preferred leadership culture and levels of quality assurance and accountability needed at QCAT. This is particularly important for aspiring leaders who wish to elevate their understanding and continue building a career at QCAT.

The benefit of facilitated and managed leadership training is QCAT staff learning together in mixed groups to allow a greater depth of teamwork and collaboration. To support and embed learnings from the 2Inspire training, a focus will be on ensuring that one-on-one supervision sessions between managers and staff are undertaken consistently. The relationship between regular one-on-ones, expectations agreements and performance management has been emphasised and will lay the groundwork for excellence in practice later in 2025.

A comprehensive "Induction and Onboarding Program" has been developed and is now being rolled out across new and existing QCAT staff. The new program enhances employee engagement, productivity, and cultural alignment with QCAT while ensuring compliance with organisational policies and governance standards. It involves a "QCAT Welcome and Induction" and briefing sessions called "QCAT Essentials" to support on the job training. Those briefing sessions include, amongst other things, an introduction to HR delegations, risk management, information technology, and QCase. A QCAT onboarding checklist and guide have been developed to assist managers to exchange information and share knowledge with staff about QCAT standards, values, governance and expectations, as well as information and knowledge about relevant parts of DoJ outside QCAT.

The program launched in April 2025 and ran through to July with approximately 352 staff participating. A total of three QCAT Welcome and Induction and 22 QCAT Essentials sessions have occurred throughout this period. The program will be extended through to August and September 2025, with recommendations to the Senior Leadership Group and Registry Operational Leadership Group to embed the program.

To further develop capability and an inclusive culture at QCAT, leaders engaged with the Neuro-Diverse Safe Work Initiative who delivered a town hall style training forum for all QCAT staff. Learnings from this initiative have been integrated into recruitment practises.

Strategic review of backlogs

During the reporting period, QCAT continued to analyse its workload and create strategies to assist in decreasing the backlog of matters and work. The June 2024 Queensland Government Budget outcome resulted in a significant increase into creating a sustainable QCAT. QCAT is now close to having the additional staff and ordinary members provided for in that budget outcome recruited and/or appointed by Government. With those additional resources, QCAT is now much better placed to strategically review the work needed to reduce backlogs, including being able to engage in more proactive list management. Previously, the establishment numbers of ordinary members simply spread the Tribunal too thin to reach optimal list management efficiency. The work will be ongoing, however we expect to see significant reduction in backlogs by the end of the next reporting period.

Guardianship stakeholder and tribunal engagement

Important stakeholder discussions have continued this reporting period, including meetings with representatives of QCAT, various non-Government advocacy groups, the Queensland Law Society, the Office of the Public Guardian, the Public Trustee of Queensland and the Public Advocate. These meetings include discussions on systemic issues affecting people who may have impaired decision-making capacity. One of the issues regularly discussed in these meetings is the desire for publicly available resources about the guardianship jurisdiction. QCAT thanks the Public Advocate, Dr John Chesterman, for organising and chairing those meetings, which QCAT facilitates within its premises.

The COAT annual conference occurred in Melbourne in June 2025. QCAT representatives attended subject matter meetings with experts from other tribunals, which provided an important opportunity to engage with peers from all over Australia and the region and exchange ideas about guardianship and administration practice.

Senior Member Joanne Browne also attends and contributes to the regular meetings held by Australian Guardianship and Administration Tribunal.

Guardianship resources

QCAT has prepared publicly accessible information sheets to assist people with an interest in a QCAT guardianship proceedings. In this reporting period, new information sheets about the *Use of restrictive practices in aged care settings* and *Completing a health professional report* were developed and made available.

The publicly accessible information contains links to relevant legislation and contact information for advocacy supports within Queensland and statutory bodies such as the Office of the Public Guardian and the Public Trustee of Queensland.

Tribunal education and training

The President of QCAT has statutory functions which include ensuring the members and adjudicators are adequately and appropriately trained to enable the Tribunal to perform its functions effectively and efficiently. Consistent with that function, the Tribunal has an Education

Committee which conducts an in-house program of monthly seminars addressing matters of substantive law, practice and procedure relevant to QCAT's jurisdiction, as well as a biennial conference.

Presenters at monthly seminars and the conference include both in-house presenters and external speakers, a number of which generously contributed their time and knowledge, including but not limited to, the Honourable Justice Brown of the Supreme Court of Queensland, the Honourable Justice Michael Lee of the Federal Court, the Honourable John Byrne AO RFD, Judicial Member Forrest SC, Roger Traves KC, Anthony Messina, Judicial Member McGill SC, Nitra Kidson KC, Emrys Nekvapil, Paula Morreau KC, Joshua Creamer, Reimen Hii and Alex Psaltis.

The keynote address for the biennial conference, which was held in February 2025, was delivered by the Honourable Justice Lee who spoke of practical ways to improve efficiency in decision making. The Honourable Justice Susan Brown delivered a presentation on the issue of costs in the Tribunal. The conference also included presentations on other important areas relevant to decision making, including the use of artificial intelligence, mediation, unconscious bias, cultural awareness and procedural fairness in the context of self-represented litigants.

The Education Committee, together with registry, facilitated members, adjudicators and registry staff to attend the 2025 Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT) National Conference in Melbourne on 5 and 6 June 2025. QCAT members were also able to attend conferences in the areas of guardianship, child protection, alternative dispute resolution, and reasons writing. Training in alternative dispute resolution by an external provider has also been organised and delivered by the Education Committee in conjunction with registry staff. This training built upon the first stage of mediation training run by QCAT in the previous financial year.

In line with the Tribunal's renewed focus on mediation, Senior Member Traves, Chair of the Education Committee, organised the training necessary for those wishing to gain national accreditation as mediators. The training was conducted by the Resolution Institute over 4 days at University of Queensland in Brisbane City, after which members each completed an online assessment in the form of a mock mediation and self-assessment submission.

The Education committee also organised an interactive legal research workshop, which was hosted by the Supreme Court Librarian and his assistant. A Legal Research Guide was prepared to support the workshop, and this Guide now forms part of the induction and onboarding materials given to new Members. The Education Committee also organised a multi-day QCase training workshop for adjudicators and produced a QCase Training Manual to enable those using QCase to better navigate the system. The Committee would like to thank Ben Hofstetter for conducting the QCase training and for preparing the QCase training Manual.

QCAT thanks former and current members of the Education Committee for their contributions. The work involved in delivering high quality and relevant training to QCAT members and adjudicators is substantial and we are very grateful to those members who were part of the Education Committee during the reporting period: Senior Member Traves (Chair), Senior Member Lember, Member Kanowski, Member Gaffney, Member Bishop and Adjudicator Vanenn.

QCAT Rules Committee

The Rules Committee is established under s 223 of the QCAT Act. The functions of the Rules Committee include developing and reviewing the QCAT Rules, approving forms for use under the

QCAT Act and subordinate legislation and any other function conferred on the Rules Committee under the QCAT Act or an enabling Act.

From July 2024, the Rules Committee consisted of the Honourable Justice Mellifont, Her Honour Judge Dann, Senior Member Fitzpatrick, Member Ford, Member Howe (who resigned on 11 November 2024), Member Gaffney (appointed on 21 November 2024), and Member Katter (appointed on 13 June 2025). The Rules Committee is assisted by its secretariat which consists of the Assistant Director General/Principal Registrar Tracey De Simone, Principal Legal Officer Maria Samios and Senior Legal Officer Jovana Krkeljas.

During the reporting period, the Rules Committee reviewed and approved *Form 18 Application to stay a decision – child protection matters* and *Form 2 Application for minor civil dispute – residential tenancy dispute*, and progressed drafts of many other forms which are expected to be finalised and approved in the next reporting period.

Legislative changes conferring further jurisdiction on QCAT

On 6 June 2024, the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* (RTRAOLAA) received assent with the objectives of strengthening renters' rights, supporting private investment, providing better pathways to resolving issues in tenancies and stabilising rents in the private rental market. The *Residential Tenancies & Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation amendment Regulation 2025* (RTRAAOLAAR) was notified on 7 March 2025 and commenced on 1 May 2025.

While some of the RTRAOLAA reforms commenced on assent (6 June 2024), the balance commenced following proclamation on 30 September 2024 and 1 May 2025.

The changes that commenced on 30 September 2024 included:

- limiting re-letting costs payable by tenants – the re-letting costs payable by a tenant where the tenant ends a fixed term tenancy or rooming accommodation agreement will be calculated based on the remaining time left on the agreement and whether the term of the agreement is greater or less than three years
- mode of rent payment – tenants must be offered at least two ways to pay rent including a way that does not incur more than usual bank costs and which is reasonably available
- utility bills – a tenant must receive utility bills within four weeks of the lessor receiving the supply bill, otherwise the tenant is not required to pay the utility bill
- maximum rental bond – no more than four weeks rent can be requested by a lessor, regardless of the amount of weekly rent payable
- evidence for bond claims – when making a bond claim or disputing a bond, a lessor must now provide the tenant with supporting evidence within 14 days of lodging the claim or dispute resolution request. This applies to all bonds lodged after 30 September 2024
- information sharing – the RTA will have the ability to share information with other government agencies and departments to drive greater compliance and enforcement outcomes
- providing false and misleading information – it is now an offence for anyone involved in a tenancy to provide false or misleading information to the RTA.

The changes implemented by both the RTRAOLAA and the RTRAAOLAAR which commenced on 1 May 2025 include:

- a new application form and process for making requests for fixtures and structural changes – a revised process allowing a tenant to make written request for fixtures and structural changes, using new RTA form 23, which must be responded to within 28 days
- two new application types to QCAT – allowing tenants and residents to apply for orders to attach fixtures or make structural changes where their original request to a lessor, body corporate or providers was refused
- disclosing benefits – any financial benefits received by managing parties regarding rent payments must be disclosed
- entry notice period – increased the minimum entry notice period from 24 hours to 48 hours
- entry frequency limited – the frequency of entries after a notice to leave or notice of intention to leave has been issued
- protecting privacy – limited the information lessors/landlords/providers/managing parties may request from prospective tenants or residents and introduced new requirements for the collection and management of personal information obtained
- rental application process – new RTA rental application form 22 must be used when a tenant is applying for a rental property. Prospective tenants must be provided with an option to lodge this form in ways other than using third-party platforms.

In preparation for these legislative changes, QCAT reviewed and updated resources including:

- the Appendix to QCAT's *Form 2 – Application for minor civil dispute – residential tenancy dispute*
- the case management system (QCase)
- the QCAT website.

New regulations are still under development by the Department of Housing and Public works such as the prescribing of fixtures that may be attached or structural changes that may be made by a tenant or resident for safety, security or accessibility purposes, and these will commence on a date to be advised.

Blue Card reforms

On the 19 September 2024, the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* was assented to and implemented the following reforms relevant to QCAT:

- removal of the requirement for approved kinship carers and their adult household members to obtain a Blue Card (to commence upon proclamation) – to be replaced by a new screening framework implemented by the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety
- improved information sharing between courts and tribunals regarding access to a child protection record, or information from a child protection record

- expanded QCAT’s jurisdiction to include review of decisions of the chief executive to issue negative notices or refuse to cancel negative notices (to commence upon proclamation)
- introduced a new decision-making framework (including introduction of a specific statutory factor to be considered for First Nations applicants) and simplified the disqualification framework
- introduced a new statutory threshold test for Blue Card assessments of “risk to the safety of children” (including a complementary ‘reasonable person’ test) defined as a real and appreciable risk so as to exclude negligible or fanciful risks. It requires a decision to issue a negative notice to demonstrate a clear nexus between a person’s conduct/alleged conduct and the risk of harm to children
- introduced new categories of regulated employment and regulated businesses, including party, entertainment, beauty and photography services directed at children
- provided a consistent exemption for parent volunteers.

Regulation of Assisted Reproductive Technology Services

On 19 September 2024, the *Assisted Reproductive Technology Act 2024* was assented to and:

- established a licensing framework to regulate Assisted Reproductive Technology services
- established a Donor Conception Information Register maintained by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- conferred new review jurisdiction on QCAT (to commence on proclamation) including:
 - a) registrar decisions relating to accessing or correcting information in the register; and
 - b) licensing decisions of Queensland Health’s Chief Executive – including power to stay the operation of a reviewable decision.

Child Safe Organisations

The *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* was assented to on 19 September 2024 and conferred new review jurisdiction on QCAT for the following decisions of the Queensland Family and Child Commission:

- to give a compliance notice to a child safe entity (commencing 1 October 2025)
- to publish details of non-compliance by a child safe entity (commencing 1 October 2025)
- commission findings that a worker has engaged in reportable conduct on an investigation conducted on the commission’s own initiative (commencing 1 July 2026).

Regulation of Health Practitioners

The *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025* was assented to on 9 April 2025 and introduced the following reforms relevant to QCAT (to commence by proclamation):

- introduced the requirement for cancelled and disqualified practitioners to obtain a reinstatement order from QCAT prior to applying to a National Board for re-registration. If QCAT decides to grant the application, it can impose conditions on the person's registration if the National Board decides to re-register the person. If the application is dismissed, QCAT may impose a period precluding the person from making another application for a reinstatement order.

Weapons licencing decisions

On 30 August 2024, the *Queensland Community Safety Act 2024* was assented to and introduced the following reforms relevant to QCAT (to commence on proclamation):

- amendments to the *Weapons Act 1990* to strengthen the mandatory exclusionary period framework by expanding the types of serious offending captured and, in certain circumstances, extending the exclusionary period to 10 years
- introducing a new category of person called 'disqualified person' who are prohibited from holding a weapons licence or being a licensed dealer's associate.

Registry issues and initiatives

TARS initiative

In May 2025, a new division, Tribunal and Registry Services (TARS) was established. This division is made up of three teams:

- Client Services
- Hearing Services
- Member Services

The reorganisation of these teams has allowed each area to focus on improving their processes and becoming more efficient.

Hearing Services

As part of the QCAT Uplift Project, five additional A04 positions were provided to the Hearing Services team. It is envisioned that these changes will enable the development of a new model for delivering hearing services across the State. This should decrease travel time and associated expenses for hearing support officers and create clearer team structures and responsibilities. This team also includes the transcription functions of the Tribunal.

Member Services

Scheduling

Additional registry and Tribunal resources resulting from the June 2024 Queensland Budget outcome have enabled the Scheduling team to schedule significantly more matters than ever before. This is helping reduce hearing wait times and clear existing backlogs.

Executive Assistants to the Tribunal

In March 2025, an additional three executive assistants commenced, providing enhanced administrative support to the Tribunal. The new team, in conjunction with the CAD Registry team, are in the process of streamlining a number of existing registry tasks (such as amending written orders and directions) by reducing the time a file spends travelling between business areas. While this aspect of the role is still developing, it is envisioned that these improvements will ultimately contribute to reduced wait times for parties.

Transfer of other existing Tribunal support functions to 'one' dedicated team

To increase efficiencies, several existing tasks associated with supporting Tribunal members have been transferred from other business areas into the new Member Services team. Such tasks include, but are not limited to, payroll (sessional member claims), reasons publishing and proofing, the organisation of monthly training sessions, managing the member's SharePoint, conducting new member inductions, organising travel to external conferences, and other administrative work with respect to member recruitment.

This restructure not only takes pressure off the overburdened existing Legal, Human Resources and Corporate Services teams, but also provides opportunities for the streamlining of some of the Tribunal processes.

Client Services

Client Services have finished recruitment for their new structure, which includes two new AO4 Senior Client Services Officers (CSOs). The Senior CSOs will act as jurisdictional subject matter

experts (SMEs) and be the first point of contact for QCAT users. This change is directed at improving the experience of QCAT users, including by decreasing call wait times and the time it takes to respond to correspondence.

Reduction in hearing wait times and backlog

In February 2025, as a result of increased funding, and internally driven initiatives, QCAT increased its number of hearings with a view to reducing hearing wait times.

There has been an overall decrease in hearing wait times in Brisbane as a direct result of this. For example:

- wait times for compulsory conferences (COCO) and guardianship/administration (GAA) hearings have been on a steady downward trend since July 2024
- wait times for 'on the papers' (OTP) hearings have also decreased significantly since February 2025
- wait times for civil hearings, which has historically been the most challenging area in terms of backlogs and long wait times, have finally begun to plateau.

Initiatives currently in the pipeline in respect of civil hearings should see those wait times start to steadily decrease over the next 12 to 18 months from the date of this report.

Major achievements 2024-25

External mediation now available for QCAT litigants

The Tribunal's objects include dealing with matters in a way that is accessible, fair, just, economical, informal and quick. In furtherance of these objects, the Tribunal's functions include encouraging the early and economical resolution of disputes, including through alternative dispute resolution. In the reporting period, QCAT undertook the preparatory work necessary to implement an external mediation model. That preparatory work has now reached fruition with the newly established QCAT Mediation Panel.

The QCAT Mediation Panel comprises external, legally qualified, nationally accredited mediators that have been appointed by the Principal Registrar to conduct mediations across most of the Tribunal's civil jurisdictions.

The Tribunal or the Principal Registrar has the power under s 75 of the QCAT Act to refer a matter to mediation, to be conducted by a mediator appointed by the Tribunal or Principal Registrar. The referral may be made with or without the consent of the parties. A matter can be referred to mediation at any stage of a proceeding. It is contemplated that the parties will bear their own costs of the mediation, to be shared equally, but ultimately that is to be a matter between the parties and the mediator.

The initiative is supported by a Practice Direction from the President (PD 8 of 2025) and new registry processes by which parties may apply for mediation.

Increasing quality and efficiency through CAD team structure

The QCAT registry together with the Tribunal members are committed to continuous improvement in service delivery and this has been enhanced by the additional resources provided in the June 2024 budget outcomes for QCAT.

The CAD division restructured into five teams responsible for discrete jurisdictions in November 2024.

The launch occurred after significant collaboration between the Tribunal and registry and continues to involve the Tribunal and registry working as a team dedicated to the collaborative management of files and the referral of matters to the Tribunal for action. As part of the new model, the Tribunal and registry have worked together to develop new training guides to enhance the knowledge of registry staff.

The model develops subject matter expertise in registry staff within the jurisdictions allocated to their team and supports faster resolution of matters and improved service to QCAT users.

Short point hearings

Proceedings involving a single issue or very limited issues can be dealt with through submissions of the parties and determined at an oral hearing, with the delivery of the decision and reasons (*ex tempore*) at the time of the hearing within a 90-minute timeframe. This pathway to hearing and determining matters has seen a success in the appeal jurisdiction where listing four matters per day saves three days of hearing resources for other matters. A further contribution to the success

of these hearings is due to the resources made available by our QCAT supplementary members of the Land Court.

The June 2024 budget outcomes have also made possible the resourcing of both Tribunal and registry to support an increase in QCAT hearings in an effort to reduce backlogs in hearing wait times.

Cultural safety and competence

In 2024-25 QCAT embarked on a proactive strategy to improve cultural safety and competence within the organisation. Achievements include:

Establishment of a First Nations Traineeship

Two First Nations trainees commenced duties at QCAT in May 2025. In a partnership arrangement with TAFE QLD, they will complete a Certificate 3 in Business Studies (Legal Services) through a private training provider, while learning key capabilities from all areas of the QCAT registry to support their studies during their 12-month traineeship.

The aim of the program is to attract more First Nations applicants to QCAT and to promote a more inclusive and diverse workplace, enriching our cultural understanding and creating accessible career pathways within our organisation.

Yarn Up

QCAT First Nations registry staff and Tribunal members meet monthly with the DoJ First Nations Advisory Unit and Assistant Director General.

The forums provide a safe place for staff to discuss any and all issues that may be important to them or our Tribunal users.

Reframe the Relationship Working Group

The QCAT Reframe the Relationship Working Group (QRRWG) was established to explore and promote ways, both internally and externally, to lift our skills, knowledge and behaviours to make QCAT a culturally respectful workplace.

The QRRWG will lead reconciliation and cultural capability initiatives for QCAT and help educate staff and members about how we can improve QCAT processes and approaches to be more culturally appropriate for First Nations people. This will include organising internal events, training, supporting the development of identified trainee positions and generating opportunities to raise awareness, celebrate and acknowledge significant dates for First Nations Peoples.

QCAT's digitisation

QCase – ongoing development

QCAT continues to work in partnership with the Courts and Tribunals Digitisation Program (CTDP), whose remit is the ongoing development of the QCase platform, both to address existing bugs and issues, and to further enhance the system in advance of replacing both the HuRD and CAD case management systems. The aim is to digitise paper-based case management processes wherever possible and to decommission existing systems.

QCAT is represented on the QCase Project Board, established with oversight for these projects. In addition, QCAT has allocated experienced, operational registry staff to assist the QCase project as 'super users' who have been involved in mapping current and future State processes in preparation for the digitisation of HuRD and CAD systems.

The project team also consults with other QCAT representatives through a network of operational 'subject matter expert' staff, who have been identified throughout the registry to assist CTDP in pre-empting and resolving issues, and for testing assumptions and developments.

The hoped-for outcomes of this stage of the project will be:

- digitisation of client lodgement functions
- digitisation of registry case management functions
- reduced risk of the continued use of out-of-support legacy systems that currently support critical business processes
- reduced reliance on manual processes, paper forms and files
- cost savings through the reduction in printing, postage and file archiving
- improved efficiencies in case management processes
- capability for online lodgement of all QCAT matters.

QCase – Judicial Workspace

In addition to assisting with the development of QCase itself, the QCAT Tribunal and registry staff have been directly involved in the development of the Judicial Workspace.

The Judicial Workspace aims to provide a more streamlined and user-friendly experience for members and adjudicators when hearing matters that utilise QCase.

Some QCAT Tribunal and registry staff were consulted and provided feedback during the Judicial Workspace's development and assisted in delivering training to judicial officers following the launch on 24 June 2025.

Acts and Regulations

QCAT Act amendments

The QCAT Act was amended in the 2024-25 reporting year by the *Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Act 2024*. It was assented to on 19 September 2024 and clarified that the legislative immunity and protections provided for functions of QCAT members, adjudicators, conciliators, mediators, assessors and the Principal Registrar (which is the same legislative immunity and protection as a Supreme Court judge) includes their administrative function.

QCAT Regulation amendments

The QCAT Regulation was amended during the reporting period as follows:

- the *Justice (Decriminalising Sex Work) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2024*, which commenced 2 August 2024, amended the QCAT Regulation to omit references to the *Prostitution Act 1999*, which was repealed on 2 August 2024
- the *Justice Legislation (Allowances) Amendment Regulation 2025*, which was notified on 13 June 2025 and commenced on 1 July 2025, amended the QCAT Regulation to increase non-professional, professional and expert witness allowances and the daily sitting fee payable to QCAT Justices of the Peace.

Enabling acts and regulations

The enabling Acts and Regulations affecting QCAT that were assented to in the 2024-25 period were:

- *Acts Interpretation (Fee Unit) Amendment Regulation 2025* – this Act amended the *Acts Interpretation (Fee Unit) Regulation 2022*, which consequently increased QCAT's regulatory fees and allowances from 1 July 2025, in accordance with the government indexation rate for the 2025-26 financial year
- *Assisted Reproductive Technology Act 2024* – this Act was assented to on 19 September 2024 and introduced the amendments detailed on page 28
- *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* – this Act was assented to on 19 September 2024 and conferred new jurisdiction on QCAT detailed on page 28
- *Health Ombudsman Regulation 2024* – this Regulation commenced 2 September 2024, following the expiry of the *Health Ombudsman Regulation 2014*, and is designed to continue supporting the operation of the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013*. Relevant to QCAT, the Regulation lists the documents that persons, such as the Health Ombudsman and QCAT, may have regard to when making decisions under the Act about what constitutes appropriate conduct or practice for a health service provider (see section 5 of the Regulation which relates to s 288 of the Act)
- *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025* – this Act was assented to on 9 April 2025 and introduced reforms relevant to QCAT. They are set out at page 28 and 29. These reforms have not yet commenced

- *Queensland Community Safety Act 2024* – this Act was assented to on 30 August 2024 and introduced reforms relevant to QCAT which are detailed on page 29. These reforms have not yet commenced
- *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* was assented to on 6 June 2024. The relevant reforms, which commenced this financial year, are detailed on pages 26 and 27
- *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025* was notified on 7 March 2025 and commenced on 1 May 2025 – sections 4, 7, 10, 13, 16 and 19 relate to the legislative amendments made to the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024*, as detailed on pages 26 and 27
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* – this Act was assented to on 19 September 2024 and introduced the reforms detailed on pages 27 and 28.

2024-25 practice directions

Practice directions are made by the President and set out the detailed practice and procedural requirements for particular types of matters in QCAT. Nine practice directions were issued in the reporting period:

- QCAT Practice Direction 1 of 2024 - Designation of QCAT Registry Closure
- QCAT Practice Direction 2 of 2024 - Photography and electronic recording devices in Tribunal proceedings and buildings
- QCAT Practice Direction 3 of 2024 - Format of documents created by a party for filing in the Tribunal
- QCAT Practice Direction 1 of 2025 - Applications for review of decisions made about animals
- QCAT Practice Direction 2 of 2025 - Closure of QCAT Registry at 259 Queen Street Brisbane on Thursday 6 March, Friday 7 March AND Monday 10 March 2025
- QCAT Practice Direction 3 of 2025 - Rescheduling of affected QCAT proceedings scheduled on Thursday 6 March and Friday 7 March 2025
- QCAT Practice Direction 4 of 2025 - Rescheduling of affected QCAT proceedings scheduled on 10 March 2025
- QCAT Practice Direction 5 of 2025 - Rescheduling of affected QCAT proceedings scheduled on 11 March 2025
- QCAT Practice Direction 6 of 2025 - Rescheduling of affected QCAT proceedings scheduled on 12 to 14 March 2025.

Human rights division

In the Human Rights Division, the Tribunal makes decisions about guardianship and administration, enduring documents, restrictive practices, special health care matters and child protection.

Guardianship and administration

The guardianship jurisdiction continues to be one of QCAT's largest jurisdictions. Tribunal members consider applications in the following areas:

- applications initiated under the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000*
- applications initiated under the *Powers of Attorney Act 1998*
- QCAT has concurrent jurisdiction with the Supreme Court of Queensland for enduring documents
- matters about a person's capacity can be referred to QCAT by the Supreme Court, District Court and Childrens Court of Queensland.

The work undertaken by the Tribunal in guardianship includes:

- making declarations about the capacity of an adult for a matter
- making advance appointments of guardians and administrators for a person who is at least 17 ½ years and not more than 18 years
- appointing guardians and administrators and reviewing their appointment
- approving the use of restrictive practices under Chapter 5B of the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000* – approving the use of containment, seclusion or other restrictive practices in well-defined circumstances
- appointing a guardian to make decisions about restrictive practice matters for a person who is found to have impaired capacity for the matter
- making declarations, orders, recommendations and giving directions and advice to guardians and administrators
- approving decisions or proposed decisions by informal decision-makers
- consenting to special health care
- consenting to special health care concerning a child
- assessing the actions of appointed administrators by examining annual accounts of administration
- making declarations about enduring powers of attorney.

The Tribunal may make a "limitation order" in a guardianship matter, but only to the extent necessary to avoid serious harm or injustice to a person. The types of limitation orders that can be made include adult evidence orders, closure orders, pre-hearing non-publication and confidentiality orders. Pre-hearing non-publication and confidentiality orders are vacated at the commencement of the hearing of the substantive application, at which time the parties and any person with standing can be heard in respect of any further limitation order/s sought.

A copy of limitation orders made at a hearing, along with all information considered by the Tribunal, and with reasons for the decision, are provided to the Public Advocate.

Sometimes the Tribunal can appoint a representative under s 125 of the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000* to represent the adult's views, wishes and interests.

The work of the Tribunal in the guardianship and administration jurisdiction is fundamental to upholding the rights and dignity of people who have impaired capacity living in our community.

Not infrequently, applications concern an adult with impaired capacity who is incarcerated or a young person who is transitioning from the child protection system to being an adult. QCAT plays a critical role in maintaining and safeguarding the welfare of adults with impaired capacity, who may be vulnerable due to circumstances such as domestic and family violence, or other abuse.

There are three main types of lodgements within the guardianship jurisdiction: new applications (which are initiated by parties); reviews of appointments (which are commenced by the Tribunal at a time specified in the current order); and administrator compliance matters (where appointed administrators can be directed to provide regular information to the Tribunal to ensure they are complying with their legal obligations as outlined in the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000*).

There was a four per cent increase overall in these three types of lodgements. Of significance to the future workload of QCAT is the eight per cent increase in new applications. This level of increase carries with it a sizeable increase in workload, not only in respect of hearing and determining the new applications, but also in respect of future reviews of appointments made and in respect of administrator compliance.

Since the commencement of QCAT, the level of demand for its services in the guardianship and administration jurisdiction has vastly increased resulting in increased pressure on the QCAT registry to prepare matters for a hearing.

The funding received in the 2023-24 budget has assisted the QCAT registry to increase its capacity to commence and ultimately finalise reviews as well as responding to new initiating applications, however, it is clear that the workload in the guardianship jurisdiction will continue to increase due to both the number of matters and the rising percentage of those matters which are complex.

Table 5: Number of lodgements 2023-24 and 2024-25

Application type	2023-24	2024-25
Lodgement – Initiating Applications	7,368	7,985
Lodgement – Appointment Reviews	1,644	1,852
Lodgement – Administrator compliance	1,600	1,215

Factors that contribute to these increases include:

- Australians are more likely to live longer and to live to a very old age
- since 1901, the 60-64 age group has seen the greatest increase as a proportion of the total population
- life expectancy has increased for both men and women since the beginning of the century (source: Australian Bureau of Statistics)
- increased awareness by social workers and members of the community of the existence and nature of domestic and family violence (such as coercive control by a family member over an impaired person's finances or ability to make personal choices freely)

- financial exploitation or physical abuse of vulnerable Queenslanders, particularly elderly members of our community who may have impaired decision-making capacity for their financial and personal matters and are therefore at risk of harm or neglect
- increased isolation and disengagement by family and other health and social supports from a person who may have impaired decision-making capacity resulting in a risk of harm or neglect to the person's personal or financial matters
- increased numbers of people who experience mental health challenges.

Registry's role and initiative in HuRD

Unlike other jurisdictions in QCAT, guardianship is not 'party driven' or adversarial but rather is an inquisitorial jurisdiction. This means registry staff need to be more proactive in their case management of matters. For example, the registry seeks to ensure it has all of the relevant information and material the decision-maker may require and where possible, assists the adult, the person to whom the matter relates, to participate in proceedings in a way that suits their individual needs.

Once an application is made, the adult who is the subject of the application is the primary focus. Section 130 of the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000* places the onus on QCAT to ensure it has all relevant information and material (with limited statutory exceptions to this requirement, as set out in s 131, i.e., "urgent or special circumstances").

The registry endeavours to meet these statutory obligations by ensuring the adult's views, wishes and preferences, along with the views of those in a supportive relationship with the adult are considered. In practice, this means the registry needs to assist in discharging this inquisitorial function by identifying shortfalls in information provided by parties, exercising judgement in identifying key issues to further explore, and ensuring there is sufficient information available for the Tribunal to make an informed decision.

In 2010, QCAT set a 12-week benchmark for matters to proceed to final hearing. This goal has been unachievable since January 2020, due to a lack of resources the average time to final hearing has been on a steady upward increase since then, with an average time to finalise matters from 21 weeks to 23 weeks during the reporting period. While some matters take considerably longer, increases in time to finalisation have an exponential effect on the cost and use of QCAT's resources required to progress to a final hearing. This is because increases in time to finalisation can lead to increases in interlocutory applications which would otherwise be unnecessary and which consume substantial resources, and to registry time otherwise being consumed by dealing with communications from persons making enquiries about matters which are awaiting listing for final hearing.

With the allocation of extra resources in the June 2024 Budget outcome, and the recruitment of additional staff and Tribunal members in consequence, QCAT is starting to see improvement in the guardianship space, and QCAT expects this to continue. By way of example, the allocation of extra resources to the Human Rights division has resulted in a clearance rate in excess of 100 per cent. Getting through more matters will ultimately lead to shorter time to hearings for other matters.

Further, this allocation of additional resources, along with process improvements, has enabled the Human Rights Division to adopt a targeted approach to addressing service delivery

timeframes at various stages of the application process. Some examples that highlight this progress include:

- the number of applications awaiting a risk triage assessment peaked in April 2025 at 457 files. As a result of the allocation of additional resources in this area this number was reduced to 12 files in June 2025
- at the start of the reporting period, a notice of hearing was being sent to parties two to three weeks prior to hearings. After a concerted effort from the registry team, and the allocation of additional resources, notice of hearings were being sent to parties seven weeks prior to the hearing as of June 2025
- wait times for reviews have decreased by three months.

The additional resources received should crystallise in further improvements in wait times in the 2025-26 reporting period.

Reporting obligations

Section 83 of the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000* requires QCAT to report on:

- the number of applications, approvals and orders made under chapter 5B of the Act during the year. The purpose of Chapter 5B is to provide a framework for the approval of practices used to respond to the behaviour of an adult with an intellectual or cognitive disability that causes harm to the adult or others for those adults that receive disability services from a relevant service provider
- the number and type of limitation orders made by the Tribunal.

Tables 6, 7 and 8, which are set out on the following pages, provide the information for those reports.

Table 6: *Applications and review of guardianship for restrictive practice matters**.

	Application for guardianship for restrictive practice matters		Review of guardianship for restrictive practice matters	
	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25
Order made	179	222	295	373
Dismissed / revoked	63	62	86	82
Deceased	2	6	5	5
Withdrawn at hearing	41	34	2	2
Rejected	1	2	0	0
Total	286	326	388	462

**Prior to 2015, only one-year appointments were permitted. In 2015, that changed and two-year appointments were permitted. As such, the number of reviews varies significantly each year, due to the post-2015 appointments being on a two-year review cycle.*

Table 7: Containment, seclusion and other restrictive practices approvals.

	Approved		Dismissed/ Revoked		Withdrawn/ Administrative Closure/Rejected		Total	
	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25
Containment	14	9	2	2	4	8	20	19
Review of containment	37	43	4	5	1	1	42	49
Seclusion	10	7	1	1	2	2	13	10
Review of seclusion	29	29	4	1	0	1	33	31
Application for another restrictive practice	11	11	1	2	2	4	14	17
Review of application for another restrictive practice	45	54	6	5	1	2	52	61

Table 8: Limitation orders.

Limitation order type	2023-24	2024-25
Adult evidence order (s.106)	3	2
Closure order (s.107)	2	4
At Hearing Non-publication order (s.108)	1	23
Pre-Hearing Non-Publication Order (s.110)	4	16
At Hearing Confidentiality order (s.109)	20	57
Pre-Hearing Confidentiality order (s.110)	59	71

QCAT hospital hearing program

QCAT conducts some hearings for guardianship and administration matters in public hospitals where the adult is a patient (“the hospital hearings program”). Up until this reporting period, the program was conducted in hospitals administered by the Metro North Hospital and Health Service (MNHHS) and the West Moreton Hospital and Health Service (WMHHS). During the reporting period, the program was modified and expanded so that it is now State-wide, and while still administered by Queensland Health representatives within the MNHHS, it is now a State-

wide program. The hospital hearings program has been able to operate because of the provision of specifically dedicated resources by the Government.

The hearings are for adults who are clinically well and are ready for discharge, but due to possible impaired capacity may not be able to be safely discharged pending a determination of the applications before the Tribunal. To enable the adult to participate as fully as possible in the hearing, QCAT holds hearings via remote conferencing. QCAT utilises a variety of remote conference technology to support the program, with most hearings conducted via MS Teams.

Suitable applications heard and determined under this program are usually finalised between three to five weeks, compared to 23 weeks in the general guardianship list.

Not all applications are appropriate to be dealt with in this program. Matters for hospital patients involving high levels of conflict between members of the adult's 'support network'⁴ and other issues of complexity (e.g., unclear capacity diagnosis, complex financial arrangements, issues with an Enduring Power of Attorney document) are currently excluded from the program. These types of circumstances are excluded from the program to make sure registry staff can gather appropriate information prior to the hearing.

If appropriate, people involved in the hearing of the adult's matter can attend QCAT in person and then enough time is allocated to the hearing for the Tribunal member to consider all of the issues. Applications that are currently excluded from the program are managed within the general guardianship list.

QCAT and Queensland Health continue to review the effectiveness of the initiative. It is clear that this program provides very significant benefits: dedicated resourcing enables decisions to be made in a timely way. Since inception in July 2016, in excess of 4,000 hearings have been conducted within the program. The ancillary benefits of hospital beds not being occupied by those who would be more appropriately accommodated elsewhere are obvious, at a human level, as well as fiscally.

Child protection

When a child is in the care of the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, parties can request a review of some decisions made by the Department by QCAT. These include decisions about where and with whom the child/ren live, and the type and frequency of contact they have with family members. Other reviewable decisions relate to whether a person is approved as a carer for children.

The main principle applied to decision making is that the safety, wellbeing, and best interests of a child or young person, both through childhood and for the rest of the child's life, are paramount. Consistent with this principle, the Tribunal seeks to ensure that all relevant material is available for the review and all appropriate parties are joined in the proceedings.

⁴ Support network is a term defined in the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000* as consisting of the following people:

- (a) members of the adult's family;
- (b) close friends of the adult;
- (c) other people the tribunal decides provide support to the adult.

Children have the right to express their views to the Tribunal, and the Tribunal takes steps to ensure they can voice their concerns and be appropriately represented. Children may choose to express their views by communicating with a community visitor, a separate representative, an advocate, a child safety officer, or another trusted person. Children may also choose to speak directly to the Tribunal in a confidential, age-appropriate way, usually in a separate private meeting from the adult parties. These arrangements assist the Tribunal to obtain a better understanding of how the decisions under review affect the children.

Most applications are resolved without proceeding to a final hearing. Soon after an application is received, the Tribunal convenes a compulsory conference with the parties which aims to:

- identify and clarify the issues in dispute
- find a solution to the dispute without proceeding to a hearing
- identify questions to be decided by the Tribunal
- make orders and give directions to resolve the dispute.

In 2024-25, 217 child protection applications were lodged in QCAT. This is an increase from the 189 received in 2023-24 year, and close to the 220 applications received in 2022-23.

Of the 217 applications, 80 progressed to a compulsory conference. Of these, 30 applications were resolved, 39 were partially resolved (that is, some of the issues which were in dispute were resolved at the compulsory conference, leaving only the residual issues in dispute to be resolved) and 11 were not resolved or partially resolved.

Most matters which were not resolved at the first compulsory conference did not proceed to hearing. Most often, applications were withdrawn before or at a subsequent compulsory conference after the parties reached agreement. In the 2024-25 period, only one application proceeded to a final Tribunal hearing.

Suspended applications pending other proceedings

Applications can be filed with the Tribunal when there are other (parallel) proceedings on foot, particularly the Childrens Court. When this occurs, the child protection review proceedings before the Tribunal must be suspended pending finalisation of the matters in the other forum⁵. This is a legislative requirement intended to ensure that issues relevant to more than one proceeding are not dealt with by two separate jurisdictions simultaneously.

⁵ Section 99M *Child Protection Act 1999*; See page 5 - <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/bill.first.exp/bill-2015-249> for explanation of the rationale underpinning s 99M

Civil, administrative and disciplinary division

QCAT conducts the work of its Civil, Administrative and Disciplinary division in the following lists:

- Minor Civil Disputes
 - residential tenancies
 - consumer/trader disputes
 - minor debts
 - dividing fences
 - property damage claims arising from the use of a motor vehicle
- Building disputes
 - domestic building disputes (no monetary limit)
 - commercial building disputes (no monetary limit, subject to a requirement for consent of the parties where the claim or the counter claim exceeds \$50,000)
- Neighbourhood disputes
 - tree disputes
- Motor Vehicle disputes
 - disputes relating to the purchase of motor vehicles (up to \$100,000)
- Anti-discrimination
 - complaints of alleged unlawful discrimination, vilification, sexual harassment, related breaches of the *Human Rights Act 2019*; and
 - applications for exemption from the operation of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- Community Living disputes
 - community titles schemes
 - retirement villages
 - manufactured homes in residential parks
- Retail Shop Lease disputes
 - retail tenancy disputes (up to \$750,000)
- Other Civil matters
 - information privacy complaints
 - monetary claims involving licensed agents
 - disputes about legal costs
- Appeals
 - from tribunal decisions
 - from decisions of decision makers under the *Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997*; *Right to Information Act 2009* and *Information Privacy Act 2009*; and under the *Racing Integrity Act 2016*
- Childrens' matters
 - reviews of child safety decisions
- Occupational Regulation and Disciplinary matters
- General Administrative Review
 - review of a large variety of administrative decisions made by Government decision-makers including:
 - QBCC
 - weapons licensing
 - animal management
 - revenue
 - liquor and gaming
 - victims assist
 - Yellow Cards

- Blue Cards
- transport licensing
- decisions relating to the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021*.

2024-25 trends

Lodgements in the following areas of Tribunal work have increased in 2024-25:

- *Other Civil* disputes were up by 26%
- *Neighbourhood* disputes were up by 17%
- *Motor Vehicle* disputes were up by 15%
- *Retail Shop Lease* disputes were up by 9%
- *Appeals* up by 2%.

The civil lists in QCAT include building disputes, body corporate disputes, tree disputes, retail tenancy disputes, disputes about manufactured homes parks and retirement villages, motor vehicle (purchase) disputes, information privacy disputes and disputes about agents and claims on the fund established under the *Agents Financial Administration Act 2014*.

While there has been a slight (three percent) decrease in building dispute lodgements in 2024-25, this should be seen against the background of an 18 per cent increase in lodgements between 2021-22 and 2024-25.

The upward trend in lodgements over from 2023-24 to 2024-25 is also apparent in tree disputes (13 per cent increase) and motor vehicle disputes (13 per cent increase). Lodgements in other civil disputes increased significantly in the 2024-25 period from the preceding year (26 per cent increase). This steady increase in lodgements is reflected in decreased clearance rates in these lists and a commensurate increase in current matters other than in tree disputes which saw a minor decrease (one per cent).

The following dispute types have increased in their rates of clearance:

- Anti-Discrimination at 81% up by 1%
- Appeals at 91% up by 11%
- Blue Card Reviews at 160% up by 22%
- General Administrative Reviews at 94% up by 29%
- Occupational Regulation at 96% up by 13%.

In the following lists, clearance rates have decreased:

- Building disputes' clearance rate at 80% down by 2%
- Motor Vehicle disputes at 69% down by 14%
- Neighbourhood disputes at 103% down by 10%
- Other Civil Disputes at 98% down by 6%
- Reopening of cases at 76% down by 16%
- Retail Shop Leases at 114% down by 14%.

In most areas where there has been a decrease in clearance rates, there is a correlation between that decrease and an increase in lodgements.

Interlocutory applications

In 2024-25, there were 10,345 interlocutory applications lodged in civil and administrative matters which is an increase of six per cent (2023-24 lodgement figure 9,743).

Interlocutory applications result in a significant increase in workload for registry staff and the Tribunal. This contributes to delays, sometimes significantly, in the finalisation of proceedings. There is a correlation between time to finalisation and an increase in the numbers of interlocutory applications. Further, interlocutory applications increase the complexity of matters and impact overall clearance rates.

Lodgements of interlocutory applications have increased in the below areas:

- Reopening applications up by 32%
- Occupational Regulation up by 31%
- Retail Shop Lease disputes up by 20%
- Motor Vehicle disputes up by 11%
- Anti-Discrimination applications up by 9%
- Appeals up by 8%
- General Administrative Reviews up by 4%
- Neighbourhood disputes up by 2%.

Where appropriate, QCAT has increased the number of matters conducted by remote conferencing. In addition to the Brisbane location at 259 Queen Street, the Tribunal is grateful for the opportunity to sit in Supreme, District, Land Court and Magistrates Courts across the state.

Minor Civil Disputes

In the reporting year, 17,668 claims were filed in the MCD jurisdiction in registries throughout Queensland, which is a slight increase overall state-wide in comparison to the previous reporting year by approximately one per cent. The MCD jurisdiction include the following matters:

- residential tenancy disputes
- minor debt disputes
- consumer and trader disputes
- motor vehicle property damage disputes
- dividing fence disputes.

MCD disputes in most SEQ⁶ locations are decided by QCAT adjudicators. QCAT has experienced a shortage of adjudicators and there has been a significant increase in our reliance upon ordinary and sessional members to hear and determine these matters. It is hoped that recruitment processes which are well underway at the time of writing this report will result in a number of adjudicator appointments by Government, in a timely way, in order to seek to stem the rise in wait times for MCDs matters.

⁶ SEQ comprises the following areas: Beaudesert, Beenleigh, Brisbane, Caboolture, Cleveland, Coolangatta, Holland Park, Ipswich, Pine Rivers, Redcliffe, Richlands, Sandgate, Southport, Wynnum

Outside of SEQ, MCD disputes are heard by magistrates sitting as QCAT members. In 2024-25, of the 30,519 MCD hearings that took place in Queensland, 23,594 were conducted by QCAT adjudicators/members and 6,925 by Magistrates sitting as QCAT members.

Compared to the 2023-24 financial year, MCDs lodgements in Brisbane decreased by 13 per cent and increased by eight per cent in areas outside of Brisbane. The increase in lodgements in areas outside of Brisbane can be explained by a change in access in the QCase portal, which allows users to select the closest registry in proximity to their residential location.

Throughout the report period, the wait times from lodgement to hearing were as follows:

- In Brisbane, an average of 21 weeks
- Outside of Brisbane, an average of 8 weeks

Similar to the upward trend in CAD matters overall, 20,418 interlocutory applications were lodged during the 2024-2025 reporting period in MCDs State-wide. This figure includes 11,271 lodged in residential tenancy disputes alone. Of those 11,271 applications, 2,749 also involved applications for leave to be represented, many of which were made by real estate agents, notwithstanding that s 206(3) of the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* provides that an agent stands in the place of a lessor for a tenancy proceeding.

Tribunal and registry continue to work on strategies to reduce the significant number of unnecessary applications for leave to be represented, including portal changes and updates to practice directions and communiques.

Tribunal and registry continue to work on strategies to reduce the significant number of unnecessary applications for leave to represent filed in this space, including QCase portal changes and updates to practice directions and communiques.

Mediation in MCDs

Section 75 of the *Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2009* provides that a matter may be referred to a proceeding for mediation. MCDs matters that are not residential tenancies and are to a value of more than \$1,500 are referred to mediation. Most QCAT MCDs mediations are conducted by external mediators from DoJ's Dispute Resolution Branch (DRB). If the dispute cannot be resolved, mediation can help to identify issues and questions to be considered at the hearing.

Improvements in accessibility for telephone mediations have resulted in increases in the attendance rate. The introduction of electronic signing of settlement agreements has resulted in improved settlement rates for matters referred to external mediation.

In this jurisdiction, QCase has improved the information obtained so far as it relates to identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander users. This information is used to inform the DRB in the allocation of specialised mediation resources to facilitate these matters. DRB allows additional time for these matters, up to two and half hours for each mediation.

Anti-discrimination

The Tribunal hears complaints made under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* following referral from the Queensland Human Rights Commission. Most claims relate to alleged unlawful discrimination, sexual harassment, vilification and victimisation.

Matters are often complex and involve numerous interlocutory applications requiring decisions and written reasons. Interlocutory applications include applications to expand complaints beyond

those referred to the Tribunal, claims for extension of time to make complaints, jurisdictional issues as to the reach of the statute, whether a matter should be a representative complaint and applications for injunctions to stop allegedly discriminatory conduct. The Tribunal is also increasingly referred allegations of a breach of human rights linked to acts or decisions of public entities, said to be unlawful under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*.

Ninety-five lodgements were made in the reporting period, a decrease of 17 per cent (115) from last year. The clearance rate of matters was 81 per cent, an increase of one per cent over the previous year. One hundred and fifty-six matters are progressing through compliance with directions or awaiting allocation of a hearing date.

Appeals

The Appeal Tribunal provides an internal appeal process from decisions of the Tribunal made in its original or review jurisdictions. The majority of appeals arise from MCDs heard in the Tribunal.

The Appeal Tribunal also hears appeals on questions of law from decisions made by other decision-makers under the *Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997*, *Right to Information Act 2009*, *Information Privacy Act 2009* and *Racing Integrity Act 2016*.

Appropriate members are constituted by the President or her delegate to hear appeals. A judicial member must be constituted as the Appeal Tribunal for appeals from Magistrates sitting as QCAT members in the MCDs jurisdiction, and in external appeals brought under the *Right to Information Act 2009* and the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

Four hundred and twenty-nine appeals were filed in 2024-25, an increase of two per cent over the previous year. The clearance rate of matters was 91 per cent an increase of 11 per cent over the previous year, demonstrating the success of a 'short point hearing' initiative by Senior Member Fitzpatrick, assisted by Senior Member Lember, in collaboration with registry. Four hundred and twenty-seven appeals are progressing through compliance with directions or are awaiting allocation of a hearing date compared to 401 at the end of the last reporting period. Part of the increase in the numbers awaiting hearing is attributable to the number of appeals that, by statutory requirement, must be dealt with by judicial members, and not having enough judicial members to hear the number of appeals coming through.

Trends emerging in 2024-25 and forecast of workload⁷

With the increase in funding from the June 2024 budget, QCAT is starting to see positive impacts flow through all parts of the organisation. This is most notable in the number of proceedings QCAT has been able to schedule in the reporting period (an increase of 26 per cent). This increase is partly due to the recruitment of extra member and registry roles to help deal with more matters, but also to internal initiatives. QCAT expects that the resourcing increases will really gain traction in the next 12-18 months, now that we are almost at full cohort within the membership, and within the registry.

⁷ s232(d) and (e) QCAT Act

The QCAT Act Statutory Review

In the reporting period, the current Government announced revised, and much expanded, terms of reference in respect of the QCAT Statutory Review.

QCAT looks forward to providing such assistance as it can to the Review in order to assist it to meet the objects of the Review. Those objects are provided for by statute: s 240 of the QCAT Act provides that the objects of the Review include deciding whether the objects of the QCAT Act remain valid, deciding whether the QCAT Act is meeting its objects, deciding whether the provision of the QCAT Act are appropriate for meeting its objects and investigating any specific issue recommended by the Minister or the President, including, for example, whether any provision of an enabling Act affects the operation of the Tribunal.

Proposals for improving quality of decision making across government⁸

It is accepted that the publication of QCAT decisions on the Supreme Court Library's website adds to the body of law available to government decision-makers, and those engaging with government in respect of those decisions, and can, in this way, improve the quality of decision making.

Currently QCAT resourcing means that there are limitations on the number of decisions which are able to be published. It is hoped with the additional funding provided in the June 2024 budget, that situation can be improved so that more decisions which contribute to the jurisprudence in a particular area or areas are able to be published.

⁸ s232(g) QCAT Act

Appendix 1 — Member and registry directory

Presidential Members

The Honourable Justice Kerri Mellifont, President

Her Honour Judge Geraldine Dann, Deputy President

Senior Members

Professor Ned Aughterson

Ian Brown

Joanne Browne

Ann Fitzpatrick

Samantha Traves

Michelle Lember (from 30 May 2025)

Acting Senior Member

Michelle Lember (19 August 2024 to 31 October 2024; 4 November 2024 to 21 February 2025; 3 March 2025 to 29 May 2025)

Ordinary Members

Margaret Arthur (from 26 May 2025)

Lee Benjamin (from 18 April 2025)

John Bertelsen

Jane Bishop

Danielle Brown (from 12 September 2024)

Kate Chapple (from 18 April 2025)

Glen Cranwell (to 16 August 2024)

Sandra Deane

Julie Ford

Elizabeth Gaffney (from 11 July 2024)

Susan Gardiner (to 26 May 2025)

Pam Goodman

Michael Howe

Paul Kanowski

Marcus Katter

Barbara Kent

James Lambie (from 2 June 2025)

Michelle Lember (to 18 August 2024)

Stephen Lumb (from 12 July 2024)

Philippa Mott (from 30 June 2025)

Sasanka Munasinghe

David Paratz

Hugh Scott-Mackenzie

Christopher Taylor (from 19 May 2025)

Christopher Wilson (from 18 April 2025)

Acting Ordinary Members

Danielle Brown (29 April 2024 to 19 June 2024; 8 July 2024 to 11 September 2024)

Talitha Burson (5 August 2025 to 4 February 2025; 12 February 2025 to 11 August 2025)

Kate Chapple (5 August 2024 to 4 February 2025; 24 February 2025 to 17 April 2025)

Jacqueline Dalling (5 August 2025 to 4 February 2025; 12 February 2025 to 8 August 2025)

Elizabeth Gaffney (29 April 2024 to 10 July 2024)

Stephen Lumb (29 April 2024 to 11 July 2024)

Philippa Mott (3 March 2025 to 29 June 2025)

Gerard Sammon (2 September 2024 to 11 October 2024)

Adjudicators

David Bancroft

Tonya Marshall

Peter Eardley

Patrick Murphy (from 12 July 2024)

Elizabeth Gaffney (to 10 July 2024)

Hugh Scott-Mackenzie (to 17 April 2025)

Greg Kelly (from 7 June 2025)

Derek Struik (to 30 November 2024)

William LeMass

Alan Walsh (to 26 September 2024)

Gabrielle Mewing (to 28 May 2025)

Anna Walsh

Acting Adjudicators

Jonathan Adcock (15 July 2024 to 27 December 2024; 13 January 2025 to 12 July 2025)

Rhiannon Helsen (from 7 October 2024 to 4 April 2025; 14 April 2025 to 13 October 2025)

Greg Kelly (9 December 2024 to 6 June 2025)

Jessica Mills (6 January 2025 to 4 July 2025)

Patrick Murphy (15 May 2024 to 11 July 2024)

Alex Vanenn (from 6 January 2025 to 4 July 2025)

Judicial Sessional Members

Julie Dick SC

Hon Duncan McMeekin KC

Hon Colin Forrest SC

Hon Peter Murphy SC

Richard Jones

David Reid

Hon Ann Lyons

Ray Rinaudo AM

Hon Peter Lyons KC

John Robertson

John McGill SC (to 31 January 2025)

Sessional Members

Jim Allen (to 30 May 2025)

Rebecca Bellamy

Talitha Burson

Margaret Arthur (to 25 May 2025)

Renee Berry

Lisa Butson (to 30 November 2024)

Dr Jacqueline Boon

Christopher Carrigan (to 30 May 2025)

Stephen Armitage

Peter Bridgman

Colleen Cartwright

Dr Sandra Baxendell

Danielle Brown

Julia Casey

Barbara Bayne

Susan Burke

Les Clarkson	Noel Jensen	Jon Norling
Tina Cockburn	Neil Judge	Ross Oden (to 30 May 2025)
Simon Coolican	Sandra Kairl	Robert Olding
William Cooper	Dr Dominic Katter	Richard Oliver
Andrew Corrigan	Benjamin Kidston	Robyn Oliver
John Davies	Robert King-Scott	Louise Pearce
Raelene Ellis	Patricia Kirkman-Scroope	Charles Ross Pinkerton
Clare Endicott	Vincent Knox (to 30 November 2024)	Vass Poteri
Richard English	Peter Krebs	Dr Robert Rees
Michelle Farquhar	William LeMass	Linda Renouf
Paul Favell (to 20 October 2024)	Darren Lewis	Peter Roney KC
Jennifer Felton	John Lobban	Keta Roseby
Dr John Forbes	Stephen Lumb	Dr Richard Roylance
Karen Garner	Mary (Lynne) Matsen	Jennifer Sheean
Christopher George	Simone Matthews	Annette Sheffield
Peter Goodwin (to 30 November 2024)	Timothy Matthews KC (to 30 November 2024)	Dr Daniel Stepniak
Jeremy Gordon (to 13 January 2025)	Donald McBryde	Derek Struik
Dr Wendy Grigg	Jennifer McVeigh	Christopher Taylor (to 16 May 2025)
Tina Guthrie	Gabrielle Mewing	Benjamin White
Renea Hart	Elissa Morriss	Maree Willey
Carolyn Hemingway	Deanna Musmeci	Paul Williams
Steven Holzberger	Natalie Myatt	Lindy Wilmott
Alicia Irving	Roslyn Newlands	Danae Younger

Land Court Sessional Members

William Isdale
Nicholas Loos
James McNamara
Peta Stilgoe OAM

Supplementary Members

Justice Thomas Bradley (as his Honour the was)
Justice Martin Burns
Justice Peter Davis

Justice Paul Freeburn

Justice Frances Williams

Justice Elizabeth Wilson

Justices of the Peace (program currently in abeyance)

James Anderson

Mark Anthony

Lawrence Ballinger

Leigh Bernhardt

Robert Brummell

Bryan Carpenter

Michael Corlett

John Crighton

Christine Cuthbert-Steele

Peter Dollman

Malcolm Edmiston

Kevin Erwin OAM

Katherine Jane Fenwick

Anthony Friel

Arthur Fry

Sean Goodsir

Jane Hawkins

Marilyn Heath

John Howie

Raymond Kelly

Jason Lawler

Susan Lindsay

Bruce Little

Karl McKenzie

Barry McPhee

Shirley Murray

Joanne Myers-Cave

Catherine O'Donnell

Stephen Osachuk

Noel Payne OAM

Graeme Rogers

Hedley Rye

Darryl Schmidt

Stuart Smith

Alan Snow

Darren Swindells

Carole Watson

Jodie Wrench

Legally qualified

Paul Arthur

Michael Francis

Samuel Hardin

Trudi Jobberns

Jessica Mills

Adam Ozdowski

David Phipps

Registry Leadership Group

Assistant Director-General and Principal Registrar (formerly Executive Director)

- Tracey De Simone

Deputy Principal Registrar (CAD)

- Melissa Meldrum

Deputy Principal Registrar (HuRD)

- Mathew James

Director, Improvement and Support

- Rachel Nibbs

Director, Tribunal and Registry Services

- Sarah Zeidler (from 7 April 2025)

Principal Legal Officer

- Maria Samios

Registrar CAD

- Letecia Diete (to 4 August 2024)
- Chontelle Wells (from 16 September 2024)

Registrar HuRD

- Elisa Robbins

Manager, Client Services, Tribunal and Registry Services

- Mallory Harrison (from 4 November 2024)
- Rhiannon Phillips (to 1 November 2024)

Manager, Hearing Services, Tribunal and Registry Services (previously Operations Support Manager)

- Rhiannon Phillips (from 28 April 2025)
- Nadia Skeljo (to 13 April 2025)
- Chontelle Wells (to 15 September 2024)

Manager, Member Services, Tribunal and Registry Services

- Alexandra Neale (from 19 May 2025)
- Nadia Skeljo (from 14 April 2025)

Communications Manager

- Andrew Dunne

Executive Officer

- Cathy Homer

ICT Strategy Manager

- Xin Yan

Business Services Manager

- Megha Patel (from 7 April 2025)
- Cathryn Whitehouse (from 25 November 2024 to 4 April 2025)
- Kate Targato (to 15 November 2024)

Human Resources Manager

- Terry McDonald