

Queensland Small Business Commissioner's Statement of Intent

As the Small Business Commissioner appointed under the *Small Business Commissioner Act 2022* (SBC Act), I will provide contemporary, results-driven leadership as outlined in the Public Sector Commission's *Leadership Competencies for Queensland* to enhance the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland and reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses.

I will uphold the Code of Conduct and other Queensland public sector policies and I will proactively manage the human and financial resources of my supporting office in compliance with any relevant legislative and regulatory obligations.

Together with my supporting office, collectively referred to as the Queensland Small Business Commissioner (QSBC), we will fulfill the statutory obligations under the SBC Act and meet or exceed the Minister's Statement of Expectations by delivering the QSBC Strategic Plan 2023-2026.



Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Our vision:

To help Queensland small businesses thrive.

Our promise:

We will deliver our services for the betterment of all Queensland small businesses. We believe everyone deserves to feel heard, valued, and important. We believe that empathy is fundamentally important to everyone's health and happiness as well as to the success and sustainability of our services. Our services will reflect that through all our interactions with each other, our customers, and the community.

Our service pillars:

- Raising awareness
- Enhancing the small business environment
- Providing dispute assistance
- Insights and reporting

Our contributions to the Queensland Government's objectives for the community:

- Backing small business
- Supporting jobs
- Making it for Queensland
- Investing in skills
- Growing the regions
- Building Queensland

Our goals:

We appreciate the unique nature of small businesses and recognise that there is no one size fits all approach. To ensure we do our best to help Queensland small businesses thrive, we will:

1. Deliver exceptional services:

- Work empathetically with customers to connect them with the right services
- Consider each customer's needs, discuss timeframes, and deliver on time
- Keep customers informed and honour our promises

2. Ensure fairness in all we do:

- Support self-agency and provide options as quickly as possible
- Use the facts, the law, and reasonably exercise our discretion
- Operate transparently and communicate decisions simply and clearly

3. Provide accessible and contemporary services:

- Design simple, integrated, and consistent solutions
- Change the way we work as technology evolves
- Actively listen to customers so we can continuously improve our services

Enhance the operating environment for small business

Strategies

Provide a dedicated central point of contact for small businesses in Queensland to seek assistance, guidance, and support.

Provide up to date and relevant information and advisory services to the small business community on matters, including during natural disasters.

Be a champion for small businesses in Queensland, advocating local, state and federal governments, and other relevant entities, on issues that impact small businesses.

Work closely with other jurisdictions to share information, best-practices, and expertise, and working collaboratively on issues that affect small businesses nationally.

Carry out other activities as directed by the Minister, to further the objectives of the SBC Act.

Actions

- Proactively engage with the small business community via roundtables, programs, events, media, and other opportunities
- Host a dedicated QSBC website with self-help information, links to other resources and support, and webforms to lodge enquiries, request dispute assistance and apply for mediation
- Provide a responsive assistance service (Monday-Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm), for small businesses to directly seek assistance
- Raise awareness of matters affecting small businesses and the services provided by QSBC via roundtables, programs, events, media, and other opportunities
- Promote relevant Queensland Government and other support programs and services to the small business community via roundtables, programs, events, media, and other opportunities
- Identify priorities and challenges, and provide targeted information and advice, by analysing data and other emerging trends to inform advice to government
- Improve access to information and advice by culturally and linguistically diverse communities, such as by direct engagement and translating key resources
- Deliver the Small Business Friendly (SBF) Program, including:
 - on-boarding new members and providing an SBF Members Information Pack
 - facilitating member roundtable discussions
 - leading Communities of Practice, addressing key themes from the SBF charter
 - hosting an annual conference
 - showcasing outcomes from SBF member activities
 - delivering annual awards to recognise excellence in the program
 - creating elements to drive action under the 'How to be SBF' framework
- Identify opportunities for best practice regulatory reforms by providing insights about small businesses to the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction (OPRTR), the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (the Department) and the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council, and collaborate across the Queensland Government to help drive improvements
- Participate as a member / observer of relevant state and federal committees and groups, such as:
 - Queensland Small Business Advisory Council
 - Procurement Industry Advisory Group
 - National Small Business Commissioners forum
 - Federal Regulatory Agencies Group
 - Business Registry Strategic Advisory Council
 - Small Business and Franchising Consultative Committee
- Provide an interface between small business, the Department, and other government agencies, by:
 - Facilitating QSBC roundtables, such as the Small Business Industry Roundtable, Small Business Roundtable, and Small Business Landlords Roundtable
 - Engaging with small business stakeholder groups, including regional representatives, such as Business Chamber Queensland, Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia, various chambers of commerce across Queensland, and various tourism and economic development groups across Queensland
- Provide feedback and submissions on policies, programs, regulation and legislation affecting small businesses in Queensland
- Report to the Queensland Government on emerging issues and trends to help inform government policy and responsive government service via meetings and monthly reports
- Engage with Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO) and Small Business Commissioners across Australia to collectively advocate at a national level, including via the National Small Business Commissioners forum
- Represent Queensland in the officer-level National Strategy Group and National Assistance Group, to share information and best-practice
- Proactively refer to, and accept referrals from ASBFEO in relation to small business disputes affecting small businesses in Queensland
- Undertake activities as directed by the Minister, and subsequently report on these in the QSBC Annual Report, in accordance with the SBC Act

Reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small business

Strategies

Facilitate informal resolution of small business disputes through the exchange of information between parties in dispute, providing guidance on communication and negotiation, and identifying potential areas of agreement.

Actions

- Provide an informal dispute resolution service, in accordance with the SBC Act
- Identify and implement improvement measures to increase the efficiency and efficacy of the dispute resolution options provided by the QSBC
- Promote options and provide information on the various complaint and dispute resolution services available to small businesses
- Refer small businesses to the most appropriate complaint and dispute resolution services to help resolve their dispute in the most cost-effective and timely manner

Provide alternative dispute resolution services, including mediation, for eligible small business disputes.

- Administer the mediation process for small business disputes under the SBC Act and retail tenancy disputes in Part 8 of the *Retail Shop Leases Act 1994* (RSL Act)
- Maintain a register of appropriately qualified mediators, and administer the process of appointing new mediators in Part 9 of the RSL Act
- Administer the dispute resolution process for affected lease disputes in Part 3 of the Retail Shop Leases and Other Commercial Leases (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020

Perform functions conferred on the QSBC under another act.

- Undertake any other functions that are conferred on the QSBC under another act

Collaborate with the Department and governance arrangements

Strategies

Collaborate with the Department to inform the policy objectives of the Small Business portfolio, and contribute relevant advice, best-practices, issues and trends to the Department, to inform policy and legislation affecting small business.

Actions

- Collaborate with the Department to fundamentally simplify and streamline the SBC Act and the RSL Act
- Engage with, and provide feedback on, the Department's key small business policies and programs, such as:
 - Small Business Strategy
 - Grants and other investment programs
 - Mentoring for Growth
 - Information for Queensland small businesses on the Business Queensland website, including translation of content in response to the Migration Research study
- Provide advice and insights on small business matters to the Department's Director-General, Deputy Director-Generals, and division heads, via meetings

Contribute to and collaborate with the Department on priority areas for the Minister's portfolio, including workforce issues, engagement, procurement and regulatory reform.

- Promote relevant workforce programs under the *Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032*, to the small business community
- Participate as a member of the Small Business Wellness Package Governance Committee and Working Group, and actively promote relevant programs in the package – to support the mental health of small business owners and their staff
- Support the roll-out of the Queensland Outdoor Activation Plan through the SBF Program's 'Placemaking' Community of Practice
- Support the continued delivery of the Queensland Small Business Procurement Commitment – Action Statement, including a commitment to engage small business suppliers where possible and to pay them on-time, and participating in the Procurement Industry Advisory Group
- Contribute to the Department's Better Regulation Update, and provide small business insights to inform best practice regulatory reforms

Reporting on the progress of the QSBC to the Minister.

- Attend regular meetings with the Minister, and the Minister's Chief of Staff and Senior Policy Advisor
- Provide a monthly report on the progress of the QSBC to the Minister's Office
- Provide an Annual Report on the functions and activities performed by the QSBC during the financial year – delivered to the Minister within three months after the end of the financial year, in accordance with the Act