

Annual Report 2021–22

Queensland Small Business
Commissioner



About this report

This annual report provides information about the Queensland Small Business Commissioner's (QSBC) non-financial performance for 2021–22. It aligns with the QSBC objectives and functions as outlined in the *Small Business Commissioner Act 2022*.

View the report online

This report is available online:

business.qld.gov.au/running-business/support-assistance/qsbc/news-updates

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The State of Queensland (Queensland Small Business Commissioner) Annual Report 2021–22.



Letter of compliance

16 September 2022

The Honourable Di Farmer MP
Minister for Employment and Small Business
and Minister for Training and Skills Development
1 William Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Minister Farmer

I am pleased to submit for presentation to the Parliament the Annual Report 2021–2022 for the Queensland Small Business Commissioner.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maree Adshead', located below the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Maree Adshead
Small Business Commissioner



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Profile

The Small Business Commissioner (the Commissioner) is a statutory position that reports directly to the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development (the Minister).

The Commissioner is Maree Adshead. The Commissioner and supporting office are collectively referred to as the Queensland Small Business Commissioner (QSBC).

The Queensland Government temporarily established the QSBC under the *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020* (CER Act), in response to the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic and to implement the national Mandatory Code of Conduct: SME Commercial Leasing Principles during COVID-19 in Queensland. The temporary QSBC commenced operation on 28 May 2020.

In recognition of the ongoing need for the service, the Queensland Government permanently established the QSBC with expanded functions, under the *Small Business Commissioner Act 2022* (SBC Act).

Establishing a permanent QSBC was a key government election commitment and an important initiative under the Big Plans for Small Business Strategy 2021–23. The permanent QSBC commenced operation on 3 May 2022.

The main objectives of the permanent QSBC under the SBC Act is to:

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

Before the QSBC was established, Queensland was the only mainland state without a Small Business Commissioner, and small businesses did not have a clear pathway to obtain the information they needed and resolve their small business disputes in a timely manner.

The QSBC provides small businesses with a dedicated, central point of contact in government to access information, support and advice; and to access assistance with disputes involving a retail tenancy, small business lease

or small business franchise. The QSBC also continues to assist with COVID affected lease disputes under the Retail Shop Leases and Other Commercial Leases (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020 (COVID Leases Regulation).

The QSBC complies with the Queensland Government's governance and accountability requirements, which are administered on the QSBC's behalf by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT).

The Commissioner

Maree Adshead was appointed as the temporary Commissioner in 2020 under the CER Act and continued as the Commissioner under the SBC Act from 3 May 2022.

As of 30 June 2022, DESBT had commenced a recruitment process to appoint a Commissioner under the SBC Act. It is likely the appointment will be completed in late 2022.

The supporting office

In addition to the Commissioner, the QSBC has a budgeted supporting office of 14 permanent full-time public service officers, structured as an Advocacy team and an Assistance team. The Advocacy team comprises a Director, Advocacy; Principal Policy Officer; Senior Policy Officer; Senior Project Officer; Senior Communications and Marketing Officer; Senior Engagement Officer; and an Executive Support Officer. The Assistance team comprises a Director, Assistance; Principal Business Liaison Officer; Senior Business Liaison Officer; three Business Liaison Officers; and a Business Support Officer.

As of 30 June 2022, 11 of these positions were filled – 3 permanently and 8 temporarily. The QSBC is awaiting the appointment of the Commissioner under the SBC Act, after which permanent staff will be recruited for the remaining supporting office positions.

The QSBC received corporate services and support from DESBT throughout 2021–22.



Jurisdiction

Under the SBC Act, the main functions of the permanent QSBC from 3 May 2022 are to:

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

The SBC Act provides that the QSBC can administer an alternative dispute resolution service and low-cost mediation process for eligible small business disputes (being other small business lease disputes, and small business franchise disputes referred from the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman) and administer a low-cost mediation process for retail tenancy disputes under part 8 of the *Retail Shop Leases Act 1994* (RSL Act).

The SBC Act sets out the conditions under which the QSBC can dismiss an application for mediation (AFM). This includes AFMs which do not relate to a small business dispute; are

frivolous or vexatious; have not been made in good faith; or have otherwise not been properly made.

The SBC Act also provides transitional provisions to allow the QSBC to continue to administer an alternative dispute resolution service and free mediation process for outstanding COVID affected lease disputes, under the COVID Leases Regulation until its expiry on 30 April 2024.

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

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

Jurisdiction of the temporary QSBC

Between 28 May 2020 and 2 May 2022, the temporary QSBC operated under the CER Act, providing information and advice about small business matters, and dispute resolution support for small business, including the provision of mediation for parties involved in small business leasing disputes.

The COVID Leases Regulation prescribed the process for the QSBC to administer free mediation for parties involved in eligible lease disputes (being COVID affected lease disputes and small business tenancy disputes). The COVID Leases Regulation was made under section 23 of the CER Act and section 121 of the RSL Act.



Commissioner's message

I am pleased to present the Annual Report 2021–22 for the QSBC. It has been a privilege to lead the QSBC since its commencement on 28 May 2020. The QSBC has provided a vital service for Queensland small businesses throughout a period of great disruption, and we continue to support small businesses in their recovery and growth.

Our vision is to enhance the operating environment for small businesses through:

- collaborative advocacy
- fast and fair assistance
- informing small businesses and the public to make better decisions.

The Queensland Public Service values have guided our behaviour and decision-making and the way we connect and deliver our services in support of small businesses in Queensland including:

- Customers first
- Ideas into action
- Unleash potential
- Be courageous
- Empower people.

Highlights

During 2021–22, the QSBC assisted small businesses, commercial landlords and small business stakeholders on more than 2,700 occasions. This included closing 251 disputes, 138 of which received free or low-cost mediation. The QSBC resolved 64% of disputes via informal resolution or mediation, with an average processing time of 51 days – keeping small businesses out of lengthy and costly court processes.

In May 2022, the QSBC transitioned from a temporary service to a permanent service for Queensland small businesses. I acknowledge the hard work of my supporting office behind the scenes to ensure a seamless transition and uninterrupted service delivery for small businesses. I also acknowledge the work of DESBT in developing the permanent legislation the QSBC now operates under, and the corporate services support it has provided.

My office continued to support COVID affected small businesses, through informal dispute resolution and/or mediation of their COVID–affected lease disputes, as well as by assisting businesses to understand and implement complex COVID restrictions and navigate grants and other support mechanisms.

My office also worked closely with flood-affected businesses, providing access to leasing support and connecting them with support services and grants. We launched the Queensland Small Business Hardship Appeal in partnership with GIVIT, to connect businesses in hardship with equipment, funds or volunteer services to get their businesses back up and running.

Throughout 2021–22, a further 18 councils joined our Small Business Friendly Councils (SBFC) program, increasing the program's reach to 42% of all local councils in Queensland. We also delivered the second annual SBFC conference in Townsville, which provided an invaluable information-sharing and networking opportunity for participants.

Opportunities for the future

I look forward to continuing to lead the QSBC in delivering the functions under the SBC Act. I will work to explore ways to further enhance the operating environment for small businesses and to minimise the time and costs associated with resolving small business disputes.

I will continue to advocate on behalf of Queensland small businesses at all levels of government and help inform policy and legislation affecting small businesses.

The QSBC will grow and expand the SBFC program, encouraging more councils to join and continuing to showcase program outcomes and inspire real change for small businesses at the local government level.

I will continue to promote the role of the QSBC and look forward to exploring opportunities to collaborate with government, industry and Queensland small businesses.

Maree Adshead
Small Business Commissioner



Performance

Performance snapshot 2021–22

Throughout 2021–22, the QSBC assisted small businesses on more than 2,700 occasions:

2,022	Enquiry requests
97	Advocacy activities
342	Engagement activities
246	Dispute requests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52 requests for dispute assistance (RFDA) under the SBC Act • 24 applications for mediation (AFM) under the SBC Act • 170 dispute notices under the COVID Leases Regulation

The QSBC closed 251 disputes¹:

64%	Reached an agreement via informal resolution or mediation ²
51	Average number of days taken to close a dispute ³
80	Provided assistance and/or were informally resolved
138	Provided free or low-cost mediation
33	Withdrawn by the applicant ⁴ / not accepted / dismissed by the QSBC ⁵

The QSBC provided information to the public:

42,693	Unique web page views ⁶
2,553	Subscribers to monthly e-newsletters
3,559	Social media followers ⁷

A breakdown of the QSBC's performance as a temporary office and as a permanent office is available at Appendix 1.

¹ Some of the disputes closed in 2021–22 were lodged with the QSBC in 2020–21.

² Excludes disputes that were not accepted or were dismissed by the QSBC.

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

⁴ A dispute may be withdrawn by the applicant for reasons including that the applicant has reached an agreement with the other party prior to the mediation conference being held; or the applicant has decided to no longer pursue the matter.

⁵ A dispute may not be accepted or may be dismissed by the QSBC for reasons including that the matter is not within the QSBC's jurisdiction; the matter is before a court or tribunal or has already been decided by a court or tribunal; the Commissioner considers the application to be frivolous or vexatious, or not made in good faith, or it has otherwise not been properly made; the matter duplicates another dispute already before the QSBC – for example, both the tenant and landlord have lodged an application.

⁶ Total number of unique web page views on QSBC web content housed on the Business Queensland website. This includes all web pages that start with the URL www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/support-assistance/qsbc

⁷ Total number of followers on the QSBC Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn pages.



Enhancing the operating environment for small business

Throughout 2021–22, the QSBC worked to enhance the operating environment for small businesses in Queensland, through advocacy, collaboration, delivery of projects and programs, and the provision of information and advisory services.

The QSBC advocated and collaborated across all levels of government on behalf of small business

Small Business Friendly Councils program

The SBFC program was established in Queensland by the QSBC and commenced in October 2020. The program aims to enhance the operating environment for small businesses at the local government level by providing participating SBFC members with the framework, network and tools to create tangible outcomes and practical improvements for their small business community.

In 2021–22, a further 18 councils joined the SBFC program, bringing the total number of participating councils to 33 – representing 42% of all councils in Queensland. The QSBC hosted 4 meetings with SBFC program members to facilitate the sharing of information and learnings between local councils and improve support for small businesses across Queensland. A list of current SBFC members is available at Appendix 2.

On 29 April 2022, the QSBC delivered the second annual SBFC conference in Townsville, with a theme of 'Change Making'. The conference was attended by more than 76 delegates from councils, chambers of commerce and government, representing 25 local government areas.

Summertime Taskforce

The Minister tasked the QSBC to lead the Summertime Taskforce project, which aimed to identify ways to make best use of Queensland's great weather, facilitate better use of outdoor

areas and on-street dining, and revitalise CBDs.

To inform the project, the QSBC established and chaired an Industry Reference Group with representatives from peak industry bodies and associations, councils and key Queensland Government departments. In December 2021, the Summertime Taskforce project delivered a report with practical recommendations and an action plan for the Queensland Government's consideration.

National Small Business Commissioners

Throughout 2021–22, the Commissioner collaborated as part of the National Small Business Commissioners (NSBC) forum. Participants include small business commissioners of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia together with the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO).

In 2021–22, the Commissioner attended all 5 scheduled NSBC meetings and collaborated on a range of small business matters including insurance availability and affordability, COVID small business supports, and disaster preparedness and resilience.

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

Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction

The QSBC met regularly with the recently established Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction (OPRTR) throughout 2021–22. The QSBC provided feedback from small businesses and stakeholders to OPRTR about regulatory barriers. The QSBC also participated in a number of internal Queensland Government regulatory reviews led by OPRTR.



Committees

In 2021–22, the Commissioner (or nominated proxy from the QSBC) participated in a range of committees to advocate for small business interests, including:

- Australian Taxation Office Small Business Stewardship Group (observer)
- Business Registry Strategic Advisory Council (member)
- Council of Small Business Organisations Australia's Member and Stakeholder Roundtable (participant)
- Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland Advisory Council (member)
- Federal Regulatory Advisory Group and National Small Business Commissioners combined forum (member)
- General Goods and Services Industry Reference Group (member)
- National Small Business Commissioners Forum (member)
- North Queensland Small Business Recovery Advisory Council (member)
- Procurement Industry Advisory Group (member)
- Queensland Small Business Advisory Council (ex-officio member)
- Small Business and Franchising Consultative Committee (observer)
- Small Business Industry Roundtable (chair)
- Summertime Taskforce Industry Reference Group (chair).

Submissions

In 2021–22, the QSBC made several submissions to the Queensland Government and the Australian Government, advocating for small business interests. Submissions were made to reviews, including:

- Inquiry into the operation of the *Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990* – Education, Employment and Training Committee
- Modernising Registry Fees – Australian Treasury
- Discretionary Mutual Fund Review Interim Report – Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman
- ePayments Code Review – Australian Securities and Investments Commission
- 2019 Monsoon Trough Review – Inspector-General of Emergency Management

- Procurement Maturity Project position paper to deliver Buy Queensland 2022 – Department of Energy and Public Works
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economic Strategy – Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

The QSBC collaborated on behalf of small business with key stakeholders across government and in the private and not-for-profit sectors

Small Business Industry Roundtable

The Commissioner continued to chair the QSBC's Small Business Industry Roundtable (SBIR), an informal forum providing members with an opportunity to raise and discuss emerging issues for Queensland small businesses. The SBIR includes representatives from a wide range of industry associations and peak bodies that represent small businesses, including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland and Ai Group. In 2021–22, the SBIR met on 7 occasions to discuss small business challenges, such as the COVID pandemic and flood events, and to share information from experts on emerging topics such as domain name changes and small business grants.

Queensland Small Business Hardship Appeal

In response to the challenges arising from the COVID emergency and the flooding that affected parts of Queensland in early 2022, the QSBC launched the Queensland Small Business Hardship Appeal in partnership with GIVIT (a not-for-profit organisation). The appeal helps affected business owners by linking them with donations of business items or equipment, voluntary time and services, or the funds they need to continue operating.



The QSBC provided a central point of contact for information and advice to small businesses and stakeholders, and engaged the public about matters relating to small business

One-on-one small business information

The QSBC provided a dedicated QSBC hotline for small businesses (1300 312 344), which was available Monday to Friday between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm. In addition to the hotline, small businesses were able to lodge enquiries, advocacy, and assistance requests via a webform on the QSBC web page hosted on the Business Queensland website (business.qld.gov.au/qsbc).

Enquiries and advocacy requests that the QSBC receives are allocated to a dedicated QSBC officer who promptly provides information or advisory services or navigates the small business to a suitable support service.

Public information

The QSBC web pages provided tailored information and resources for small businesses, including the QSBC's Help and Support Guide – a regularly updated guide that highlights key support services and programs of interest to small business.

This information was supplemented by monthly QSBC e-newsletters and regular social media updates, which provided subscribers with timely access to key information.

The Commissioner also participated in multiple media opportunities, with a particular focus on informing the public about emerging small business issues, including COVID support.

Engagement activities

The QSBC participated in a range of events, webinars, and other engagement activities across Queensland throughout 2021–22.

Notable events included:

- Cook Shire Council – Women in Business Breakfast (presenter)
- Council of Small Businesses of Australia – 2022 National Summit (presenter)
- Food and Agribusiness Network – Meet the Makers (attendee)
- Fraser Coast Council – Business Expo (presenter)
- Get Ready Small Business Expo – Port Douglas and Townsville (exhibitor)
- Gov Ready – Small Business and Government Procurement Workshop (presenter)
- Kingaroy Chamber – SMILE Mental Health Gala (attendee)
- Legalwise – Retail and Commercial Leasing Webinar (presenter)
- Local Government Association of Queensland – Annual Conference (exhibitor)
- Our Fair Share – Women in Procurement (presenter)
- Rising Regions North-West Queensland – Small Business Expo (attendee)
- Rural Financial Counselling Services – Annual Conference (presenter)
- Tamil Association – Deepavali Festival of Lights (presenter)
- Western Downs Regional Council – Accelerate Manufacturing Conference (attendee).



Reducing the time and costs associated with resolving disputes

Throughout 2021–22, the QSBC helped reduce the time and costs associated with resolving disputes involving small businesses, by assisting parties in reaching an informal resolution and administering a mediation service.

The QSBC assisted parties to informally resolve disputes and helped facilitate the exchange of information between the parties through collaboration with, and referral to, support services and programs

Informal dispute assistance

Small business disputes that are lodged with the QSBC are allocated a dedicated QSBC officer, who engages with the parties. The assistance provided is tailored to the nature of the request and the needs of the applicant. While some applicants want help with attempting to resolve the dispute on their own, others might be seeking assistance to start a more formal process with the other party. If the matter cannot be resolved informally through this process, the parties are guided through the next step, which may consist of progressing to the QSBC's mediation service or to another support service or agency with appropriate jurisdiction.

Referral pathways

Small businesses who required specialist services, or services outside of the QSBC's jurisdiction, were referred to a range of free or low-cost programs and support. Where appropriate, the QSBC connected the small business with the service provider directly, so the small business did not have to repeat its information.

One of the most common referral pathways was to the free Small Business Financial Counselling program delivered by the Rural and Small Business Financial Counselling Service Southern Queensland and the Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland. The financial counsellors assisted

QSBC clients to understand their financial position and to prepare documentation to help with informal resolution negotiations and mediations.

For disputes outside the QSBC's jurisdiction, the QSBC assisted with informal resolution of the dispute. Matters that could not be informally resolved were referred to a dispute resolution service with appropriate jurisdiction, including the ASBFEO, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT), the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, the Dispute Resolution Branch (Department of Justice and Attorney General) and the Queensland Ombudsman.

Small business legal support

In 2021–22, the QSBC, QUT School of Law, and Law on Earth (a Brisbane-based social enterprise and small business), worked together to provide pro bono legal support to small businesses in financial hardship. Students from QUT School of Law worked with qualified pro bono lawyers to provide 20-minute sessions and written advice to answer a range of legal questions related to commercial and retail shop leasing matters.

The QSBC referred more than 100 small businesses to the service to receive advice. The assistance small businesses received ranged from finding drafting errors in eviction notices that led to additional time to vacate the premises, through to correspondence with landlords and agents that led to the return of bank guarantees / bond payments.



The QSBC administered a mediation service for eligible small business disputes, including COVID affected lease disputes and small business tenancy disputes (under the CER Act), retail tenancy disputes (under the RSL Act) and small business lease disputes and small business franchise disputes (under the SBC Act)

Mediations

Throughout 2021–22, the QSBC delivered 138 free or low-cost mediation conferences for a range of commercial leasing disputes involving small businesses. While parties to a retail tenancy dispute under the RSL Act can apply for mediation directly, the parties to a small business lease dispute must have attempted to informally resolve the dispute before they can progress to mediation.

Parties to eligible disputes made under the COVID Leases Regulation were able to access free mediation, while parties to eligible disputes made under the SBC Act were provided low-cost mediation (\$175 for each party).

The SBC Regulation allows for the Commissioner to waive all or part of the mediation fee payable by a party or a class of parties due to financial hardship or to promote access to mediation. In 2021–22, the Commissioner used this provision on one occasion – waiving the fees payable by small business lessees and lessors in the Toombul Shopping Centre at the time of the South-East Queensland rain event and subsequent flooding in February 2022.

Mediations administered by the QSBC were delivered over the phone or through a video-conferencing platform where possible, with face-to-face mediations only held in extenuating circumstances. QSBC mediators are all accredited under the National Mediation Accreditation Standards and have experience in relation to commercial leasing matters.

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

Directions from the Minister

A statement of expectations was issued to the temporary Commissioner on 15 July 2021. The deliverables under that statement of expectations are broadly reported against in this annual report.

During 2021–22, the Minister did not give the Commissioner any written directions under section 17 of the SBC Act.

On 8 June 2022, a statement of expectations was issued to the Commissioner by the Minister under section 18 of the SBC Act. This will be reported against in the QSBC's Annual Report 2022–23.



Financial statements

The financial statements for the QSBC are included in the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training Annual Report 2021–22. Separate financial statements are not required for the QSBC.



Appendix 1: Performance snapshot by office status

The collective performance of the QSBC in 2021–22 is set out the snapshot of the QSBC's performance during 2021–22 (page 4).

Temporary QSBC performance (1 July 2021 to 2 May 2022)

In its temporary capacity, the QSBC assisted small businesses on more than 2,300 occasions:

1,785	Enquiry requests
92	Advocacy activities
293	Engagement activities
168	Dispute requests (as dispute notices under the COVID Leases Regulation)

The QSBC closed 195 disputes:

46	Provided assistance and/or were informally resolved
120	Provided free or low-cost mediation
29	Withdrawn by the applicant / not accepted / dismissed by the QSBC

Permanent QSBC performance (3 May 2022 to 30 June 2022)

In its permanent capacity, the QSBC assisted small businesses on more than 360 occasions:

237	Enquiry requests
5	Advocacy activities
49	Engagement activities
78	Dispute requests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52 requests for dispute assistance (RFDA) under the SBC Act • 24 applications for mediation (AFM) under the SBC Act • 2 dispute notices under the COVID Leases Regulation

The QSBC closed 56 disputes:

34	Provided assistance and/or were informally resolved
18	Provided free or low-cost mediation
4	Withdrawn by the applicant / not accepted / dismissed by the QSBC



Appendix 2: Small Business Friendly Councils program members

Small Business Friendly Councils (SBFC) program members, as of 30 June 2022:

Banana Shire Council*	Mareeba Shire Council*
Barcoo Shire Council	Moreton Bay Regional Council
Brisbane City Council*	Mount Isa City Council*
Burke Shire Council*	Redland City Council*
Cairns Regional Council	Richmond Shire Council*
Cassowary Coast Regional Council*	Rockhampton Regional Council*
Charters Towers Regional Council*	Scenic Rim Regional Council
Cloncurry Shire Council*	Somerset Regional Council
Cook Shire Council*	South Burnett Regional Council
Douglas Shire Council*	Southern Downs Regional Council
Flinders Shire Council*	Sunshine Coast Regional Council*
Fraser Coast Regional Council	Tablelands Regional Council
Gympie Regional Council	Toowoomba Regional Council
Ipswich City Council	Townsville City Council*
Isaac Regional Council	Western Downs Regional Council*
Logan City Council*	Whitsunday Regional Council
Mackay Regional Council	

* The council joined the SBFC program in 2021–22.



Appendix 3: Glossary of terms

AFM	Application for mediation – an application made to the QSBC for mediation of a retail tenancy dispute under the RSL Act, or a small business lease dispute under the SBC Act
ASBFEO	Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman
CER Act	<i>COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020</i>
COVID affected lease dispute	A dispute about an affected lease as defined under the COVID Leases Regulation
COVID Leases Regulation	Retail Shop Leases and Other Commercial Leases (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020
DESBT	Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
Dispute	A collective term that captures all of the following types of disputes that fall under the jurisdiction of the QSBC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID affected lease dispute • small business tenancy dispute • retail tenancy dispute • small business lease dispute • small business franchise dispute
Dispute notice	An application made to the QSBC to seek assistance with, and possible mediation of, a COVID affected lease dispute or a small business tenancy dispute under the COVID Leases Regulation
Mediation	A confidential mediation conference administered by the QSBC involving parties to a dispute, who work with an impartial third-party mediator nominated by the QSBC to resolve the dispute and reach agreement
Minister	Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development
NSBC	National Small Business Commissioners forum
OPRTR	Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction
QCAT	Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal
QSBC	Queensland Small Business Commissioner (a collective term for the Commissioner and supporting office)
RFDA	Request for dispute assistance – an application made to the QSBC to seek initial assistance to informally resolve a dispute (particularly for a small business lease dispute under the SBC Act)
Retail tenancy dispute	A dispute about a retail shop lease as defined under the RSL Act
RSL Act	<i>Retail Shop Leases Act 1994</i>
SBC Act	<i>Small Business Commissioner Act 2022</i>
SBC Regulation	Small Business Commissioner Regulation 2022
SBFC program	Small Business Friendly Councils program
SBIR	Small Business Industry Roundtable
Small business	The Commissioner considers a small business to be a business that identifies as a small business and would be reasonably considered to be small in size, regardless of its structure
Small business franchise dispute	A dispute about a franchise agreement as defined under the SBC Act
Small business lease dispute	A dispute about a small business lease, other than a retail shop lease, as defined under the SBC Act
Small business tenancy dispute	A dispute about a small business lease as defined under the COVID Leases Regulation

