

OUR STAFF

QCAT registry staff work with our decision-makers and Magistrates Courts staff to deliver tribunal services across Queensland.

Our workforce

“QCAT was clear in all communications and direction. The process was communicated well and support or contact was offered at all levels.”

QCAT user, 2015

As at 30 June 2015, QCAT has an establishment of 111 permanent positions, and five temporary Hearing Support Officers employed for the Justice of the Peace Trial. In 2014-15 seven trainees commenced a Certificate III in Business Administration and one trainee commenced a Certificate III in Information, Digital Media and Technology.

Of the staff working in the registry there are 100 women (71 per cent) and 41 men (29 per cent), with 17 staff employed on part-time arrangements.

There were no early retirement, redundancy or retrenchment packages awarded in 2014-15.

During this reporting period, there has been a 5.4 per cent separation rate.

Workforce Reinvigoration Program

In 2014-15 QCAT has continued to implement the Workforce Reinvigoration Program (WRP). The WRP combines a number of projects which invest in our workforce so staff are ready to meet new challenges in service delivery. In phase 1, the focus is on ensuring internal processes are clear for staff, and introducing new projects for staff development. Projects delivered under the WRP have included:

- review of internal processes for recruitment, selection and flexible working practices
- revitalised QCAT orientation program to encourage staff engagement
- new performance and evaluation plan (PEP) and probation processes linked to strategic planning
- launch of the QCAT Leadership Development Program to provide skill development and career pathways
- business process improvement projects including reviews of register searches and file archiving
- development of a workforce plan to plan for skill, development and recruitment needs
- launch of a reward and recognition program for staff.

Staff are regularly engaged in events to support charities such as The Smith Family and Cancer Council.

A day in the life of a QCAT Hearing Support Officer (HSO)

HSOs are on the frontline of delivering tribunal services. A team of over 20 HSOs provide support to tribunal decision-makers and parties in over 17,000 QCAT hearings each year.

From Kingaroy to Palm Island to Southport, HSOs can travel up to 25 locations throughout Queensland.

Regardless of the jurisdiction, HSOs are responsible for facilitating the recording all proceedings, managing evidence and exhibits, swearing in witnesses, and preparing orders and directions for parties. They often deal with parties who may be vulnerable or distressed.

After travelling from Brisbane to Cairns on an early morning flight, the Hearing Support Officer (HSO) arrives at the Cairns Magistrates Court.

While waiting for decision-makers and parties to begin arriving for the day, the HSO prepares the hearing room for the member and parties, and checks for any last-minute updates on matters scheduled.

Before the start of the first hearing at 9.30am, the HSO takes appearances (confirms all parties are present) and advises the member.

The HSO guides all parties to take their place in the hearing room. The first hearing is an anti-discrimination matter where one party is appearing by phone, so the HSO connects the party to the hearing via speaker phone when the member and all parties are ready.

The second matter for the day – a guardianship matter – is due to start at 11:15 am. The HSO receives advice from a registry case manager that the adult and carer can no longer attend the hearing in person and they now request to attend by phone. Despite the late notice, the HSO obtains permission from the member and arranges a conference call for all parties.

At the conclusion of the second hearing, there is a short break between hearings. The HSO types tribunal orders and updates case management documentation.

At 1:45 pm it is time for the next proceeding. The HSO receives an email with further documents needed for the hearing. The HSO checks the documents and provides to the member to review.

The final hearing for the day begins at 3pm – another guardianship matter. The HSO provides the parties with information about the Statutory Health Attorney, and posts the same information to the parties who attended by phone.

At 4.30pm the last hearing concludes. The HSO ensures all orders and case management documentation is up to date and does a final check on preparation for the next day of hearings.