

Alternative Dispute Resolution division

The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) division coordinates the delivery of mediation services for Minor Civil Disputes via internal mediators and the Dispute Resolution Branch of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

The role of the Alternative Dispute Resolution division has expanded in 2010-11 to accommodate the ongoing demand for mediation of minor civil disputes, and in preparation for an increased need for ADR under the *Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act 2011*.

Our year

The ADR division continued to build a productive relationship with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's Dispute Resolution Branch (DRB), now formalised with a service level agreement outlining the mutual obligations of QCAT and DRB around delivery of mediation services for minor civil disputes (MCDs) across Queensland.

This year has seen a new focus on training existing QCAT registry staff from all divisions in alternative dispute resolution techniques to strengthen our roster of qualified mediators. Three of the tribunal's registry staff mediators have achieved National Mediation Accreditation (NMA), with more to follow in the coming year. Conciliation training has also been provided by the Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Queensland.

The in-house training approach enables training of mediators who already have strong knowledge and experience in QCAT processes and jurisdictions.

The new approach has enhanced QCAT's capacity to provide an in-house mediation service for minor civil disputes and dividing fence matters.

Looking forward

Further embedding ADR processes throughout QCAT is a key priority of the *QCAT Strategic Plan 2012-15*. Experience shows that outcomes negotiated between parties are often fairer, and more lasting, than those imposed on them by a decision-maker.

With an increasing demand for mediation as a result of increased MCD lodgements and the new challenges of the *Neighbourhood Dispute Resolution Act 2011*, an ongoing focus on in-house training (including National Mediator Accreditation) will deliver decreased waiting times for mediations, absorb new conciliation demand and ensure timely delivery of dispute resolution for the community.