

Making connections

Our stakeholders

Our stakeholder community includes government departments, statutory bodies, the legal community and a large number of support and advocacy groups.

Since the establishment of the tribunal, we have valued our relationships and collaborations with organisations who may be impacted by decisions made by QCAT, who appear regularly before the tribunal, or who contribute to raising awareness of tribunal services and processes through their own communication channels.

This year has seen the development and implementation of a stakeholder engagement plan outlining priority stakeholders and a goal-oriented approach to ensure we meet and exceed expectations.

Our engagement and collaboration with these groups relates directly to ensuring existing and potential QCAT clients throughout Queensland are engaged through a range of sources and channels.

Stakeholder research

Stakeholder satisfaction research undertaken for the second time this year demonstrated an overall satisfaction level of 77 per cent – a 16 per cent improvement from 2009-10. The research reflected significant improvements in stakeholder perception of member and adjudicator professionalism and QCAT's accessibility and independence. Elements of the stakeholder research will help inform the Tribunal Excellence Framework performance analysis in 2011-12.

How do we engage?

Stakeholder engagement in 2010-11 included:

- speaking engagements
- appointment of a dedicated MCD Coordinator within QCAT as a direct contact for Magistrates Court staff
- a monthly newsletter for Magistrates Court staff focussing on minor civil disputes
- facilitation of staff from stakeholder organisations to observe hearings e.g. community legal centres and the Residential Tenancies Authority
- visits to courthouses across Queensland to engage with courts staff and ensure knowledge of the QCAT process
- delivery of Law Week information sessions.

Looking forward

A new initiative for 2011-12 is a quarterly stakeholder newsletter, *QCAT News*. Launched in August 2011, the newsletter will communicate new processes, legislation, events and significant decisions across all jurisdictions.

We will continue the implementation and ongoing evaluation of the stakeholder engagement plan to plan, report on and evaluate stakeholder activities including speaking engagements, training, participation in working groups, provision of consultation advice, community education and events.

Our clients

Every Queenslanders is potentially a QCAT client. With such a diverse range of jurisdictions and legislation to administer, people and businesses from all walks of life with all manner of disputes may come into contact with us, at a time when they may be feeling stressed, upset or vulnerable as a result of their dispute.

Client research

Research into QCAT client satisfaction was undertaken for the first time in 2011. Results reflected a high level of satisfaction with QCAT client service in relation to courtesy and respect shown by staff, regardless of satisfaction with case outcomes.

Elements of the client research will help inform the Tribunal Excellence Framework performance analysis in 2011-12.

How did we engage?

The QCAT website is a key communication channel and continued to attract high numbers of visitors in 2010-11.

QCAT registry staff and members undertook a number of speaking engagements to connect directly with clients including:

- events such as DJAG's *Planning for Life* forums, International Women's Day and Law Week
- legal advice and advocacy organisations e.g. Caxton Street Legal Centre, Court Volunteer Network, Legal Aid Queensland, Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services and Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House
- legal and judicial groups e.g. Australian Institute of Administrative Law, Australian Institute of Judicial Administration, Bar Association Queensland, Building Disputes Practitioners Society, Coalition of Australian Tribunals, Ipswich

- Regional Magistrates Group, Professional Standards Council of Australia, Queensland Law Society and University of Queensland School of Law
- residential tenancy organisations e.g. Residential Tenancies Authority, Real Estate Institute of Queensland and Community Titles Institute Queensland
 - training events e.g. Queensland Courts Orientation Program, Courts Capability Network
 - organisations covered by occupational regulation legislation e.g. Australian Institute of Radiography
 - other organisations with a specific interest e.g. Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine.

Looking forward

A client engagement strategy will be finalised in 2011-12 to outline client awareness and education activities.

Interpreter and translation services

During 2010-11 QCAT provided 155 interpreter and document translation services via the Queensland Interpreting and Translating Service, the Translating and Interpreting Service and the Korean Interpreting and Translation Service.

The services were provided across 31 languages, with the most common being Mandarin, Korean and Arabic. The majority of services were required with the guardianship and administration for adults (42 per cent) and minor civil dispute jurisdictions (30 per cent).

Deaf Services Queensland was also engaged to provide client assistance on seven occasions.

Engaging with other tribunals

In December 2010, QCAT hosted a delegation of 18 judges from Qinghai province in North-western China. The delegation met with senior staff to discuss processes and procedures for administrative matters.

In December 2010, QCAT hosted the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements from South Africa to discuss our approach to alternative dispute resolution.

QCAT has hosted several staff from Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), and undertaken reciprocal visits, which benefit both tribunals in learning more about innovative or different ways to approach similar challenges.

The NSW Planning and Environment Court have also provided support to QCAT in developing new processes for tree dispute resolution as part of the *Neighbourhood Dispute Resolution Act 2011* to be implemented in 2011-12.

Supreme Court of Queensland Library

The Supreme Court of Queensland Library (the Library) is the lead information agency for the Queensland courts and judiciary. It serves the Supreme, District and Magistrates Courts and QCAT.

The Library provides a range of information services to tribunal members including:

- legal reference and document delivery service via telephone, facsimile and email
- research services
- access to more than 150 databases and an estimated 60,000 individual full-text titles via the Judicial Virtual Library intranet
- consolidated and discounted subscription purchasing for the QCAT member library
- regular current awareness services via email subscription including the Judicial Current Awareness service and the *Queensland Legal Updater* bulletin.

Since 1 December 2009, the Library has published over 1,100 QCAT decisions and over 330 appeal tribunal decisions via the Library website. The availability of decisions is valuable for QCAT members, clients and the legal community because it shows how QCAT applies the legislation in different matters, and the potential outcomes and costs of being a party to an application to QCAT.