

28 October 2021

Committee Secretary
Education, Employment and Training Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Q 4000

By email: EETC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Inquiry into the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback into the inquiry into the *Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021*.

The Property Council of Australia is the leading advocate for Australia's biggest industry – property. We are a national not-for-profit organisation established to promote the work of the property industry in delivering prosperity, jobs, and strong communities to all Australians. Here in Queensland, the Property Council represents over 400 member companies across residential, commercial, retail, retirement living, industrial, tourism and education sectors.

The Property Council supports the establishment of the role of a Small Business Commissioner and the efforts to make the position permanent. We applaud the significant role that the Queensland Small Business Commissioner (QSBC) continues to play as businesses navigate the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Queensland Civil Administration Tribunal continues to be overwhelmed, the QSBC plays a pivotal role in the dispute resolution process. Since its inception in 2020, its role in providing a first step in the mediation process has been greatly valued by our members.


The key benefit of the QSBC has been the staff's ability to move quickly and deal with disputes early in the process, leading to reasonably efficient resolutions for all parties involved. The Property Council wishes to highlight that the proposed legislation should seek to enhance the flexibility and look to remove any barriers that would impinge the agility afforded to the QSBC.

Pleasingly in Queensland there has been widespread collaboration between landlord and tenants, meaning that they have been able to reach resolution through effective communication. On this basis we wish to reinforce that mediation should continue as a voluntary step in the dispute resolution process. We support clause 21 of the proposed *Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021* that an application for mediation may only be made after the parties to the dispute have attempted to resolve the dispute by seeking informal assistance from the commissioner.

The proposed legislation outlines a 7 days' notice period is given to convene a mediation session. Given the nature of such negotiations we feel that a 14 days' notice period is a more realistic period to allow both parties to prepare.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback into this inquiry. We welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of this submission with the committee in more detail. If you have any questions in relation to the Property Council or this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me on jwilliams@propertycouncil.com.au or 0448 432 936.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jen W". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Jen Williams
Queensland Executive Director