



Master Grocers Australia Limited

T/AS

MGA Independent Retailers

MGA Timber Merchants Australia  
(MGA/TMA)

Submission to the Education, Employment and Training Committee  
Queensland

Inquiry into the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021

**28 October 2021**

**MGA INDEPENDENT RETAILERS AND MGA TIMBER MERCHANTS AUSTRALIA (MGA/TMA)**

1. MGA/TMA thanks the Queensland Education, Employment and Training Committee Secretariat for the opportunity to make this submission in respect to the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021 (“**the Bill**”) on behalf of its members for the purposes of the inquiry process.
2. MGA Independent Retailers (“**MGA/TMA**”) is a national registered employer industry association representing independent food and grocery, liquor, and other retail outlets including timber and hardware, in all States and Territories of Australia. These businesses range in size from small, to medium and large, and make a significant contribution to the retail industry, accounting for approximately \$16 billion in retail sales.
3. There are 2,700 branded independent grocery stores, trading under brand names such as: Drakes, Farmer Jacks, FoodWorks, Foodland, Friendly Grocers, IGA, IGA Xpress, Supa IGA and SPAR, with a further approximately 1,300 independent supermarkets trading under their own local brand names. In addition, there are numerous independent liquor stores operating throughout Australia and trading under names such as: Cellarbrations, The Bottle O, Duncans, and Local Liquor, which are either single or multi-store owners. Our members also own independent hardware stores trade under brand names including Mitre 10, Home Timber and Hardware, Thrifty Link and True Value Hardware.
4. These stores and businesses which collectively employ more than 120,000 staff are comparatively much smaller when juxtaposed against the large supermarket and hardware chains of Coles, Woolworths, and Bunnings, which combined represent approximately 80 per cent of the retail supermarket and liquor industries and 65% of hardware industries.
5. In Queensland, MGA TMA’s members trade under a variety of different brand names including, among other things, Drakes, FoodWorks, Friendly Grocers, Supa IGA, IGA, IGA Xpress, SPAR, SPAR Express and Mitre 10 and Home Timber and Hardware.
6. MGA TMA’s 490 Qld Members generate retail sales of more than \$2.8 billion, conduct 156 million transactions per annum or 3 million transactions per week.
7. Their businesses range in size from small to medium to large - 100m<sup>2</sup> to 2,500m<sup>2</sup>
8. MGA TMA’s Members are family operated and privately owned community businesses which employ more than 21,000 full time, part time and casual employees across a seven-day working week.

9. The independent grocery sector makes a significant contribution to the Queensland economy and the communities in which they trade.
10. Small business – family and private enterprises are the backbone of the Qld social and economic community – If small business thrives - Qld thrives!

#### **THE POSITION OF MGA IN RESPECT OF THE BILL**

11. In this submission, MGA TMA strongly supports the Queensland Government's commitments to permanently establish the Queensland Small Business Commissioner (**QSBC**) and a supporting office.
12. MGA TMA submits that there have been detrimental effects from the COVID-19 pandemic during the past 1-2 years, especially amongst its small business members, whose trade has been affected by COVID-19.
13. Although there is considerable optimism currently, arising from a recent increase in employment and the arrival of the long-awaited vaccines, MGA TMA recognises that its members are still recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and there is still a long road to full recovery.
14. MGA TMA therefore strongly endorses the introduction of the Bill and submits that the establishment of a permanent QSBC will substantially alleviate the financial stress and hardship suffered by small business employers as they slowly grapple with the aftermath of the pandemic.

#### **REASONS WHY MGA/TMA SUPPORTS THE BILL**

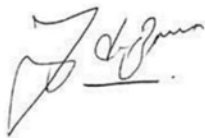
15. MGA TMA recognises that there are substantial economic and long-term benefits of establishing a permanent QSBC for our members in Queensland. Notably, these benefits include, among other things, the following:
  - (a) providing a one stop shop where small business employers can receive information, tailored support and advice about small business matters (such as commercial lease queries); and
  - (b) offering alternative dispute resolution services to resolve small business disputes, particularly through the provision of free mediation services, without the need to go through the traditional court proceedings.
16. MGA/TMA understands that larger retailers have managed to cope with the virus in the community better than our members as they are well supported, equipped, and financially resourced. In comparison, it cannot be said that the same luxury is afforded to our members who rely heavily upon services such as the Small Business Commissioners in their respective states and territories

to assist them in navigating the complexity of issues associated with their small businesses.

17. Without a permanent QSBC, MGA TMA anticipates that its members would be severely impacted as it means that they can no longer readily access the advice and support required to resolve their disputes in a cost effective and timely manner.
18. MGA TMA has a strong view that the role of the QSBC, similar to Small Business Commissioners in other states goes beyond dispute resolution and mediation. In fact, the QSBC has already played a leading role in providing a conduit between the small business community and the government of the day to express the issues and concerns, as well as, opportunities that the small business community faces on a day to day basis.
19. The strength of Qld Small Business Commissioner is accessibility – being able to engage on matters of concern immediately – person to person. Small business owners need this vital service!

## CONCLUSION

20. As a registered family and private business industry employer organisation, MGA strongly supports the need for the QSBC to transition into a permanent Qld support service and strongly believes that the Bill would significantly improve the confidence, certainty, viability, productivity and operating environment of small and family businesses within Queensland.
21. MGA thanks the Education, Employment and Training Committee for the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of our Queensland members.



Jos de Bruin  
CEO  
Master Grocers Australia  
Trading as MGA Independent Retailers Timber Merchants Australia