

## Question on Notice

No. 971

Asked on 15 June 2011

**Mr Wellington** asked the Minister for Education and Industrial Relations (Mr Dick) —

QUESTION:

With reference to Queensland Education staff on the Sunshine Coast who have either applied to take early retirement, or are on sick leave or on leave, or have applied for a transfer—

Will the department investigate why these staff desire a change to their employment?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question.

I have been advised by the Department of Education and Training that staff on the Sunshine Coast apply for early retirement when schemes such as the teacher Career Change Program are in operation. The program has been initiated by the Department on a number of occasions as a renewal strategy for specific cohorts of teachers as need is identified from workforce planning. In the recent primary teachers Career Change Program, 35 Sunshine Coast teachers accepted the offer of a grant to change careers.

In respect to employees taking sick leave, particularly long-term sick leave, each case is managed with a view to returning the employee to active employment as soon as practicable notwithstanding the particular health, life and career circumstances relevant to the employee at that time. The Department's trained and accredited Return to Work Coordinators, Injury Management Consultants and the Employee Assistance Service assist the employee directly as well as supporting the employee's manager or supervisor. There are some isolated cases of ill-health retirement where the employee's health permanently prevents return to work.

In relation to requests for transfer, each case is assessed in terms of schools workforce needs and the individual circumstances of each applicant, taking into consideration employees' career aspirations and personal circumstances. Individual teachers on occasions seek transfer as one method of professional renewal. Teachers often gain opportunities to apply their specific teaching capabilities in new settings and to engage in different teaching and learning programs not offered in their previous school.

In general the numbers of employees seeking transfer or early retirement are minimal in comparison with the total workforce. Long-term special leave without pay is sought for a range of reasons, such as extending maternity or family leave and sabbatical leave, particularly for teachers seeking to further professionally develop their teaching practice and experiences by working overseas.

The attrition rate of Queensland teachers is below that of the Queensland Public Sector generally, with an attrition rate of 6 per cent.