

1. Title: Employment Security

2. **Effective Date:** 20 April 2000

3. **Reviewed:** 20 October 2008

(See also - *Best practice guidelines for maximising employment security*)

4. Introduction:

On 17 April 2000 the Queensland Government approved a new employment security policy for the Queensland public sector. This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- a) the *Queensland Government policy on the contracting-out of services* and
- b) any existing industrial instruments relating to job/employment security (which may override or expand on this policy).

The government is committed to maximum employment security for permanent public sector employees (as outlined in Clause 6) by developing and maintaining a responsive, impartial and efficient public sector as the preferred provider of existing services to government and the community. The workforce's commitment to continue working towards achievement of best practice performance levels makes this commitment possible.

The government is also committed to providing stability to the public sector by curbing organisational restructuring and contracting-out of services. The focus will be on pursuing performance improvement strategies for the public sector workforce to achieve "best value" delivery of quality services to the community, in preference to restructuring, downsizing or simply replacing public sector employees with non-government service providers. A greater emphasis will be placed on effective change management, which together with workforce planning, career planning and skills development will ensure that the public sector workforce has the flexibility and mobility to meet future needs.

Further, the government undertakes that permanent public sector employees will not be forced into unemployment as a result of organisational change or changes in departmental priorities other than in exceptional circumstances. Where changes to employment arrangements are necessary, there will be active pursuit of retraining and deployment opportunities, and involuntary redundancy will only occur in exceptional circumstances, and only with the approval of the Commission Chief Executive.

5. Permanent employment:

Queensland Government is committed to maximising permanent employment where possible. Casual or temporary forms of employment should only be utilised where permanent

employment is not viable or appropriate. Agencies are encouraged to utilise workforce planning and management strategies to assist in determining the appropriate workforce mix for current and future needs.

6. Organisational change and restructuring:

It is the government's intention that future organisational change and restructuring will be limited in scale. All organisational change will need to demonstrate clear benefits and enhanced service delivery to the community. The objective is to stabilise public sector organisations, and to avoid unnecessary change that will not deliver demonstrable benefit to the Government or the community.

Cabinet approval is required for all major organisational change and restructuring in agencies:

- a) that will significantly impact on the public sector workforce (e.g. significant job reductions, deployment to new locations, alternative service delivery arrangements, etc). The emphasis will be on minimum disruption to the workforce and maximum placement of affected staff within agencies, and ordinarily organisational restructuring should not result in large scale "spilling" of jobs.
- b) that will have major social and economic implications, particularly in regional and rural centres where the government is committed to maintaining public sector employment. Proposals affecting these centres need to carefully evaluate the impact on communities to ensure that short-term efficiency gains are balanced against the long-term social and economic needs of these communities.

The agency will need to demonstrate that any proposed organisational change or restructuring will result in clearly defined service enhancements to government and/or the community, as identified in a business case, and be undertaken through a planned process. Where an agency has made a decision to introduce major organisational change or restructuring, it will notify affected employees/unions and discuss the changes as early as practicable. This may be undertaken through forums such as Agency Consultative Committees.

The requirement to obtain Cabinet approval for major organisational change is not intended to reduce the flexibility of chief executives in their day-to-day management of agencies' operations. Chief executives retain prerogative over normal business activities to manage the public sector workforce, (such as job reclassification, job redesign, performance management, disciplinary action and transfers), and organisational improvement initiatives (such as process re-engineering, changes in work practices and the introduction of new technology).

7. Queensland Government policy in contracting-out of services:

The *Queensland Government policy on the contracting-out of services* confirms the Government's commitment to maintaining public sector employment. It provides for contracting-out only in limited circumstances and requires Cabinet approval for all contracting-out proposals that will have a significant impact on the public sector workforce in terms of job losses.

8. Employees affected by organisational change:

The government undertakes that tenured public sector employees will not be forced into unemployment as a result of organisational change, other than in exceptional circumstances.

Public sector employees affected by performance improvement initiatives or organisational change will be offered maximum employment opportunities within the public sector, including retraining, deployment, and redeployment. Only after these avenues have been explored will voluntary early retirement be considered.

Where continuing employment in the public sector is not possible, support, advice and assistance will be provided to facilitate transition to new employment opportunities. In the event of a decision to outsource a government service, the agency should ensure that every effort is directed towards assisting employees to take up employment with the external provider. Retrenchment will only be undertaken in exceptional circumstances where deployment or redeployment are not options, and only with the approval of the Commission Chief Executive.

9. Application:

These guidelines apply to all permanent employees of Queensland Government departments, public service offices and public sector units.

These guidelines do not apply to public sector employees who are subject to disciplinary action which would otherwise result in termination of employment, or who are not participating in reasonable opportunities for retraining, deployment or redeployment.

10. Authority:

These guidelines were approved by Cabinet on 17 April 2000.

11. Consultation:

For further advice on the application of these guidelines, agencies should consult with Workforce Futures, Policy and Performance, Public Service Commission.