

REDEPLOYED PUBLIC SERVANTS, VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE PACKAGES

1031. Mrs EDWARDES to the Treasurer:

I refer the Treasurer to his media release dated 12 April 2002 announcing the potential savings from the Government's \$20 million offer of an enhanced voluntary severance package for the approximately 430 public servants who are redeployees, and our conversation during last night's budget debate.

- (1) Can the Treasurer confirm that, in accordance with current policy, all redeployees are given the first option of accepting any vacancy that they can reasonably fill before that vacancy is advertised?
- (2) If not, why is the Government wasting taxpayers' funds on an expensive \$20 million program when many of those redeployees could be offered genuine positions within the public service?

Mr RIPPER replied:

- (1)-(2) Occasionally, the Opposition makes a few valid points. The member for Kingsley is one opposition member who occasionally makes a substantial contribution to a debate. Yesterday, she made some important points about redeployees in the public sector. In the past, some redeployees have not taken available jobs in the public sector for which other people have considered them to be suitable. There have also been occasions in which agencies have said that they would rather hire whomever they want from outside the public sector than accept a redeployee. Although the redeployee might have been suitable, the agency did not accept him.

As part of the voluntary severance arrangements, we will toughen up the application of the redeployee and agency obligations. If a redeployee is offered suitable alternative employment within the public sector, he should accept that employment. If an agency has access to a suitable redeployee to fill a vacancy, that agency should employ that person. That way, we will be able to make the best use of the people we have in the public sector, and minimise the number of people who might have to leave the public sector or consider taking up the voluntary severance offer. Valid arguments have been made. As I promised yesterday, I intend to refer the speech of the member for Kingsley during the budget debate to the people in the public service who are charged with administering the voluntary severance and redeployment arrangements. I will seek advice about how the new arrangements and the new scheme work.

The voluntary severance offer remains open until 30 June. Generally, most applications for such things are submitted nearer to the closing date. At that time, I will be in a better position to advise the House on the progress of the voluntary severance scheme.