



Government of Western Australia
Department for Child Protection
and Family Support

Country Attraction and Retention Framework

Survey Analysis

Human Resources Workforce Strategy

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1. BACKGROUND

A submission was made to Corporate Executive on 6 December 2012, for the Workforce Strategy Branch to examine the factors most influential in attracting and retaining staff in the Department. It was recognised that long term vacancies and high turnover can result in lost productivity, increased recruitment and training costs, decreased customer satisfaction and low employee morale. A better understanding of factors influencing an employee's decision to join the Department and to work in either a Country or Metropolitan District was necessary to inform strategies to alleviate the impact of staff turnover.

Over the past 3 years, the Department had an average annual turnover rate of 12.5%. An examination of the termination statistics for the period 1 January 2009 to 29 February 2012 indicated that the Department lost 57% of Caseworkers within their first two years of employment, irrespective of whether they are employed in metropolitan or country locations.

An employee survey was conducted between December 2012 and February 2013 to get an understanding of employees' experience in terms of how the Department attracts and retains staff. Separate surveys were developed for country and metropolitan staff. The purpose of the country survey was to gain country employees' perspective regarding the benefits and challenges of working in a country location. Information was also sought relating to current policies and practices. The metropolitan survey was shorter and focussed on factors that may attract them to consider taking up a position in a country district.

The purpose of this paper is to summarise the survey results and provide further information to inform future strategies for attracting and retaining employees in the Department.

2. SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Separate surveys were distributed to all employees working in country and metropolitan district offices in December 2012. Emails were sent directly to staff requesting their participation. Employees had a two (2) week period to respond to the on-line survey. Due to the small participation rate, the same survey was redistributed mid-February 2013.

A total of 512 employees responded. As at March 2013 there were 1,891 employees in Country and Metropolitan Services, which indicated a sample size of 27%.

- 273 employees located in Country Services responded to the survey with a response rate of 29%.
- 239 Metropolitan Services employees responded to the survey with a response rate of 25%.

The demographic profile of the respondents reflected the Department's overall profile:

- 88% female;
- 12% male;
- 88% are permanently employed, 11% are on a fixed term contract and 1% are casual;
- 9% of survey respondents identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (11% Country and 7% Metropolitan).

Respondents were required to nominate their occupation from three areas. The average response rate by occupational group was:

- 52% - Caseworkers (including Child Protection Worker, Senior Child Protection Worker, Fieldworker, Senior Fieldworker, Caseworker Parent Support, Senior Caseworker Parent Support)
- 26% - Service Delivery (Team Leader/Team Manager, Family Resource Employee, Education Officer, Residential Care Officer, Youth and Family Support Worker, Best Beginnings Officer, Psychologist etc.)
- 22% - Administrative/Business Support (District Director, Assistant District Director, Administrative Assistant, Aboriginal Practice Leader, Assist Mentor, Business Manager, Case Support Officer, Customer Liaison Officer, District Administration Officer etc.)

This occupational breakdown was chosen as this is consistent with the monthly reports provided to Corporate Executive. This ensures the reliability of data when comparing with other reports produced in the Department.

Figure 1 - Country respondents' occupational category

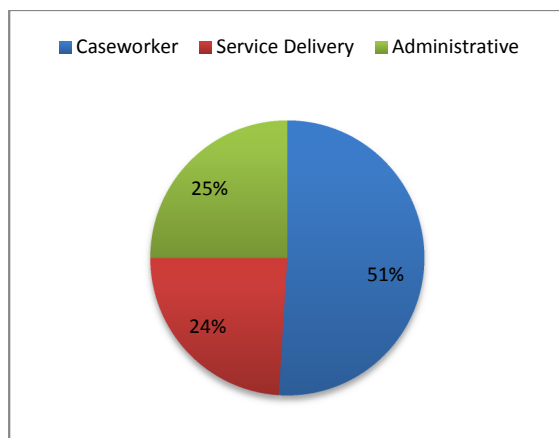
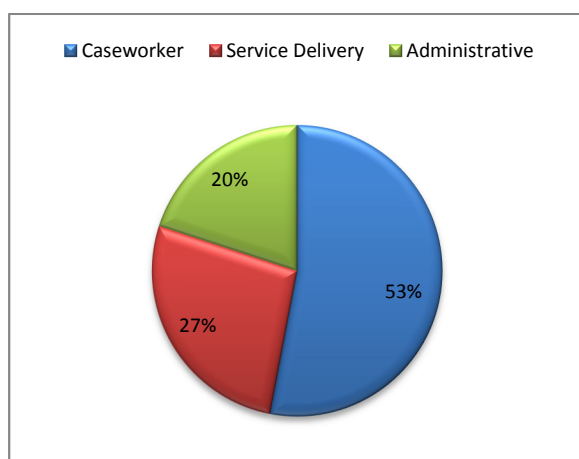


Figure 2 - Metropolitan respondents' occupational category



3. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Attraction

The purpose of this section was to understand how the Department attracts staff, where new recruits come from and the reasons for joining the Department. The objective is to determine the most effective method and vehicle for recruitment whilst providing an indicator as to how established the Department's employment brand is in the community.

3.1.1 Marketing

Four-hundred-and-twenty-three employees responded to the question, "Where did you first hear about your current job?"

Table 1 - Job Source

Response	Country	Metropolitan
www.jobs.wa.gov.au	27%	27%
Seek	1%	4%
West Australian Newspaper	4%	9%
Recruitment Agency	2%	0
Referral from CPFS employee	21%	20%
Referral from family, friend or associate	15%	13%
Internal jobs board	13%	12%
News of the day story	1%	0
Other	17%	16%

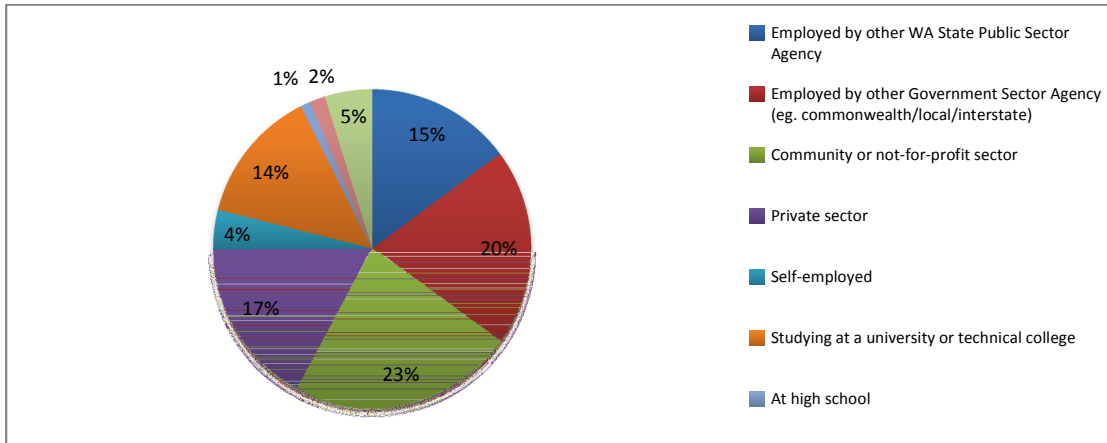
The Government Jobs Board had the highest response rate for both Metropolitan and Country which is to be expected as it is compulsory for all jobs to be advertised in this location, whilst the other resources (Seek, Newspaper and News of the Day stories) are not used consistently. What is significant is the combined referral response (combining referrals from CPFS employee and referral from family, friend or associate). Twenty-one per cent of employees in a country location and 20% in a metropolitan location were referred to the department by a CPFS employee, with 15% in country and 13% in metropolitan being referred to the Department by a family, friend or associate.

Twenty-eight per cent of country respondents who have selected "other" came to know about employment opportunities through the local paper, 19% via internal discussions and 15% from direct contact with the Department, for example, handing in their resume and subsequently getting a position. Forty-one per cent of metropolitan respondents heard about job opportunities either through their student placement or through University information sessions held by the Department. Ten per cent of these respondents also heard about their current position either directly from the District Director, local paper or a friend.

3.1.2 Prior to working for the Department

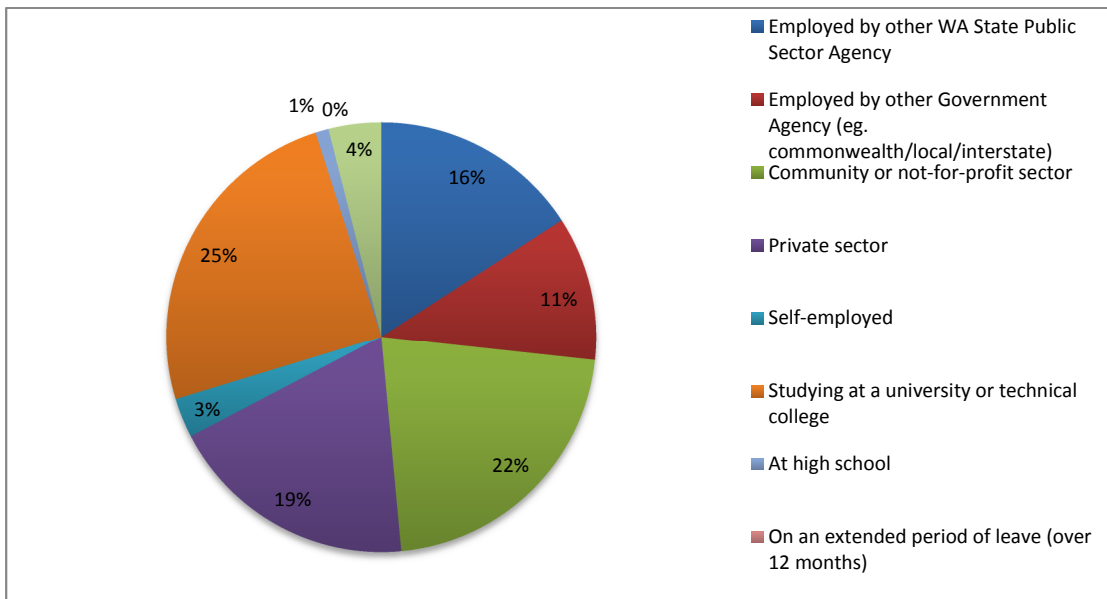
Employees were asked to identify where they were working prior to being employed by the Department. Four hundred and seventy three employees responded to this question, 23% in the Country Districts were employed by the Community or not-for-profit sector followed by 20% being employed by other Government sector agencies (Commonwealth/local/interstate).

Figure 3 - Country employees' previous employment



This is in contrast with the Metropolitan Districts where the highest percentage, 25%, was studying at a University prior to joining the Department, followed by 22% who were employed in the Community or not-for-profit sector. From the aforementioned, it is clear that the source of potential employees differ between country and metropolitan areas.

Figure 4 - Metropolitan employees' previous employment



The above statistics also confirms that there is little difference between the number of people joining the Department in either country or metropolitan areas from the private sector and from other WA state public sector agencies.

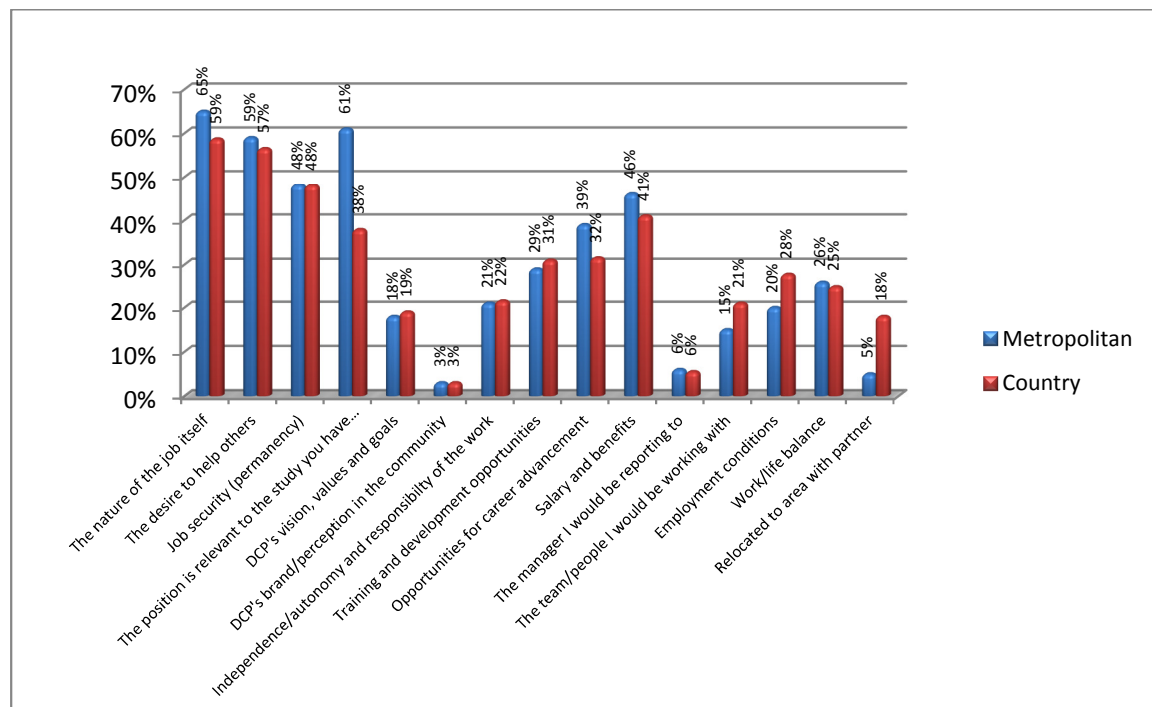
3.1.3 Reasons for joining the Department

Employees were asked to identify the top 5 reasons that had the biggest impact on their decision to join the Department.

The top reason for both country and metropolitan staff joining the Department was due to the type of work and the job description (the nature of the job). However, in the country the “desire to help others” came second, whereas second place for Metropolitan staff was the position being relevant to the study they have completed.

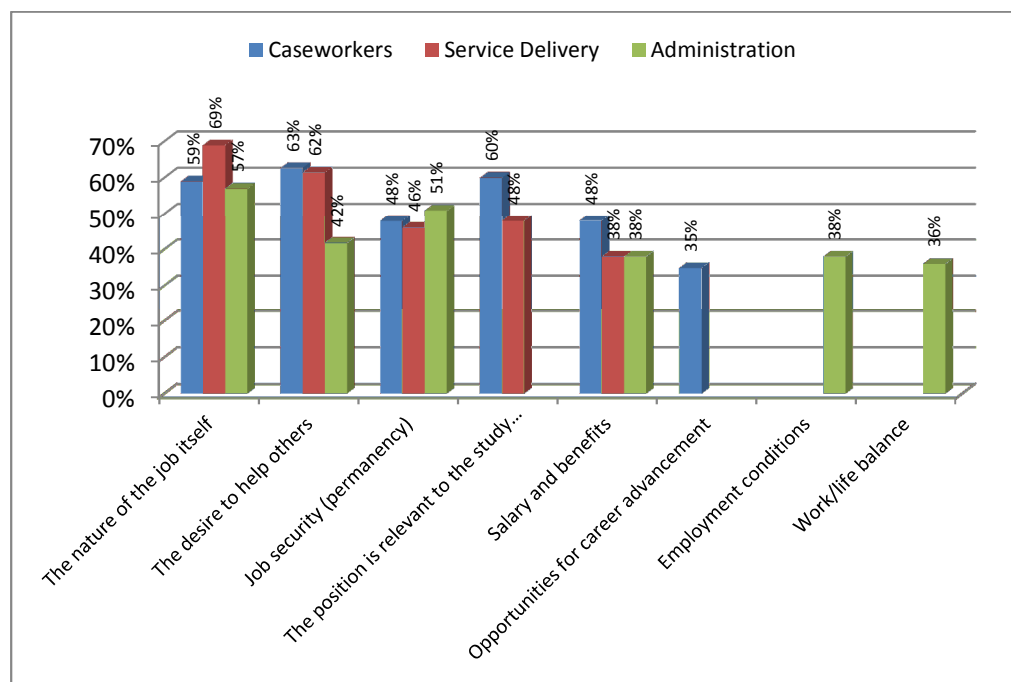
“Job security” rated third most important for country whilst in metropolitan areas it was ranked fourth. “Salary and benefits” ranked the lowest for metropolitan staff in fifth place and was fourth for country staff. A consistency across all districts is that the Department’s brand/perception in the community is not highly rated; hence only 3% of respondents indicated “CPFS’s brand/perception in the community” as a reason for joining the Department. The value people attach to the Department’s vision, values and goals as a reason for joining was significantly higher at 19%.

Figure 5 - Reasons for joining the Department



An examination of the responses by occupational groups identified clear differences between occupational groups as to the main reasons for joining the Department. Service Delivery and Administration employees rated “the nature of the job itself” as the most important reason for joining the Department, whilst the “desire to help others” was the most important for Caseworkers. This gives an indication as to what is most attractive to the different occupational groups when applying for a position. Figure 6 indicates the top five reasons for joining the Department per occupational group.

Figure 6 - Reasons for joining by Occupational group



It is clear that what motivates people to join the department is quite different depending on the work undertaken. This would suggest that advertisements can be structured differently to ensure that the emphasis is placed on the factors important to that occupational group.

3.2 RELOCATION

This section was aimed at country employees, focusing on the relocation experience. The metropolitan survey focused on what would motivate staff to relocate to a country district, and also included a question to rank the country districts as desirable work locations.

3.2.1 Country Districts

Two-hundred-and-sixty-nine employees responded to the question “*Did you reside in the district or did you relocate to the district you are currently employed in?*”

- 44.6% of respondents relocated to the area they are currently working in to take up the position.
- 14.8% relocated for other reasons.
- 40.5% identified as being local to the area.

Seventy per cent of respondents relocated to take up a permanent position, whilst 23% relocated for a fixed term position. Of the 26 respondents who have relocated for a fixed term contract only one employee’s contract is for longer than 24 months. Periods of contracts vary between:

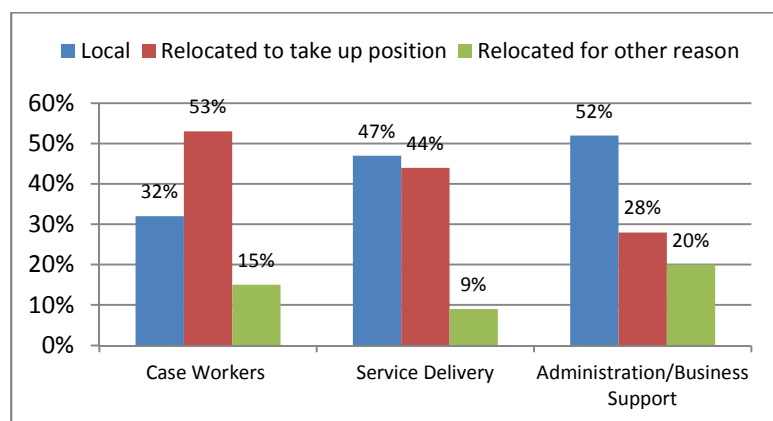
- 12-24 months, 3 employees;
- 6–12 months, 8 employees;
- 3-6 months, 10 employees; and
- 0-3 months, 4 employees.

Respondents were asked to provide further explanation for their reasons for relocating, feedback included:

- *“To work with my own families and people in my own traditional ‘country’”*
- *“To have the opportunity to work remotely and regionally”*
- *“To be closer to family and the position was available”*

The distribution of staff by occupational category highlighted some differences. Due to the qualification requirements, the majority of Caseworkers have relocated to take up the position they are currently in. Employees in administrative positions are more likely to be local to the area. The split for Service Delivery staff was more evenly distributed between local and relocated employees. Service Delivery covers a variety of positions with some requiring a qualification whilst the majority do not.

Figure 7 - Local or relocated, by occupational group



Respondents who indicated that they have relocated to the area where they are currently employed were asked to specify where they have relocated from. Seventy-four per cent of respondents relocated from within Western Australia, 19% from interstate and 7% from international locations.

Twenty-eight per cent of relocations to the country districts took place pre 2007; relocations then remained stable, averaging 12.25% between 2008 and 2011. In 2012, relocations increased to 23%, up 9% from the previous two years. This may be attributed to the extra Parent Support Worker positions created through the additional funding made available through Royalties for Regions.¹

Seventy per cent of employees that relocated took up a permanent position. Those employees that identified as relocating to take up a temporary position were asked if they would consider extending their time in the district they were employed in. The responses were positive with 82% stating they would be open to an extension. If they responded ‘yes’ to extending their time, respondents were asked to explain why. The majority of the respondents indicated that they have already been successful in gaining a permanent position after a period of temporary contracts.

Other statements centred on lifestyle reasons and the type of work:

- *“The district relationships are very positive. It is also rewarding helping to strengthen the skills within the other district positions and overall practice”*

¹ Department for Child Protection Annual Report 2011-2012, pg. 97

- *“Lifestyle and ways of working in the country districts and the relationships developed”*
- *“The environment in which I work..... Love the lifestyle and community”*

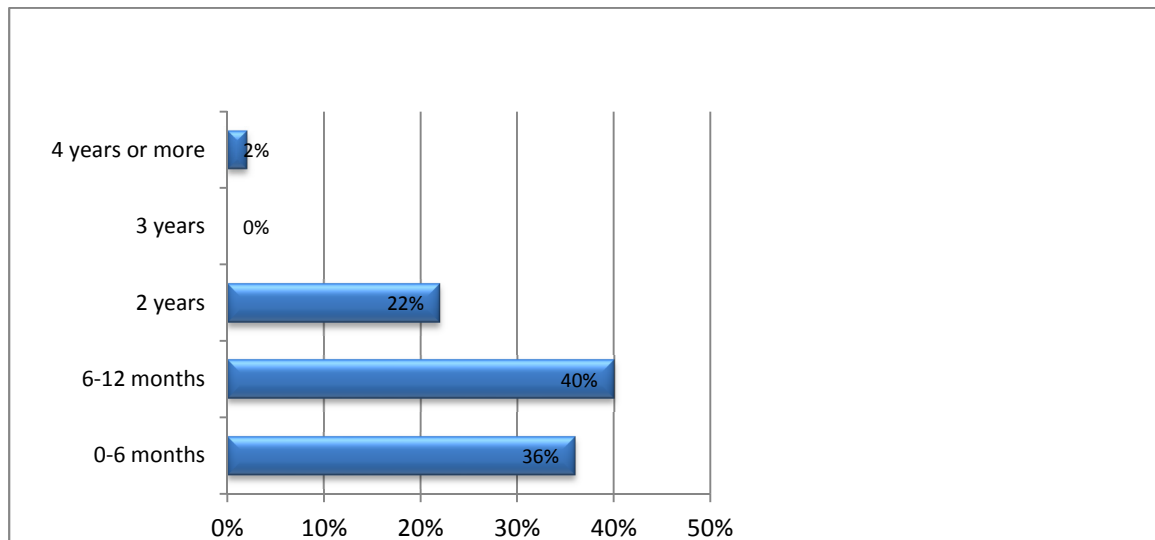
Employees who responded ‘No’ to the question about extending their employment in the district they are currently in (18%) were then asked if they would consider employment in another country district. Only a small number of employees responded to this question but the overall response was negative.

3.2.2 Metropolitan Districts

These questions were specific to metropolitan employees with the purpose of discovering what would motivate them to move to a country district. Respondents were asked if they would consider relocating to a country district for a permanent position, only 8% indicated that they would move for permanency. Respondents were also asked if they would relocate for a promotional position, 51% of employees answered in the negative.

Fifty-eight per cent of metropolitan employees indicated that they are willing to move for a fixed period of time. This supports the implementation of the Mobility Policy that allows employees the freedom to move to a country location whilst maintaining their substantive position in a metropolitan district. Employees indicating a willingness to move were asked a follow up question about the length of time they would be willing to relocate for. Of the employees willing to relocate for a fixed period of time only 22% would be willing to relocate for a period of 2 years, whilst 40% would be willing to relocate for a period between 0 and 6 months. The fact that employees were willing to temporarily relocate is positive as the results from the country survey indicated that 82% of staff that move to a country location would extend their time in the country.

Figure 8 - Length of contract, metropolitan employees would be willing to relocate for



Respondents were asked to rank the various country districts from the most to least desirable work location. They were also asked to explain the reason for their number one location. By identifying the districts that were least desirable, strategies could be devised to promote those districts.

Eighty-five per cent of the respondents ranked their most desirable location. The districts were ranked as follows:

1. South West
2. Great Southern
3. Peel
4. East Kimberley
5. West Kimberley
6. Murchison
7. Pilbara
8. Goldfields
9. Wheatbelt

Reasons provided for the ranking of a specific location include: location/proximity to Perth, lifestyle, family, working in remote/local communities and a previous relationship with the area.

- *“South west of Western Australia is well known for its attractive lifestyle. I have family living in Great Southern which would be attractive for that reason”*
- *“Environment – options to work with different client base – learn about culture of the region – opportunity to travel in the region”*
- *“Still close to family and educational facilities for children”*
- *“Have experience of remote social work and enjoy the challenges it presents”*

It is not surprising that the first three districts came up in that order when you consider the responses above. Interestingly the Wheatbelt, (with the furthest office being approximately 4 hours from Perth), is the lowest ranked district office. This suggests that the proximity to the city is not the main consideration but rather that the lifestyle and climate are significant factors. East Kimberley being the most remote location is listed as number four. A common theme in the comments was working with local communities and the opportunity to experience work in a remote environment which this district would be able to offer.

2.3 Relocation Process

Moving is one of the most stressful undertakings in an individual’s life and uncertainty surrounding the moving process can create a negative impression of the Department before the employee has started. It is essential that this process is managed effectively to ensure a smooth transition, enabling an employee to start work as soon as possible.

Forty-four per cent of respondents indicated that the relocation process was not clearly conveyed to them. The person responsible for the relocation process varies from district to district. Fifty-one per cent of respondents, communicated with the business manager, 27% with the district administration officer and 12% with their line manager. This is not unusual as each district is responsible for the management of their own relocation processes.

When asked if they felt supported throughout the relocation process the overall response was positive with 58% of respondents feeling supported. Comments on the extent of support ranged from positive to negative experiences:

Positive comments included:

- *“Information on schools, child care etc. in area, local services and general info on the town. [Government Regional Officer Housing] GROH information and support with the actual relocation details (getting quotes, accommodation and travel etc.)”*
- *“Transport costs and flights, hotel accommodation until I got a GROH house, and a little bit of rental furniture until mine was transported over”*
- *“Day to day updates about forms and also status of accommodation”*

Negative comments included:

- *“..... the organising was done fairly well however the communication was poor”*
- *“The district main office neglected to inform the local office of the date I was due to arrive so my house was not ready and I was dropped off at night to my accommodation with no assistance in gaining food etc. House was without power for two days and I was left alone without a vehicle to explore the community”*

Appropriate communication and guidance about what is expected from the individual and what assistance the Department will provide contributes to a positive relocation experience. Providing clear guidance as to what support the Department will offer in terms of allowances, time and advice is critical to ensure the actual relocation process goes smoothly. It is also essential that the new employee understands what is expected of them with regards to GROH housing (if it is provided), the requirements and expectations of the new position and anything else about the community they are entering that will assist with the transition process.

3.3 MOTIVATION TO MOVE DISTRICTS

Both country and metropolitan employees were asked to consider various work and non-work related factors that might motivate them to change locations.

3.3.1 Country: work and non-work related factors

Employees were asked to select five ***work related factors*** that would influence their decision to move to another country or metropolitan district.

The respondents from the Country Districts indicated:

- the position/type of work;
- promotional position; and
- being valued,

as the 3 main reasons they would consider moving to another position in a country location. The majority of respondents indicated that they are not overly interested in moving to a metropolitan based position; such a move will depend on whether it is a promotion and on the nature of the work. Access to training and development opportunities was rated fairly low and was not seen as a determining factor when it comes to deciding between a move to a country or metropolitan location.

Employees were asked to select five ***non-work related factors*** that would influence their decision to move to another district to establish if there are any lifestyle factors that might motivate employees to move between offices. Housing availability (177), followed by family responsibility (154) and cost

of living (154) were the factors listed as the most important when making a decision to relocate to another country location. Access to retail/commercial facilities (54) and distance from Perth (84) were rated as the least important non-work related factors. The results were similar for a decision to move to a metropolitan district.

3.3.2 Metropolitan: work and non-work related factors

The same question was posed in the metropolitan survey, *under what circumstances would employees consider either a move to another metropolitan location or alternatively to a country location*. The results indicated that metropolitan employees would consider a move to either a country or a metropolitan location based on the nature of the work and for a promotional position, even though they would strongly favour a metropolitan district. The location/quality of office accommodation, the people they were to work with and being valued are some of the factors that were also ranked high by employees should they consider a move to either a country or a metropolitan location.

Table 2 - Work related factors having an impact on an employee's decision to move

Options	Country District Office	Metropolitan District Office
The position/type of work	(1) 130	(1) 160
Promotional position	(2) 122	(2) 143
Job security (permanency)	60	75
Independence/autonomy and responsibility of the work	54	56
Access to training and development opportunities	55	56
Location/quality of office accommodation	(3) 104	(3) 118
The manager you would report to	52	77
Optimal use of your skills and knowledge	70	89
The team/people you would be working with	83	111
Being valued	82	114

Housing availability was the biggest *non-work related factor* having an impact on a metropolitan employee's decision to consider a position in a country district, followed by family responsibility and cost of living. The considerations for a position based in country are somewhat different to the factors that will be considered for a metropolitan position. Access to educational facilities, as well as retail/commercial facilities, seems to not be a major factor for metropolitan employees considering a position in a Country District.

Table 3 – Non work related factors having an impact on an employee's decision to move

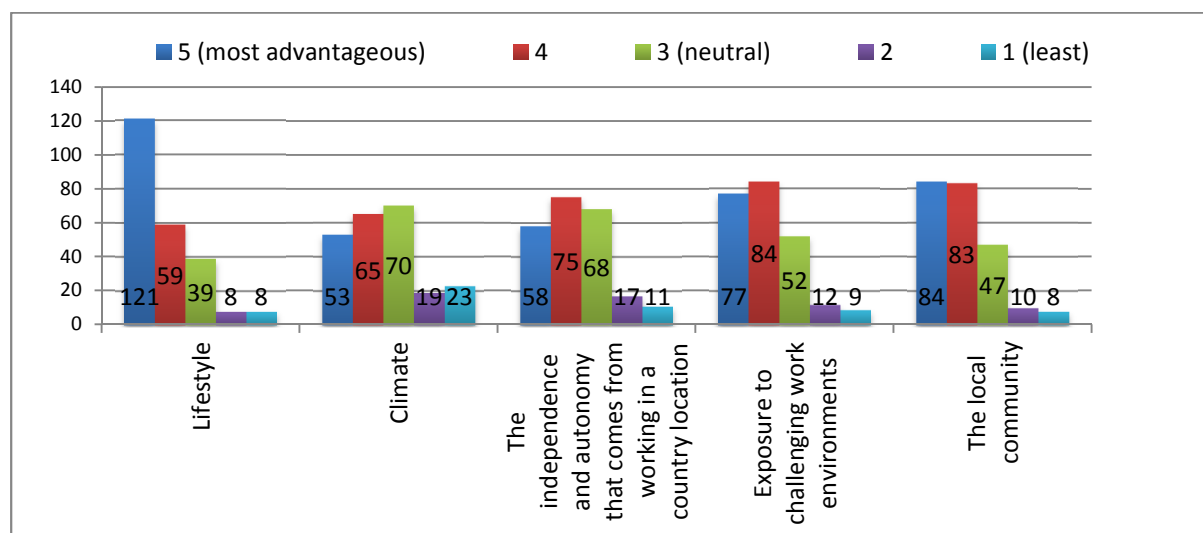
Options	Country District Office	Metropolitan District Office
Family responsibilities	(2) 124	(1) 154
Employment opportunities for spouse/partner	102	85
Housing availability	(1) 134	(4) 96
Distance from Perth	(4) 111	(2) 107
Climate	85	36
Access to educational facilities	37	54
Access to hospital/medical facilities	68	63
Access to retail/commercial facilities	43	62
Cost of living	(3) 122	(3) 107

3.3.3 Advantages and disadvantages of employment in a country district

Employees were asked to consider the advantages of country employment and to rate factors that apply to them, from 1 (least) to 5 (most) important.

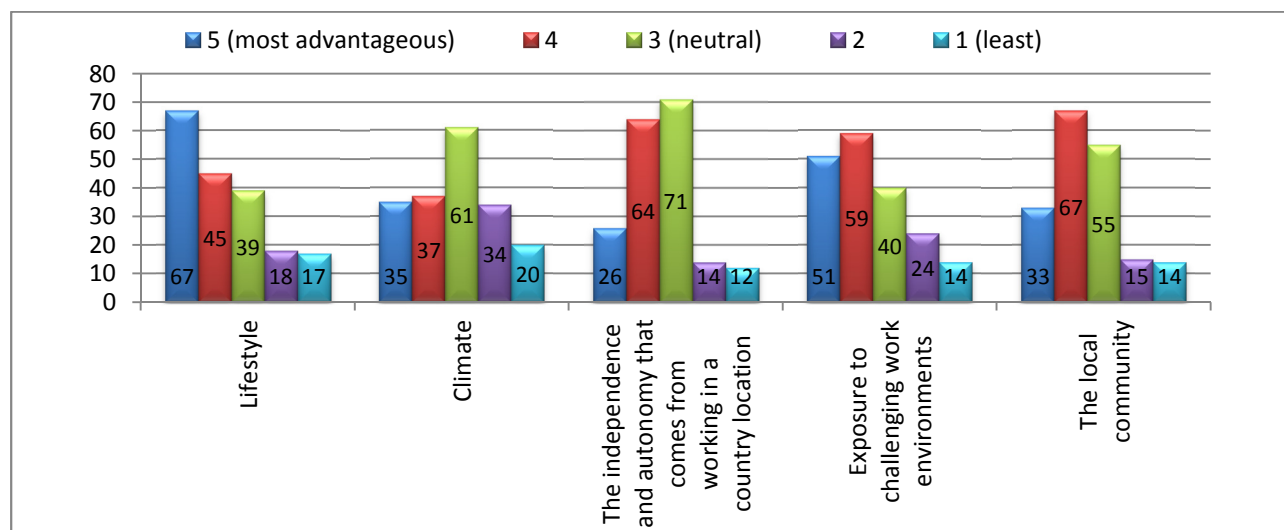
Employees from the country rated the advantages of country employment differently to metropolitan employees, with lifestyle (121), the local community (84) and exposure to challenging work environments (77) seen as the highest advantages they experience working in a country location. The climate and independence or autonomy that goes with working in a country location was seen as the least advantageous when it comes to working in the country.

Figure 9 - Advantages working in a country location - a country district perspective



Metropolitan respondents also rated lifestyle (67) as the most important factor with exposure to challenging work environments coming second (51). The local community (33) was not as highly rated for metropolitan employees but was seen to be a clear advantage for employees working in country locations.

Figure 10 - Advantages working in a country location - a metropolitan perspective



Employees from both country and metropolitan districts were then asked to consider the disadvantages of country employment. Employees were asked to rate from 1 (least) to 5 (most) important factors that apply to them.

The reality of life in the country varies significantly from the perception of metropolitan employees. The top five disadvantages associated with country employment are highlighted below.

Table 4 - Perceived disadvantages of country employment

Rank	Country Employees	Metropolitan Employees
1	Isolation from family and friends (78)	Isolation from family and friends (117)
2	Access to training and development opportunities (53)	Impact on immediate family (109)
3	Impact on immediate family (53)	Distance from Perth (75)
4	Professional isolation (50)	Lack of partner career opportunities (57)
5	Distance from Perth (43)	Professional isolation (41)

Isolation from family and friends rated the highest for both groups of employees. The next most significant factor for country employees was access to training and development opportunities whereas that did not rate significantly for metropolitan employees. The impact on immediate family and distance from Perth were significant factors for metropolitan employees. A lack of partner career opportunities was seen as a potential disadvantage for metropolitan employees, whilst country employees did not rank it as a significant disadvantage.

3.4 REGIONAL INCENTIVES

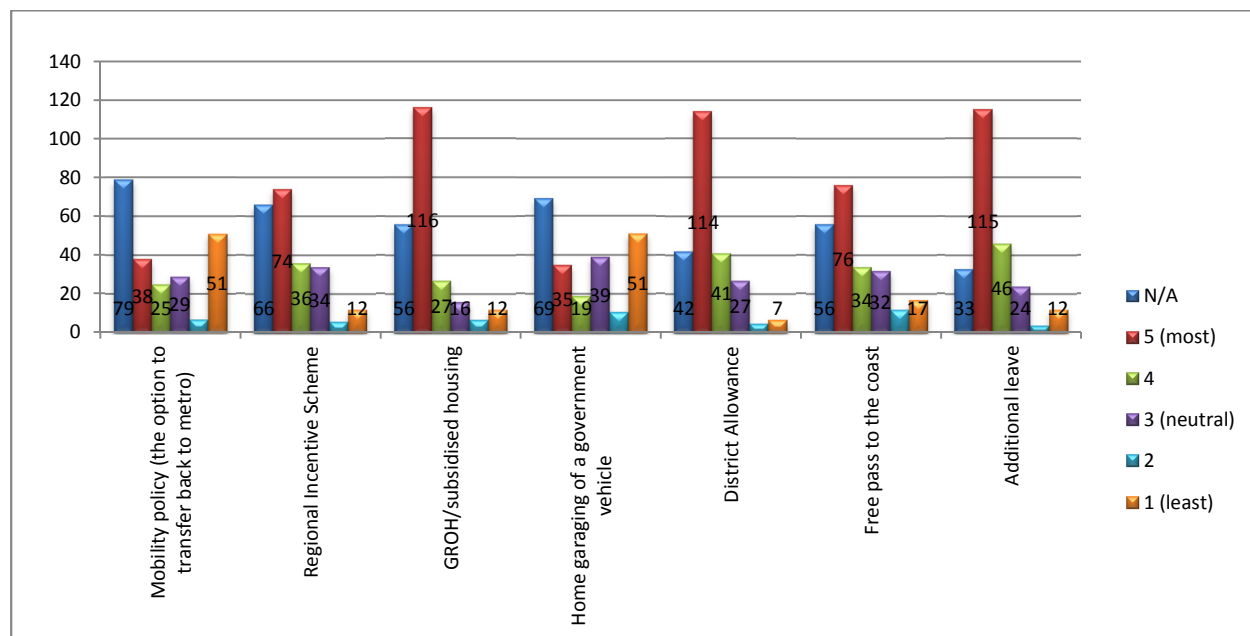
3.4.1 Country Districts

This section focused on the various entitlements on offer to employees that work in regional locations, the purpose was to establish what incentives country employees most value.

There are a range of government-wide; award based regional incentives for employees living in the country, including: District Allowance, Annual Leave Travel Concession (Free Pass to the Coast),

GROH and additional leave. The Department also offers incentives specific to the Department including the Mobility Policy, home garaging (not limited to the Department but is subject to individual policy arrangements) and the Regional Incentive Scheme. Country employees were asked to rate the importance of the benefits as they apply to them, whereas metropolitan employees were asked what benefits would influence their decision to relocate to the country.

Figure 11 - Importance of regional benefits



GROH (116), additional leave (115), District Allowance (114) and Free Pass to the Coast (76) were the top ranking benefits for regional employees. These benefits apply to all employees across the public sector which does not give the Department an advantage when advertising for staff as other public sector agencies offer the same. Home garaging (35), Mobility Policy (38) and the Regional Incentive Scheme (RIS) (74) were the least popular benefits. This may be due to the fact that they only apply to employees in certain occupational categories. The inequity in the RIS was consistently raised in employee comments, particularly from administration staff.

Employees were also asked to provide comments or suggestions on the benefits and allowances available to regional employees.

Examples of some of the comments include –

- *“The Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme (HOSS) needs to be reviewed urgently. As a manager, I see the Department would save masses of money if we increased the allowance to home buyers (as opposed to paying GROH) and by supporting workers to buy homes we retain them for at least 5 years. This creates stability in the workforce, will attract a different type of employee (perhaps young families etc.) reduces the financial outlay and encourages our staff to become part of the community they live and work in...”*
- *“The Regional Incentive Scheme is unfair given it is position based however all people in the office experience the same cost of living pressures”*

- *“All of the above are the reasons to stay remote, without them the job would be harder. You work 24/7 in small communities even when you have strict boundaries the local knowledge is underestimated”*

A common theme throughout was the inequity in allowances as staff in certain positions are eligible for additional benefits even though all staff in the district experience the same difficult living conditions. Also the application process and general knowledge of eligibility for allowances was raised.

- *“Streamline the free pass to the coast, as it would be much easier to apply for a single pre-determined amount than trying to constantly work out the best/cheapest way to travel from a remote area to Perth when there are no regular public transport travel options available.”*
- *“It would be good to have a few more sessions on what this looks like and how often it is updated. I know people in the job have to search and search to find out the benefits- would be good to discuss before starting in the position.”*
- *“Do not know about Regional Incentive Scheme!”*
- *“Make the process simpler regarding electricity subsidies and clearer.”*

The inequity and additional costs created by GROH housing being offered when local employees have substantial mortgages was also raised. The benefits provided by the Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme are not comparable to the perceived benefits of having GROH housing, such as significantly below market rents and the provision of furniture. It was suggested that encouraging employees to purchase homes in the country may result in improved retention rates.

- *“Home ownership scheme to be increased to allow for a feeling of belonging for self and family”*
- *“Opportunity to buy housing in your country location and receive substantial support from workplace to pay off mortgage as this would still be cheaper for the dept. than paying high rent. There is no support for people who remain in long term jobs i.e. no housing assistance - we have mortgages to pay but others get GROH subsidy and have their own homes rented in other locations getting their mortgages paid.”*
- *“The mortgage subsidy after leaving geha needs to be reviewed. It currently doesn’t make sense to purchase your own home here when the cost of renting and buying is so high and the relative cost of geha rental so low. More encouragement to purchase a home would mean a lot less people renting through geha and ultimately mean less cost for the department and a more stable workforce.”*
- *“A major attraction for me that would keep me with the Department and in a country district is the Government Home Ownership Scheme - This should be increased / doubled to reflect cost neutrality in relation to the current costs of GROH. At the moment my department pays out at least \$500 a week in GROH subsidy for me indefinitely but would only give me a maximum of \$175 per week towards my own home for up to a maximum of 5 years - this should be reviewed to provide more incentive to stay - buy in the community and stay in the work.”*

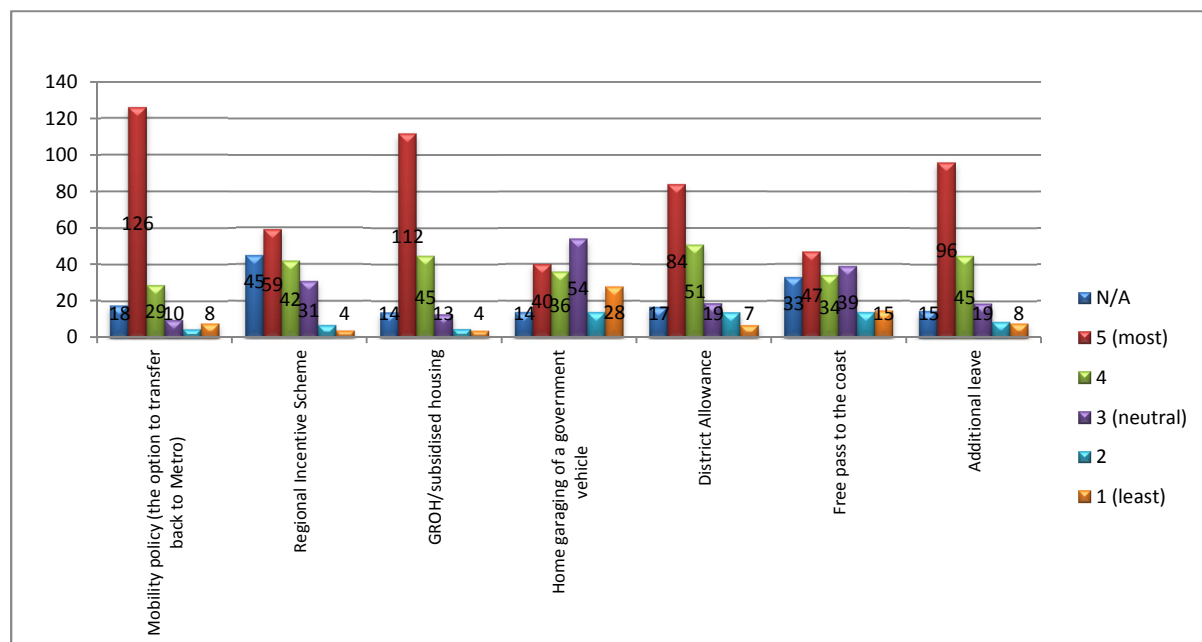
The travel between district offices and having to come to Perth for departmental business and training, necessitating time away from family was also seen as a significant issue.

- *“Recognition of distances/travel on workload”*
- *“The one week commuted toil is not sufficient for those roles that have a district wide responsibility and therefore travel regularly throughout the district as well as Perth travel for bi annual role requirements and other incidental training travel”*

3.4.2 Metropolitan Districts

Whether metropolitan employees are willing or not to relocate to a country district appears to be highly influenced by the Mobility Policy. This guarantees employees a return to their substantive position in a metropolitan district once they have completed their allocated time in the country. Metropolitan employees also highly rated the provision of GROH housing (112) and the prospect of additional leave (96) as benefits that may have an impact on their decision to accept a position in a country district.

Figure 12 - Metropolitan employees' perception on regional benefits



Metropolitan employees were asked if there were any additional strategies that the Department can consider to attract them to relocate to a country district. Only a small number of employees (14) responded to this question, respondents indicated that due to their personal circumstances there was nothing that the Department can do to make it attractive for them to move to a country location.

Some feedback included –

- *“Free flights back to Perth per term”*
- *“Four day weekend each month”*
- *“Regular trips back to work paid for (similar to FIFO work)”*
- *“I would not move to the country due to family commitments and due to my children's education”.*

These suggestions, whilst not cost effective, highlight what the respondents in metropolitan positions value. The decision to move to a country location varies based on the employees' personal circumstances. This makes a “one solution for all” approach difficult.

3.5 RETENTION

The purpose of this section was to determine if employees are looking for employment elsewhere, and if so, where and why they are looking and what factors are likely to influence their decision to remain with the Department. The questions focussed on possible factors likely to have an impact on an employee’s decision to remain with and/or leave the department.

3.5.1 Country Districts

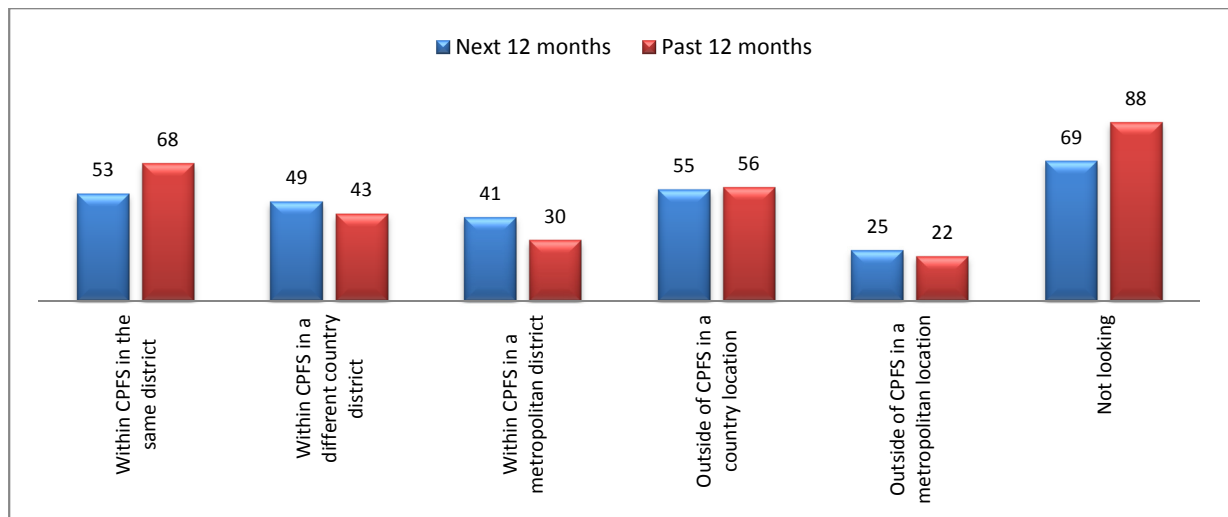
Two-hundred-and-twenty-eight employees responded to the question *“Have you looked for employment in the past 12 months or do you intend to look for employment in the next 12 months?”*

A smaller amount (69) of employees will be looking for other employment in the next 12 months than in the previous 12 months (88).

The number of respondents (53) who plan to look for a position within the Department, in the same location is higher than that of employees looking for a position in a different country location in the Department (49). The number of employees that indicated that they will be looking out for other positions in the Department (different country district (49) and metropolitan district (41)) over the next 12 months is higher than in the previous 12 months.

Interestingly, the highest number of respondents (55) that will be looking for alternative employment indicated that they will be looking outside CPFS in a country location. This may indicate that it is not necessarily the country location that will influence their decision, but rather the workplace or job prospects. However, of the 157 employees who were seeking alternative employment in a country district, 102 (65,6%) indicated that they will be looking within CPFS either in the same district (53) or in another country district (49). Encouragingly, 69 (24%) are not seeking alternative employment.

Figure 13 - Country employees exploring the market over a 12 month period



Employees were asked if they were to look for employment outside of the Department what sector would they consider. The highest percentage, 32% indicated that they would be looking at other WA public sector agencies, followed by 28% who indicated that they would be open to whatever is available. The assumption can be made that there are a number of employees that will always be looking at what is available and testing the market *“Not sure just looking at what is available”*.

Twenty-five per cent of respondents were considering employment with other government agencies (Commonwealth and local government). The low interest in the private sector indicates that losing employees to the private sector was not a factor. The challenge for the Department will be to attract and employ and then to offer them something unique that other WA public sector agencies cannot offer in order to retain them.

To determine what the Department would have to offer/do to retain an employee, respondents were asked: 1) what influences their decision to look for employment elsewhere, and 2) what make them stay.

3.5.1.1 Why employees are looking for employment elsewhere

Feedback from the respondents on the reasons as to why they are looking for employment elsewhere included:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Improved career development opportunities | 63% |
| • Personal or family circumstances | 62% |
| • Better pay and conditions | 52% |
| • Workload pressures/demands of the job | 42% |
| • Lack of support on the job | 36% |
| • Not valued as an employee/not being cared for as a person | 35% |
| • Skills and knowledge not optimally used | 31% |

This information is consistent with the results received from the exit surveys, which listed the top five reasons for leaving were:

- Improved career development opportunities
- Lack of recognition/not valued as an employee
- Personal or family circumstances and lack of support in the job
- Change in career direction
- Workload pressures/demands of the job

Whilst there is some deviation between the two surveys with better pay and conditions not as highly rated in the exit survey, it demonstrates the relevancy of the data between staff thinking about leaving and staff that have made the decision to leave.

The top three reasons are to a certain extent outside the Department's control, whilst the next four reasons on the list can be influenced as they are closely related to how employees are managed, supported and utilised in the Department. Twenty-two per cent of respondents who indicated "other" as a reason provided the following comments:

- *"Struggles based on only having one team leader, lack of access to other senior staff for consultation, lack of promotional opportunities in a small office, not feeling valued and respected by current line manager"*
- *"Disregard by fellow employees/DD for tax payers money, too much spent on i.e. training etc. where staff can access via video conferencing equipment, staff falsifying timesheets but nothing done by supervisors, tasks and special conditions passed onto favourites, improper and dishonest. Nepotism is also an issue of concern"*

- *“I would choose Unresolvable Conflict with Manager/Supervisor rather than Conflict with Manager/Supervisor”.*
- *“I am very happy in my current position but I love the opportunity to go out of my comfort zone and experience new environments and workplaces.”*
- *“Incentives such as home ownership incentives in other areas being better than DCP will offer. Local government and some federal and community sector provide \$300 - \$350 per week towards own home where as DCP will only provide GROH or maximum of \$175 to home ownership.”*

The comments provided under “other” as per the above and the indication of lack of support and not being valued as an employee or cared for as a person is an indication of further development required for supervisors and managers.

3.5.1.2 Why do employees stay with the Department

The second question on the subject of retention was based on the reasons that have an impact on an employee’s decision to stay with the Department. Two-hundred-and-thirty-four employees in Country Districts responded to this question with the top five reasons for remaining with the Department being:

- | | |
|---|----|
| • A good relationship with my line manager | 98 |
| • Doing work that makes a difference to the wider community | 93 |
| • Good relationships with my colleagues | 92 |
| • Salary and benefits | 89 |
| • Able to balance work and personal/family life | 80 |

These results are consistent with the reasons why employees joined the organisation (add value and making a difference). Adding value and good relationships are a consistent theme throughout this section, which indicates that employees join for the right reason however the lack of effective management plays a significant role in them leaving the Department.

3.5.2 Metropolitan Districts

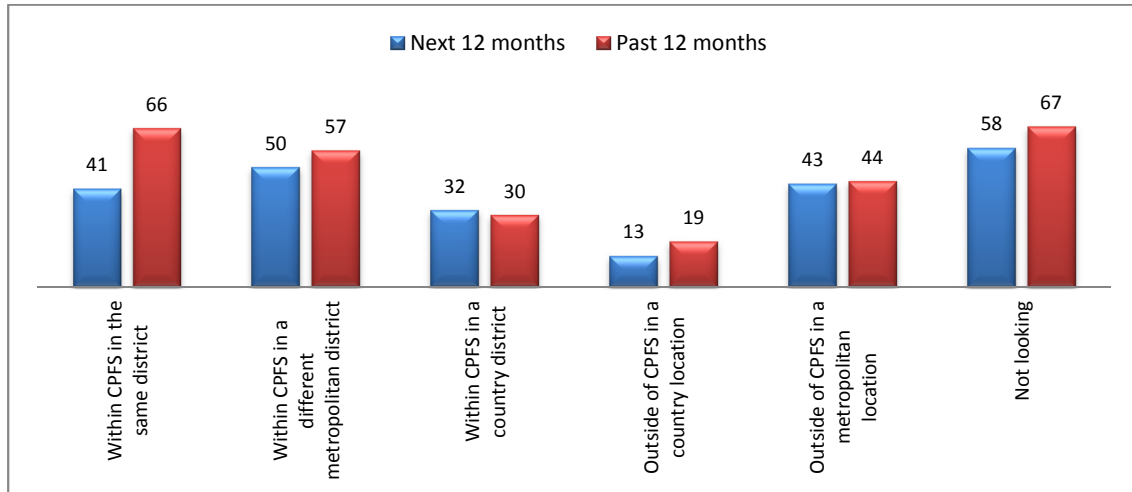
One-hundred-and-ninety employees responded to the question *“Have you looked for employment in the past 12 months or do you intend to look for employment in the next 12 months?”*

Sixty-seven out of 85 respondents indicated that they did not look for employment in the past 12 months, whilst 58 indicated that they do not plan to look over the next 12 months. In contrast with the country situation there is an overall decrease in the number of staff looking for other employment. The decrease may be due to a lack of confidence in the labour market with a general tightening of conditions and the current budget situation which lead to a decrease in the number of positions available for advertising.

In contrast with the country, the number of respondents looking for a position within the Department within the same district was lower than employees looking for a position in a different metropolitan district.

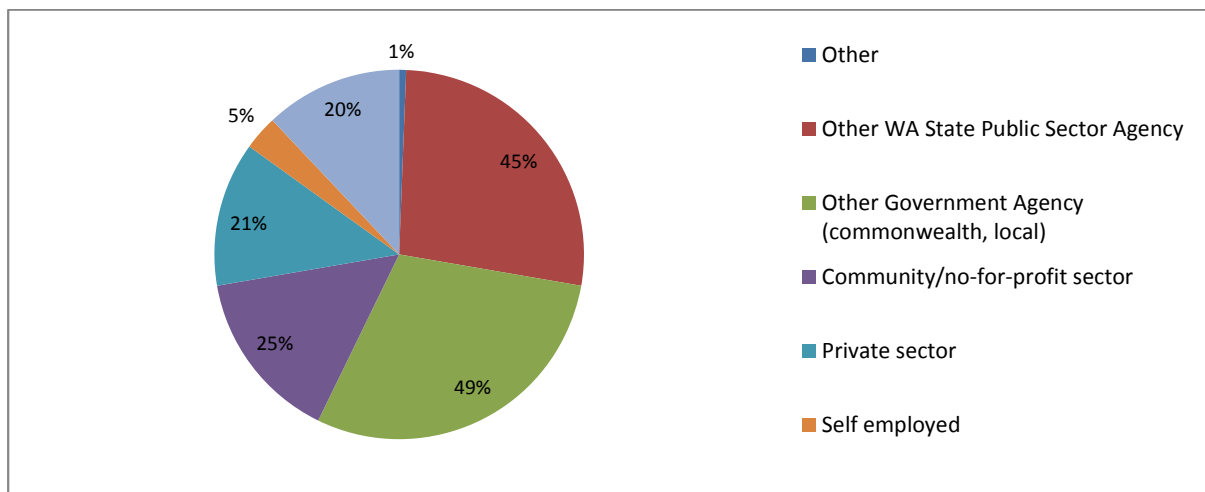
Employees were also slightly more willing to consider a country district than what was the case 12 months before. Respondents were more open to look for employment outside their current district than what they were in the past. Overall the number of staff looking for positions has decreased from the previous 12 months.

Figure 14 - Metropolitan employees exploring the market over a 12 month period



Employees were asked if they were to look for employment outside the Department what sector would they consider. The highest percentage (49%) indicated that they would be looking at other Government agencies such as the Commonwealth/local or interstate followed by 45% looking at other WA state public sector agencies.

Figure 15 - Metropolitan employees' sectors of interest



Metropolitan employees were also asked: 1) what influences their decision to look for employment elsewhere, and 2) what make them stay.

3.5.2.1 *Why employees are looking for employment elsewhere*

Employees were asked to select the top five (5) answers as they most apply to them. The feedback from the metropolitan respondents on the reasons as to why they were looking for employment elsewhere included:

- Better pay and conditions 61%
- Improved career development opportunities 60%
- Personal or family circumstances 54%
- Workload pressures/demands of the job 52%
- Lack of support on the job 41%

This information is also consistent with the Exit Survey results. The exception is that better pay and conditions was the number one reason for metropolitan staff looking to leave.

Workload pressures/demands of the job are very much grounded in the perception of the individual. Whilst the Department has strategies in place around workload allocation for caseworkers, overall workload pressures are more highly rated amongst Caseworkers and all metropolitan employees.

A smaller number of employees provided comments regarding the other reasons as to why they would leave, some of the comments received included:

- *“Permanency, broadening skills and variety”*
- *“Better professional development opportunities elsewhere”*

There were a number of positive comments with staff indicating that they would not look to leave:

- *“I love my current place of work and the only reason I would consider moving would be for career progression”*
- *“Some of this ebbs and flows and currently feels very validated in career and opportunities but this is the first time in a number of years that I have”*

The other comments centred on workload, corporate decisions such as specified callings and frameworks and workplace politics:

- *“Corporate complacency that excessive workload and lack of resources is just the way it is”*
- *“Management changes too frequently”*
- *“Staff are clicky and this influences opportunities for growth”*
- *“Feels like social work by numbers. All that matters is being seen to meet KPI's and quality of interaction with clients is of little importance as it is not measurable.”*

The comments provided under “other” indicate that further development for supervisors and managers may be required to assist their staff in coping with change and ensuring that favouritism is not perceived as the reason why staff progress.

3.5.2.2 Why do employees stay with the Department

One-hundred-and-ninety-five metropolitan employees responded to the question ranking the reasons they choose to remain with the Department. The top five reasons were:

- | | |
|--|----|
| • Good relationships with colleagues | 87 |
| • Salary and benefits | 74 |
| • A good relationship with my line manager/Able to balance work and personal/family life | 71 |
| • Doing work that makes a difference to the wider community | 66 |
| • Feeling valued and cared for as a person | 56 |

This is consistent with the Country results that adding value to the community (which was a reason for joining the Department) and good relationships play a significant role in retaining staff. Whilst better pay and conditions was listed as the number one reason for metropolitan employees to leave, these results suggest that the salary and benefits on offer are a sufficient reason to remain with the Department.

4. CONCLUSION

Although this survey has provided information already being used in the development of several projects in the department, there is scope for more development that is to be explored further. The information obtained has highlighted some areas where the Department is doing well, as well as areas of concern. The current budget situation impacts on the feasibility of some suggestions, there are however options that could be explored further.

5. STRATEGIES

The following strategies have arisen as a result of the survey and can be explored further:

1. Evaluate the benefits of an employee referral program.

Thirty-six per cent of respondents in country and 33% in metropolitan were referred to a position with the Department. Explore this form of marketing further, including the implementation of an employee referral program and the provision of resources through the Intranet and Internet that can be used for this purpose.

2. Ensure the Department continues to target university students.

Consistent with the introduction of Specified Callings and the Qualifications Framework it is essential that the Department continues to attend universities to target people with the appropriate qualifications. This is particularly relevant in the metropolitan districts where the largest number of respondents to the survey was studying prior to joining the Department.

3. Consider the development of targeted advertising material for the different occupational groups.

The survey indicated that there were different reasons for joining the Department across the occupational groups. Develop targeted advertising, including the provision of an additional information sheet. For example, targeting Caseworkers should include the structure and opportunity for progression, professional development and how this position makes a difference. Administrative positions should focus on employment conditions and how this may lead to a better work/life balance.

4. Develop a consistent approach to handling Interstate and Intrastate relocations in the Department.

The majority of staff employed in regional areas come from within Western Australia. Develop and provide to Business Managers and District Directors a consistent approach and information on managing employee relocations from Intrastate and within Western Australia.

5. Improve internal marketing of those districts identified as the least desirable work locations.

Employees have indicated that location/proximity to Perth, lifestyle, family and previous relationship with the area are important factors in determining desirable work locations. The least desirable districts should improve their internal marketing to other employees in the Department by raising their profile which may result in the movement of experienced staff. Examples include, improved online profile (expertise from Head Office may be required) and country and metropolitan exchange programs, a viable period to be determined.

- 6. Create a register of experienced employees who are willing to temporarily relocate.**
Create a register of employees interested in temporarily relocating for hard to fill positions. This will create a ready pool of employees that country district directors can view when a position becomes available.
- 7. Ensure that promotional material for country districts focuses on the lifestyle factors associated with the region.**
Develop improved promotional material focussing on lifestyle benefits for each of the country districts, to attract both internal and external applicants.
- 8. Provide clear communication about allowances and benefits on offer in country districts.**
The knowledge of what allowances and benefits are on offer and the time taken to process them was raised throughout the country survey. Prepare a simple summary of allowances and benefits (as opposed to a complex award) to improve the understanding and implementation of allowances and entitlements.
- 9. Review the application of the Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme (HOSS).**
The HOSS aims to assist staff with the purchase of their home up to a capped amount for 5 years. Review the scheme to capitalise on the suggested benefits that are provided to the community and the permanency associated with home ownership.
- 10. Review the effectiveness of the Regional Incentive Scheme (RIS).**
The Regional Incentive Scheme has been operational for 3 years. It is rated low as a benefit and creates a rift (them and us) in the eligible districts, as it is not available to all employees. Review the RIS to determine its ongoing viability as an attraction and retention “incentive”.
- 11. Development of guidelines for managers to improve the workplace.**
The Department has limited control over the actual pay and conditions of employees as prescribed by the Award. There is however scope for the Department to influence other factors (nepotism, cliques) that may have an impact on morale in the workplace. Provide managers with guidelines as to what to look out for and how to deal with day-to-day situations that may have a negative impact on employee morale.
- 12. Ensure that line managers can identify and support employees suffering from workplace stress.**
Managers should be aware of factors that can cause stress, recognise when an employee needs assistance, know what actions to put in place to manage it, and know when and where to refer an employee for external support. Provide managers with the knowledge and tools to identify stressors in the workplace.
- 13. Explore “smarter ways” to deliver supervisor and management training to cover a larger group and to include more day-to-day management skills.**
Ongoing supervisor and management development focusing on the core competencies of a good manager managing a team on a daily basis will become vital for the Department to become an employer of choice. Investigate the delivery of a practical program that i) covers more practical topics, ii) can reach a broader audience, iii) without taking them out of the workplace, and iv) has an “immediate” impact.

A large number of employees indicated that they do not feel valued, good managers will become key in retaining employees.

14. Establish a culture of an ongoing employee “climate” assessment.

The Department needs to ensure that employees remain engaged and that they stay with the department because it is a great place to work. They join for the right reasons (to make a difference) but leave for reasons that can be prevented and managed by the Department. Establish preventative measures such as an annual Employee Satisfaction Survey, or an Investor in People Audit, or a Gallup Q12 survey. As the Department’s ratings increase it will also contribute to an increased perception of the Department as an employer of choice. Conduct further study to determine which measure will be the most beneficial for the Department.

6. RECOMMENDATION

In consultation with the Executive Director Country Services consider and prioritise strategies for inclusion in a 3 year plan.