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# Work-life balance coming to a workplace near you

A new strategy to help Queensland employers and their workers enjoy the benefits of work-life balance policies was launched recently at a forum of public and private sector employers seeking to retain or lure experienced workers.

The strategy, developed by the Work and Family Unit in the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations will help employers ensure their work-life balance policies work better for them and their employees, giving them a greater edge attracting and retaining employees.

Dr Marjolein Broers, a senior policy officer at the unit, said that at a time when changing demographics and an ageing workforce were causing labour and skills shortages across the country, it was initiatives like the work-life balance strategy that will help Queensland employers and employees.

The strategy will improve worker's ability to balance their work and personal lives,

providing employers with more dedicated, focussed and productive employees. Employees will want to move to, and remain with, businesses that provide proper access to attractive work-life balance policies.

While all economies have been hit by the sub-prime crisis to some extent, labour and skills shortages have and will in the future continue to affect productivity. Utilising work-life balance policies can help lure workers to Queensland employers and boost their satisfaction levels so that retaining staff is less of a problem.

Dr Broers said the recent forum of public and private sector employers heard how the new strategy had been developed to

help any employer in the state wanting to bolster their work-life balance policies—at little to no cost.

Dedicated officers in the department will be available to help employers improve on their current work-life balance policies through proper implementation so that employees can actually use these policies.

Information to assist Human Resources (HR) and Industrial Relations (IR) managers improve uptake of work-life balance policies can be found on the departments' website and a number of resources for both the private and public sector also will be developed as part of the strategy.

To access the HR/IR toolkit visit [www.deir.qld.gov.au](http://www.deir.qld.gov.au)



# School children and Christmas holiday work

Employers and parents have been reminded children under 16 years of age need written consent to work over the Christmas holidays and that work cannot exceed 38 hours in a non-school week.

An audit campaign earlier this year found minor breaches of the state's two-year-old *Child Employment Act 2006*, mostly relating to paperwork and consent form inconsistencies.

The audit campaign found no Dickensian nightmares of children working down mines or in other dangerous jobs, but it did highlight some ignorance as to the rights and responsibilities of everyone involved.

The Act was designed to ensure child workers were not ripped off, not performing dangerous work and not neglecting their school studies.

The minimum age does not apply to work in a family business or in the entertainment industry, which is governed by separate provisions.

Under the Act, younger children aged 11 and 12 years of age may only be employed in

supervised delivery work and only between 6am and 6pm.

Employers are required to keep detailed records of child employees and to provide induction packages and appropriate training, including workplace health and safety training. Children generally must not work between 10pm and 6am, with exclusions for children working in the entertainment industry and family businesses.

Parents also have a responsibility to provide a consent form which has to be signed by the parent and returned to the employer before a child can start work.

For a copy of the *Child Employment Guide* or further information on the *Child Employment Act 2006*, please visit the Department of Industrial Relations' website at [www.deir.qld.gov.au](http://www.deir.qld.gov.au) or call 1300 369 945.



## Christmas public holidays

Public holidays for December and January are:

Christmas Day	Thursday, December 25
Boxing Day	Friday, December 26
New Years Day	Thursday, January 1
Australia Day	Monday, January 26

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