Question on Notice

No. 628

Asked on Tuesday 29 April 2008

MRS CUNNINGHAM asked the Minister for Transport, Trade, Employment and Industrial Relations (MR MICKEL)—

QUESTION:

With reference to anti-discrimination legislation and QR's policy of compulsory retirement of drivers at 65 years of age, and given the increase in coal exports and demand for additional trains – Why are drivers, who pass health checks and are competent, required to retire at 65 years of age?

ANSWER:

A mandatory age 65 retirement policy currently applies to all QR Limited employees, including the Chief Executive Officer.

QR Limited has advised it has specific exemptions under s106A(1)(i) and s106(1)(j) of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*. These sections relate to QR Limited's Chief Executive Officer and all other QR Limited employees, respectively. The Act allows, but does not impel, QR Limited to make a mandatory age 65 retirement policy.

All key stakeholders are aware of QR Limited's policy on mandatory age 65 retirement, which has been unchanged since 1991.

Currently, the additional demand for traincrew is being met by using a combination of 209 new trainee drivers, the continuation of traincrew volunteering to work overtime and, when feasible, using tutor drivers not currently assigned to trainee drivers.

QR Passengers has developed and implemented a Business Instruction (in August 2007) with a focus on one-on-one tuition, which will substantially reduce time required to qualify new drivers and improve the effectiveness of training. The qualification time for Interurban drivers is expected to be reduced from twelve to nine months as a result of the development and implementation of the Business Instruction.