

My story of retirement

Ruth Ernest

I remember as a bright-eyed beginning teacher in 1981 being asked whether I wanted to retire at age 55 or 60 – and being a female I had this option at that time. Well, what could I say? Here I was in my dream job as a science teacher at Tamworth High School and I thought “Wow, I could do this forever – why would I want to ever retire?”. So I chose to retire at 60 and made my superannuation contributions accordingly. I certainly don't regret those extra five years (it's amazing how one's perspective is altered by time) because that was when I became very much involved with the SPC and my principalship.

But as the time was drawing nearer and things were getting tougher and tougher for principals, I saw the writing on the wall and knew it was time to call it a day. Certainly the death threats and verbal abuses I had suffered helped to make that decision easier and I had accrued sufficient long service leave to be able to go almost twelve months early.

So I made an appointment to meet with my Director during the Term 3 holiday break in 2016 and armed with my completed [separation forms](#) I informed her of my decision. I also had to complete a paper leave application form because the on-line electronic system couldn't work out my leave entitlements for such an extended time. I didn't rescind my position primarily for a couple of reasons: Firstly, I could change my mind (ha ha) but most importantly, it would give my 2IC a decent length of time as relieving principal and put her in a better position to become substantive should she still want to do so! (I had been focused on leadership succession for some time – it was even in the school plan.) I will say that HR was terrific and very helpful even when I changed my leave to sick leave for an extended time – but that's a topic for another article. I also notified State Super and NSWTF of my intended retirement.

I learnt a few things along the way that would have been very helpful to have known at the start. Perhaps the most significant thing was **loss of access to the portal** – yes, I knew I wouldn't have access to my email account and I'd spent considerable time cleaning that up, saving and deleting etc, but I naively didn't consider any other information I might need. Nor did I realise that the cut off was almost immediate upon retirement – and without any warning that it was about to happen. It was only when I came to do my tax return (yes, late as usual) and couldn't access my pay information that I realised this. After a phone call to Ed Connect (1300 323 232) I had to submit an online query form to HR and request the information I needed. This took a couple of days but it did arrive.

Other than that slight hiccup everything proceeded rather smoothly. Financial entitlements from the Department magically appeared in my bank account as did my Super funds. Oh, and I received my retirement medal only seven months after retirement!

Contributor details

Ruth Ernest (ruth.m.ernest@gmail.com) 23/7/18