

Harris: I'll put my family first

Education Minister Tom Harris will contest the seat of Port Darwin in the Territory election but has not ruled out retiring from politics soon.

He said if his career placed any additional strain on his family life he would not hesitate to quit.

CLP president Shane Stone said Mr Harris' attitude was understandable but did not make him a lame duck candidate.

Mr Harris' wife Margot is living in Sydney with their 15-year-old daughter Dimity, who is studying ballet.

He said the separation caused by Dimity's studies was making life difficult.

"We took the decision that Margot should be there," Mr Harris said.

"But we don't like being apart.

"I don't think it's a secret that if there was any threat to the family relationship I'd get out of politics tomorrow.

"I feel very strongly about the family."

Mr Harris said he did not want to become another of what he termed the "statistics" of Territory politics.

"If you look back you can see how many marriages have split up in the Assembly since it started."

Mr Harris is 50 and has already qualified for a parliamentary pension.

He also has considerable business

By FRED McCUE

interests — "I haven't had to be in politics to make a living."

He said his political future had been doubtful for the last two or three years because of family matters.

"How the future pans out depends on how Dimity fares in her exams."

Should his daughter progress in ballet she will move to Melbourne to further her studies and this could force Mr Harris out of politics.

"The problem at the moment is that I'm apart from my wife and I'm not happy with that scene.

"Even if we were living in a normal relationship in Darwin and my work had been putting a strain on my marriage I'd have got out of politics."

Mr Stone, who had expressed an interest in standing for Port Darwin, said he would not be contesting pre-selection against Mr Harris.

He said he had already stated publicly that he did not intend standing against sitting CLP members.

"I don't see Mr Harris as being a lame duck," Mr Stone said.

"The way I read him is that he's saying he wants to do one more term and that's it."

Mr Stone, who steps down from the CLP presidency in August, said he was now unlikely to contest a seat at coming election.