

**Question on Notice
No. 288
Asked on 10 March 2005**

HON K LINGARD MP asked the Minister for Child Safety (MR REYNOLDS)-

QUESTION:

With reference to foster carers -

1. For each of the last two financial years and for the financial year to date (reported separately), what is the number of foster carers, by electorate?
2. For those listed in (1), what number of foster carers did not have additional criminal history and departmental checks undertaken following the Crime and Misconduct Commission Inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care?
3. For each of the last two financial years and for the financial year to date (reported separately), what is the number of foster carers who have had their approval withdrawn, by electorate, and what was the reason for the withdrawal?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question. The Crime and Misconduct Commission in its report into the foster care system identified the lack of electronic collection and storage of data as a major problem impacting upon the delivery of services to children and young people at risk of harm.

Information about electorates is not currently collected or stored on any departmental databases. As all electorates were requested, the address of each carer was electronically geocoded (longitude and latitude determined) and the electorate was then determined (also electronically) to create this response. For any addresses that were unable to be matched, all efforts were made to determine the electorate by manual means.

In order to overcome the problems identified with the information technology systems of the former Department of Families, the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Communities are in the process of developing an integrated client management system (ICMS). The ICMS is an integral part of the child protection and youth justice reforms recommended by the CMC Inquiry's report.

The ICMS is part of the Information Renewal Initiative, a \$44.4 million, three-year program to improve information management to support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in care or 'at risk' of harm.

The first key phase of the ICMS will be Queensland's first statewide Carer Directory, a registry of carers and care services that will be introduced to Child Safety Service Centres in 2005. This system will detail the foster care data that is necessary for an efficient and comprehensive child protection response.

1. As at 30 June 2003, there were 2,234 foster carers, whereas at 30 January 2005, there were 2,626 foster carers, a net increase of 392 carers. In 2003-04, 932 new foster carers were approved, and for the same period, 657 foster carers exited the system, which equates to a growth of 275 additional carers. This highlights the challenge of maintaining an equally strong focus on sustained recruitment and assessment activities and ongoing support of active foster carers.

See Table 1 for the number of foster carers by electorate for each of the last two financial years and for the financial year to date. It should also be noted that foster carers are attached to one of the Department of Child Safety's seven zones and not to electorates.

2. As per departmental policy, all foster carer applicants are required to undergo an initial assessment of their suitability. This process includes:
 - a child protection history check against departmental records;
 - a criminal history check;
 - a domestic and family violence history check;
 - a traffic history check;
 - the successful completion of *Quality Care: Foster Care Training*;
 - a medical assessment;
 - at least two character references; and
 - a *Foster Carer Assessment*.

All foster carers are approved in the first instance for a period of 12 months where they are reassessed at the end of that time. As part of the assessment process, criminal, traffic, domestic and family violence and child protection history checks are conducted again. If foster carers remain assessed as suitable persons, they are provided with an additional approval period of up to two years. The renewal process (inclusive of history checks) continues to occur every two years.

The department does not record information, regarding individual criminal history checks, electronically. This hard copy information is contained on the individual carer's file, which is held by the relevant Child Safety Service Centre.

3. The number of foster carers (by electorate) who have had their approval withdrawn for each of the two financial years and for the financial year to date is detailed in Table 2.

The number of foster carers (by financial year) who have had their approval withdrawn is detailed in Table 3.

Table 1.

Number of foster carers by state electorate.

SED Name	As at 30 June 2003	As at 30 June 2004	As at 31 January 2005
	Total	Total	Total
Albert	36	46	51
Algester	36	39	44
Ashgrove	10	11	12
Aspley	16	16	19
Barron River	35	32	40
Beaudesert	55	64	73
Brisbane Central	9	10	12
Broadwater	11	6	4
Bulimba	5	9	10
Bundaberg	43	41	43
Bundamba	42	49	54
Burdekin	19	21	20
Burleigh	14	15	14
Burnett	23	26	24
Cairns	27	38	39
Callide	33	33	35
Caloundra	13	14	15
Capalaba	22	30	32
Charters Towers	13	17	17
Chatsworth	17	23	21
Clayfield	5	10	10
Cleveland	16	18	17
Cook	55	52	51
Cunningham	13	13	15
Currumbin	18	16	14
Darling Downs	17	16	21
Everton	12	17	14
Ferny Grove	22	24	24
Fitzroy	28	22	26
Gaven	30	34	35
Gladstone	33	46	50
Glass House	32	30	32
Greenslopes	10	12	11
Gregory	30	32	39
Gympie	28	32	33
Hervey Bay	19	26	34
Hinchinbrook	17	18	18
Inala	41	56	55
Indooroopilly	4	6	6

SED Name	As at 30 June 2003	As at 30 June 2004	As at 31 January 2005
	Total	Total	Total
Ipswich West	37	42	43
Kallangur	25	35	42
Kawana	15	18	19
Keppel	19	16	20
Kurwongbah	30	26	29
Lockyer	42	46	53
Logan	44	52	62
Lytton	28	29	27
Mackay	35	35	40
Mansfield	15	21	20
Maroochydore	9	11	11
Maryborough	35	48	49
Mirani	21	23	23
Moggill	7	7	6
Mount Coot-tha	8	11	8
Mount Gravatt	10	9	11
Mount Isa	68	58	55
Mount Ommaney	13	13	12
Mudgeeraba	27	24	26
Mulgrave	46	51	53
Mundingburra	27	29	34
Murrumba	31	37	37
Nanango	38	37	38
Nicklin	24	26	28
Noosa	9	13	12
Nudgee	14	14	14
Pumicestone	20	20	25
Redcliffe	19	20	21
Redlands	19	25	33
Robina	11	9	8
Rockhampton	34	39	32
Sandgate	34	35	37
South Brisbane	12	14	14
Southern Downs	13	21	22
Southport	20	22	19
Springwood	25	27	28
Stafford	17	19	20
Stretton	17	22	23
Surfers Paradise	7	10	10
Tablelands	35	45	38
Thuringowa	45	42	47

SED Name	As at 30 June 2003	As at 30 June 2004	As at 31 January 2005
	Total	Total	Total
Toowoomba South	12	16	20
Townsville	23	27	28
Warrego	38	40	46
Waterford	55	67	66
Whitsunday	29	26	27
Woodridge	59	63	69
Yeerongpilly	9	10	12
Not in Qld	40	48	42
UTD*	9	13	18
Grand Total	2,234	2,481	2,626

*UTD – State Electoral Division unable to be determined from current address details (ie address is post box or overseas)

Table 2.

Number of Foster Carers (by Electorate) who have had their approval withdrawn.

SED Name	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Albert	16	9	16
Algester	9	3	5
Ashgrove	1	1	2
Aspley	3	1	3
Barron River	9	17	13
Beaudesert	7	9	4
Brisbane Central	0	0	3
Broadwater	2	8	9
Bulimba	0	3	1
Bundaberg	3	9	17
Bundamba	17	5	11
Burdekin	8	9	5
Burleigh	4	4	6
Burnett	3	2	9
Cairns	20	25	14
Callide	10	17	1
Caloundra	3	2	8
Capalaba	11	2	4
Charters Towers	3	5	1
Chatsworth	9	0	4
Clayfield	0	0	3
Cleveland	2	3	2
Cook	19	61	20
Cunningham	12	1	1
Currumbin	5	6	8

SED Name	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Everton	3	0	5
Ferny Grove	2	3	13
Fitzroy	5	14	5
Gaven	6	19	18
Gladstone	9	4	0
Glass House	2	7	11
Greenslopes	1	1	3
Gregory	5	5	8
Gympie	3	13	11
Hervey Bay	8	6	6
Hinchinbrook	8	11	5
Inala	9	11	4
Indooroopilly	1	0	1
Ipswich	8	7	4
Ipswich West	16	1	1
Kallangur	1	6	11
Kawana	3	1	3
Keppel	11	1	11
Kurwongbah	6	13	5
Lockyer	16	5	4
Logan	13	3	0
Lytton	5	7	9
Mackay	12	7	17
Mansfield	4	6	6
Maroochydore	3	1	3
Maryborough	6	10	4
Mirani	3	4	16
Moggill	2	1	3

SED Name	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Mount Gravatt	2	4	0
Mount Isa	19	77 ¹	21
Mount Ommaney	0	0	2
Mudgeeraba	9	10	13
Mulgrave	14	27	19
Mundingburra	4	23	3
Murrumba	8	7	14
Nanango	5	8	10
Nicklin	5	3	4
Noosa	10	3	3
Nudgee	4	8	2
Pumicestone	3	6	3
Redcliffe	6	6	8
Redlands	9	2	4
Robina	2	4	7
Rockhampton	12	5	23
Sandgate	6	13	4
South Brisbane	5	4	2
Southern Downs	14	2	5
Southport	3	10	9
Springwood	6	2	3
Stafford	1	3	7
Stretton	2	2	1
Surfers Paradise	2	3	8
Tablelands	12	6	18
Thuringowa	11	14	3
Toowoomba North	12	4	1

¹ Note: During this period, the CSSC conducted an intensive audit of foster carers. Data relating to relative and limited approval carers with no children in their care were removed from the system.

Toowoomba South	18	0	2
SED Name	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Warrego	25	10	6
Waterford	13	10	10
Whitsunday	7	8	12
Woodridge	28	13	8
Yeerongpilly	6	4	1
NotQld	24	21	24
UTD *	3	4	4
TOTAL	678	722	629

*UTD – State Electoral Division unable to be determined from current address details (ie address is post box or overseas)

Table 3.

Number of Foster Carers (by financial year) who have had their approval withdrawn.

End Reason	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
	Total	Total	Total
Amendment - Approval Type	17	26	12
Amendment - Carer	6	9	4
Approval Closed	6	18	338
Child No Longer in Placement	342	260	132
Amend. - Carer/Other Carer Deceased	3	2	5
Amend. - Carer/Other Carer Withd. Approv	2	2	0
Amend. - Carer/Other Carer Withd. Volunt	4	9	4
Carer Deceased	5	3	0
Approval Expiry	69	214	56
Expiry of Childs Order	2	9	0
No Application for Re-Approval	23	30	9
Other	78	10	6
Withdrawal of Approval By Department	14	32	5
Withdrawal of Service - Voluntary	107	98	58
Total	678	722	629

Note: Approval closed, Child no longer in placement and approval expiry are all similar, data relies on manual recording and may be recorded by child safety officers in any of the three categories.

Note: Data accuracy will be improved by new information technology activities underway and improved training and procedures.