

**Question on Notice
No. 767
Asked on 24 May 2005**

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

QUESTION:

With reference to children in care-

- (1) What is the number of foster homes currently caring for six or more children?
- (2) What is the total number of children currently in each of those homes?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question. There are many reasons for carers having several children placed in their care. Large groups of siblings may be placed together in line with the department's policy to make all attempts to co-locate siblings in the one placement.

The Department of Child Safety is constantly looking to recruit new carers in order to address the issue of insufficient carer numbers and the Department has introduced a number of strategies to recruit and retain more foster carers.

In 2004-2005, focus has centred on planning for a comprehensive foster care recruitment strategy and on developing and producing an array of resource materials for use during successive years.

A multi-tiered approach, comprising state level activities, local area activities and targeted activities has been instigated to address the need to increase foster carer numbers. The strategy draws upon research on successful recruitment approaches which highlights the role of existing foster carers in recruitment of new carers and that of church congregations and other local networks. The intention is to expose prospective foster parents to multiple messages. Extensive media advertising and other media coverage is being explored.

Specific strategies were also employed to attract more carers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The recruitment strategies have been complemented by a range of support strategies for carers, including increased allowances to foster and relative carers, aimed at enhancing their satisfaction and retention.

Increased financial support includes:

- an increase of \$10 per week in the fortnightly fostering allowance for carers of 0-1 year olds from 1 July 2004;
- an increase in the one-off establishment payment from \$200 to \$375;

- an increase in the Start-up Allowance from \$50 to \$60;
- an increase in the High Support Needs Allowance from \$120 to \$144 per fortnight;
- an introduction of a 10% Regional/Remote Loading for carers living in the far north and west of the state, effective from the beginning of 2005; and
- a 2.5 percent increase in the fortnightly fostering allowance linked to movement in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in January 2005.

As well, the Foster Care Training Package has been initiated. Since the inception of this package, 27 Quality Care: Foster Care Pre-Service Training programs have been successfully completed in various locations across the state.

While it is a constant challenge to recruit carers, our strategies are bearing fruit with 1060 new carer households approved in the period between September 2004 and March 2005.

- (1) As at 31 March 2005, there were 103 foster care households that care for six or more children or young people.
- (2) As at 31 March 2005, there were a total of 706 children or young people placed in the 103 foster care households that care for six or more children or young people.