

**Question on Notice
No. 1004
Asked on 27 October 2005**

MRS J ATTWOOD MP, asked the Minister for Child Safety (MR REYNOLDS)-

QUESTION:

Will he detail the success of the Community Visitor Program?

ANSWER:

The Community Visitor Program is administered by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian under the jurisdiction of the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000*. The program was initially established in 2001 to visit children and young people in Government funded residential facilities, including Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) funded facilities, disability agencies, youth detention centres and authorised mental health services.

Following recommendations arising from the CMC report, *Protecting Children: An Inquiry into Abuse of Children In Foster Care*, the Community Visitor Program was expanded to include regular visits to children and young people in foster and kinship care.

Community Visitors are employed by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian on a part-time basis and are located in metropolitan and regional centres across Queensland. Their responsibilities include:

- helping to resolve children and young people's concerns and grievances;
- seeking information about and helping children access support services provided by relevant agencies which are appropriate to their needs;
- assessing the adequacy of information given to children about their rights; and
- assessing the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

Community Visitors are required to report to the Commissioner on each visit as soon as practical after the visit. A report is provided about each child in the alternative care environment which is based upon the standards of care outlined within Section 122 of the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

This program offers children in out-of-home care in Queensland an alternative and independent forum in which to express their views and raise any concerns that they have. It also supports the Commission's legislative responsibility to monitor service provisions to these children.

Community Visitors endeavour to resolve any issues raised by children and young people at the local level with departmental staff. Child Safety Service Centre staff and the Community Visitors have established regular liaison meetings to enable the sharing of appropriate information and so that concerns raised by the children and young people can be discussed and addressed. In those instances where issues are of a serious nature or cannot be locally resolved, the Commissioner refers these to the Director-General for necessary action.

In January and February 2006, 1703 Queensland children and young people living in out-of-home care responded to a survey initiated by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. It is encouraging to note that, of these children, 98% reported that they felt safe in their current placement.

The Community Visitor Program is a valuable mechanism to ensure that the views and opinions of children and young people in alternative care are heard and that significant issues can be acted upon as they are identified. The Department of Child Safety is committed to its lead role in ensuring that the needs of vulnerable children are being met. This role is complemented by initiatives such as the Community Visitor Program.