

**Question on Notice
No. 716
Asked on 22 May 2007**

MRS JAN STUCKEY MP asked the Minister for Child Safety (MS BOYLE)-

QUESTION:

With reference to foster carers at 30 June 2006 and 30 April 2007 -

- (1) How many foster carers had one child, two children, three children, four children, or greater than five children in an individual placement (listed individually and separately by CSSC and by region)?
- (2) How many placements with multiple children included siblings (listed individually and separately by CSSC and by region)?
- (3) What was the average length of placement of a child with a foster carer (listed individually by CSSC and region)?
- (4) Is there a limit, or a plan to limit, the number of children under care of the department who are in the same placement?
- (5) What priority is given to keeping siblings together when taken into the care of the department?
- (6) What screening of foster parents is undertaken which might show their suitability for caring for multiple children?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question and for her interest in this important issue. This question required a significant amount of staff time to compile the detailed data which is outlined below. Further updated data from the ICMS system which is now in operation will be available in the next few months.

It is important to note that some of the families that the Department of Child Safety deals with have a large numbers of siblings. When those large sibling groups, which can include groups of 8 or more children, come into care every effort is taken to either place those children together or in close proximity to each other.

- (1) How many foster carers had one child, two children, three children, four children, or greater than five children in an individual placement (listed individually and separately by CSSC and by region)?

Number of approved foster carer families with placements, by number of children placed.

Number of children placed with carer	31 December 2006			30 June 2006		
	Number of carers	Carers as percentage of all carers with placements	Carers as cumulative percentage of all carers with placements	Number of carers	Carers as percentage of all carers with placements	Carers as cumulative percentage of all carers with placements
1	1,250	46.4%	46.4%	1,229	46.7%	46.7%
2	693	25.7%	72.2%	674	25.6%	72.3%
3	357	13.3%	85.4%	340	12.9%	85.2%
4	181	6.7%	92.1%	175	6.6%	91.8%
5	102	3.8%	95.9%	98	3.7%	95.6%
more than 5	110	4.1%	100.0%	117	4.4%	100.0%
Total	2,693	100.0%	100.0%	2,633	100.0%	100

NOTE: These figures only include carers who have at least one child placed with them

(2) How many placements with multiple children included siblings (listed individually and separately by CSSC and by region)?

- The department is unable to provide this data at this stage. It is anticipated that details of children placed with siblings will be available from the department's ICMS in the next few months.

(3) What was the average length of placement of a child with a foster carer (listed individually by CSSC and region)?

- The following results are averages of placements of all children (1,553) exiting care between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2006.
- A list of the 1553 children exiting care by service centre detailing how long they were in care is provided at attachment 1.
- A list of the average placement length for these children by service centre is also provided at Attachment 2.

**Average Months per Out-Of-Home Placement,
Zone By Total Length of Time in Out-Of-Home Care,
Queensland, Children Exiting Care between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2006**

Zone	Total length of time in out-of-home care				
	Under 1 year	1 to 2 years	2 to 5 years	more than 5 years	Zone
Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast	2	8	11	27	12
Brisbane South and Gold Coast	3	7	15	22	10
Central	2	7	13	28	10
Far Northern	2	5	8	17	5
Ipswich and Western	2	8	12	38	13
Logan and Brisbane West	2	7	12	21	10
Northern	2	8	8	25	9
Queensland	2	7	12	27	10

Definition/Description

The average number of months spent in each out-of-home care placement, by total length of time in care.

The figures are averages of placements of all children exiting out-of-home care between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2006 who spent a total of at least one month in out-of-home care.

Children are deemed to have exited when they have left out-of-home care and not returned for a period of two months.

All placements of at least 7 days are included in these averages including those resulting from CAOs, CPOs and IPAs.

A break in placement of two months or longer will result in a separate placement being counted.

Includes placements with approved (funded) carer families only (approved foster, provisionally approved and kinship carers)

If a child exited more than once in the period, all exits are counted.

(4) Is there a limit, or a plan to limit, the number of children under care of the department who are in the same placement?

- The department believes that the needs of children should be matched to the capacity of foster and kinship carers, rather than applying a standard limit across the board.
- As part of the assessment and approval of carers, a Foster Care Agreement (for foster carers) or Placement Agreement (for kinship carers) details what type and how many children the carer is able to provide care for and the supports needed by the carer to provide quality care consistent with the legislated Statement of Standards. This Agreement is then referred to when children are placed with the carer to ensure that children's needs are being met and carers are being supported appropriately.
- When matching a child to a placement, consideration is also given to the needs of the children that may already be in the placement. For example, the number, ages

and support needs of children in the placement and the possible impact of the added demands of caring for another child must be taken into consideration.

- The assessment of the appropriateness of the placement will also take into consideration feedback from the foster and kinship care service and/or, the CSO who supports the carer and the CSO with case responsibility for any children currently in the placement.

(5) What priority is given to keeping siblings together when taken into the care of the department?

- The principle that siblings should be placed together in out-of-home care is embedded throughout the department's legislative and practice framework, including the *Child Protection Act 1999* and the Child Safety Practice Manual.
- The Child Safety Practice Manual currently requires that siblings are placed together where possible; unless it is determined that placement together would not be in the best interests of the siblings.
- To prevent the unnecessary separation of siblings, a range of strategies are presently available to support carers, including:
 - the use of a number of foster or kinship carers to work together, to provide care for the same sibling group;
 - financial support to foster and kinship carers through child related costs;
 - the regular use of planned respite care; and
 - sibling contact as part of planned respite care.

(6) What screening of foster parents is undertaken which might show their suitability for caring for multiple children?

- The department undertakes a thorough assessment process to determine whether applicants are suitable to be approved as carers. This includes consideration of practical matters such as how many children could potentially be placed based on the applicants existing accommodation, through to assessment processes such as interviewing and observing applicant/s family interactions, their children and other household members.
- These discussions and observations subsequently lead to a decision about what preferences and capacity the applicant has for caring for children of different ages and needs levels. The outcome is recorded in the carer's Foster Carer Agreement or Placement Agreement and referred to during the pre-placement matching process.
- Extensive training is also provided to carers, both before and after they are approved, to equip them with the skills and knowledge to provide quality care for the specific children placed with them.

Attachment 1

**NUMBER OF EXITS FROM OUT-OF-HOME CARE,
BY ZONE AND SERVICE CENTRE BY TOTAL LENGTH OF TIME IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE,
QUEENSLAND, 1 JANUARY 2006 TO 31 DECEMBER
2006**

Zone Service Centre	Total length of time in out-of-home care					
	Under 1 year	1 to 2 years	2 to 5 years	more than 5 years	Total	
Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast	Caboolture	4	14	5	3	26
	Chermside	6	4	10	2	22
	Fortitude Valley	24	16	12	3	55
	Gympie	14	3	1	4	22
	Murgon	20	2	7	7	36
	Pine Rivers	7	3	4	5	19
	Redcliffe	20	9	7	8	44
	Sunshine Coast	13	2	12	6	33
	Total	108	53	58	38	257
Brisbane South and Gold Coast	Beenleigh	22	9	6	3	40
	Gold Coast	90	18	27	11	146
	Mount Gravatt	13	6	5	2	26
	Redlands	8	7	7	5	27
	Stones Corner	6	1	5	3	15
	Wynnum	12	11	9	2	34
	Total	151	52	59	26	288
Central	Bowen	8	1	4	1	14
	Bundaberg	26	14	4	8	52
	Emerald	11	1	5	-	17
	Gladstone	17	14	8	-	39
	Mackay	17	6	4	5	32
	Maryborough	28	13	12	6	59
	Rockhampton	49	17	5	4	75
	Total	156	66	42	24	288

Far Northern	Atherton	22	2	6	-	30
	Cairns	23	9	11	-	43
	Cape/Torres	26	12	7	2	47
	Innisfail	16	5	-	-	21
	Total	87	28	24	2	141
Ipswich and Western	Charleville	3	3	2	1	9
	Goodna	13	9	3	1	26
	Ipswich	29	16	11	16	72
	Roma	18	6	2	3	29
	Toowoomba	44	25	23	10	102
	Total	107	59	41	31	238
Logan and Brisbane West	Browns Plains	19	10	12	9	50
	Inala	43	23	18	3	87
	Logan City	42	10	8	10	70
	Total	104	43	38	22	207
Northern	Mount Isa	11	4	8	6	29
	Thuringowa	21	14	5	3	43
	Townsville	32	12	10	8	62
	Total	64	30	23	17	134
Total		777	331	285	160	1,553

Definition / Description

Counts all children who exited departmentally funded out-of-home care during the period, and spent at least one month in out-of-home care.

Children are deemed to have exited when they have left out-of-home care and not returned for a period of two months.

If a child exits out-of-home care more than once in the period, multiple exits are counted.

Includes placements with approved (funded) carer families only (approved foster, provisionally approved and kinship carers)

Attachment 2**AVERAGE MONTHS PER OUT-OF-HOME CARE PLACEMENT,
ZONE AND SERVICE CENTRE,
QUEENSLAND, CHILDREN EXITING OUT OF HOME CARE BETWEEN 1 JANUARY 2006 AND 31 DECEMBER 2006**

Zone Service Centre		Average months per placement
Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast	Caboolture	13
	Chermside	14
	Fortitude Valley	12
	Gympie	13
	Murgon	16
	Pine Rivers	12
	Redcliffe	10
	Sunshine Coast	12
	Zone	12
Brisbane South and Gold Coast	Beenleigh	9
	Gold Coast	9
	Mount Gravatt	7
	Redlands	15
	Stones Corner	14
	Wynnum	14
	Zone	10
Central	Bowen	10
	Bundaberg	13
	Emerald	5
	Gladstone	6
	Mackay	10
	Maryborough	14
	Rockhampton	9
	Zone	10
Far Northern	Atherton	6
	Cairns	5

	Cape/Torres	7
	Innisfail	3
	Zone	5
Ipswich and Western	Charleville	9
	Goodna	12
	Ipswich	22
	Roma	7
	Toowoomba	11
	Zone	13
Logan and Brisbane West	Browns Plains	12
	Inala	8
	Logan City	9
	Zone	10
Northern	Mount Isa	16
	Thuringowa	6
	Townsville	8
	Zone	9
Queensland		10

Definition/Description

The average number of months spent in each out-of-home care placement.

The figures are averages of placements of all children exiting out-of-home care between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2006 who spent a total of at least one month in out-of-home care.

Children are deemed to have exited when they have left out-of-home care and not returned for a period of two months.

All placements of at least 7 days are included in these averages including those resulting from CAOs, CPOs and IPAs.

A break in placement of two months or longer will result in a separate placement being counted.

Includes placements with approved (funded) carer families only (approved foster, provisionally approved and kinship carers)

If a child exited more than once during the period, all exits are counted.

