

**Question on Notice  
No. 1469  
Asked on 9 October 2008**

MRS JANN STUCKEY MP asked the Minister for Child Safety (MS KEECH)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the response to Question on Notice No. 372 of 2007—

- (1) What was the average caseload of child safety officers in 2007-08 and year to date (listed individually by zone and individual child safety service centre)?
- (2) What was the total staff attrition rate for each zone in 2007-08 and year to date (reported separately)?
- (3) What was the staff attrition rate (for full-time and part-time staff, listed separately) for each child safety service centre in 2007-08 and year to date (listed individually)?
- (4) What are the recorded causes of staff attrition for staff exiting the Department for each zone in 2007-08 and year to date (reported separately)?

ANSWER:

The Bligh Government is looking over the horizon and building a stronger, greener, smarter, healthier and fairer Queensland.

The Department of Child Safety plays, and will continue to play, an important role in tomorrow's Queensland.

To ensure a better Queensland, we are planning today for tomorrow.

And that's exactly what we are doing in my Department.

High separation rates characterise the human services sector, particularly child protection agencies, right across Australia. As I have stated publicly, my Department has a separation rate three times the public service average.

I have never accepted that we cannot improve this statistic.

The Bligh Government has a strategic plan to retain staff.

I'm pleased to advise that plan is working, with an 8 percent reduction in the separation rate so far this financial year. I'm confident we can improve even further.

Child safety is difficult but rewarding work. Our frontline officers do their job in the face of threats and abuse from parents – the same people whose abuse and threats caused us to intervene in their families in the first place.

Departmental staff rarely receive the accolades they deserve for rescuing and protecting vulnerable children and young people.

Too often they are lambasted in the media for decisions that have been taken in the best interests of children – to ensure their safety.

Sometimes parents and other family members run to the media with scandalously and deliberately inaccurate reports. Sometimes those reports are published as fact. Such inaccuracies affect the morale of officers, and I can understand why.

Since I was appointed Minister in September last year, I have made staff my No 1 priority. I am committed to supporting them and to have my Department continue to enhance support mechanisms.

Protecting children is a priority for the Bligh Government. One way we can do that is to support our Child Safety workforce. As I travel the state visiting child safety service centres and talking to staff, they say they feel much more supported.

I will continue to support staff, who do an amazing job under trying circumstances.

I want my Department to have a flexible workplace; to provide better work/life balance and provide more career options.

We have implemented a suite of initiatives aimed at reducing separations – ranging from workload reduction strategies, to incentives and accommodation support for those working in rural and remote areas; enhanced training; mentoring of inexperienced staff; improving career paths; broadening entry qualifications to give more diversity in the workforce; promoting almost one-third of our frontline CSOs from PO2 to PO3 level, thanks to a special \$2.2 million budget allocation this financial year that has put up to \$315 a fortnight in CSOs' pay packets; providing more flexible workplaces; and converting around 400 suitable temporary staff to permanent status.

I am pleased to report our initiatives are already having a positive impact.

Fewer people are leaving the Department. Separations to date this financial year are trending downwards. I am confident the improvement will continue as other initiatives are added to our strategy.

The average caseload for a CSO pre the Crime and Misconduct Commission report was around 33. A record Bligh Government budget of \$586 million in 2008-09 has brought it down to 20. The average caseload for a CSO was 21 as at 30 June.

We are determined to reduce it even further. We are working on a range of initiatives aimed at reducing red tape and making a tough job easier.

The average caseload of child safety officers is set out in the below tables.

## Child Safety Officer caseload calculation (2007-08)

Zones	CSSCs	Total Caseloads as at 30 June 2008	Total Caseloads as at 30 September 2008
Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast	Caboolture CSSC	22	20
	Chermside CSSC	19	16
	Fortitude Valley CSSC	18	16
	Alderley CSSC	28	24
	Gympie CSSC	18	18
	Pine Rivers CSSC	23	23
	Redcliffe CSSC	24	22
	South Burnett CSSC	30	27
	Sunshine Coast North CSSC	26	17
	Sunshine Coast South CSSC	24	23
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>

Brisbane South and Gold Coast	Beenleigh CSSC	23	20
	Mermaid Beach CSSC	20	19
	Nerang CSSC	21	20
	Labrador CSSC	13	11
	Mt Gravatt CSSC	17	18
	Redlands CSSC	17	17
	Stones Corner CSSC	15	15
	Wynnum CSSC	20	23
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>

Central	Bundaberg CSSC	20	21
	Emerald/Longreach CSSC	17	13
	Gladstone CSSC	19	19
	Mackay CSSC (Bowen)	23	20
	Maryborough CSSC	23	22
	Rockhampton North CSSC	14	17
	Rockhampton South CSSC	21	21
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>

Far Northern	Atherton CSSC	19	15
	Cairns North CSSC	21	22
	Cairns South CSSC	20	15
	<b>Cape Torres CSSC</b>	<b>22</b>	20
	Innisfail CSSC	14	14
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

<b>Ipswich Western</b>	<b>and</b>	Goodna CSSC	27	22
		Ipswich North CSSC	23	27
		Ipswich South CSSC	26	27
		Roma CSSC (Charleville)	14	15
		Toowoomba North CSSC	26	24
		Toowoomba South CSSC	29	23
		<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>

<b>Logan Brisbane West</b>	<b>and</b>	Browns Plains CSSC	23	28
		Beaudesert CSSC	26	25
		Inala CSSC	11	16
		Forest Lake CSSC	17	18
		Woodridge CSSC	17	18
		Logan Central CSSC	15	16
		Loganlea CSSC	18	20
		<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>

<b>Northern</b>	Mt Isa CSSC	14	11
	Gulf CSSC	37	23
	Townsville CSSC	20	19
	Aitkenvale CSSC	20	21
	Thuringowa CSSC	16	15
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>

	<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>
--	--------------	-----------	-----------

As I have advised the Member previously, our turnover rate is, in part, reflective of the demographics of our workforce. The workforce is 86 per cent female, with almost half under 35 years of age. The demographics suggest a mobile workforce where career stability and permanency are not as important as to older workers. Our workers are exploring varied career options, taking career breaks to travel and start families. The turnover rate also reflects the buoyant labour market.

We know from staff surveys that 85 per cent of departing staff say they would consider returning to the Department of Child Safety.

In fact, 105 staff who have left the Department have returned since July 2007.

#### Total Staff Attrition - Department of Child Safety by Zone

Zone	2007/2008	2008/09 YTD
Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast Zone	17.7%	2.9%
Brisbane South and Gold Coast Zone	22.2%	3.9%
Central Zone	19.5%	2.2%
Far Northern Zone	25.9%	6.4%
Ipswich and Western Zone	32.6%	3.0%
Logan and Brisbane West Zone	13.2%	6.6%
Northern Zone	16.9%	5.4%

Notes:

The attrition rate was calculated as total permanent separations over an average permanent headcount. The above table includes zonal offices. Separation rates are based on financial year periods and the YTD figure reflects 1 July 2008 to 30 September 2008 (3 months).

**Permanent Staff Attrition Flow – 2008/2009 Financial year to date**

July	36
August	32
September	23
October	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>

**Full-time staff separations**

Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast Zone: Alderley Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 5 (08/09 YTD 0); Caboolture Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 5 (08/09 YTD 3); Chermside Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 3 (08/09 YTD 0); Fortitude Valley Child Safety Service Centre total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 1); Gympie Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 1); Pine Rivers Child Safety Service Centre total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 2); Redcliffe Child Safety Service Centre total separations 7 (08/09 YTD 0); South Burnett Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Sunshine Coast North Child Safety Service Centre total separations 5 (08/09 YTD 0); and Sunshine Coast South / Caloundra Child Safety Service Centre total separations 5 (08/09 YTD 0).

Brisbane South and Gold Coast Zone: Beenleigh Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 2); Labrador Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 0); Mermaid Beach Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 10 (08/09 YTD 1); Mt Gravatt Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 0); Nerang Child Safety Service Centre total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 1); Redlands Child Safety Service Centre total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 1); Stones Corner Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 2); and Wynnum Child Safety Service Centre total separations 3 (08/09 YTD 0).

Central Zone: Bundaberg Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 0); Emerald Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Gladstone Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 1); Mackay Child Safety Service Centre total separations 13 (08/09 YTD 0); Maryborough Child Safety Service Centre total separations 10 (08/09 YTD 0); Rockhampton North Child Safety Service Centre total separations 4 (08/09 YTD 1); and Rockhampton South Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 0).

Far Northern Zone: Atherton Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 4 (08/09 YTD 1); Cairns North Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 8 (08/09 YTD 0); Cairns south - Edmonton Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 5 (08/09 YTD 0); Cape Torres Child Safety Service Centre total separations 13 (08/09 YTD 4); Cape York and Torres Strait Islands Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1); and Innisfail Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 2).

Ipswich and Western Zone: Goodna Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 5 (08/09 YTD 0); Roma Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 2); Toowoomba North Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 0); Toowoomba South Child Safety Service Centre total

separations 9 (08/09 YTD 0); Ipswich North Child Safety Service Centre total separations 10 (08/09 YTD 2); and Ipswich South Child Safety Service Centre total separations 10 (08/09 YTD 0).

Logan and Brisbane West Zone: Beaudesert Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 2); Browns Plains Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 5 (08/09 YTD 1); Centenary Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 3 (08/09 YTD 0); Forest Lake Child Safety Service Centre total separations 3 (08/09 YTD 1); Inala Child Safety Service Centre total separations 3 (08/09 YTD 2); Woodridge Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 0); Logan Central Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 4); and Loganlea Child Safety Service Centre total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 0).

Northern Zone: Aitkenvale Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 4 (08/09 YTD 0); Gulf Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 6 (08/09 YTD 2); Mount Isa Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 1); Thuringowa Child Safety Service Centre total separations 4 (08/09 YTD 0); and Townsville Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 3).

### **Part -time staff separations**

Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast Zone: Alderley Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1); Caboolture Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Chermside Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Fortitude Valley Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Gympie Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Pine Rivers Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Redcliffe Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); South Burnett Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1); Sunshine Coast North Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); and Sunshine Coast South / Caloundra Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 0).

Brisbane South and Gold Coast Zone: Beenleigh Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Labrador Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Mermaid Beach Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 3 (08/09 YTD 1); Mt Gravatt Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 0); Nerang Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Redlands Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 1); Stones Corner Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); and Wynnum Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 0).

Central Zone: Bundaberg Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Gladstone Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 0); Mackay Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1); Maryborough Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Rockhampton North Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); and Rockhampton South Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1).

Far Northern Zone: Atherton Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Cairns North Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Cairns south - Edmonton Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Cape Torres Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0

(08/09 YTD 0); Cape York and Torres Strait Islands Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0).

Ipswich and Western Zone: Goodna Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1); Roma Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Toowoomba North Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Toowoomba South Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1); Ipswich North Child Safety Service Centre total separations 2 (08/09 YTD 0); and Ipswich South Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0).

Logan and Brisbane West Zone: Beaudesert Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Browns Plains Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Centenary Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Forest Lake Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Inala Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1); Woodridge Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); Logan Central Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); and Loganlea Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0).

Northern Zone: Aitkenvale Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Gulf Child Safety Service Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0); Mount Isa Child Safety Services Centre 2007/08 total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 1); Thuringowa Child Safety Service Centre total separations 1 (08/09 YTD 0); and Townsville Child Safety Service Centre total separations 0 (08/09 YTD 0).

The reasons for staff leaving the Department for each zone in 2007-08 include death, cessation of temporary or casual employment, ill health, retirement, resignation, secondment to another agency, moving to another government department.

Staff have left this financial year for similar reasons.