

Question on Notice
No. 1623
Asked on 30 October 2008

MR KENNETH HAYWARD MP asked the Minister for Child Safety (MRS KEECH)-

QUESTION:

- (1) Does her department accept donations of clothing and associated items from community and church groups to be provided to children on placement with foster parents?
- (2) If so, what is the process for any organisation wishing to make donations?

ANSWER:

I thank the honourable Member for his question, for his continued support of my Department of Child Safety in the work it does to protect vulnerable children.

The Department of Child Safety acknowledges the generosity of community and church groups which donate clothing and other items to children who have been taken into care. Donations are a very practical way of supplementing the support and love given to children by their foster carers. They also send a message to children and young people in care that there are people out there in the broader community who really care about them and their future.

For health and hygiene reasons, the Department prefers that donated items are new, particularly clothing and toys.

Donated items can be especially helpful when children first come into care, as children often come to a foster family with nothing more than the clothes they are wearing. Project Love and Care is a wonderful example of how donated goods can make a difference in this situation. Through the generosity of volunteers, Project Love and Care, which started in Inala in 2005, provides care packs to children and young people when they first come into care. The packs include basic toiletries, new underwear and socks and a gift such as a cuddly toy or book.

Last year, representatives of Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific donated 100 care packages containing life diaries, cameras and photo albums to help children and young people living away from home make sense of their experience and to remind them they are not alone.

Of course, Christmas is the time of year when many of us extend our generosity beyond our immediate family and friends. Last year, the Australasian Order of Old Bastards at Labrador made Christmas very special for several children in care by donating 14 bicycles (with padlocks and helmets). A businesswoman in far northern Queensland donated a large range of new clothing and shoes when she closed her children's boutique. Such generosity helps to achieve positive outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people and gives them an extra reason to smile at Christmas.

This year my Department has again joined forces with the Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ) to collect Christmas presents for children and young people in care. Gifts (labelled with the age and gender of the child they are intended for) can be left under the Christmas tree in the foyer of 111 George Street, Brisbane, at REIQ head offices and at child safety service centres in Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba and Brisbane and on the Gold and Sunshine Coasts.

Whether they wish to make a one-off donation of goods or establish an ongoing relationship with my Department, I encourage organisations wishing to donate items for children and young people in care to contact their local child safety service centre to discuss the suitability of items and make arrangements for delivery or collection of the items.