

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 208**  
**Asked on Wednesday, 27 February 2008.**

MR ANDREW CRIPPS asked the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women (MRS KEECH) -

QUESTION:

With reference to the use of commercial accommodation by the Department of Child Safety—

- (1) How many children under the care of the department are currently being housed in commercial accommodation (reported by zone)?
- (2) Of the children housed in commercial accommodation, how many currently have care plans (reported by zone)?
- (3) How many currently have education plans (reported by zone)?

ANSWER:

The safety of children in care is a priority for the Bligh Government.

Commercial accommodation is used as a last resort to ensure the immediate safety of young people when they are not safe in their homes. The use of commercial accommodation for children is an interim measure only.

The length of placement may vary based on the individual needs of the child or young person. In some cases children may remain for one night only before being transitioned to an alternative placement. In other cases, for example, with sibling groups, the Department may require additional time to locate a placement with carers who can best meet the needs of the individual children, while also ensuring that brothers and sisters remain placed together.

Departmental officers work with children who have experienced significant harm. This may include physical, sexual or emotional harm, or neglect.

Sadly, as a result of their life experiences, many of these children and young people may demonstrate complex and challenging behaviours. These behaviours may place both the young person, or other people at significant risk. Again, in these cases, departmental officers need to ensure that the best possible placement is located and this may take time.

For the period 1 July 2007 to 31 December 2007, the Department of Child Safety utilised commercial accommodation for 187 children. The zonal breakdown was: Brisbane North and Sunshine Coast 9; Brisbane South and Gold Coast 18; Central 33; Far Northern 71; Ipswich and Western 34; Logan and Brisbane West 11; Northern 11.

With respect to the Member's question regarding how many of the children accommodated in commercial premises have 'care' plans, I can report they all do. All children under court orders also are required to have a 'case' plan. All children in commercial accommodation receive intensive case planning, specifically focussed on their need for stability and a longer term placement which meets their needs.

I can advise the House the percentage of children under orders who were placed in commercial accommodation has fallen from 7.4 percent in 2004-05 to 5.1 percent in 2006-07.

I have asked the Department of Child Safety to develop workable alternatives to further reduce the need for us to use commercial accommodation.