

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 1659**  
**Asked on Thursday 29 October 2009**

**MR DEMPSEY ASKED THE MINISTER FOR CHILD SAFETY AND MINISTER FOR SPORT (MR REEVES)—**

With reference to response priority timeframes (RPTs) for child protection notifications (CPNs) lodged in 2007–08 and 2008–09—

- (1) How many RPTs of 24 hours for CPNs were not actioned in the required 24 hours (reported by year)?
- (2) How many RPTs of five days for CPNs were not actioned within the required five day period (reported by year)?
- (3) How many RPTs of ten days for CPNs were not actioned within the required ten day period (reported by year)?

**ANSWER:**

The decision about how soon the Department of Communities must respond to a notification takes into consideration the child protection concerns, the child's need for immediate safety, and the likelihood of harm occurring to the child in the near future.

The response timeframe of a notification will be 24 hours, five days or 10 days from when the decision is made that the concerns meet the threshold for a notification.

An investigation and assessment is considered commenced when the subject child is sighted by an authorised officer. Background checks and information gathering may be undertaken prior to sighting the child. For example, a Child Safety Officer may have spoken to key agencies such as the child's school, Queensland Police Service or Queensland Health before sighting a child.

Data for 2007–08 is unable to be readily provided. To extract this data from the department's systems would require a manual review process which would be lengthy and divert staff from other critical work. Data that is readily available relates to the 2008–09 financial year.

Community awareness and public confidence in Child Safety Services in Queensland has increased leading to greater numbers of intakes recorded each year. To support these increases, this Government has more than tripled the budget and doubled the number of staff in the last five years.

As the Member would be aware, there were over 101,000 children and young people who became known or were known to the department in the three years prior to 2008–09.

During 2008–09, 1,416 notifications allocated with a 24-hour response timeframe were commenced after 24 hours; 3,841 notifications allocated with a five-day response timeframe were commenced after five days; and 6,632 notifications allocated with a 10-day response timeframe were commenced after 10 days.

External factors impact on when an investigation and assessment can commence, especially notifications with a 24-hour response timeframe. These include instances where the family is not at home or unable to be located at that time or if the child is in a location that is difficult to reach. Queensland is a very decentralised State with a transient population. This Government has placed staff in some remote communities and in various locations across regional Queensland to ensure better service delivery in those communities. Strong partnerships with local police are vital when Child Safety Officers are unable to get to a remote area immediately.

In circumstances where a child cannot be sighted within 24 hours, the Child Safety Officer would seek information from relevant people about the safety of the child and take other actions to allow for the commencement of the investigation, while arranging for the child to be sighted as soon as possible.