

Question on Notice

No. 1104

Asked on 2 August 2011

MS GRACE asked the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport (MR REEVES)—

QUESTION

As this week is foster and kinship carer week, will the Minister advise how the Bligh Government supports foster and kinship carers, particularly in my electorate of Brisbane Central?

ANSWER

Foster and kinship carers are the unsung heroes in our community and I thank the Member for her ongoing support of these valuable volunteers.

As at 31 March 2011 there were over 4,000 approved carer families in Queensland.

Sadly, in Queensland, there are more than 8,000 children and young people who are unable to live at home due to abuse and neglect.

It is for this reason that I was pleased to join the Member to launch the foster and kinship carer recruitment campaign, *Foster a child. Foster a future*, at the Royal Brisbane Show on Thursday 11 August 2011.

This campaign aims to recruit more foster and kinship carers to provide safe and loving homes for Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people and I encourage all Queenslanders to consider fostering a future.

This is yet another example of the Bligh Government delivering on its *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland* goal of increasing volunteers.

The campaign follows Foster and Kinship Carer week which recognises foster and kinship carers and the important role they play. During foster and kinship carer week a range of events, including the Foster and Kinship Carer excellence awards, were held to celebrate our foster and kinship carers. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Anita and John Evans for winning the Brisbane Region, Foster and Kinship Carer Excellence Award on 1 August 2011, and to thank them for the outstanding care they have been providing to children since 2004.

In 2010–11, \$30.1 million was approved to non-government foster and kinship care services to recruit and support foster and kinship carers.

The Bligh Government is committed to ensuring that foster and kinship carers in Queensland have access to wide ranging supports such as:

- competency based training packages which include pre-service, standard and advanced training for foster carers
- emotional and financial support
- assistance from support groups
- an after hours foster and kinship carer helpline
- respite care
- community support through the foster carer awards and local carer recognition events.

These supports are provided or facilitated by the Bligh Government funded foster and kinship care services, Child Safety Service Centres and Placement Service Units.

Additional supports provided to the foster and kinship carers within the Brisbane region includes:

- yearly training calendars to make it easier for all carers to identify and access upcoming training opportunities
- providing a bi-monthly newsletter outlining future training opportunities, upcoming events and other information to help carers fulfil their important caring role
- regular foster carer morning teas and support group meetings facilitated by local foster carer agencies and individual Child Safety Service Centres.

Another valuable support service provided to foster and kinship carers within the Brisbane region is an outreach support service run by the agency Mercy Family Services, which provides in-home support to foster carers.

The Government is committed to providing safe and supportive communities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and has demonstrated its commitment by investing more than \$1.6 million to help recruit, train and support foster carers and provide cultural advice. The Indigenous Family and Child Support Service is the service funded to provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster and kinship carers in the Brisbane region.

In June 2011, I joined Queensland State of Origin stars, Mr Sam Thaiday and Mr Jharal Yow Yeh, in launching the Indigenous Family and Child Support Service community campaign 'Keeping the mob together' to recruit more Indigenous foster and kinship carers throughout Brisbane.

The Bligh Government also provides funding of \$822,048 in the 2011–12 financial year to Foster Care Queensland to advocate on behalf of and provide support to foster and kinship carers across Queensland. We work closely with Foster Care Queensland to ensure our valuable foster carers feel supported in the important role that they play.

Foster and kinship carers undertake a vital role in our community. They work alongside the Queensland Government to provide for the care and protection needs of our most vulnerable children and young people. Foster and kinship carers open their hearts and their homes to children and young people when their parents can't or won't provide the love and care they need.