

Question on Notice

No. 830

Asked on 25 May 2011

MS DAVIS asked the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women (MS STRUTHERS)—

QUESTION

Will the Minister provide (in table format) a list by region of the number of community visits undertaken by the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian, for each of 2008–09, 2009–10 and 2010–11 (to date)?

ANSWER

The Commission's Community Visitor functions are outlined in Chapter 5 of the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000*.

Community Visitor functions and responsibilities include:

- visiting and developing trusting and supportive relationships with children and young people
- assessing the appropriateness of a child or young person's accommodation and observing their treatment and the extent to which their needs are being met
- advocating on behalf of a child or young person in relation to their concerns and grievances, including thorough discussions with carers and other relevant agencies
- making formal referrals about more serious concerns, including risk of harm to a child or young person, to the relevant department/s for further investigation and resolution
- making referrals to the Queensland Police Service and/or Crime and Misconduct Commission where matters involve possible criminal offences.

As the Commission is a statutory authority, the visiting frequency for children in foster care, residential services and detention centres is determined by the Commissioner.

There is no doubt that the Community Visitor program is an essential safeguard for vulnerable children.

Another important element however is the ability of foster parents and the children who have for a long period of time lived safely in their care to have as normal life as possible, just like other well functioning families. To allow this balance it is important that visits continue and at the same time the frequency of visits do not impact on the family's quality of life. A reduction in the frequency of visits recognises that a foster carer is providing children in their care with a long term, safe and secure home.

Over the past five years, the Commission has built a robust evidence base in terms of the safety and wellbeing of all children within its visiting jurisdiction. Analysis of this data has highlighted that there is a significant number of children who are living in safe and stable placements, where no serious issues of concern are being raised by the children.

Consequently, in March 2010, the visiting schedule changed from visiting each child monthly to a more flexible, risk management based approach which has resulted in varying the frequency of visits to some children.

Currently 57% of children in foster care are on a bi-monthly visiting schedule which has resulted in a decrease in the total number of visits conducted over the reporting period. The remaining children in foster care and those in residential facilities, remote Indigenous communities and detention centres continue to be visited on a monthly basis.

The number of community visits undertaken by the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian, for each of 2008–09, 2009–10 and 2010–11, is as follows.

Community Visitor Zones	2008–09 Visits	2009–10 Visits	2010–11 Visits (as at 27 May)
Brisbane North	3,469	2,764	2,289
Sunshine Coast	2,772	2,488	1,906
Moreton and South Burnett	3,172	2,415	2,114
Logan	4,023	3,225	2,222
Brisbane West	3,966	3,626	2,463
Brisbane South	3,194	2,913	2,358
Gold Coast	5,502	4,827	3,430
Central North	4,510	3,554	3,084
Central South	4,685	4,072	3,002
Ipswich	5,587	4,700	3,784
Toowoomba and Western	6,018	5,020	3,712
Northern	3,549	3,694	3,544
Far Northern	4,859	4,046	3,620
Queensland Total:	55,306	47,344	37,538