

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

2156. Mr P.D. Omodei to the Minister representing the Minister for Child Protection

- (1) How many children in foster homes were, at any stage, absent without leave from their foster home or hostel?
- (2) In what area were these children located for foster care?
- (3) For what period of time were these children in care absent?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

The Member's question provides no date for which information is sought so this answer provides information as at 31 March 2007. Figures provided are for all children in the care of the CEO (that is, all children in care, not just in foster homes or hostels).

- (1) On 31 March 2007 there were 2,564 children in the CEO's care and ten were absent without leave.
- (2) The areas and number of children in care of the CEO who were absent on 31 March 2007 were as follows:

2 were located in the Department's Mirrabooka District
1 was located in the Department's Perth District
1 was located in the Department's Peel District
1 was located in the Department's Wheatbelt District
1 was located in the Department's Midland District
1 was located in the Department's Armadale District
1 was located in the Department's Cannington District
1 was located in the Department's Rockingham District

- (3) Length of time number of children in care of the CEO who were absent without leave on 31 March 2007 were as follows:
1 for one day
3 for less than a week
5 for longer than a week.

In training for foster carers and the Foster Carer Handbook advice is given that if a carer believes that a child in their care has run away or missing, they are to notify their Case Officer or Team Leader immediately. If the event occurs after hours they are to call the Crisis Care Unit immediately. For children in departmental residential facilities the relevant policy states that staff should make every effort to keep young people on site but where this is not possible, a staff member should follow the young person a short way to attempt to persuade them to return, or failing this to ascertain their intended destination. When staff have confirmed that a young person has left the premises without permission they should report them as absent without permission to the local Police and to the Juvenile Aid Group (JAG) in Perth (as per protocols between DCD and the WA Police Service).