

ADOPTIONS - ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS - NUMBER OF ASSESSORS
AND WAITING TIMES

1500. Dr E. Constable to the Minister for Community Development
- (1) At 8 September 2006, how many case workers were employed or contracted by the Department of Community Development to assess prospective adoptive parents and report to the Adoption Application Committee?
 - (2) At 8 September 2006, how many assessors were employed or contracted by the Department of Community Development to assess prospective adoptive parents and report to the Adoption Application Committee?
 - (3) At 8 September 2006, how many assessors of prospective adoptive parents had refused assessment work from the Department in the previous 12 months?
 - (4) At 8 September 2006, how many prospective adoptive parents were waiting to be assessed by social workers?
 - (5) At 8 September 2006, how many weeks on average were prospective adoptive parents waiting to be assessed by social workers in (1)?
 - (6) At 8 September 2006, how many prospective adoptive applicants were living in regional and rural areas?
 - (7) At 8 September 2006, what were the causes of the delay in (4)?
 - (8) What are the factors preventing the Department from employing more social workers so that prospective adoptive parents do not experience such long delays in the application process?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1) The Department for Community Development does not have a position called "case worker". The Adoption Service branch has seven Field Workers (6.5 FTE). These staff do not normally assess prospective adoptive parents.
- (2) At 8 September 2006, the Adoption Service Branch had 10 contract assessors to cover the metropolitan area and two who provided assessment services in Bunbury and Kalgoorlie. In other country locations local Field Workers undertake suitability assessments.
- (3) Eight contractors did not take up offers of assessment work from the Department in the last 12 months.
- (4) At 8 September 2006, seventy applicant households were waiting to be assessed. There are currently 114 approved applicant households with a preference for an overseas and/or a local child and 11 who only want to adopt a locally born child. In 2005/2006 there were only 62 adoptions in Western Australia.
- (5) No prospective adoptive parents were waiting to be assessed by departmental officers as the Field Workers working in Adoption Service (referred to in Question 1) do not normally assess prospective adoptive parents. The median waiting time for prospective adoptive parents who have been allocated a contract assessor since January 2006 was 28 weeks. For those prospective adoptive parents waiting for a contract assessor to be allocated the waiting time is currently 26 weeks.
- (6) There are currently forty applicant households living in regional and rural areas.
- (7) The reason for the delay is the time taken to assess these applications and that there are a limited number of qualified contractors currently available to undertake assessments.
- (8) As explained in Question 1, departmental staff do not normally undertake the assessment of prospective adoptive parents. The Department is currently recruiting additional contractors.