

FOSTER CARERS — SOUTH WEST REGION

**1170. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Child Protection:**

I refer to a recent article in the *Manjimup–Bridgetown Times* entitled “Children at risk as carers diminish”, which states that Manjimup children may be forced to leave town and siblings could be separated unless more foster carers are found.

- (1) How many foster carers are needed in the South West Region?
- (2) What efforts are being made by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support to find more foster carers in regional towns such as Manjimup?
- (3) What success have these efforts had?
- (4) Does the minister agree with the assessment by the department that children could be separated from their siblings and sent to Albany?

**Hon HELEN MORTON replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The department always needs foster carers, both general and relative, in all regions. The department hopes that, as a result of the article in the *Manjimup–Bridgetown Times*, the community will have a greater understanding and awareness of the need for foster carers.
- (2) The department advertises regularly in local papers and through school newsletters, and encourages existing carers to encourage other community members to consider becoming foster carers. The department had a recent recruitment drive over the festival weekend in Manjimup, which included a shopfront presence on the main street.
- (3) Recruitment of foster carers continues to be a challenge. Since January 2014, the department has received three applications for the Manjimup office; however, none of these applicants live in Manjimup. In the great southern, where Bridgetown and Manjimup are located, general foster carers make up about one-third of all carers. Most carers are relative carers.
- (4) When foster carers are not available, children may be placed away from their home town. There is the possibility that children will be separated when sibling groups are large; however, the department will always consider this as a last resort.