

ADOPTION

10 September 2008

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I was recently informed by the Budget and Finance Committee that adoptions of local children have dropped exponentially from a high of some 467 in the 1972-73 financial year to just five in 2006-07, and none at all in the preceding year 2005-06. Indeed, Families SA's own website concedes that numbers are very low and that it is almost impossible to adopt a South Australian child these days.

Adoption is widely recognised as a more secure and permanent environment for children than foster care, and higher adoption rates are also an alternative to a high abortion rate. In the past month New South Wales has moved to streamline its local adoption laws, including allowing women to apply for adoption while trying to have their own children through fertility programs such as IVF, making adoption more attractive to foster carers by allowing them to retain foster care allowances, and cutting red tape and simplifying the process of putting a child up for adoption in the first place.

My questions to the minister are:

1. Why has the number of adoptions in South Australia dropped dramatically from several hundred each year in the 1970s to currently fewer than half a dozen each year?
2. Why are local adoptions not being promoted as a better alternative than forcing prospective parents to scour overseas—at great cost, delay and personal anguish—to find a child so that they can start or continue their family?
3. To give children a higher degree of permanency and stability, will the minister consider giving foster carers the option of adopting children—and, indeed, make it easy to do so—who have already been in their long-term care and allow them to retain their foster carers benefits for a period after doing so?

The Hon. CARMEL ZOLLO (Minister for Correctional Services, Minister for Road Safety, Minister for Gambling, Minister Assisting the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): I thank the honourable member for his questions. I will refer them to the Minister for Families and Communities in the other place and bring back a response.