

AA ACT Series A 452/1 Item 54/498

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ADMINISTRATOR,  
DARWIN, N.T.

The Secretary,  
Department of Territories,  
CANBERRA A.C.T.

1 FEB 1958

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT - RETTA DIXON HOME

I refer to your memorandum 56/162 of 17th December, 1957, in which you set out in your second paragraph the Minister's direction in this matter.

2. I very much regret that my teleprint message D.2496 of the 3rd December, gave the impression that the Director of Welfare was avoiding commenting on a serious issue which had been the subject of ministerial enquiry, or was attempting to cover up for lack of specific action in this matter.

3. This was certainly not intended as the Director and his senior officers have spent a considerable amount of time in discussion with the Director of the Aborigines Inland Mission and the Superintendent and staff of the Retta Dixon Home, in an attempt to tackle what is a most difficult problem in an Institution of the type of the Retta-Dixon Home.

4. I have attached for the Minister's information a brief statement prepared by the Director of Welfare, covering the results of the discussions which have been held.

5. It will be noted however that these discussions have left unresolved the question of whether or not corporal punishment is to be administered at the Institution; and this has led me to a conclusion that the time is overdue for a full examination of this question in relation to our institutions and schools generally.

6. While, in relation to the schools under the control of the South Australian Education Department, the practice adopted is that laid down in the Regulations in force in South Australia; and while, in the relation to our aboriginal schools, we have adopted the rather generalized instructions formerly laid down by the Commonwealth Office of Education, there is no provision in the Welfare Ordinance dealing with the corporal punishment of wards; and the Child Welfare Bill (Section 91) merely preserves "the right of a parent, teacher or other person having lawful care of a child, to administer punishment to the child", without attempting to regulate and control the use of such punishment.

7. I feel there is need to examine the whole question fully with a view to attempting to define a clear policy for general application to our schools and welfare institutions which would control and regulate the use of corporal punishment by defining the types and quantum of the punishment, to whom and by whom it may be administered, and the types of offences that

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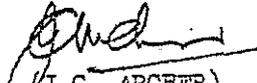
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are punishable in this way. While I am conscious of the many difficulties that will be met with in formulating such a policy, I consider that the attempt must be made; and I have accordingly arranged with the Director of Welfare to examine the whole question and prepare a submission which I would hope to be able to present to the Minister in the near future.

  
(J.C. ARCHER)  
Administrator.

439