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CRS NTRC 1982/34/0

Item NW Corporal

Punishment

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6th February, 1956.

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HIS HONOUR, THE ACTING ADMINISTRATOR:

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF WARDS AT RETTA DIXON
HOME

I refer to the letter on folio 48-49 hereunder from the Acting Director of the Aborigines Inland Mission, Sydney, concerning an interview which I had with the Acting Superintendent of the Home (Mr. Stretton) and Miss Dinham on the matter of corporal punishment of children who are my wards in the Home.

2. I then informed Mr. Stretton that I had no authority to authorise corporal punishment of Wards, that he had no authority to carry out corporal punishment of Wards and that as legal guardian of Wards if cases of corporal punishment of Wards came to my notice I had a duty to see that appropriate action was taken against the person inflicting the corporal punishment. Mr. Stretton vigorously contested my right to interfere in the affairs of the Home to the extent of threatening action in the event of cases of corporal punishment being brought to my notice. This letter from his headquarters is evidence of the fact that the Aborigines Inland Mission supports his point of view concerning corporal punishment of children in the Home. This to me is a most disturbing state of affairs.

3. I received a telegram on 3rd February from Collins (folio 58) and after consultation with the Crown Law Officer and the Acting Government Secretary, I replied in terms of the telegram on folio 60.

4. I have been concerned for some time at the state of affairs at the Retta Dixon Home - the inability of the staff to control adolescent girls and older school boys and propose to have Sister Eileen investigate and report on this institution when she comes to Darwin. My own view at the moment is that Miss Shankleton and her staff could do a good job with children of up to about 10 years of age but after that age because of the narrow outlook of the staff, the nature of the programme provided for the children in the Home, the attitude of staff towards the activities of teenage children and the proximity of the Home to the Bagot Settlement, it would be advisable to make other arrangements for the 10 plus girls and boys in the Home.

5. The Aborigines Inland Mission is meeting in conference in Sydney this week and I think that they will probably make an approach direct to the Minister. In view of this I would like your advice as to whether we should at this stage inform the Minister of what we have done and what action we propose in the future in regard to the investigation of the functions of this Home.

H. C. Giese

(H. C. Giese)
DIRECTOR OF WELFARE

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