

IN THE FEDERAL COURT OF AUSTRALIA  
DARWIN DISTRICT REGISTRY  
GENERAL DIVISION

No. DG14 of 1996

BETWEEN:

**LORNA CUBILLO**

Applicant

AND

**COMMONWEALTH OF  
AUSTRALIA**

Respondent

### STATEMENT

I, **HAROLD DESMOND WALTERS** of **REDACTED**, Queensland say as follows:

1. I was born on **REDACTE** 1930. I am now 69 years old.
2. I was born and raised in the Brisbane area. After I completed High School, I went on to take an apprentice course in motor mechanics. I have also taken a leadership course with the RAAF and a TAFE course on Terra Technology.
3. I joined the RAAF in 1948. I was posted to Darwin in 1950. I was in Darwin with the RAAF for approximately 18 months, before I left the RAAF to join the Aborigines Inland Mission ("AIM") as a full-time missionary.
4. When I was with the RAAF at Darwin in 1950 and 1951, I spent all of my spare time as a volunteer at the Retta Dixon Home, which was run by AIM. The Retta Dixon Home needed male volunteers, as there were no men on the staff there. Itinerant AIM missionaries, like Dick Stretton and Charlie Main, would stay at Retta Dixon and help out when they were in Darwin.
5. Early in 1952 I left the RAAF and joined the ministry full-time. I did not go to the Retta Dixon Home immediately. I was first posted to help one of the other AIM missionaries, Dick Stretton, build the mission house in Katherine.
6. After assisting Dick Stretton for approximately six months, I returned to Brisbane to marry my wife, Audrey.
7. About three months after Audrey and I were married, that is in early 1953, Audrey and I went to Katherine as missionaries with the AIM. At Katherine, we continued the work of building the mission house. We also performed mission work on the cattle stations and the Aboriginal Reserve located near Katherine, and with the aborigines living in the town. The work we were doing was the same type of work

as Dick Stretton had been doing prior to our arrival in Katherine. Our arrival in Katherine allowed Dick to perform mission work over a larger area.

8. While in Katherine, Audrey and I occasionally visited the Retta Dixon Home in Darwin. There were no male staff at the Home at that time. There was no resident male staff member until the arrival of Stan Matthews in 1953 or 1954.
9. Mr and Mrs Matthews were not there for very long. Mr Matthews ran into some strife at the Retta Dixon Home and was sent away by the Government.
10. After Mr Matthews was sent away, AIM needed someone to look after the boys at the Home, so Audrey and I were asked to leave Katherine and go to the Retta Dixon Home. We were at the Retta Dixon Home from the middle of 1954 until around the end of 1955. Because we had to leave our work in Katherine, the mission there lapsed until someone else was appointed at a later time.
11. As a trained motor mechanic, I was able to perform most of the maintenance work at the Retta Dixon Home, and Audrey, who is a trained nurse, was able to treat the children's minor illnesses and injuries. Audrey set up a dispensary at the Retta Dixon Home which she operated every morning. She would treat the children for cuts and abrasions and the like.
12. In the second half of 1955, an AIM conference was held in Sydney. Audrey and I went to this conference. I drove the missionaries down from Darwin to the conference; we collected some other missionaries along the way. It was at this conference that we gave notice of our resignation. In fact, we drove back up to Darwin after the conference to pack up all our things and return the other missionaries and the vehicle to the Home.
13. I cannot recall the date when we left the Retta Dixon Home, however it would have been about the end of 1955.
14. We did not resign for reasons connected with any of the children or the Home, we left for spiritual reasons.

#### **My duties at Retta Dixon**

15. When I visited the Home in 1950-1951, I would help out with maintenance and odd jobs that had to be done.
16. When Audrey and I were at the Retta Dixon Home in 1954-5, I did everything from looking after the older boys to doing all of the maintenance work on the buildings and the vehicles.
17. I was also in charge of the work boys. The work boys were two or three full-blood aboriginal boys from the Bagot Reserve. They did things like chopping wood for the coppers. I think one of them was called Jackie, and had been working there since the Home started; I can't otherwise recall their names.

18. I also started and looked after a vegetable garden at the Retta Dixon Home.
19. However, my main responsibility was looking after the boys' dorm and supervising the older boys. I made sure that they got up in the morning and were washed and dressed and ready for school when the school bus came.
20. The maintenance work kept me very busy at the Retta Dixon Home. There was always something to do.
21. I also used to drive the children in the truck when they needed to go somewhere. When I first went to the Retta Dixon Home, they only had one vehicle for the children. It was an old ex-Army truck that the children called the "Green Frog". One of the things the government bought us was a new Austin Road Star 3-ton truck. We put high sides and seats in the back for the children. The truck had a canopy top. I can also recall that we had a new Bedford truck at the Home when I was there. I can't recall precisely when we purchased the Austin or the Bedford.
22. Miss Shankelton had a Vanguard, which was a little, covered van which she and some of the other missionaries drove.
23. Dick Stretton had his own car, to transport him around on his mission work. Audrey and I also had an old Stuart utility which we had brought up from Katherine, although we didn't use it when we were at Retta Dixon.

#### **Staff at Retta Dixon**

24. The Retta Dixon Home was run solely by Miss Shankelton. She was definitely in charge. She was the only person who would give us directions. She organised all the finances and the administrative side of the place. She was also the person who dealt with the Government people about the Home. I have no knowledge of the records at the Retta Dixon Home or the system of record keeping in the Home - all of that was done by Miss Shankelton. She was always down at the dining room for breakfast and assisted with the making of the lunches. She also led or participated in the devotions for the staff which were held at morning tea time.
25. Miss Shankelton would occasionally give me specific instructions regarding the maintenance at the Home, but I mostly decided what needed to be done and did the work.
26. The only people I gave directions to were the work boys from the Bagot Reserve who assisted me.
27. I have been shown some documents in the course of preparation of this statement. The documents are attached and marked "A", and are as follows: a letter dated 2 November 1954 from Egerton Long to the Acting Director of Native Affairs, a letter dated 24 November 1954 from the Acting Director to Egerton Long, and a further

letter from Egerton Long to the Director of Native Affairs dated 15 December 1954. I have never seen any of these documents prior to the preparation of this statement.

28. These documents suggest that I was being put forward by AIM for an appointment as Assistant Superintendent. I was not aware prior to seeing these letters that I had ever been put forward for such a position, nor was I aware that there was such a position at AIM. I knew Egerton Long - he was the man in charge of AIM when I was involved with it. I do not remember anyone called Mr McCaffery. Nor am I aware of any suggestion that anyone in the Government had any criticisms of me or my work with AIM.
29. It rather surprises me that I was apparently being put forward for the position of Assistant Superintendent, as Audrey and I only ever intended to stay at Retta Dixon temporarily, until a permanent replacement for the Matthews could be found. We much preferred working and living down in Katherine.
30. Like all of the other missionaries at the Retta Dixon Home, neither Audrey nor myself ever took a salary. We lived on faith.
31. I don't have the best recollection of the other staff members at the Home.
32. Dick Stretton was an itinerant worker. He spent some time at the Retta Dixon Home during the wet season. The wet season extends from December to March, but he would not have spent the entire four months at the home. I cannot recall how long Dick Stretton was at the Home during the wet season when Audrey and I were there.
33. Charlie Main was an itinerant worker with the AIM. Like Dick Stretton, he would travel around to the cattle stations and minister to the aborigines. During the wet season, Charlie Main would do quite a bit of writing. He would spend some time at the Home doing this. I don't believe he would have been at the Home for more than a few weeks in total while Audrey and I were at the Home.
34. Gladys Dinham looked after the babies in the nursery at the Home.
35. Jocelyn Bridges worked with Miss Dinham in the nursery with the toddlers.
36. Marg Spohn was responsible for a group of girls. I think they were the younger girls but I can't quite remember. Miss Spohn seemed to be sort of second in charge after Miss Shankelton.
37. Ada Cavanagh worked with the pre-school girls. She and Miss Dinham and Miss Spohn were fairly elderly ladies when we were there in the mid 1950's.
38. Stan and Hazel Matthews was there only for a short time. Audrey and I went up to the Retta Dixon Home to replace the Matthews after he was dismissed from the Home.
39. I remember Vivienne Orcher. She looked after some of the girls - I can't recall what age group.

40. I know Merv Pattermore. He was not at the Home when we were there. I understand that he became involved with the Home later on.
41. I remember Hector George Bentley. Mr Bentley was in Katherine in the Salvation Army. I don't believe he ever had any involvement with the Retta Dixon Home. I have no idea what became of him.
42. I remember Ruby Shepherd, she was an aboriginal woman who worked in the laundry with Bessie Croft.
43. Chrissie South was a part-aboriginal missionary, who looked after the older girls if I remember rightly.
44. Winnie Winsley was a part-aboriginal woman who was part of the laundry team.
45. Except for one visit by Egerton Long, I cannot recall there being any official visits by members of the AIM Council when we were at the Retta Dixon Home.
46. I remember that Gordon Sweeney and some other Government field officers would come quite regularly to the Home, although I can't remember all of their names. I can't recall exactly what the Government officers who would visit the Home would do when they were there. I don't know if they conducted a review per se of the Home. I think they had some involvement in bringing some of the children to the home, but I don't really remember. I think they also came out to address particular issues, but that would have been with Miss Shankelton.
47. I don't recall any female welfare or field officers. The name Mamie Merlin doesn't ring any bells with me - I don't know who she was.

#### Accommodation

48. The Retta Dixon Home was an ex-Army hospital. The buildings all had concrete floors, concrete walls, and a fibro roof. The dorm buildings all had windows but the windows were not glass, they had fibro louvres.
49. The beds were what were classed as hospital type beds. They had a steel frame with wire mesh slats. The beds all had mattresses and Army stock blankets and pillows. The bedding was basic but adequate.
50. The toilet and shower facilities were unchanged from the days when the Home was used as a military hospital. They were basic but they were clean and in working order. There was a septic system in place. One of the banes of maintenance work was pulling the cans and bottles out of the septic system. The children would flush anything they didn't want down the toilets. To clean out the septic system I had to open all of the traps one by one along the entire length of the septic system. It was not a pleasant job. Quite often the girls would put their sanitary napkins down the toilet.

51. The dining facilities were also basic but adequate. There was a big dining hall that contained a number of tables at which the children sat. I think that the children were assigned to a particular table but, as Audrey and I did not eat in the dining hall, I can't really remember. I think that the staff members sat with the children. I don't recall who would have sat with the boys who were in my dormitory.
52. Audrey and I, and our first child, Paul, lived in a small quarters area at the end of the girls' dorm. These quarters were attached to the girls' dorm. There was a concrete block wall separating our flat from the girls' dorm. We did not have our own toilet or bathroom and had to go down to the main toilet block, like everyone else.
53. Audrey and I did not eat at the dining room with the rest of the staff and the children. We cooked all of our meals on the small stove in our flat.

#### **The children at Retta Dixon**

54. From what I can remember, most of the children at the Retta Dixon Home were from cattle stations. I can only think of two or three mothers who were at the Home with their children. I don't remember any of the children being from the Darwin area with the exception of the children of these two or three mothers.
55. I think that if there were children from the Darwin area they would be children who were abandoned or not wanted.
56. I don't remember there being a particular group of children who had come from the Phillip Creek area.
57. In my ministry work, I saw a number of situations where the mothers did not want their children. I remember one aboriginal woman who had two children with one man, a third with a second man and a fourth and fifth child with a third man. It was very difficult for such children because, from what I could see, the half caste child was not wanted by either the whites or the aborigines.
58. I understood that some of the children had simply been dumped at Retta Dixon, because their mothers didn't want them.
59. I don't recall the circumstances of arrival of any particular child at the Retta Dixon Home. I assume that Miss Shankelton would have had the initial contact with the child, but then the dorm parent for that child's age group would take over.
60. I recall that some of the children had some contact with their families. I am not sure how this was arranged. I imagine it was done through the department with the involvement of Miss Shankelton. I do not remember any policy on whether children could go home on holidays or not. I do not believe that parents were forbidden from seeing their children at the Home, or having them home for holidays if they wanted them. I am not aware of any situation where the parent was not permitted to see their child if they wanted to.

61. I think that the children had a fair amount of contact with other part-aborigines. There was quite a large half caste population in Darwin. The children at the Retta Dixon Home would have had contact with these children at school. The children also would have had contact with other part-aboriginal children on our picnic days when we went to places like Howard Springs. Howard Springs was a popular day trip from Darwin. Many of the towns people would go to Howard Springs as well.
62. We tried to minimise the contact that the children had with the full blood aborigines from the Bagot Reserve. The children were not supposed to fraternise at all with the full bloods from the Bagot Reserve. I understand that this was a Government initiative, although it was supported by the Home.
63. The children did not have much contact with the Darwin community while they were at the Retta Dixon Home. When I was in the RAAF I would come out to the Home and volunteer there, but I cannot recall anyone who did that while I was a full-time worker at the Home. I think I did it because there was not a lot to do in Darwin in 1950 and 1951.
64. I have no recollection of any of the children speaking tribal languages when I was at Retta Dixon. Of course, they all had certain words that they used, such as the word they had for the white man, which I cannot remember right now. But aside from using certain words, they did not speak in an Aboriginal dialect.
65. I don't believe that the Retta Dixon Home had any sort of restriction on the speaking of Aboriginal dialect. I cannot recall language ever being an issue or ever hearing it discussed while I was at the Home.

#### **General facilities and activities**

66. I have been informed of an allegation that the children were consistently denied proper or appropriate food, clothing, shelter, medical services and educational programs. This is simply not true. The children were well cared for and well provided for at the Hostel.
67. The clothing worn by the children was always very good. They were a credit to us when they went out.
68. The medical facilities were also perfectly adequate. Audrey ran a dispensary every morning. We had a good first aid kit at the Home. If any of the children required more serious medical attention, Dr Moody would come out to the Home. I can only remember Dr Moody being required to come to the Home on a few occasions. Generally the children were very healthy.
69. As far as the quality of the education received by the children at the Retta Dixon Home, I don't have much to say. I think that the education they received must have been the same as the education received by any child in Darwin, as they all went to

the same school. I didn't see children's school reports - I assume they would have gone to Miss Shankelton.

70. I know that education was very important to the Retta Dixon Home. If the children did not receive an education, as would have been the case if they had stayed on the stations, they would not have had an opportunity to get a job.
71. During the school days there was a routine that was followed, but I can't now recall the details of the routine. The children would get up and have to make their beds. I think that they also had certain chores to do in the morning. The chores might be to clean up the dead banana leaves from around the yard or something like that. I can't really recall. I think that there were some days when the dining room tables would be scrubbed. This would be a chore that would be done by the children.
72. I think that for the children's chores we tried to provide to them some form of reward or compensation. We tried to be fair to the children and we did not treat them as slaves. As an example of one of the rewards, I think that there were some special events like basketball games in town where I would take in a small group of children rather than everyone from the Home. Being chosen to come to these events would be one of the rewards for the children.
73. On many of the weekends we took the children away to camps. We had huts at Casuarina Beach. We would also take the children to Howard Springs or to Berry Springs. These were swimming places located approximately 40 km from Darwin. We also had a camp at Adelaide River. I cannot recall the name of the camp at this time.
74. On most Saturdays we would take the children to one of these camps or on a picnic. The children loved swimming at those places. At the picnics the children would play sport. Football and cricket were popular sports to play on the picnic days. The children also knew which fruits could be eaten and would pick fruits when we were out at the picnic areas.
75. On the days that we would have a picnic, we would rise at the normal time and have breakfast. Lunches would then be made and taken with us. I cannot recall who would make the lunches. Almost all of the children would come with us on the picnic outings. The only ones who would not come were the very young children.
76. Once the children arrived at the picnic area, their day was unstructured. We would tell the children when we expected them to be back at lunch and that sort of thing. We wouldn't have to watch the children carefully. We didn't worry about them in the water. They were like fish. The children were very good at finding activities for themselves to do. They did not need to be entertained.

77. Although we didn't often take the children out on a Sunday, they were allowed to play cricket and other games on Sunday. They weren't prevented from playing on a Sunday.
78. The children were all very good at sports and enjoyed their sports very much. Basketball was the big sport at Darwin at that time. Every Friday night the older children would go into Darwin to compete or to watch basketball. The children who went into basketball were aged between about 10 or 11 to about 16.
79. The children also played football and cricket. I can't recall if the children played hockey or not.
80. I used to help coach the boys at basketball. We used to have practices in the afternoons at the Home, before the evening meal was served. There was a basketball court at the Home.
81. I can't recall who coached the girls basketball team. I was only involved with teaching the boys. I think that perhaps Chrissie South taught the girls basketball, although it may have been Vivian Orcher who coached the girls' basketball team.
82. I have been told that Lorna Nelson alleges that Fong Lim coached her at basketball. I do not remember anyone by that or any similar name. Nor do I remember the children being coached by anyone other than a staff member at the Home.
83. I think that, in addition to the children being divided into basketball teams based on their gender, there were also different age groups for the basketball teams. I can't recall the age groups for each of the teams.
84. The Retta Dixon children would compete against school teams and against community teams from outside the school. I can't recall what other community groups would have had a basketball team. I do remember that the Retta Dixon children won a good percentage of the games.
85. The basketball court in Darwin was very good. It was almost the focal point of the activities in town. The court was an outdoor court that had lighting so that events could be held in the evenings. I think that there were several courts, or at least more than one basketball court, at the facility. There were stands for spectators to watch.
86. I can't recall the names of any of the children who were particularly good at basketball or any of the other sports.
87. In addition to sports, the girls were also taught sewing and knitting and crochet.
88. I have also been told that it is alleged that non-religious activities outside of the Retta Dixon Home were discouraged. I don't think that this is true. Aside from sports, there were not a lot of activities, religious or non religious, in Darwin at the time. I think that the children would participate in school activities like the school play and that sort of thing. But there weren't lots of things to do in Darwin in

those days - it was pretty primitive and a lot of the buildings had been bombed out during the war and not yet rebuilt. I don't remember there being any public swimming pool in town at that time. I think the first chemist in Darwin was built whilst we were there. I can't remember there being any picture theatre except the one at the Airforce base. Even the senior Government people worked in old army buildings.

89. The primary purpose of the Retta Dixon Home was to provide a stable environment in which the children could live and develop and to provide for the children protection, food, clothing, education and some understanding of relationships in the world. By relationships I am referred to the giving attitude of the staff. The staff at the Retta Dixon Home were all unpaid. They were there because they loved the children. This, I think, created a loving environment, an unselfish environment, for the children.
90. As much as was possible, the Retta Dixon Home attempted to provide for the children all of the advantages of family life.
91. Generally speaking, I think that back then the children appreciated what we did for them. When we went out on picnics we had fun with the kids. My wife and I were young enough to do that.

### Religion

92. At the Retta Dixon Home, church services were held every Sunday. The service was a normal, low key type of service. It was conducted by Miss Shankelton. The service would start with some singing, followed by preaching by Miss Shankelton. The service would go for no more than hour.
93. In addition to services on Sunday, grace was said at meals and we had evening prayers in the dormitories. I would lead the boys in the evening prayers. The prayers would consist of praying for various things such as the safety and well being of the residents. It was very low key. I can't recall if there was Sunday school. I remember that we had a mid week church service as well, but I think that this was only for the staff.
94. I cannot recall any children who especially took to Christianity, nor can I recall any children who rebelled against it.
95. I've recently been informed that a patrol officer named Ryan wrote a report stating that the AIM placed considerable emphasis on evangelical teachings and that this was done to the detriment of the social adjustment of the children and seriously retarded their outlook. I am not familiar with patrol officer Ryan, but I agree with him that there was an evangelical viewpoint presented at the Home; however, I do not believe that it was presented to the point where it would have retarded the

development of the children. I think that this type of comment depends entirely on the viewpoint of the person making the statement. I remember one Government official, named Gordon Sweeney, who was very helpful and was a good liaison officer between the Mission and the Government. I cannot recall if Gordon Sweeney was in Darwin when Audrey and I lived at the Retta Dixon Home, or if I would have met Gordon Sweeney when I was still with the RAAF.

96. I believe that the level of religious instruction at the Retta Dixon Home was appropriate. The children probably learned more from observing the actions of the missionaries than anything they learned at church.

### Discipline

97. As far as I can remember, there was no set policy or procedure for handling discipline at the Retta Dixon Home. I think each staff member would handle the minor discipline problems themselves. If there was something more serious, then Miss Shankelton would be involved. I think that each staff member generally disciplined their own children, although Dick Stretton would sometimes administer corporal punishment at Miss Shankelton's request. Unless one of the staff members was temporarily in charge of a particular child, I don't think that they would have disciplined that child without involving the dorm parent of the child.
98. I think that the children were usually disciplined by losing their privileges such as sports privileges and other things. By loss of sports privileges, I mean that the children would not get to go into Darwin to watch a sports event. I don't believe that the children would have been disciplined by refusing to let them play in a particular game, because that would have penalised the whole team not just that particular child.
99. I also think that we gave the children extra work chores as a discipline. When Audrey and I were at the Home, I introduced chickens into the Home. We used the chickens for eggs. We also had a vegetable garden. I think that the children used to be assigned additional chores like working in the chicken coop or cleaning up the yard.
100. I also think that one of the punishments was that the children had to go and sit in Miss Shankelton's office. This was a form of punishment because the children, instead of playing with the other children at the Home, would have to sit in Miss Shankelton's office.
101. I've recently been informed of an allegation that the children were disciplined by being locked in a room without food. Aside from sending the children to Miss Shankelton's office, I can't think of any detention type punishment at the Retta Dixon Home. If this allegation doesn't refer to Miss Shankelton's office I can't

imagine where the children would have been detained. There were no spare rooms or unoccupied rooms at the Retta Dixon Home.

102. I've also been informed of an allegation that the children were made to work in the nursery laundry cleaning soiled nappies. I remember that the older girls were delegated to help Miss Dinham in the nursery. She was old and she needed help. Miss Dinham worked very hard at the Retta Dixon Home. I do not know whether Lorna Nelson would have been made to assist Miss Dinham more often than the other girls.
103. As far as corporal punishment is concerned, I think that the younger children (up to about 10 years of age) were disciplined with a slap on the backside. The slap on the backside was usually with the hand.
104. Older children might be slapped on the bottom or receive a few hits with the strap on their legs and bottom, through their clothes. By a few hits, I mean maybe 2 or 3 or 4 hits with the strap. The strap was a leather belt, but not the buckle end. I don't remember any cane or rope or other implement being used.
105. There were some discipline problems with the girls. A number of the girls were falling pregnant. The women staff members at the home were all single and unmarried and quite innocent in the ways of the world. They were very ignorant of the facts of life and Audrey and I had to educate some of them. The women could not understand how the girls were becoming pregnant. The girls' dorm was locked at night so that they would not be able to get out. I discovered that the individual louvres in the windows could be removed one by one. The girls, I believe, were removing the louvres and climbing out the window. It took a long time for Audrey and I to convince the staff that this was happening.
106. I was not really involved with disciplining the girls. If any of the house parents needed assistance in disciplining the children, Miss Shankelton would assist them.
107. When I was at the Home, there were other men involved in the discipline of the children. I believe that, on occasion, Miss Shankelton would call in Dick Stretton to assist her with the discipline. Miss Shankelton never called me in to assist with the discipline of the girls.
108. As far as the boys were concerned, I would not send them to Miss Shankelton to be disciplined. I would discipline the boys myself. With the boys, most times a slap on the backside was as far as a discipline would go. I would do this in the dorms so that the other boys could see the discipline that the child was receiving.
109. I do not recall any of the boys making any complaints about me to the Government.
110. The only major discipline issue that I can recall at the Retta Dixon Home was the situation that involved Stan Matthews. I understand that Mr Matthews was sent

away from the Home by the Government because he had disciplined a couple of the boys too harshly.

111. I understand that Mr Matthews overstepped the mark in disciplining the children. It wasn't that he was a bad man or cruel, it was because of the attitude of the department that Mr Matthews had to go. It was devastating for him. I did not see the actual event but it soon became public knowledge that he had struck a few of the boys with something other than his hand.
112. Everyone at the Home was taken aback by Mr Matthews being sent down south. The department made the ruling that Matthews had overstepped the mark and there was simply no give and take.
113. I don't know any of the details regarding who was involved from the department.
114. I cannot recall if Mrs Matthews and the children left the Home with Mr Matthews or after he did.
115. In the course of preparing this statement, I have been shown a copy of a letter from Mr Dentith to the Acting Director of Native Affairs dated 27 July 1954. A copy of that letter is attached to this statement and marked "B". I have never seen this document before. In this letter, Mr Dentith says that I had been involved in flogging boys with Mr Matthews. I do not recall any occasion when Mr Matthews and I were both involved in punishing children. I don't recall having any contact with Mr Matthews regarding the discipline of the boys. The document says that the boys who were punished by Mr Matthews were Les Reid, David Russell and Ray Tilmouth. I remember each of those boys, but I do not recall being involved in their discipline with Mr Matthews.
116. I don't know why Mr Dentith would have mentioned me in his report. I seemed to have got on the wrong side of Dentith from the start. I also don't think he really liked the missionaries or the Home, because he wasn't a religious man himself. I remember one incident when Dentith and I clashed. The full bloods used to have really noisy corroborees at the Bagot Reserve; they would be screaming and yelling and throwing sticks and so on. One night, there was a particularly noisy corroboree going on, which seemed to have turned into some sort of brawl. I went down to the reserve and tried to stop the fighting. Mr Dentith abused me for doing so - he said it was none of my business and I could have got myself killed. He didn't seem to like me after that.
117. In the course of preparing this statement, I have also been shown a letter from Mr McCaffery to the Administrator, dated 29 July 1954, a copy of which is attached to this statement and marked "C". I had not previously seen this document. Nor was I aware of the allegations against Mr Matthews in respect of incidents in November 1953 and February 1954 (when Audrey and I weren't at Retta Dixon). This letter

seems to confirm that it was the Government who decided that Stan Matthews had to leave the Home.

118. In the letter of 29 July, Mr McCaffery said that I had taken upon myself "the role of Judge and Chief Whipper". I do not know why Mr McCaffery would have made such a comment. As I said earlier, I don't remember who Mr McCaffery was, and I don't recall ever meeting him. I do not know what unfounded rumours Mr McCaffery might have heard from the children or anyone else. I do not believe that I ever behaved inappropriately in relation to punishing children at Retta Dixon.
119. I am not sure where Audrey and I were living Katherine at the time when Mr Matthews was sacked. We had come up to Darwin for the birth of our first child, Paul, but I don't remember whether or not we had returned to Katherine by the time Matthews was sacked.
120. I think Stan Matthews ran into trouble at the Home because the Government was changing the rules somewhat. We were working within very close perimeters as far as the department was concerned. They were keeping a close eye on what we were doing at the Home. The Government was allowing the children the liberty of complaining if they were being hard done by. Every time a child was restricted in any way, the child would run into town to the department and lay a complaint. It became nearly impossible to maintain discipline and you can't run a place like the Retta Dixon Home without discipline.
121. The greater Government involvement made us subservient to the Government. I don't think this was a good thing. The children were given all sorts of rights which made it difficult for the Home to function in an orderly manner.
122. I do not believe that I had any real problem with disciplining the children. However, I do remember one occasion when one of the boys wanted to strike me with a brick. He was quite a rebellious boy and when he picked up a brick I knew he was going to do some damage to me. When I saw that this was about to happen, I knew that something needed to be done to show the boys that this was not acceptable. I think that the aborigines are always looking for a leader, someone to set the standard, and I thought that this boy was about to become a leader for the other boys in the dorm. So when I saw him coming towards me with the brick I got him on the floor and put my knee on his back and said "Listen, you have to behave or you won't be able to stay in the Home". By this time the boys in the dorm gathered around. I did nothing further to the boy with the brick. This was all that was needed. The boys needed to be shown that this type of behaviour wouldn't be tolerated. The boys in the dorm paid attention. This was the only problem I had with discipline. There was nothing else of any consequence.

123. In the course of preparing this statement, I have recently been shown a copy of another letter by Mr Dentith, dated 27 October 1954, a copy of which is attached to this statement and marked "D". This is the first time I have seen this document. I presume from the description of a situation in which I was involved with a boy who was on the dormitory floor that this is the same incident as the one I have just described - I do not believe I was involved in any other incident like that. It appears from the document that the boy in question was Norman Anderson.
124. I did not kick Norman Anderson, I only held him on the ground as I have described above. I also reject the suggestion that my wife or Miss Shankelton were there, "restraining" me, or that Mr Dentith came into the dormitory or spoke with me on this occasion. I don't believe there were any adult witnesses to this incident. I don't recall going anywhere after this incident; I certainly don't recall going to Mr Sweeney's place.
125. I do not know what Mr Dentith was referring to on the second page of his letter, when he said he had spoken to a police officer who had concerns about me. I had no contact with the police when I was at Retta Dixon. Nor do I know what Mr Dentith was referring to when he spoke about complaints about my driving.
126. There was never an incident involving any type of sexual contact between the girls at the Retta Dixon Home and the male staff members at the Retta Dixon Home, to my knowledge. We also had no concerns about sex between the children at the Retta Dixon Home. We tried to make the Retta Dixon home like a family and I think that the boys believed the girls were too close to them. The boys were not locked in at night but the girls were. The problem was with the girls sneaking across to the Bagot Reserve. I'm not sure when the practice of locking the girls in the dorm started. It was in place when we arrived at the Retta Dixon Home.

#### **Lorna Nelson**

127. I remember that Lorna Nelson was one of the girls at the Retta Dixon Home, but I do not recall her in detail. I don't know what her academic abilities were like, nor do I recall her sporting aptitude. I don't remember where she was originally from nor do I recall any family coming to visit her. I have no recollection of Lorna being mistreated in any way at the Retta Dixon Home.
128. I have been informed that Lorna alleges that she won a prize for being the best all round athlete. I have no reason to doubt that, as many of the children were very good athletes.
129. I've been informed that one of Lorna's allegations is that Miss Shankelton refused to refer correspondence to Lorna detailing her potential admission to a nurse's training program. I cannot believe that Miss Shankelton would have done this. Miss

Shankelton was very concerned about encouraging the education of the children. I've also been informed that Lorna alleges that Miss Shankelton wanted her to go to the Singleton Bible College. That would not surprise me, as Miss Shankelton often encouraged girls to go there. However, I do not believe that Miss Shankelton would have refused to pass on a letter to Lorna if she didn't want to go to Singleton - she wasn't that sort of person.

130. I've recently been informed of allegations made against me regarding an incident at Berry Springs involving Lorna Nelson.
131. I do not have a detailed memory of the occasion, but I deny that the incident happened as Lorna describes it, and I certainly did not strike Lorna (or any other girl) with the buckle of a belt. I also have no recollection of being struck by Lorna.
132. Given the scrutiny of the Retta Dixon Home by the department, if the incident happened as Lorna alleges it happened, I am sure that I would have been out on my ear. Mr Matthews was sent away for a far less serious matter than the one Lorna alleges. After the incident with Matthews, it was clear to all of us that the Government would step in if we mistreated the kids. I was well aware of that. The kids were also well aware that they could complain about us if we did something to them that they didn't like.
133. I do remember that Audrey and I had been camped at the springs for a few days in the Christmas holidays with the older girls and some of the other missionaries. The girls were in the habit of going down to Berry Springs to swim and do their washing first thing in the morning. I told them to be sure that they returned to the camp before the local Darwin townspeople arrived at the springs for the day. I didn't ban them from going swimming again because it was Sunday (which is what Lorna Nelson apparently alleges); I did so because I didn't want them getting in the way of the townspeople.
134. Some of the girls returned to the springs later in the day and I found this out. I can't now remember which girls were involved, or how I found out that they had snuck back to the springs. I don't remember whether Lorna Nelson was one of the girls. I can't recall the precise number of girls involved, but it may have been 3 or 4.
135. I believe I would have given the girls a strap on the legs, that was the usual punishment. I deny strapping them anywhere other than on the legs. I also deny that I used the buckle end of the belt. I don't remember any of the girls hitting me back. I don't recall what happened after I punished the girls, or whether any of them ran away from the camp as Lorna alleges.
136. I have also been told of another allegation that I placed my hand on Lorna's thigh one day, as we were driving into Darwin to go to the basketball. That is not true. I

can't recall any situation occurring that would have led Lorna to believe that I was making sexual advances towards her.

137. I have no recollection of ever driving anywhere with only one of the children. Whenever I took the children anywhere it was always in a group and they sat in the seated area at the back of the vehicle. I do not know why Miss Shankelton would have been in the practice of driving Lorna into Darwin on Friday evenings, nor do I know why I would have been going into Darwin on this particular occasion, as it is alleged by Lorna.
138. I've also been informed that Lorna is alleging that I stalked her and would stand behind her very close while she was doing housework. This is also not true.
139. I believe that my wife was helped with the housework on occasion by some of the girls from the Home. I have no recollection of Lorna working there, although it's possible that she did.

#### Later life

140. After resigning from the AIM, we went to Bundaberg, Queensland, where I worked as a mechanic and participated in the ministry with Dr Moody. Dr Moody had also previously been at Darwin and he occasionally would come out to the Retta Dixon Home to treat the children there. Dr Moody is now deceased.
141. I worked as a mechanic in Bundaberg from 1955 or 1956 to about 1959. Audrey and I then went to Townsville where I worked as a mechanic. In Townsville I volunteered with the Open Air Campaigners, an interdenominational ministry. We were in Townsville until approximately 1964.
142. Audrey and I then moved to Gladstone, Queensland for about three or four years. At Gladstone, I was a minister for the Independent Baptist Church.
143. In 1967 we moved to Perth. At Perth I was working as a mechanic and, on a part-time basis, assisting the pastor of the Baptist Church at Attadale, Western Australia.
144. After a few months, Audrey and I moved to Kununurra, Western Australia. I was working for the CSIRO on a major engineering project. While at Kununurra, I acted as the unofficial pastor and, also on an unofficial basis, I hired the aboriginal workers for the CSIRO.
145. In about 1969 Audrey and I left Kununurra. Our children were now of High School age and there was no High School in the Kununurra region. Audrey and the children went to Perth and I went to India. While in India I travelled and did evangelical work with an Indian Missionary.
146. I returned to Australia after spending about a year in India. Audrey and I and our family went to Sydney. This was about 1970. In Sydney, I worked as a motor mechanic for about 2½ years.

18

147. In about 1972 Audrey and I moved to Yandina, Queensland. I set up my own business as a motor mechanic. Since that date we've moved around Queensland periodically. Sometimes I've be working as a motor mechanic, sometimes I've been assisting my children with their businesses.

148. Audrey and I are now retired.

DATED: 9 April 1999

*H. Desmond Walters*

H. Desmond Walters