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**OUR REF: 980966**

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN FROM EGERTON LONG**

**AT CASTLE HILL, NSW**

**ON 25 MARCH 1999**

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**Living conditions in Darwin**

- 1 I first went to Darwin in 1947 or 1948.
- 2 Darwin in the 1950's was a primitive place. Most of the building materials came from Sydney by ship and were therefore hard to come by and very expensive.
- 3 Much of the food also came up from Sydney by ship. People in Darwin were accustomed to doing without. They had to be.
- 4 The houses were primitive. Glass windows were unknown. The windows had wooden shutters or louvres that just pushed out to open.
- 5 Accommodation at the Retta Dixon Home was quite comparable with the other accommodation in the city of Darwin. I would say it was even better than average.
- 6 Many of the Darwin residents lived in Sydney Williams Huts. Many lived in worse accommodation. There were a few government houses with wide verandahs but even these homes did not have glass windows.
- 7 The government offices in Darwin were just Sydney Williams Huts. They were just bare, unlined buildings with no air conditioning.
- 8 The water for the town came in from nine miles out. The pipe was above ground for the entire nine miles and the water was usually very hot by the time it came out of a tap in Darwin.
- 9 The airport building was just a tin shed.
- 10 The streets were mostly dirt or gravel. There may have been a few bitumen streets. The highway between Alice Springs and Darwin was bitumen. The army improved the road considerably during the war. But after the war highway maintenance seemed to be no one's responsibility so it fell into disrepair.
- 11 The Half-Castes in Darwin lived in Stewart Park. The AIM had workers there. The AIM had a reasonable house in Stewart Park but that was not built until the mid-1950's.
- 12 Stewart Park, by the late 1950's, was composed primarily of houses rather than shacks or dumps. They were practically all fibro houses with louvres. But again this was not until the later 1950's. I don't remember what Stewart Park was like in the early 1950's.
- 13 I think that about half the houses in Darwin would have had dirt rather than concrete floors in the early 1950's.

**Visit to Darwin prior to AIM Council meeting dated 31/5/55**

- 14 I have now read the minutes from the Council meeting dated 31 May 1955 which state that there was an atmosphere of unrest and disharmony at the Home in 1955.

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- 15 I would have made this assessment on a trip I made to Darwin early in 1955.
- 16 I remember this trip to Darwin. I am not sure exactly when it took place but it must have been in about March, April, or May 1955. I kept a perpetual diary from the 1960's onward. When I started keeping this diary, I wrote down in it what I could recall of my movements in the 1950's, however, I did not record anything about this trip to Darwin.
- 17 It was during this visit to Darwin that I had a discussion with Des Walters. I remember being told by Des Walters that he was not happy at the Home.
- 18 From what I can recall, Des was very unhappy with Miss Shankelton, a woman, being in charge of the Home. Des had come to us from the Brethren. The Brethren believe that it is Biblically wrong for a woman to be in a position above a man.
- 19 I remember talking with Des about this while we were sitting in their flat at the Home.
- 20 I can't recall any more specific details of our discussion.
- 21 The minutes also mention that Miss Cavanagh needed to "get away". She was an older woman in charge of 8 to 10 year old boys. I can't remember any details but I don't think that was working out that well.
- 22 I think that the humidity and crowded conditions at the Home contributed greatly to the stress of the missions.
- 23 In the Minutes, I also mention that the worker's "seem to be so absorbed in their endeavour to accomplish the routine work that they had lost touch with much that was spiritual." One of the reasons that the AIM was involved with Aboriginals was to teach them about Christianity. I believe from reading this passage that I must have thought that the spiritual teachings were being overlooked.
- 24 At the AIM we believed we were helping the Aboriginals. I remember when I was very young, about 8 or 10 years old, hearing the theory that the Aboriginals were a dying race. The theory was that their days were numbered, and that it was only a matter of time before there were no more Aboriginals. At the AIM, we did not want this to happen. We believe that every soul is precious in God's eyes and should be saved. The AIM was in the Northern Territory to help the Aboriginals, both with their physical needs and their spiritual needs.

**AIM Council Meetings – November 1955 to June 1956**

- 25 I was not at any AIM Council Meetings from November 1955 to June 1956. I was in America during this time.
- 26 I left for America in mid-November 1955 and returned on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1956.
- 27 While I was away, Mr. Collins was the Acting Director of the AIM.
- 28 As a result, I was not involved personally with any of the decisions that were made at this time.
- 29 I do recall there was a problem with the two girls mentioned in the Minutes, Josephine and Ruth. However, I don't recall any of the details.

**Dealings with the Welfare Branch**

- 30 Even though I was not present at the AIM meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1956, I have some general comments on the Minutes.

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- 31 I dealt with Harry Giese a lot as Director of the AIM. I can't remember when we first met. If he was at the original Government/Mission conference in 1953 I would have met him there, but I can't recall him being there.
- 32 I've now been shown an extract from a Telegram referred to in the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 3 February 1956. The telegram was from Harry Giese to the Council. I assume we received it on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1956 and that it is in response to a telegram we sent to Harry Giese earlier that day.
- 33 In the extract from the Telegram, Harry Giese states "...I should like to confirm that corporal punishment is not to be inflicted on my wards in any circumstances..."
- 34 The telegram summarises Harry Giese's approach to dealing with the AIM. He never discussed anything. He simply told you what was what. And Giese would just not allow any discipline in the home.
- 35 I had more talks with Ted Milliken than I did with Harry Giese. I felt that Ted and I could discuss matters that concerned the AIM and the Welfare Branch.
- 36 However, I don't recall whether Ted and I discussed discipline. If we did, I do not recall the details of the discussion.
- 37 One of Harry Giese's primary requests was that we staff the Retta Dixon Home with trained social worker types. But it wasn't possible for us to do this because there weren't any around.
- 38 The AIM goals for the Retta Dixon Home and the AIM position on corporal punishment is summarised in the resolutions for the Retta Dixon Home as stated on sheet 4 and 5 of the 3 February 1956 Minutes.
- 39 We wanted to staff the Home with trained people. We wanted to pay the staff a wage.
- 40 We wanted the Superintendent of the Home to have the power to apply corporal punishment as necessary to maintain discipline.
- 41 We also wanted the Superintendent to have the power to expel children who did not respond to discipline.
- 42 I am not certain to what extent we were able to realise these goals.

**Minute procedure**

- 43 The procedure for preparing the Minutes varied little throughout my time as Director of the AIM. I am reasonably sure that Arthur Collins would have followed this procedure in my absence from the AIM from November 1955 to June 1956.
- 44 The secretary, Richard M. Living would hand-write the minutes. After he had finished re-writing the minutes by hand, he would pass them to the Director for amendment. The amended minutes would then be typed up and signed off.
- 45 Mr. Richard Living passed away early 1960's in Victoria. His daughter is still living in Victoria. Her name is Mrs. Lynette Oates. She is connected with the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

**Meetings with Paul Hasluck**

- 46 From reading the Minutes of an AIM Council meeting that took place on 15/3/56, it appears that Arthur Collins and Miss Shankleton met with Paul Hasluck to discuss discipline at the

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Home. The Minutes state that Paul Hasluck indicated that he would "...personally take up the matter of disciplining the children in the Darwin Home and advise us of his investigations."

- 47 I have no knowledge of the meeting between Paul Hasluck and Miss Shankleton and Arthur Collins.
- 48 I have no recollection of discussing corporal punishment with Paul Hasluck. I am not certain if Paul Hasluck conducted any investigations into corporal punishment at the Home.
- 49 My only contact with Paul Hasluck was at the opening of the new Retta Dixon Home in 1962.
- 50 I note that my signature is at the bottom of these Minutes. I was not present at the meeting but, as I had returned from the US by the time the minutes were settled, I signed off on the minutes. Even though I signed off on the minutes, Arthur Collins would have checked over the Minutes and informed me that they were accurate.

**Document No. 03115600**

- 1 I have been shown a letter dated 16 February 1954 from Miss Shankelton in which Miss Shankelton responded to a proposal for transferring the mixed blood children from Darwin to Gawler, South Australia. Miss Shankelton rejects to this plan for three reasons. The first reason is that the home in Gawler is of Methodist persuasion rather than Baptist persuasion. The second is that it would be of an upheaval in the lives of the children and the third is that the children in the Retta Dixon Home would lose contact with their parents who reside in the Darwin area. The letter goes on to state that the AIM is against segregating the mixed blood children and prefers the children to attend public school in the company of non Aboriginal children and to mix freely with the general community.
- 2 Miss Shankelton, as a superintendent of the Retta Dixon Home, would have been the AIM representative primarily in charge of the children at the Home. As such, she would have had the authority to write this letter. I agree with Miss Shankelton's comments regarding segregating the mixed blood children. We were not in favour of segregation.

**Document No. 03119500**

- 3 This document is a letter from myself to Reg McCaffery dated 2 July 1954. I wrote this letter in response to Miss Shankelton forwarding on to me a copy of the letter that she wrote to Reg McCaffery dated 16 June 1954. In this letter I support Miss Shankleton's position on the matter.
- 4 I don't believe that anything came of the plan to send children down to Gawler. I can recall receiving a telephone call from Mr Marsh stating that the Gawler plan did not include the children from the Retta Dixon Home. I don't know if the Gawler plan went through for children from other homes. I don't believe it did.

**Document No. 03123100**

- 5 I have been shown a document dated 9 July 1954 from F.J.S. Wise to the Secretary of the Department of Territories. In particular I have read the extract from the report dated 3 February 1954 contained on pages 5 and 6 of this document. The extract from the report indicates that the Acting Director of Native Affairs is dissatisfied with the quality and training of the staff at the Retta Dixon Home and states that the Home "in its present location and form is a failure....".
- 6 I am surprised at such a strongly worded report on the Home. I don't recall much about my contact with McCaffery. I dealt mostly with Harry Giese. In my contact with Harry

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Giese he stressed two complaints that he had about the Home. The first was the training given to our staff and the second was with regard to discipline. Harry, as I've said before, did not want any of the children disciplined.

- 7 Despite reading these criticisms, I still believe that the Retta Dixon Home fulfilled its role adequately. This is especially so when compared with a proposal to transport all of the children to South Australia. I still feel that it was quite important to have a home in the Darwin area where the children could have contact with their families if the parents so wished.

**Document number unknown**

- 8 I have been shown a document from the District Superintendent, Native Affairs Branch to L.K. Dentith, Superintendent of Bagot Reserve. The document is titled "Treatment of Norman Anderson ---- by Staff Member of Retta Dixon Home".

- 9 The document refers to an incident between a staff member identified as Mr. Waters and a child named Norman Anderson. I assume that 'Mr. Waters ' refers to Des Walters. I vaguely recall Norman Anderson's name but I have no distinct recollection of him.

- 10 I am not familiar with this incident. I do not recall this incident being raised in any discussions I had with the Welfare Branch regarding Mr. Walters.

**Document number unknown**

- 11 I have been shown a document whose number is illegible. It is a letter dated 2 November 1954.

- 12 The letter is from myself to the Acting Director of the Native Affairs branch in Darwin. In this letter I inform the Acting Director that Mr & Mrs Walters have recently joined the staff at the Hostel. In the letter I inform the Acting Director that we, which I assume means the AIM Council, have suggested to Miss Shankelton that Mr Walters be appointed Assistant Superintendent of the Hostel.

- 13 I don't recall writing this letter nor do I recall attending an AIM Council meeting at which this matter would have been discussed. A decision such as this one is the type of decision that would be made at AIM Council meetings.

- 14 I have just been informed that there is no record of this discussion in the AIM Council minutes.

- 15 If the decision to suggest to Miss Shankelton that Mr Walters be appointed superintendent was not made at a Council meeting it may have been made by Arthur Collins and me. We met once every two weeks or so. I was residing up in Singleton in 1954. I would drive down to Sydney every two weeks to meet with Mr Collins.

- 16 In our meetings we would discuss each of the individual missions operated by the AIM. In the mid 1950's there were approximately 50 or 60 missionaries with the AIM.

- 17 I cannot recall whether it was standard procedure to inform the Welfare branch of staffing changes at the AIM. I suspect that the reason we informed the Welfare branch of the appointment of Mr Walters was because it was an appointment to the position of Assistant Superintendent. I am quite certain we wouldn't have informed the Welfare branch of the appointment of staff who would not have administrative powers.

**Document number unknown**

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- 18 This is a letter from myself to the Director of Native Welfare in Darwin dated 15 December 1954.
- 19 From reading this letter it appears that Mr Giese vetoed our decision to appoint Des Walters as the temporary Assistant Superintendent.
- 20 The letter I wrote indicates that I wished to meet with Mr Giese regarding this matter. I do not recall meeting with Mr Giese.

**Document No. 03692502**

- 21 I have been shown a copy of the document that is undated. The document is titled "Corporal Punishment of Children: Retta Dixon Home".
- 22 I am not familiar with this document. The first paragraph indicates that there had been a number of discussions between the Director of Welfare and his senior staff, the Superintendent of the Retta Dixon Home and her staff and the Reverend C.E. Long, Director of the Aborigines Inland Mission. I do not recall these discussions taking place. If I were to hazard a guess I would say that it might be referring to the 1953 Missions/Administration Conference. However, I've just been informed that the document was likely drafted after mid-1955 as the final paragraph, Paragraph No. 9, refers to a "woman Welfare officer" being called into the Home on particular occasions. I have been informed that there were no female Welfare officers prior to the middle of 1955. In that case, I have no recollection whatsoever of discussions between the Welfare Branch and myself regarding corporal punishment in the Home.
- 23 I agree with the statement in Paragraph No. 4 that there was a need for corporal punishment for some of the children who were difficult cases. I am not aware of any situation where a male staff member disciplined an adolescent girl.
- 24 I accept the statement in Paragraph 6 that says I was in favour of training prospective staff for the Retta Dixon Home prior to placing them in the Home. It was difficult to do this in the mid-1950's, however, as there was a lack of qualified people to work at the Home.
- 25 I agree with the statement in Paragraph No. 7 that there were very few opportunities for social and recreational activities outside the Home for the adolescent girls in the Home.
- 26 I do not recall a plan to break up the Home into two Homes. However, there were several plans floated in the 1950's for changing the Retta Dixon Home to better meet the needs of the residents.
- 27 In reference to paragraph 9, I am not aware of any particular case where the Assistant Director of Welfare or the woman Welfare officer was called in for consultation at the Retta Dixon Home. I note that the paragraph goes on to state that there were no cases where the Mission considered that the only remedy was administering corporal punishment.

**Document No. 03539401**

- 1 This is a letter from Miss Shankelton to Mr Giese, Director of Welfare, dated 25 February 1957.
- 2 The letter refers to the appointment of Mr & Mrs Arthur Howell. I remember Mr & Mrs Howell. He and his wife came from out Penrith way. We all thought he was quite a fine fellow. I think they had one or two adolescent children.
- 3 I remember Mr Howell as a "mover." He had definite ideas on how things should be run. It was hoped that he would take over as superintendent at the Retta Dixon Home. However,

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the Howell's did not work out. I can't recall exactly why they didn't work out. I think they may have left over the matter of discipline of the children. Mr Howell went into the Home thinking that he knew how to straighten out the children. I think he exercised strict discipline of the children, although I do not recall whether this involved corporal punishment or not. I think that Mr & Mrs Howell became discouraged when their ideas of how the Home should be run did not work out.

- 4 I note on the letterhead on which this letter is written that Chrissie South, Eunice Holly, and Mr & Mrs Knight are listed as missionaries and staff members. It is possible that they may be able to comment more particularly on Mr & Mrs Howell.

**Document No. 03581601**

- 5 This is a letter that I have been informed was dated 8 May 1957. It is from Harry Giese to myself. The letter sets out a new reporting requirement for the Retta Dixon Home. I do not recall this particular letter nor do I recall having to prepare a report of the type described in the letter. I am not able to comment any further on this letter.

**My activities after I left the AIM**

- 6 When I left the AIM I made a clean break with the Mission. I believe that is why my memory is so hazy in many respects. I have not spent a great deal of time thinking about my activities with the AIM in the intervening 27 years.
- 7 In 1961, I relinquished sole directorship of the AIM. Arthur Collins and I became joint directors of the AIM. I did so to enable myself to take a position with a church in Stanmore, New South Wales.
- 8 I continued on as part-time Acting Director until 1972. During this nine-year period, Arthur Collins and I continued our morning meetings, however Arthur carried on the bulk of the work. In 1972 I left the AIM altogether. I have had no formal dealings with the AIM since that date.