

C O N F I D E N T I A L

SUBMISSION NO. 1059COPY NO. 28

FOR CABINET

ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTITUTIONS FOR WARDS, PART-  
COLOURED AND STATE CHILDREN IN THE NORTHERN  
TERRITORY.

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for the care, welfare, education and advancement of native, part-coloured and State children in the Northern Territory and has found it convenient and economic to use the services of the Christian Missions in part for this work for which the Administration pays operational subsidies and gives assistance towards the purchase of capital items.

2. It is felt that it is preferable for the Administration to leave to Church organizations the control and operation of institutions for wards and State children, and of hostels for the accommodation of children from outback areas who must leave home to obtain education - but that where the Government has a full responsibility for the care and welfare of children, it should be prepared to meet the total costs accruing to missions and similar bodies associated with their maintenance and education.

3. At present accommodation is being provided through several agencies for some 312 children required to live away from home (outback white children who must board to attend school, wards (under the Welfare Ordinance), part-coloured and State children). Of these 214 are wards, part coloured or State children located at the:

- (a) Retta Dixon Home, Darwin - 100 ranging from infants to adolescents;
- (b) St. Mary's Hostel, Alice Springs - 70 varying in age from five to 18 years;

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- (c) United Church Home, Darwin - two (2) part-coloured and State children; while
- (d) Four (4) part-coloured children from outback areas board at Griffiths' House, 20 at St. John's Hostel and 18 at the Convent in order to attend school in Alice Springs.

4. There are 88 children committed to the care of the State Children's Council and the majority of these have been placed in other Church institutions throughout the Territory. With increasing population and closer supervision this number will increase.

5. Because of undesirable social problems arising from its close proximity to the Bagot Settlement the Retta Dixon Home must be moved. It is desirable that this Home, and St. Mary's, should care only for children of primary school age. Children receiving secondary education should pass to institutions catering for secondary school age groups, whilst apprentices and young people in their early years of employment also require supervised hostel accommodation.

6. It is felt there will be an ultimate need to provide for 490 children, apprentices and young people to be accommodated in groups of 60 each at:

- (a) Darwin - a new Retta Dixon Home and the United Church Home;
- (b) Alice Springs - St. Mary's Hostel, Griffiths' House, St. John's Hostel and the Convent; whilst
- (c) The United Church or similar group will require hostel accommodation for apprentices and young workers numbering 50 in Darwin and 30 in Alice Springs; and, similarly
- (d) There is a need for a Catholic Home for 50 in Darwin.

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7. Separate accommodation for State children will not be required. Where adoptions or foster parents or accommodation in Southern States cannot be arranged, State children will be placed, as at present, in existing Church institutions.

8. Co-operation between the Government and voluntary agencies in the establishment and operation of these institutions might be achieved by:

(a) The Government erecting, furnishing and equipping the buildings and then passing the institution over to an organization to operate and administer. The Government would retain full equity in the property and make a per capita payment in respect of each child accommodated at the request of the Government; or

(b) The Government advancing to Church Missions or other approved agencies a loan sufficient to cover the cost of establishing and furnishing the institution to be repaid over a long term and at a nominal rate of interest.

9. The Administrator considers the second arrangement would place less administrative strain on the Administration and would, in the long term, produce better results. The key to the successful operation of such institutions lies in the type of staff engaged and religious organizations have a better chance of recruiting and retaining the type of staff needed. The Administration would still have responsibilities to discharge by the exercise of adequate supervision and control through the provisions of the Welfare Ordinance, the State Children's Act and, as the main contributor to operational expenses, by financial control. By the time the loans were redeemed and the Government right of nomination lost, the welfare programme would have advanced to the point where the numbers of children requiring this

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kind of institutional care would be smaller. Meanwhile there would have developed enough institutions to take care of them without need of pressures and priorities.

10. I recommend that Cabinet approve:

- (a) That the Government provide to those Mission groups and Church bodies in the Territory interested in the establishment and operation of such institutions, a long term loan for 60 years at a nominal rate of interest of 1%, to establish and furnish such institutions as the Administrator may recommend and the Minister for Territories approves to provide for:

- (i) the care and education of children up to the age of 11 plus;
- (ii) children of post-primary age attending post-primary schools;
- (iii) young apprentices and young working people; or
- (iv) hostels for young persons attending educational institutions in the main centres from areas where educational services are not available to them.

- (b) That in respect of the first three categories ((i), (ii) and (iii) above), where the Government has the full responsibility for the care and welfare of the children, the Government make a per capita payment varied according to the financial statements provided by the institution in respect of each child nominated by the Government. With regard to the fourth category ((iv) above), that the

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Government pay the present allowance for boarding to the children who come from homes in outlying areas, and if it is advisable to accommodate wards or State children in these hostels, that the Government should pay a per capita cost at the same level as any other institutions.

- (c) That a lease be granted to the Mission under a special purposes lease for the establishment of the institution, a condition of which will be that the institution must be used at all times for the purpose for which the lease has been granted.
- (d) That until such time as the loan has been repaid the Mission will be prepared to accept those children nominated by the Government for accommodation.

Paul Hasluck  
Minister for Territories

Canberra  
//K March 1958.