

[CID]

[REDACTED]

South Camden N.S.W.

January 5<sup>th</sup> 1990

Sister Joan

Principal – Mater Dei – Special School

Dear Sister Joan,

First of all, let me say that despite what you may have heard re-my thoughts about you. I personally think, that over the last six months of the 1989 school year, during which time I came to know you that you did a good job of running the school. I realise the very difficult and daunting task you encountered when you took over the school and I, as an individual, would like to offer you my congratulation. I know that the new school year in 1990 will not be easy for you and you will no doubt face a lot of difficulties which, I firmly believe, you will overcome.

Sister, I wish to start the school year in 1990 with a “clean slate” and this leads me into my reasons for contacting you privately in such a manner. I would like to talk privately with you ([illegible]), re what I am about to write but first I feel I can express myself in a far more meaningful way, by putting my thoughts and feelings down on paper. Often, I find in a face to face meeting, because of the way a conversation goes or because of the other person’s interpretations of what one is saying, things that perhaps should be said are left unsaid because one simply does not think of them at the time or, one does not get an opportunity to express them.

In your first year at Mater Dei School you did a lot of work. I realise that there are still many areas you have yet to sort out. The cottage programme is one such area. It is about the cottage programme and myself that I wish to express my feelings and out forward my views to you. I do hope you will not be offended by my manner by what I write as no offence is intended.

Let me start by briefly outlining my qualifications and work experience with children – I have had training in – “The psychology of childhood,” “Children’s behavioural difficulties,” “Child welfare legislations – [illegible], I also have a diploma in social welfare. “I have also had sixteen years working with children in various settings. EG: [illegible], drug clinics, sexually abused, physically and mentally abused children in trouble with the law. So you see Sister, I have a wealth of academic and practical “hands on” experience working with children. This experience does afford me the ability to speak confidently about my present position with the due conviction that I do know what I am talking about [illegible] that I am NOT confusing emotions with fact or allowing emotion to dictate my actions.

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I truly love all the children I work with and I give each one the special one and attention I truly believe that child needs. Some children need more special love and attention than others. Each child is an individual with separate needs and with separate problems and we can't treat all children the same. This is especially true with the lovely special children we work with at our school.

I think Carol would have informed you that I was seeking employment in which I could be more academically stimulated! Well Sister, I don't really want to leave Mater Dei. I think I could do so much for the school and for the children. Having said that, I think you should know – straight from the horse's mouth, that over the last six months of the 89 school year, I felt very left out of the school activities. This was especially true in relation to the cottage's general functioning – EG, Important decisions about the children in my care were made without any consultation [illegible] myself at all. This was highlighted over the incident with [REDACTED]. I felt as though my position at Mater Dei was of no real significance. Carol re-inforced this feeling when she un-professionally lost her temper over the phone to me. A further incident which served to fuel my feelings of “worthlessness” within my position was – the counselling of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] about which I knew nothing – and still know nothing. When speaking to [REDACTED]'s father, I felt very silly when in passing conversations, I asked Mr [REDACTED] how he felt [REDACTED] counselling was coming – he replied- “What counselling?” For some reason not known to me, [REDACTED]'s father had not been informed about the counselling and when he pressed me for further information, I was unable to tell him anything. This incident only served to heighten my frustrations.

As a social educator, I often talk with parents and the parent often talk with me. I think Sister, that it is vital that Social Educators be a little better informed on relation to the children in our direct care. Parents often don't get the chance to talk with you or with teachers directly and Social Educators, we are often the only “front-line” personal face to face contact a parent may have with an employee from the school.

Sister, as a well qualified and experienced social welfare officer, I think I have the ability to be more involved in decisions involving the children in the cottage programme. This leads me to my next point Sister, that of cottage placements.

Non resident social educators are often not qualified or they have limited experience only [illegible] other hand, resident social educators are qualified and as such, I would like to see a lot more involvement of resident social educators in matters pertaining to such things as cottage placements.

I have never thought it necessary to move students every 6 or 12 months unless there is a significant problem which can't be solved by the resident social educator and the

‘assistant’ non resident social educator – in consultation with yourself.

In regards to the two students moved from my cottage with no reason or any explanation to me, I fell further frustration and especially let down. This is particularly true with [CIL] being moved because, in my view of what you said to me at the beginning of term 3 89 – (EG. [CIL] would not be moved), I am very disappointed.

My feelings in this matter have nothing to do with emotions or my being – so called – “to close to [CIL],” I have only [CIL]’s welfare at heart. Sister, I firmly believe that [CIL] was moved from Arnold Avenue for reasons based on gossip, jealousy and political ‘back chat”, simply to get him away from me. The excuse used by Carol for moving [CIL] EG he can now manage in a cottage with less supervision, is weak and untrue. If basic skill was the only reason for moving [CIL]? Then why hasn’t [REDACTED] been moved to the Seniors Cottage? Also, Arnold venue is to have less supervision because you have decided that I don’t need any assistance in the mornings? So, [CIL] could have stayed at Arnold Avenue.

The cottage system is such, that if [CIL] is moved every six or 12 months, he will not benefit from his stay at Mater Dei. He will become too unsettled and his general behaviour will regress – after all, [CIL] has no permanent home and his present foster placement is definitely breaking down and will collapse in the very near future. Sister, as a qualified and experienced social welfare officer with training in – child psychology, I do know what I am talking about.

I am truly aware that the purpose of the cottage programme is to teach independent living skills however, I feel that [CIL]’s does not need to “move his home” in order to practice the skills. [CIL]’s needs a stable home and Mater Dei with the moving of students like [CIL] every six or twelve months, will not provide that stable background for [CIL].

Sister, I am very much aware of the tales about [CIL] and myself however, the reality of the matter is: [CIL] is the only one to suffer in the long term.

[CIL] is a ward of the state and he has had a very difficult life. He is only 13 and he has had 13 sets of foster parents and soon he will be needing a 14<sup>th</sup> set. Against that background [CIL] has fleetingly had a stable two years at Arnold Avenue. He has made it his home and has many friends in the local community and he has definitely lost a lot of his infantile behaviour. As a state ward, a distinct officer is ultimately responsible for [CIL] and his overall welfare – This includes all decision affecting [CIL]. [CIL] has no parents as such and when he is troubled and wants to talk to someone, he talks to his district officer. Word has reached [CIL] district officer via the [illegible] ([CIL]’s present foster parents) and the Macarthur District Temporary Family Care Centre, that the school intends to move

[CIL] to a new cottage in 1990. It would seem that [CIL] is very unhappy and I believe F.A.C.S are not happy with the decision.

I don't think it's a case of mellow dramatics on [CIL] part or on my part but Sister, I can see a big chance for the better in [CIL] however, I know his behaviour patterns will change for the worse if he is moved from Arnold Avenue against his will – which is the case. [CIL] will not be happy at Berallier Drive and I firmly believe his emotional behaviour as well as his general behaviour, will suffer great psychological damage if he is forced against his will-as is the case to make the move. I am perfectly aware that life has its ups and downs and that we can't have our own way all the time. This is a part of everyday life however, in [CIL] case I think the decision to remove [CIL] from his "home" against his will, should be given fresh thought.

Sister, I know you are a fair and open person and despite all the gossip and back chat about myself and [CIL], I, with all respect to you, request on [CIL] behalf that you re-consider the decision to move [CIL] and that you let him remain at Arnold Avenue.

I have a strong conviction for all I have written her however, I must point out once again, that although you will consider me a being favourable biased towards [CIL]'s – that my emotions have not in the least clouded my judgement in what I have written.

End

Copy taken

Yours sincerely

[signed]