

REDACTED

30th July 1990

Mr P Grew  
Chairman of the Board  
Mater Dei Special School

Dear Mr Grew,

I am resident Social Educator at Mater Dei Special School and it is imperative that the information I am about to impart to you remain private and not be divulged to Sister Joan. As she is leaving at the end of this year, I see no point in confronting her because it is quite a while between now and the end of Term Four and I do not wish to be victimised by Sister Joan, Carol and other Sister Joan followers. I ask this guarantee of you as I genuinely do have the school's best interests at heart and I wish to avoid any further bitterness between staff. Having said that, I put my trust in you.

I feel that the school as a whole is suffering under Sister Joan's administration and you, as Chairman of the Board of Mater Dei Special School, should be made aware of some important facts. I will try to be as objective as possible in giving you this report because, apart from the damage Sister Joan has done to the quality of my character, the damage she is doing to the school is even greater.

Many parents have made complaints to the Department of Education about the quality and standard of education at Mater Dei School, which they consider to be in serious decline. Students with behavioural difficulties were asked to leave the school, much to the dismay of their parents. I believe that Mr Kevin Moore, who is a member of the Parents and Friends Committee at Mater Dei, can give you more information about those parents and he is willing to do so. His phone number is: REDACTED Family and Community Services have also had complaints against the school and the cottage programme. As F.A.C.S. have children at the school who are wards of the state, they made enquiries at the school which have now led to a decision by them to remove all their children from the cottage programme and from the school altogether. Let me explain:

I had a state ward in my cottage for three years. Suddenly this boy was moved without consultation with me, without consultation with his foster parents and without consultation with Family and Community Services (F.A.C.S.). This boy had come to trust and confide in me and because of this, I became his advocate because the boy had no one else to confide in. The boy did not want to be moved from Arnold Avenue because he had many friends in the local community. As the boy's advocate, I informed F.A.C.S. of the situation because Sister Joan would not talk to me about it. I had written a letter to Sister Joan (copy enclosed) in which I expressed my concerns about the boy being moved against his will. Sister Joan has ignored this letter. F.A.C.S. made their enquiries and discovered the boy was indeed suffering great infelicity. F.A.C.S. were angry that they had not been consulted about the boy's move and they approached Sister Joan to have the boy return to Arnold Avenue. She refused, saying I spoilt him and let him get away with murder. On top of this, I believe doubt was cast on my character by way of innuendo which implied that I am "sexually unbalanced". Innuendo's of that nature are defamatory and a slur on my good name and I am very hurt and disturbed by them. F.A.C.S. have informed me that they have no concerns about me and are satisfied I can carry out my duties as a social educator without being "a risk" to the children with

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With reference to the boy concerned, after talking with Sister Joan, F.A.C.S. had an independent educational assessment done on the boy. The boy's assessment revealed that he was "underachieving" at Mater Dei. F.A.C.S. were unhappy with this report and dissatisfied with Sister Joan's refusal to have the boy moved back to Arnold Avenue. F.A.C.S., as a result of their enquiries and Sister Joan's failure to negotiate, are now going to remove the boy from the cottage programme and from Mater Dei School altogether. F.A.C.S. have already removed one of their state wards from the cottage programme and from the school. F.A.C.S. give three reasons for their decision which are as follows:-

1. Sister Joan got rid of all the "old staff" who had training and experience in special education and as a result, the standard of education at the school has suffered for many of the school's students.
2. With major decisions involving children at the school who are state wards, she does not communicate with F.A.C.S. or other significant people, neither does the cottage co-ordinator.
3. The cottage programme run by Carol and supported by Sister Joan, lacks structure, lacks direction and is basically inadequate because it does not have any organisation such as pre-testing of students' living skills before placement in the cottages.

The cottage programme is failing the students and it is meant to help because of the following reasons:-

1. There is no consultation with residential social educators, parents or significant people, such as foster parents, care givers or F.A.C.S. as to placement of children in the cottages. Social Educators are told by Carol, the present co-ordinator, of the cottage system and usually on the last day of term, which students we are getting and which students are moving from one cottage to another. We do NOT have any say in the matter at all and no reasons for moving students or for receiving students, are given.
2. Students placed in the cottage system are given no pre-assessment or testing of their skills prior to placement in a cottage. An example of this is as follows: I was told on the last day of term 2 this year that I was getting another boy. I was given his name and that was all. I knew nothing about the boy at all, e.g. how old he was, whether or not he was a bed wetter, whether he was on any medication, what level of skill function re-independent living skills did he have, what expectations did his mother have for her son being placed in my cottage. All these things I did not know. I had never met the boy or his mother and they had never visited the cottage. The boy and his mother turned up at the cottage for the first time - after getting hopelessly lost, on the eve of the first day of term 3. It transpired that this boy has no skills at all for a boy his age. He is 16 and can't dress himself and he has little or no comprehension of how to complete many other simple tasks.

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Mr Bernard Pozo is the F.A.C.S. District Officer for Disability Services within the Campbelltown and surrounding area. I have spoken with Mr Pozo and he has expressed his Department's grave concerns about Mater Dei school and in particular, the poor quality of the residential programme. Mr Pozo has informed me that he is willing to put forward his Department's complaints to the Board and he requests that you contact him at his office on REDACTED Mr Pozo can give you a lot more detail about their concerns re the school than I can. I believe Mr Pozo has been informed that Department of Education are also very concerned about the school, and Susan H, who is responsible for funding at Mater Dei, is considering withdrawing funding from the school. This will have very serious long term implications for the school and may even lead to its closure.

I like the children at Mater Dei school and their honest simplicity and total acceptance of all the adults around them. It makes working with them a pleasure and not a chore.

Speaking from a personal point of view, one does not commit oneself to this work without having a true interest in the development and future well being of the children. Further to this, one also has an interest in the development and good reputation of the school which provides a fulcrum on which these children can be helped towards a better standard and quality of life.

It therefore is sad to see the school in its present state of decline not only in its reputation in the wider community, but also in its quality of staff working relationships and student development.

Yours sincerely,

CID