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 YOUTH WELFARE DIVISION

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BAK: CWSTRICTLY CONFIDENTIALDIRECTOR-GENERAL

5th November 1971

Mrs. M. L. Gaffney
 Superintendent, Winlaton Youth Training Centre

As requested in the Public Service Board's memorandum of 3rd June 1971 (71/4997) I submit a report on the question of the confirmation of Mrs. Gaffney's permanent appointment.

Mrs. Gaffney's work has been carefully observed during the probationary period to-date. She received details of deficiencies in her work when the first report on her probation was submitted in May last. This has been followed by several discussions with myself and weekly contact with the Supervisor of Classification and Treatment. On 2nd July 1971, I found it necessary to discuss her duty statement in detail with her to ensure that she had a proper conception of her duties. She has received substantial attention in view of her special circumstances. This close contact has revealed serious weaknesses in her administration and have confirmed doubts about her suitability.

On this evidence it is submitted that her permanent appointment should not be confirmed. Particular matters of concern are as follows:-

- (a) As Superintendent, Mrs. Gaffney has fundamental responsibility for the security, care and treatment of trainees. During her probationary period her handling of problems of both group behaviour and individual cases showed indecision, a lack of common-sense and above all, a very great dependency upon others when she should have been giving responsible leadership. For example, during the early part of her probation six consecutive incidents occurred in the security section (Goonyah). These incidents were threatening the stability and security of Winlaton. Investigation showed that Mrs. Gaffney had taken no effective action. She had to be ordered to call a staff meeting, to hold discussions with the trainees and to report on necessary measures. She did so but could not recommend remedial measures - reporting only that the trainees were bored. It was then necessary for the Supervisor of Classification and Treatment to handle the situation himself and to issue instructions involving significant staff and programme changes. These resulted in a substantial improvement of conditions for the girls and the incidents ceased. This is one of many instances of Mrs. Gaffney's dependency on head office intervention in management and problem solving.
- (b) She has revealed serious deficiencies in her application to her administrative duties relating to the provision of services. During an inspection of Winlaton, in the company of a Herald reporter, I found the main kitchen in a disgraceful condition. Subsequently, I was obliged to assign individual staff responsibilities for the kitchen and to give specific directions for the restoration of standards of cleanliness and food services.

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The Superintendent had neglected her duty in this regard. Expert advice had been obtained from a special food services team and clear guidelines had been provided for the Superintendent. Nevertheless, she had allowed standards to lapse, approved menus had been discontinued, girls complained about the monotony of food and I found that no senior officer had specific responsibility for supervision of the food services staff and standards. It is of great concern that Mrs. Gaffney was aware of the deterioration but took no action until directed to do so.

- (c) As Superintendent, Mrs. Gaffney is required to be a member of the Classification Committee and of the Review Committee. Each Committee meets fortnightly at Winlton to determine the placement and treatment of trainees. During the past year the Supervisor of Classification and Treatment has introduced new methods of assessment and classification based on overseas research. In the first report on her probation she received warning of her lack of knowledge of the girls and she made an effort to improve this. This improvement was limited and the Supervisor of Classification and Treatment and the Supervisor of After-Care both report that she is still only able to echo the opinions of other members. More critically the Supervisor of Classification and Treatment reports that she is unable to grasp the new concepts and methods and she herself advised the Supervisor of After-Care to instruct his social workers to direct their enquiries about trainees to the Deputy Superintendent. She should act as Chairman in the absence of one of the regular Chairmen but she is unable to do this and it is necessary to make other arrangements.
- (d) Her duty statement requires the Superintendent to carry out a programme of in-service training at all levels and to conduct regular staff meetings. Consistent efforts by the Supervisor of Classification and Treatment to get Mrs. Gaffney to do this have been unsuccessful. Specific directions to hold staff meetings have been obeyed but the conduct and content of these meetings have revealed that Mrs. Gaffney cannot understand what is required.
- (e) Overall, Mrs. Gaffney's staff management and relationships during the period have caused considerable anxiety. Following the extension of her period of probation by the Board Mrs. Gaffney reacted against several members of the Division's staff and, in particular, towards the Deputy Superintendent, Miss P. Gunn. Miss Gunn appealed to the V.P.S.A. who contacted me with the result that I interviewed Miss Gunn. Miss Gunn stated that Mrs. Gaffney was making her position at Winlton intolerable, and redundant, in that she was being isolated and ignored. I called a conference comprising the Supervisor of Classification and Treatment, Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Secretary and myself. Notes of this conference are available and Mrs. Gaffney admitted the general truth of the Deputy Superintendent's allegations that she was being isolated. In the

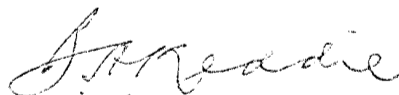
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conference, which she described as a 'kangaroo court' she consistently refused to respond to specific questions and showed little realisation of the importance of settling differences and improving executive communication. The conference revealed a most disturbing pre-occupation with her own personal interests and lack of concern for others. This conference gave rise to serious doubts about Mrs. Gaffney's personal and temperamental suitability for the Superintendent's role after allowing in full for her feeling of disappointment and inadequacy.

- (f) During her first period of probation Mrs. Gaffney's attendance was irregular and unsatisfactory. She absented herself from Winlaton without permission and was frequently not there when required. She took recreation leave in January this year without notice to the Director, the Supervisor of Classification and Treatment or the Deputy Superintendent. I found that she had applied personally to the then Director-General who approved the leave. This was at a critical time for Winlaton when the institution had a record number of trainees and all school teachers were on vacation. It was clear that, in this instance, as with other absences from duty, her personal and family needs took precedence over her official duties. This remains a matter for concern and although there has been an improvement since May, there is no confidence at all that the improvement is permanent.

My attention has just been drawn to a notice in the Education Gazette appointing Mrs. Gaffney to a permanent position as an Art Teacher at Brunswick Girls Secondary School. The appointment is subject to appeals. It is now approximately two weeks since the notice appeared and Mrs. Gaffney has still neither notified the Department of the appointment nor of her intentions. Overall, certain aspects of her conduct, attendance and application to duty have been most unsatisfactory and it would be detrimental to the interests of Winlaton to confirm her permanent appointment. As she has now secured another position it would seem to be an appropriate time to finalise this matter.



B. A. Keddie
Director of Youth Welfare