

CONFIDENTIAL

DJ/MM

FAMILY WELFARE DIVISION.BOX HILL S.A. BOYS' HOME.

5 As requested by Mr. Hughes, I visited this home on 30.8.68 to discuss its running with Major Sumsion, the acting Manager, during the absence abroad of Major Broadstock. Major Sumsion is an especially interesting person with whom to talk on child care work, having himself been an inmate of Box Hill for six years as a child during the depression and having worked as a S.A. Officer at Box Hill, Bayswater and most recently in Western Australia.

This morning's visit did nothing to alter the views I have always expressed about Box Hill, which according to Major Sumsion is a byword among officers in the Southern Territory for an unpleasant posting.

Numbers - stand currently at 80, only two of whom are privately placed. The age range is from 6-17, the ages being evenly distributed. Although lads can be kept on to Matric. level at school (one is doing Matric. this year) Major Sumsion is not really in favour of them staying once they reach 15 years as the whole layout and tenor of the place is conducive to them becoming at once restless and prone to bullying.

Accommodation - The old No.3 section was shut in 1966, since when the boys have been grouped into two sections - the reasonably modern but jerry-built No.4 and the clump of battered buildings which go to make up No.1 - the original house (which contains sleeping accommodation, offices, etc. and the kitchen,) the huge old timber dining room closely adjoining, the unappetising toilet-cum-ablution block some fifty yards away, and a battered old timber shed which serves as a playroom. There is no sort of adequate lounge room, nowhere for hobbies and nowhere to play quietly - the whole complex giving the youngsters ample opportunity for mischief while keeping the staff constantly on the run. Maintenance of the buildings seems to be an increasing drain out of proportion to the value of the buildings being maintained, for instance \$1200 was approved recently for rewiring No.4's electrical system which had been inadequately done some years ago by a well-intentioned non-tradesman.

Staff - are described by Major Sumsion as his biggest headache. Child Care staff are inadequate in number and poor in calibre (true apparently of both lay and Army personnel) while there is something of a surplus of elderly, reactionary female domestics whose illdefined duties are dictated by an even more reactionary matron. Considerable time is wasted performing routine domestic affairs in the time-honoured and unthinking way they have always been done and innovations are received unenthusiastically if at all. Staff consists of Major Sumsion as acting Manager, also doing a good deal of child care work -

Major Van Kralingen - office only.

Captain Kopp - Dutch - was at Lyndon Lodge previously, has done a Youth Officers' Course at Training Division.

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The Director

In information & director re action reqd. please.
B.R. Hughes
12.6.68.

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Does not impress at all well - is overburdened and pretty rough in consequence.

- two lay bachelors - untrained -
said to be willing but weak.

These operate the No.1 section.

- No.4 section has
- a married couple
 - a single girl.

A reasonably adequate domestic staff functions under the control of the Matron, who has been there ten years and is described as being opposed to any sort of change. Care staff get one day off per week and one weekend per month, the day off being cancelled in the week during which they have the weekend leave.

Pay is at usual S.A. rates, Major Sumsion receiving \$25 per week plus house. Major Sumsion is looking forward very much to being finally told whether or not he is to remain in the job after Major Broadstock's return in September as he wishes to bring in what he considers will be a number of domestic improvements. At the moment, Major Sumsion says of the Care Staff "our nerves are strained to the utmost" by long hours, (Boys rise 6.30, go to bed at up to 10 pm for older lads) and by the poor domestic facilities.

Education - Relations with the State School are said to be reasonably good.

While at the Home I paid my usual visit to the school, where I had the usual cordial conversation with the Head Master, Mr. Richards, and reached the usual polite impasse - namely that he deplors the constant influx of educationally retarded boys and refuses to start lads over 12 years in his school on social grounds while I pointed out the high numbers of such lads coming into care and the dearth of facilities for them. He is this year without an O.G. teacher but has hopes of getting one in 1969. However, the classes are small and a good deal of attention can be given to dull lads.

Despite his apparent cordiality I always find something rather unlikable about Mr. Richards and the Turana grapevine gives the impression that his attitude to the boys can be pretty brusque, but I can't really elaborate on this.

Twenty-six boys are at present attending outside High and Technical Schools. Monash students are coming in during the weekday evenings to coach these. One lad, Peter Howell, attends Montague Special School. He is said to be reasonably settled there but is unsuitably placed at the Home, where his dullness and vagaries make him the butt of endless tormenting from other lads. Major Sumsion feels that for his own sake he should be placed somewhere else in a smaller unit. If Major Sumsion is confirmed in office and continues to hold to his view that lads over 15 are unsuitably placed at Box Hill, one wonders if boys who want to further their education could be transferred to the Gordon Homes, where excellent student facilities have been provided and are not always fully used.

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Discipline - while trying not to appear disloyal to Major Broadstock, Major Sumsion let it be known that he was appalled at the low standard of discipline prevailing on his arrival. This included behaviour inside and outside the Home. He was particularly worried at the administration of the monthly weekend leave - boys were allowed to go to parents whether or not the parents requested them and without any investigation of parental circumstances. Major Sumsion said that in some cases boys were allowed to go to an address even when there was no certainty of parents still being there and he strongly suspects that some boys as a result simply had a weekend's walkabout. Strapping was used - I'm still not really sure to what extent - as a punishment for graver breaches of discipline. He claims that absconding and vandalism, which ^{were} sporadically prevalent on his arrival, are on the wane; no abscondings have taken place in the last couple of months.

Activities - a number of lads go to outside youth groups and sport clubs, but on the property there is nothing except outdoor games or homework and T.V. indoors in the evenings. Major Sumsion has hopes of getting local Service groups to help provide a hobbies room cum-workshop and a library. Difficulty is encountered in keeping lads entertained on Sundays as a number of Headquarters staff live in houses built on the Elgar Road frontage of the property and these disapprove of Sunday games-playing.

Bedwetting - is more prevalent than in most children's homes. Despite the provision of pills, anything up to twenty boys are wet on any one night.

Clothing - I was annoyed to find that all Wards leaving the Home are still being returned to their parents with a full Schedule 19 outfit despite our instructions to Major Broadstock not to do this. I noticed that the standard of clothing for the internal school lads has gone up considerably and that they look generally less waifish - due a good deal to Major Sumsion's insistence that they all be inspected before going off to school.

Mr. Hughes and myself have always thought Box Hill a depressing place and suspected that there was a good deal of inefficiency in its daily routines, but this was the first time such has been openly vouchsafed to us by a member of its staff. We look forward to the future with interest mixed with some little apprehension. I should like to visit again at the end of the year, whether or no Major Sumsion is confirmed in office.



(D. JAGGS)

Children's Homes Section.

Home Release and Review Report forms - the "School Progress" Section is filled but by the Manager after discussing the case with the appropriate School Headmaster.