

"BALTARA" RECEPTION CENTRE

STAFF ONLY

"AKORA" - (Short Term "Treatment" Section)

~~MRS JAGGS~~  
MR. PEARCE

A. INTRODUCTION

Akora is a short term "experimental treatment" section for wards who it is felt can make a quick positive adjustment back into the community after a period of intensive care and supervision. Boys in this section who make good progress may be returned home within two to three months.

B. CRITERIA FOR PLACEMENT

Many boys coming into care do not necessarily need long term placement, and can benefit from a more intensive short term programme. Such a programme helps meet the differential needs of wards coming into care and, in fact, gives the Placement Committee an additional placement alternative other than an approved or established home. This adds strength and flexibility to the overall system.

Selection for this section is based primarily on whether there appears to be sufficient strengths in the family situation to indicate an early home release, and secondly the boys potential to progress under the Akora programme.

C. THEORY

The Akora programme calls for involving boys in frequent discussions of the behaviour of individuals within the group and the motivations underlying it. By concentrating on participants' current experiences and problems, the approach attempts to develop a group culture that encourages those involved to assume responsibility for helping and controlling each other. The theory is that boys will be more responsive to the influence of their peers than to the cautions of staff, and less likely to succeed in hoodwinking and manipulating each other.

As the section culture develops and the group begins to act responsibly, staff members seek to encourage a broader sharing of power between boys and the staff. At first, group decisions will be limited to routine matters, such as the schedule of the day, but over a time they may extend to disciplinary measures against a group member.

One of the basic assumptions behind Akora is that a boy will work harder at "therapy" when the goal of release is determined in part by his own efforts.

D. PRINCIPLE SECTION AIMS & OBJECTIVES

1. The basic aim of the section is to create a programme (based largely on principles of "guided group interaction" and "therapeutic communities") that will lead to the successful re-adjustment of each boy back to his family and community.
2. To study the personality and social background of boys newly admitted to the section, and to continue this study while they remain in the section.
3. To provide opportunities for developing adequate and satisfying relationships with the community of the section, both with peers and officers.
4. To provide individual and group counselling to help boys with their personal problems.
5. To provide opportunities for contact with outside community groups, such as youth clubs, etc.

#### E. SOME ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS

After a boy has been selected for placement in Akora, he is interviewed during school hours (usually on a Thursday) by the Social Worker and Section Senior who explain the purpose and function of Akora and invite the boy to join the section. He is then given weekend leave and the chance to discuss Akora with his parents. The Social Worker and Section Senior also contact his parents to encourage and ensure, if possible, their involvement in the Akora programme.

In the past each boy has been given his "Bring Up" date as determined in the Placement Meeting. However, boys have tended to overanticipate their home release on this date. It has therefore, been decided that "Bring Up" dates will be used purely for administrative purposes, and that the Section staff will bring to the notice of the Placement Meeting the readiness of a boy's Home Release, at anytime within the maximum three months period.

Occasionally boys who appear not to be making suitable progress are referred to the O.I.C. for reassessment.

#### F. STAFF HANDLING

From the time of the initial interview upon entry, until a boy is home released staff attitudes and handling are based on the following points:

1. Every boy should perceive progress not in terms of the problem of meeting the institutional need for conformity, but in terms of his solution to his own problems. If one asks a boy in a "Conventional" institution. "How do you get out?" one variably hears some version of, "Be good, do what you are told". "Behave yourself". If one asks a boy in a group treatment programme, "How do you get out?" one hears "I have to help myself with my problems, or when my group thinks I have been helped".

2. Each boy should begin to resolve some of his problems and show a change in attitude appropriate for home release.

3. Each boy should know why he is in Akora and what is required of him - i.e. Akora is a special section presenting a unique opportunity for early home release provided the boy's attempts to resolve his problems and the reasons for him being in Baltara. Conformity to section rules is not enough. He must show some real change.

4. Every boy is given maximum opportunity for free discussion of grievances and personal problems within a permissive but controlled environment. Boys are given maximum personal responsibility and are drawn into section decision making and enforcement whenever and wherever possible.

#### G. PROGRAMME

1. School Remedial - some correspondence work for brighter boys.

2. Individual Counselling - each officer is responsible for about four boys and spends at least one hour a week with each boy even if some time is spent during informal activities. Officers are expected to know their assignment boys in some depth.

3. Group Counselling - comprises of 2 groups 8/10 boys meeting twice weekly for an hour. These are taken by the Social Worker and Section Senior.

4. Group Discussions - are conducted by C.C.O. two or three times a week on topics pertinent to the boys eventual home release.

5. Daily Section Group - This group involves the whole section and is conducted by the Senior or 2/O.I.C. informally every evening immediately after tea. The object of this meeting is to involve the group in discussion of the running of the section, programming and control. Problems, particularly those involving personal interactions are plucked from the days events for frank discussion by the group. During the session any disciplinary incident occurring during the day is also discussed, with the group determining within certain tactical limits, the appropriate correction, this may be extra duties, restriction of privilege, etc. to be given in the case concerned.
6. Camps - each boy is expected to attend 2/3 "light weight" adventure camps during his stay in Akora. These are organized and conducted by the Activities Officer.
7. Casework with Boys - casework may be done by the Social Worker or O.I.C. but in most cases the section is encouraged to handle difficulties and counselling themselves.
8. Leave - every boy is eligible for fortnightly leave to parents or relatives.
9. Hobbies - hobbies include the usual range of activities but are geared where possible to projects for handicapped children. Such as making soft toys for spastic children. This is combined with visits to the institutions concerned.
10. Parent Involvement - when boys are placed in Akora parents are encouraged to become involved in the programme.
- a. Parent counselling - by Social Worker or O.I.C. is done regularly either on an individual or group work basis.
  - b. Frequent contact between parents and son, i.e. weekend leave.
  - c. Open Nights - are conducted once a fortnight for parents on invitation from their sons. A fairly normal programme is followed on this night ending in the boys making coffee for and looking after their own parents.
  - d. Parents Meetings - are held every three weeks on a Sunday.
11. Community Involvement
- a. Visiting Groups - the following groups visit Akora on a regular basis, the Public Relations Section of the Victorian Police Force, the National Safety Council, the Father and Son Movement (sex instruction).
  - b. Visits to Youth Clubs - every boy attends either the Hotham Community Centre, North Melbourne, or the Carlton Community Centre one night a week for various club and recreational activities.
  - c. Club night - a Club night is conducted every Wednesday by Youth Leaders from the Training Division.
  - d. Membership of Local Organization - where practical every boy is invited and encouraged to join (or continue) an organization in his own residential area such as a youth club, scouts, sporting club, etc. Boys are allowed to attend these organizations from Baltara, and are placed on trust. This aspect of the programme is organized by our Activities Officer.

Ivan Beringer  
Officer-In-Charge