

RV:VMS.

23rd December, 1958.

MEMORANDUM TO:

ACTING DIRECTOR OF WELFARE:

On the 22nd. December 1958, I interviewed **REDACTED** of the Retta Dixon Home. She was referred to me by the District Welfare Officer. She had come to this office to inform us that she has been requested to leave the Retta Dixon Home because of trouble which occurred on the 21st. December, 1958. She told the following story:-

2. On Sunday morning, or it may have been Sunday afternoon, she was perturbed by the screams of a child whom she knew as **REDACTED** aged six to ten years. She was not sure of the age. She stated that Mr. Howell was thrashing the child because the child had been in the girls' toilet. Some of the girls had reported this fact to Mr. Howell. **REDACTED** had told **REDACTED** who is also employed at the home, and who is **REDACTED**'s aunt. It appears that **REDACTED** challenged Mr. Howell on the matter and Mr. Howell requested **REDACTED** to leave the home. She plans to go to Bella Woodroffe at Winnellie.
3. **REDACTED** has three children at the home, namely - **REDACTED**, 7 years, **REDACTED**, 4 years, and **REDACTED** 2 years. It is understood that she has been employed at the home for a number of years.
4. I went to the Retta Dixon Home and questioned Mr. Howell about the matter. He stated that **REDACTED** had been in the girls' toilet but when questioned, he denied the fact. It was necessary therefore, to punish him for breaking the rules and telling lies. He had strapped him with a razor strap.
5. The child was sent for and Mr. Howell remained in the room during the interview and made no effort to give an opportunity for a private interview. However, the child stated that he and some other boys had been playing with the girls and had been chasing each other around the yard. The girls teased the boys and when they had almost caught them, the girls had run into the toilet and hid behind the door. **REDACTED** had continued running, followed them to the toilet and pushed the door on them. The girls had told Mr. Howell that they had been pushed on to the toilets.
6. I looked at **REDACTED**'s body and observed on the left leg a bruise about 2½" wide reaching across the back of the leg. The skin was not broken, but the blue and red indicated to me that it was bruised from the weight of the strap. As **REDACTED** wanted to go up the street with some of his friends, I took him with two other boys, to their friends in my car and took the opportunity of talking to him about the matter. As I had been informed that he had been hit across the back, and he confirmed this matter, I inspected his back but

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there were no marks. At the time I felt inclined to take the child to the Hospital and ask for a Medical Officer to observe the bruise. However, I refrained from that as the skin was not broken and I was not sure as to whether the occasion warranted taking action against Howell.

7. During conversation with the children, REDACTED indicated, and it was confirmed by the others, that they were often beaten. I draw your attention to this matter as other allegations have been made. I refer in particular to the young girl who ran away from the Home alleging that she had been pushed on the floor by Mr. Howell.

8. It appears that corporal punishment is the main form of discipline and it is administered indiscriminantly. Mr. Howell is a powerful person and it is quite possible that he does not intend to inflict punishment in a manner that would harm the child. In addition, to his powerful physique, I consider that he is not a placid person and it is quite possible that in administering corporal punishment he would become highly excited. It is possible that he is feeling the strain of administering this Home and it may be that he is possibly in need of assistance. It is pointed out however, that the school holidays have only just commenced and it is not likely that the position will improve with all the children being around the Home.

9. I make no suggestion that Mr. Howell is irresponsible or sadistic, but I think there are grounds for concern at the growing complaints concerning corporal punishment in this institution.

(R. VINCENT)
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (GENERAL WELFARE)