

24th May, 1965.

HMF/HEO

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (NORTHERN)

RETTA DIXON HOME - ABSCONDERS FROM
HOLIDAY CAMP, COOMALIE CREEK.

On Sunday morning I received a telephone call from Mrs. Allom informing me that she had received an urgent call from the Welfare Officer at Katherine concerning five girls who had absconded from a holiday camp at Coomalie Creek being conducted by the Retta Dixon Home under the supervision of Miss Shackleton. The problem was referred to me in the absence of her husband and her inability to contact any other Welfare Officer.

2. I rang Mrs. Houldsworth at Katherine and she informed me that the Police Authorities had taken into protective custody the following children :-

REDACTED

3. She stated that the Police had contacted the girls at the low level bridge and on questioning found that they had absconded from the holiday camp at Coomalie Creek and had hitch-hiked to Katherine.

4. Before giving any instructions to Mrs. Houldsworth I contacted a responsible officer at the Retta Dixon Home who informed me that the girls had sought permission from Miss Shackleton to go for an early morning walk. Permission was granted but the girls had not returned. Miss Shackleton had reported the absence and the women Police in Darwin had been informed. During this conversation I was told that the girls are accommodated at Retta Dixon Home under our authority and that they are normally well behaved.

5. Following this information I again rang Mrs. Houldsworth and authorised her to place the five children on the Ansett-A.N.A. aircraft that afternoon. The children arrived safely in Darwin and were picked up by an officer from Retta Dixon Home. At approximately 8.00p.m. last night I again contacted the Home to make sure the children had arrived.

6. I understand that one of the young girls has been receiving some attention from a young lad in Darwin and that it is possible that he may have taken part or assisted in the escapade.

7. It might be worthwhile having a Welfare Officer interview the girls to see if there is any more behind their actions other than an impromptu decision to enter into such an escapade.

(H.M. FORD)