

District Welfare Office

IBA/MH
DWO. 71/898/627th August, 1971The Secretary,
Box 3,
GLEN WAVERLY, VIC. 3150

Attention: Mr. M. J. Liddell

Dear Mr. Liddell,

RE: MARY WHITTAKER
(Your ref. J3/JR3)

Thank you for your letter of 19th August. Your efforts on our behalf are greatly appreciated.

I am enclosing what information I can lay my hands on in the hope that it may be of some help to your Social Worker. Our files on Mary are unfortunately very brief owing to the fact that she has not been officially committed to the care of the Director of Child Welfare of the Northern Territory.

I am enclosing copies of the first entry in our files, an application from the Superintendent of the Retta Dixon Homes, for Mary to be included in the Part Aboriginal Education Scheme. I am also enclosing my record of an interview with Mary and her foster parents on the 28/4/71. This is necessarily brief, as the interview was not very long. I have endeavored to find out other information about Mary and this is as stated below.

Mary's mother was Mrs. Audrey Watters, who after her marriage to a Mr. K. McMahon, divorced him in 1958. At that time she had formed a liaison with Mary's father, a Mr. Jack Whittaker, who was a member of the Northern Territory Army Command. She became pregnant to Whittaker and when the latter was transferred to Sydney, Audrey accompanied him. Mrs. Watters is of Part Aboriginal descent and Mr. Whittaker was European. Apparently Mrs. Watters broke up the relationship with Mr. Whittaker in Sydney and eventually returned to Darwin. Mary at present has two brothers – Willie McMahon aged 10 years and Noel McMahon aged 15 years, who are living in Retta Dixon Home.

I am not quite sure why the children were remitted to Retta Dixon Home in 1960 but I [unclear] that this [unclear phrase] of neglect by Mrs. Watters [unclear]. [Unclear] 1960 [unclear phrase] the Superintendent of Retta Dixon Homes and the [unclear] the children into their care. The children are being [unclear] Retta Dixon Home [unclear]. Mrs. Watters [unclear rest of sentence.]

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Retta Dixon Homes which is a congregate care institution running on the lines of small cottages supervised by a cottage mother, all within one area. Apparently Mary has been with one lot of cottage parents, Mr. & Mrs. Henderson, since the age of two, and they arranged for her present placement at Glen Waverley.

The Superintendent applied to have Mary admitted under the Part Aboriginal Education Scheme which is a scheme operated by the department to educate Part Aboriginal children in southern cities and she was accepted for this scheme. The Superintendent reports that throughout her time at Retta Dixon Homes she has "never really given herself to anyone" and because of this she has often been socially isolated both from cottage parents and other children. Quite frankly it would appear that Mary was not a particularly good candidate for foster care with European foster parents in a southern state and it may be necessary to investigate other placements. When I interviewed Mary in April, however, she was adamant that she did not wish to return to Retta Dixon Homes.

I hope this information is of help to you and I would appreciate hearing from you, together with any recommendation you would care to make.

Yours Faithfully,

I.B.ALCORN
Senior Social Worker
District Welfare Office

[Handwritten]
Dispatched 30/8/71

AOGW
For your info
[Signature] 30/8