

GRS 4164/8 Unit 3, File 14/6/1, Eden Park Boys Home (Salvation Army) Mt  
Barker (Wistow) 5251

SALVATION ARMY  
EDEN PARK BOYS HOME

REVIEW OF OPERATIONS

Subsidies Section  
Department of Social Security, Adelaide

4 May 1982

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314/2/A984

HANDICAPPED PERSONS ASSISTANCE ACT  
THE SALVATION ARMY  
EDEN PARK BOYS HOME  
REVIEW OF OPERATIONS - 4 MAY 1982

On Tuesday 4 May 1982 the above service was reviewed by Bob Bolton, (Executive Officer, Subsidies) and Maurice Elmendorp, (Project Officer, Subsidies) accompanied by Doug Carney of our Central Office Subsidies Section.

OBJECTIVES

2 The objectives of this review were to update the Department's information on this service, concentrating on obtaining broad data about:

- . the clients, and in particular, their apparent needs;
- . the program - in term of its objectives, their operationalisation and its relevance to the clients needs;
- . the physical setting in which the program is conducted.

As well, audits of Salary Subsidy and Handicapped Children's Benefit payments were to be carried out.

METHODOLOGY

3 A full day, from 7am to 9pm, was spent at the home enabling us to observe the normal routines experienced by the boys as well as to discuss aspects of the service with those associated with it. Data was collected independently by each reviewing officer and collated during subsequent discussions.

4 In addition to these observations of the program, a formal interview was conducted with Brigadier Hedley-Steer, State Salvation Army Social Secretary, and Senior staff of the home.

5 Subsequent to the review, discussions were also held with senior staff of a major referral agency to this service, the Child Adolescent and Family Psychiatric Services branch of the Education Department of South Australia.

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6 As this service had not been reviewed for a considerable time little current information as to its operations was available. By necessity therefore the review was one of familiarisation; it did, however, concentrate mainly on the nature and quality of the programs and services offered.

#### HCB AND SALARY SUBSIDY AUDITS

7 Records in respect of claims for Handicapped Children's Benefit and Salary Subsidy were examined. These were found to be satisfactory and no discrepancies were noted.

#### HISTORY OF THE SERVICE

8 Eden Park was initially purchased by the Salvation Army in 1900. At that time boys as young as seven who committed petty crimes or who were unable to be looked after by their parents were housed in a special section of the Adelaide Gaol. The Salvation Army, through its continuing policy of responding to unmet community needs, set up Eden Park as a reformatory to more appropriately house these children. Eden Park remained a reformatory catering for boys seven to seventeen until the 1914-18 war at which time the majority of boys went into the armed services. After the war Eden Park reopened as a boys orphanage. It remained an orphanage until 1950 when it once more became a home for wayward boys. In 1974 at the suggestion of the Child Guidance Clinic, Eden Park converted to its current role as a home for severely emotionally disturbed boys. In 1976 Eden Park was approved under the Handicapped Persons Assistance Act as a residential training centre for emotionally disturbed boys aged six to sixteen.

#### PHYSICAL SETTING

9 Eden Park is a forty hectare rural property about five kilometres from Mt Barker and about forty kilometres from the Adelaide City Centre. The property is a large old Australian Colonial house which, until 1970, was used to accommodate the boys. Between 1970 and 1976 three dormitory blocks, one of which was subsidised under the Handicapped Persons Assistance Act, were erected on the property. Two of these dormitory blocks are currently used to accommodate the boys referred to this service. A series of fairly run down sheds and out-houses are adjacent to the main building and these in the past have been used as workshop areas for the boys. Currently they are used mainly for storage. Two other houses, one of which accommodates the Manager and his family, the other presently vacant, are also on the property. An Education Department school block comprising three classrooms plus amenities is set on the premises. (This school is staffed by the Education Department and provides remedial education for primary school boys referred to this facility). A swimming pool and tennis courts are provided. A recreational hall, adjacent to a small library, appears to have fallen into disuse. The land surrounding these buildings consists mainly of open paddocks and is used for raising beef and dairy cattle. One area of about an acre has been converted to a market garden producing a variety of vegetable crops for use at this facility as well as several of the other facilities administered by the Salvation Army.

10 The property is isolated from the general community. (This is seen as advantageous by the Salvation Army - see comments in paragraph 23 below). The nearest public transport is in Mt Barker and the nearest shop is at Wistow, a walk of several kilometres - however clients are not permitted to leave the premises without supervision. The surrounding countryside consists of similar rural properties.

#### CLIENTS

11 Although 36 boys may be accommodated at this facility, at the time of our review 15 boys in the age range 9 to 14 were in residence. In general the boys come from dysfunctional families where parents either cannot cope with the boy or have rejected him for other reasons. Essentially, emotional disturbance resulting from emotional insecurity is common to all clients of this service. In general this emotional instability is the only handicapping condition experienced by these boys.

12 Apart from the basic physiological needs the client group at Eden Park Boys Home, due to their somewhat common histories, all appear to have particular needs. We consider that they need:

- . to belong (family ..... group);
- . a stable emotional environment;
- . self esteem and opportunities to develop personal capacities.

The Salvation Army believes that its program at Eden Park provides:

- . a highly stable environment;
- . structure;
- . a degree of love and affection; and
- . understanding

to meet these needs.

#### THE PROGRAMS

13 The boys are referred to Eden Park through one of four referral agencies. By far the majority are referred through the Child Guidance Branch (C.A.F.P.S.) of the Education Department, and about equal proportions are referred through the Department of Community Welfare, Adelaide Childrens Hospital, or Flinders Medical Centre. The boys come to the notice of these referral agencies through either severely disturbed and disruptive behaviour in the classroom, a crime, or injury caused by physical abuse. Upon referral each boy initially becomes the responsibility of the Eden Park social worker. Through a series of interviews with the boy, his parents or guardian and representatives from the referring agency a case history is derived.

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On the basis of this a recommendation as to the ability of Eden Park to accept this boy is made. Prior to final admission a potential client spends a day at the facility to allow both the boy and staff to consider whether this is the most appropriate setting for him. It was stated that it was the client who finally decided whether or not to accept the placement.

14 The program at Eden Park is essentially a highly structured residential program where routines vary little from day to day. The boys reside in residential care units, each unit under the supervision of two residential care workers. In terms of age range and nature of problems the composition of client groups in each residential care unit is essentially similar. The residential care workers remain with their allotted units, thereby providing the boys with a identifiable continuity of staff personal contact.

15 Daily routines in each unit are the same. The boys arise at 7.00 dress, make their beds and generally clean their unit; have breakfast at 7.30; leave for school at 8.30; return from school between 3.15pm and 3.45pm, at which time they clean their shoes, do their homework and should time be available have free play until dinner at 5.00pm. After dinner the boys again do allotted duties, eg the washing up, the cleaning of the bathrooms and toilet areas, or the cleaning of the unit. Following these required duties each boy has his shower and changes into his nightwear. From then until lights out at 8.30pm the boys have directed duties such as writing of personal letters, games or handicrafts. It was stated that from time to time depending on the suitability of programs the evening may be spent in watching television. On the evening of the review the boys in one unit watched the television and indulged in informal play which due to limited supervision became increasingly boisterous and ultimately required severe control. (see comments in paragraph 24 below). The boys are in bed by 8.15pm and lights are out at 8.30.

16 Little opportunity appeared to be taken for any effective programming during the time between coming home from school and 5.00pm. Indeed there appeared to be many opportunities for programming, eg greater use of workshop facilities, market garden and general farm operations, that were not being taken.

17 The programs are largely remedial, and it was stated that they are on an individual basis, depending upon the problem experienced by the boy concerned. The program is designed by the residential care worker in conjunction with the boy, and generally concentrates on modifying the negative aspects of the boys behaviour. The residential care worker discusses the behaviour with the boy, explaining the consequences of his behaviour and attempts to determine the reason why the behaviour is exhibited. In this fashion it is hoped that the boy will learn to understand his own reasons for his behaviour. The boy and the care worker then jointly design an ongoing program whereby the incidence of this behaviour is reduced. It was stated that these programs are written in a series of small steps each with the objective of reducing the incidence of the undesirable behaviour. As each step is achieved the boy is rewarded through praise or more tangibly through reduced duties; failure leads to discussions as to the reasons why and possible alternatives for achieving success. Each program is discussed with the Manager of the facility and the overall results used to determine when a boy is ready to leave the facility.

18 On a daily basis the residential care worker completes a record chart for each boy (see attachment). On this chart he rates by degree of severity a number of problem features in each boys behaviour. In this fashion an assessment of the long term degree of improvement for particular behaviour is made. This method of charting is further used to assess the effectiveness of the programs conducted at this centre. The reviewing officers felt that this assessment concentrated solely on the negative aspects of behaviour rather than on skills developed - nevertheless, the assessment certainly reflects the philosophy of programming at the home which was not considered positively developmental.

19 A board of review - consisting of the Manager of the facility, Social Worker of the facility, Child Care workers, Chairman of the (DCW) Residential Child Care Advisory Committee and any other person who has had contact with the boy or can contribute something to discussions - meets on a six monthly basis to review the progress of the boys at the centre. At this time the success of the boys program is discussed and a recommendation on the anticipated length of the boy's stay at the home is made. It is the board of review which determines when a boy may leave the facility.

20 In general the boys can have a maximum length stay of two years at this facility. In practice, however, the average length of stay is about 9 months. This does not necessarily imply success but reflects a recognition that a longer stay can over-institutionalise a boy.

21 It was stated that where possible, boys return to their families on alternative weekends and school holidays, that this is seen as a testing time to measure the boys' and the families' ability to cope with each other, that parents are encouraged to note difficulties experienced as well as disturbed behaviours, and that these are then discussed with the boy and his family and possible methods determined so as to make his next visit more harmonious. The Salvation Army Social Worker recognises the importance of working with the boy's family and attempts to contact each family on a weekly basis. However, the majority of the boys' problems are in the first instance caused by dysfunctioning families. This was given as one reason for the role of the parent in this program being limited. We were told that parents often feel that the boy is to blame for all the problems and that it is he, not they, who should be treated. Further, we were told, many parents do not really want the child and are consequently loath to accept help from visiting professionals. It appears that this tension between the need for parents to be involved in the program, and their ability to be so, is a difficult area.

22 In fact, it appeared that the Superintendent of the facility does not encourage the reciprocal arrangement of parents coming up to visit the boys at Eden Park. This it was stated often causes a major disruption which is displayed through agitated behaviour immediately before and after such visits. We were told that such behaviour on the part of one boy can have a detrimental affect on other boys at the facility and therefore for the good of all, parental visits are not encouraged. As well, Captain Meaby indicated that parents' arrangements to visit boys at Eden Park often fell through and that the boys were then doubly disappointed by missing an outing organised by Eden Park. It should be noted that we were giving conflicting information on the frequency of these occurrences - and indeed of organised outings.

23 In summary, although this facility provides residential care, the care provided is essentially custodial and is regarded by both referring agencies and the Salvation Army as a correctional "time out" program. The boys at this facility live highly structured lives which are bound by many rules and regulations. Developmentally, the programs offer the boys little by way of additional skills acquisition. Programs are not designed to do this, rather they are aimed at the reduction of a problematic behaviour exhibited by the boy. The Salvation Army believes that due to the nature of the boys' previous histories a stable structured environment is their most pressing need. This the Army aims to achieve at Eden Park. It is for this reason also that the programs are conducted at the very isolated setting of Eden Park, as it is believed that it enables the boys to get away from the environment and the stimuli which have generally caused their problems.

#### OR CONCERNS

24 There are a number of elements of programming that the reviewing officers view with serious concern. It is accepted that the boys lives prior to entry into this program lacked structure, and that the boys infact "soak up" the definite structure that is provided. However, it is felt that there are many unnecessarily institutional practices that add to the generally institutional physical ambience of Eden Park:

- The boys do not have any private living space, and this physical constraint is exacerbated by generally limited opportunities to be responsible for their own personal possessions. While some boys had a few personal possessions and items of clothing in their individual lockers, access to "best clothes" in many cases appeared to be controlled by staff from communal wardrobes. We felt that care and pride in clothing was one area that could be used for development of self esteem in a much more positive way.
- Similarly, we observed that the boys attending Mt Barker High School drew their footwear from a common cupboard and that there did not appear to be personal ownership of particular pairs of boots.
- We were not surprised to hear that boys often become very distressed. We were told that on these occasions they are allowed to "run down to the front gate for a good cry". Further it was indicated that some boys cried themselves to sleep. We found the obviousness of this need for parental affection incongruent with the pragmatic discouragement of visits from parents.
- While we do not claim expertise in the field of care in the emotionally disturbed, we were perturbed at a particular practice of control - physically sitting on and holding down boys who were obviously in extreme distress. While we were told this is a standard procedure in this field, we consider that more positive programming might alleviate the degree and frequency of distress observed.

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- . Pocket money was dealt with in a way considered not to actively develop boys' capacity to responsibly handle money.
- . Apart from the concession of running to the main gate for a cry, it appeared that the boy's movement was limited to the immediate surrounds of the residential buildings and that they are not allowed into the market garden, kitchen, dairy or other areas of the forty hectare property unless accompanied by a supervisor. The large property is thus not used for programming, nor does it provide boys with the opportunity for "personal space".

25 The reviewing officers were seriously concerned at the Salvation Army's policy of providing clothing. While this Department pays Handicapped Children's Benefit at the rate of \$35 per week in respect of each boy in the home, we were told that only \$100 per year was budgetted to purchase clothes for all residents. As a result a large central clothing store is maintained with clothes and shoes donated, or purchased second hand or as factory rejects. A seamstress, whose salary is subsidised under the Handicapped Persons Assistance Act, extends the life of these well used items with running repairs and alterations. Although there was a large stock of such clothing in the central store it was noted that some boys were wearing ill-fitting clothes and that many were wearing footwear clearly falling apart. We discussed the clothing situation with Captain Meaby who saw it as one of his critical problems but could see no alternative to using Handicapped Childrens Benefits payments to cover general operating deficits.

26 We were given the impression by some of the administrative staff that the boys' lives are enhanced by programs such as Canoeing, BMX biking and bike repairs, camping and woodworking. However this impression conflicted with that obtained through discussions with the boys, who generally indicated that these activities had fallen into decline as interested staff had left the facility, and were now almost non-existent. In fact, we gained an overall impression that the programs were in a state of decay. This was endorsed by some staff who indicated that morale was being affected by uncertainties over the facility's future.

27 We were disturbed to find, from boys' general conversations, that they themselves see Eden Park as the first step of the Correctional Services System and that no attempts were made by staff to correct this belief. Indeed, one inexperienced staff member was observed explaining the Correctional Services System to the boys and endorsing their view that Eden Park was the first step on that road.

28 We felt that there were inadequate links - in fact some tensions - between the Education Department facility and the residential facility. Although it was stated that relations between the two had improved, we felt that closer involvement would provide a much more cohesive program.

29 A further major concern relates to the lack of follow-up or support for the boys after they leave Eden Park. A boy leaves this service when the board of review considers that he has developed sufficiently to enable him to cope with his previous situation or when

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he reaches the age of seventeen, or when it is considered further time would overinstitutionalise him. Where the boys go after Eden Park varies: the majority go home to their parents, some go into foster placements and occasionally a boy may be adopted into a family. What happens to the boys after they leave Eden Park is something that the Army has not, at this stage, been able to measure. However it is suspected that in many cases the placement breaks down and the boy returns to his former ways. When asked what the future was for these boys, some staff considered that the majority of them would either end up in Yatala Gaol or commit suicide at an early age. Very few were expected to make any sort of success of their lives. There was a clear recognition by the staff of the facility that one of their programs' main problems lies in the inability, through lack of resources, to continue work with the boy and the family he returns to or is placed with.

#### STAFFING

30 At the time of our review the following staff were employed at this facility:

- . Manager - responsible for the overall running of this facility;
- . Senior Assistant Manager - responsible to the Manager assisting him in his duties as well as the overall supervision of child care staff;
- . 4 Child Care Workers - responsible for day to day running of the units. These have the most direct contact with the boys;
- . Social Worker - this position is funded through the Department of Community Welfare and is responsible for the overall social welfare of the boys and their families;
- . Sister -- a part-time position responsible for the medical needs of the boys;
- . Cook - responsible for the general meal preparations at this facility;
- . Farm Manager - responsible for the maintenance of the farm;
- . Domestic - responsible for the general cleanliness of the establishment;
- . Laundress -- responsible for the major washing of the facility;
- . Seamstress - responsible for the maintenance of clothing;
- . Gardener/Handyman - responsible for the general handy work around the facility but having a major area of responsibility in the maintenance of the market garden.

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31 Two major concerns over staffing arose during this review. Firstly all of the above staff, excepting the social worker, attract salary subsidy under the Handicapped Persons Assistance Act. Of these staff only the Manager, the Senior Assistant Manager, the Social Worker and the 4 child care staff have any regular dealings with the boys. The other staff are mainly supportive ensuring that the property as a whole continues to function. It was noted that the general farming activity:

- . is not used for programming activity for the boys; and
- . supports food requirements of various other Salvation Army residential facilities.

We felt that in terms of developmental opportunities for the boys the Department must question the validity of continuing to subsidise some of these support staff.

32 Secondly we gathered from discussions that the client group at Eden Park are generally recognised as being one of the most difficult in the field. In that context we were concerned, with some exceptions, at the general level of relevant experience and expertise of the staff. Other than one of the child care workers and the social worker, none of the care staff hold any formal qualifications for their positions, although several of the staff are in the process of completing studies for a child care certificate. The direct child care staff in general are young and at the time of our review all but one had been at this facility for less than 2 months. This inexperience was readily obvious in the sometimes inappropriate way in which the new child care staff related to the boys.

33 Due to the relative inexperience of direct care staff it would be expected that a high degree of formal and intensive staff training would occur. This does not appear to be the case; rather, a new staff member is teamed with a more senior member and the rules and regulations and methods for handling the boys are passed on in the process of daily contact, and at weekly staff meetings where problems experienced and methods for overcoming them are discussed. In this ad hoc fashion the new worker learns to cope with the special problems presented by these boys.

#### CONCLUSIONS

34 It is easy to draw the conclusion that the program at Eden Park is highly unsatisfactory in many ways.

35 However, it is much harder to draw any conclusions about what should be done. Apart from broader questions about the level of government that should be responsible for this client group, there are dilemmas that should be resolved as quickly as possible if the boys in residence are not to be further disadvantaged:

- . if adequate resources were directed to significantly upgrade Eden Park, this would represent support for a program that is essentially isolated, segregated and institutional;

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- we are aware that an alternative program is being discussed by the Salvation Army and the Department for Community Welfare - however, this proposal entails the use of the current level of Handicapped Persons Assistance Act funding in ways not legislatively possible. As well, our discussions with Brigadier Hedley Steer following this review indicated that the Salvation Army considers that it does not have the resources to deliver a program of the type suggested; and
- as it was suggested to us in various quarters that no other service in South Australia caters for this client group, we are concerned that any precipitate action that might force closure of Eden Park before the establishment of a satisfactory alternative could leave these boys with no acceptable options at all.

36 Accordingly, the reviewing officers consider that the Department has an obligation to assist the Salvation Army and the Department for Community Welfare in finding a more appropriate way of addressing the needs of this client group.

*M P A Elmendorf. 17/9/82.*  
M P A ELMENDORP  
PROJECT OFFICER