

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

TO THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR.

Re: Complaints made through Solicitors,  
Johnston & Johnston, dated 19/5/70,  
concerning illtreatment of boys at

SALVATION ARMY BOYS' HOME, MT. BARKER

1. THE COMPLAINTS.

Both complaints as expressed by Mr. Tunks, are in essence, substantiated by my investigation. However, it did appear that the complainant may have exaggerated, particularly to the point where they had been taken out of context of the general relationship of staff to boys in the Home.

(1) The Manager confirmed that a storage room had been used to hold a boy on rare occasions. I was shown the room. Measurements were such as the complainant stated, about 4' x 5' 6". It has an uncovered stone work floor. There were no windows, and the door is locked by means of a bolt on the outside. The room is mainly used as a storage room and, at the time of my inspection, was housing many crates. It is a very old building, and is not in good condition. Ventilation would be no problem because the door leaves large gaps between the walls and the door posts, and the roof itself does not fit flush with the wall. However, it seemed to me that it would be most inappropriate and unsuitable for any child to be placed in the room for holding purposes or for punishment. The Manager stressed that the room had only been used on rare occasions and on the last occasion, one of the boys had been held there, to prevent him from absconding. He felt that the boys found this acceptable.

(2) The Manager confirmed that one of his male assistants, Sergeant Ellis, does have his approval to use a strap when he feels that such discipline is necessary. He vigorously denied that the strap was carried as a matter of routine, or that it was used regularly. Sergeant Ellis has been at the Home for about eight years and is held in high respect by the Manager, who feels that he can rely completely on his responsible management of the boys.

Because these points have been raised, the Manager stated that it was his intention to ensure that both these practices cease.

2. Current situation at the Home involving Complainant.

As soon as I arrived at the Home, Brigadier Lawlor pointed out that this current trouble in the Home was something quite new for him. Apparently the Home had been functioning quite smoothly until the last few weeks when Mr. Tunks had been employed there. Mr. Tunks had arrived at the Home two months ago, having come from the Salvation Army in Victoria. Apparently he had travelled to Adelaide in order to dissociate from former friends with whom he had been involved before joining the Salvation Army. As a youth, he had been in a Boys Home, but, as far as the officers were aware, he has had no experience in this type of work.

Three or four weeks ago, Mr. Tunks was seen to strike several of the boys, and he was instructed not to do this. However, the practice continued. This eventually resulted in Brigadier Lawlor advising him that his service would be terminated. This was done on the 18th day and he was given a fortnight's notice. Apparently on Sunday, 4/5/70, Mr. Tunks was again involved in striking the boys, and when reprimanded caused an unpleasant scene; this led to Brigadier Seamans visiting the Home, late in the afternoon

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and at this time, Mr. Tunks threatened to report the Home to the Department of Social Welfare. Also Police action was threatened to remove Mr. Tunks from the Home if he did not leave at the time of his termination. His reaction to this was that such action would assist him in his political aspirations.

At present Mr. Tunks is still working at the Home. A Mr. Morphett is commencing as an assistant on a week's trial.

### 3. Staffing in the Home.

(1) Brigadier Lawlor, the Manager, has in fact retired. However, he has continued for a period of some months and I was not able to establish clearly the reason behind this. Certainly Brigadier Lawlor is totally involved with the boys and is greatly concerned to ensure appropriate care. However, it was my impression that he was now unable to fully cope with the responsibilities and duties of Superintendent and that his elderly manner did not allow him the necessary flexibility. It was also my impression that he was not particularly aware of all activities occurring in the Home; he commented several times that as soon as he obtains some clerical or administrative assistance, he would be able to give more time to the lads. This meant that the assistants who operate there, are able to exercise a fair degree of autonomy in their dealings with the boys. Improvements appear necessary in the supervision of staff of the Home.

(2) Sergeant Ellis, one of the assistants has been in the Home for a long period and by virtue of his length of service, has been allowed much more responsibility. This appears to have caused some jealousy on the part of Mr. Tunks, and has caused friction in their relationships, as well as in their relationship with the boys.

(3) The roles and responsibilities of each staff member are not clear. For instance, Captain Kop, the assistant Manager, has with him his wife, Mrs. Kop, who has been assigned a role in the Home acting as Matron. It would appear necessary for the administration to clarify staff roles and responsibilities.

(4) Major Osborne's role as an unofficial part-time assistant, needs to be clarified; Major Osborne has reprimanded staff members at times, and in view of his own tentative position, in the Home framework, this could cause difficulties.

(5) It was my impression that the administrative staff at the Salvation Army Headquarters, have not been sensitive to and are unaware of many of the activities of the Home. Brigadier Findlay, without directly confirming this, expressed his intention to attempt to obtain a closer liaison with the Home.

(6) Selection of staff appears to be a somewhat unsatisfactory procedure because officers from anywhere in Australia can be appointed to the Home. I felt the administrative staff should take a more positive role in assessing potential staff members.

### 4. Billings.

At present 15 boys are sleeping in what has been termed "temporary accommodation" in an annexe of the old building. This dormitory is old, cold and dilapidated, although efforts have been made to make it comfortable. Nevertheless, it can only be described as temporary. The boys have already been in it for about 2 to 3 years. The Manager is expecting this year's S.A. Red Shield Appeal to provide finance for a new wing. There are 39 boys at present in the Home.

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5. Reactions of boys.

I was able to talk with some of the lads while they were kicking a football. Prior to talking with them, Brigadier Lawler had mentioned that Mr. Tunks had told the boys that a Departmental Officer would visit the Home to investigate it. When chatting with the lads, it was obvious that a person had prepared them for an official visitor from this Department. Therefore I was unable to gather any impression of conditions from the boys. They did, though, indicate their happiness and they appeared to be normally engaged in their activities. Spontaneity in their responses to my comments was also evident. They did mention that they "liked Mr. Tunks."

6. OPINION.

It was my impression that the Home in its present condition, needs careful re-assessment and re-organization by the central administration of the Salvation Army in South Australia.

The present Superintendent has definite limitations, particularly with his acceptance of out-moded disciplinary measures. His concern and care for the boys remains unquestioned, nevertheless. It was only in this context that the storage room was used to "hold" boys. Although this does not excuse the action, I feel it explains it. He certainly had also lost control of the staff situation. I consider the second complaint that the strap was used in "a routine way" is exaggerated and untrue. In any event, I have been informed that these practices will cease.

With the Superintendent's retirement, the central administration has an opportunity to re-organize the Home. I think this will occur. I would also expect the administration to maintain a much closer liaison with the Home. In this way it will continue to meet a need in providing care for disturbed lads in this rural setting.

RBO:MLL  
28.5.70.

ASSISTANT SENIOR WELFARE OFFICER.

To the A/D.D.

As requested.

*[Signature]*  
Harc 2/6/70.