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PROBLEMS AT BETHCAR CHILDREN'S HOME, BREWARRINA

Reference is made to my discussions with the Director on 10 March 80 regarding problems at Bethcar Children's Home, Brewarrina. On that day the Director requested a written confirmation of the problems being experienced. The situation at Bethcar is as follows.

On 5 March 80 I was requested by Brewarrina police to attend the police station because they had received certain information about an employee working at Bethcar Children's Home.

At that stage present in the police station was REDACTED, the adopted daughter of Bert and Edith Gordon and REDACTED, an Aunt of REDAC. REDA made certain allegations and I then left the police station and went to Brewarrina central school where I collected Jodi Moore, Emilia Moore and REDACTED, known as REDA. I met Bert Gordon and we travelled together to the police station. I was then present as was Mr Gordon during the interviews the police had with REDACTED and the abovenamed three children.

REDA alleges that about three years ago Colin Gibson who resides at Bethcar and works there in an unpaid capacity as bus driver-cum-handyman, had made sexual passes at her. Colin is married to Bert and Edith's daughter, AIT and AIT also works there to assist Mrs Gordon.

After this episode, about two years ago the family went on holidays to Lightning Ridge and REDA left the caravan to go to the toilet and found Colin sneaking around at night. She then went back inside and got Mrs Gordon to go with her when she went to the toilet. A couple of months ago, Colin wrote a love letter to REDA. She showed it to her family and they spoke to Colin about it. Colin wrote a subsequent letter to her. A couple of weeks ago REDACTED, one of the children in the home, came into REDA's room with Jodi Moore, Jodi was crying. Jodi told REDA that she had seen Colin peeping at her through the bedroom window.

Emilia Moore also complained to REDAC about Colin coming into the bedroom late at night and touching her on the breasts. REDA claimed that she had reported the matter to Mr and Mrs Gordon and told them to get rid of Colin. They refused because they believed his innocence. REDAC subsequently left home and after another episode occurred reported the matter to the police.

In her statement Emilia Moore claimed that on a number of occasions Colin had indecently touched her, Emilia is 11. She also complained that she had woken at night on occasion and seen Colin in his underpants in their room. Jodi Moore who is nine similarly complained about waking in the night and finding Colin hiding between beds or behind a cot dressed in either his underpants or pyjamas only. She also made a statement to the police about Colin peeping at her through the bedroom window. REDA then advised that two years ago at Lightning Ridge AIF complained to her that she had observed Colin "mucking up" with AIE. At that time AIE would have been six years old. The Brewarrina uniform police had referred the matter to Bourke detectives who are to brief the woman detective from Dubbo, Kay McMahon. Kay is to travel to Brewarrina on either 12 March or 13 March and interview all the Bethcar girls to ascertain whether a case should go ahead.

From my own impressions observing the interview, REDA and the other girls answered their questions very truthfully and without any prompting and appeared to be genuine in their belief that these episodes had occurred. Mr Gordon refuses to concede that such a thing could have happened and is maintaining

Colin's innocence. I put it to him and he agreed that Colin should vacate Bethcar until the matter is resolved one way or the other. Colin and his wife **AT** subsequently left Bethcar on the night of 5 March 80 and went to stay with relatives at Dubbo.

At this stage I consider that the Department should await the outcome of police enquiries. I must however express my concern that Mr Gordon did not take action on the complaints he received about Colin and that instead the matter had to come to notice by **REDAC**.

T R Madden
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