

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
FORTITUDE VALLEY

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Subject: Mr and Mrs Lester - Houseparents at Alkira

RECORD NUMBER	MINUTE DW
90I/1/0	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Folio 106</i></p> <p>Further to my report of 10th October, a number of further incidents involving physical manhandling of boys has occurred in the Lesters' unit. Within a week, Peter Lester is alleged to have twisted REDACTED's arm behind his back and punched him a number of times in the small of his back. When I was told of these incidents by Peter Brandon, social welfare cadet, I discussed the whole issue with Major Hall. He was particularly concerned about the incidents and spoke at length with the Lesters than night. Mr and Mrs Lester denied much of the story, but admitted that some anger was displayed towards REDA. Major Hall contacted me again and suggested that I speak to Mr and Mrs Lester on Monday, 30th October, and also to the three boys involved.</p> <p>I spoke to the Lesters with Major Hall and we discussed both incidents. Both Peter and Barbara were angry at what they saw as my unwarranted intrusion and the fact that I had involved the superintendent. They both felt that the incident should have been discussed by only Peter Brandon and themselves. (Peter has case responsibility for REDACTED.) Mr and Mrs Lester seemed aware that they could be sacked for this occurrence, although no indication of that was given. On asking them about the two incidents, I received some sense of "covering up"; both tended to minimise the physical handling and overlooked the pattern that had emerged. This kind of incident has continued to occur since they first began working at Alkira.</p> <p>I then spoke to REDAC and REDACTED and REDAC REDAC the first incident occurred when REDAC was with REDAC, and the second with REDA. Each of the two stories from REDAC were largely corroborated by what REDAC and REDAC respectively told me. I relayed this information back to Major Hall and I recommended that the Lesters be given one month's notice with two conditions - 1. there were to be no further incidents or they would need to leave immediately and 2. a proposed camp on Bribie Island would be cancelled because of my concern for the boys' safety. This was done.</p> <p>On Wednesday, 1st November, I spoke to the Lesters before they had received notice, and both were angry and upset. Neither could accept that physical abuse was inappropriate and unwarranted, and both accused me of not providing any suitable replacement for physical discipline. They also felt that I was over-reacting to incidents which also occurred in the other units (which is completely untrue) and that if Mr Lester did something wrong "everyone was on him like a ton of bricks".</p> <p>Much of their anger was due to the uncertainty of their future and the fact that Mrs Lester was forced to confront the knowledge that Mr Lester's unwarranted anger and aggression would be always present within their marriage. However, I explained that there were a large</p>

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	<p>number of incidents, all of which are contributing to my concern about the general functioning of the unit.</p> <p>In summary, my reasons for requesting dismissal of the Lesters are: the large number of incidents; the lack of effect of counselling by either Major Hall or me; the general unsuitability of Mr Lester to houseparenting (see previous reports). Major Hall has always been aware of what was happening in the unit, and agreed fully with my recommendation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <u>R.J. McLary,</u> <u>Child Care Officer.</u> Residential Care A. 8th November, 1978. </p>