

All communications must be  
addressed to the Director.

In reply PLEASE QUOTE  
Reference No.....

TELEPHONE: B 2229.



*State Children Department,*

*William Street,*

*Brisbane, 18th December, 1936.*

Sir,

On 17/12/36 I held an enquiry into matters generally concerning the treatment of State boys, and of three absconding boys in particular, at the Salvation Army Industrial School for Boys, Riverview.

The Superintendent and most of his assistants were interviewed and a statement from each, as well as one from each of the absconding boys, will be found attached.

Food: There were certain complaints and suggestions made relative to the meals supplied, but I could not find that the boys are underfed. The three absconding boys do not appear to be undernourished.

The midday (hot) meal, which was supplied on the 17th instant, was good and sufficient. It consisted of meat, haricot beans, potatoes etc., followed by a pudding. Bread was also supplied for those who wanted it with their meat.

The boys, when questioned, advised that that day's dinner was a sample of what is usually provided.

The morning meal (Breakfast) consists of porridge with milk and sugar, bread, butter, jam or honey, with a cup of tea, or two cups if required.

The evening meal consists of bread, butter, jam, syrup or honey.

Skimmed milk is sometimes used. This practice should be discontinued.

A slice of bread and butter or of bread and jam is given to each boy at about 10 o'clock.

At the morning and evening meals additional slices of bread should be supplied where called for, within reason. Some additional ones are supplied, but this matter needs careful supervision.

Accommodation: The sleeping accommodation provided is satisfactory. Arrangements should be made to have the dormitories closed at night, as at

The Director,

State Children Department,

BRISBANE.

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Westbrook, to prevent lads escaping. At present there is no night attendant on duty and boys are at liberty to walk out then if they wish to do so. <sup>Two</sup> The attendants sleep next door to the boys' dormitories.

Punishment: The curtailing of privileges is used as a punishment for minor offences. No objection can be raised to this practice. In the matter of corporal punishment for the more serious offences all the officers practically are authorised to inflict same in cases where they consider it is warranted. It is usually administered with a strap on the open hand and is sometimes applied to the buttocks, either bare or covered by trousers. The greatest number of strokes given at one time to any of the absconding boys was eight.

One officer (Lieutenant REDACTE), on occasions, has used a piece of old tubing of a motor car pump. This has been applied to the buttocks, bare or otherwise.

In none of the cases was a boy held by one officer whilst another officer punished him.

Only one of the three boys (REDACTED) bore marks, and in his case there were two on the buttocks, but they were not deep seated, and the punishment will not be injurious to the boy's health in any way.

There were no traces of marking on the bodies of REDACTED and REDACTED.

A punishment register is not kept.

One of the boys played a trick of putting ants down the back of one of the subnormal boys. An officer then instructed another boy to put ants down the back of the offending boy, as it were, giving the boy a dose of his own medicine. When questioned by me one officer said he could not see anything wrong in such action. The Superintendent should impress on his staff the grave error of such treatment.

Absconding boys: I found that REDACTED is a troublesome boy. His word is not to be relied upon and he is of the "humbug" type. He pleaded to be left at Riverview but I feel he should be where he is under more strict supervision and he has consequently been transferred to the Farm Home for Boys, Westbrook.

I do not anticipate any trouble with REDACTE and all REDAC appears to need is a close watch on his movements. These two boys should do well at Westbrook once they settle down. They were taken there also on 17/12/36.

Self abuse: This has been a practice of some of the inmates and REDACTED has this tendency when a close watch is not kept on him.

Two other inmates, not State boys, are known to be guilty of this practice.

Such practices have to be coped with in most institutions and only the vigilance of the Superintendent and officers will keep it in check and eliminate it.

Keeping boys fully occupied in hard physical work is helpful and proper talks to the boys in private will assist also.

Administration: There has been a feeling of restlessness at the Institution during the past few weeks, due in some measure to the recent abscondings.

The main trouble, in my opinion, is the laxity of control by the Superintendent, Major Dawson. He does not appear to have a grip on the various activities connected with the place and he has not his finger on the pulse thereof. Powers which he should reserve to himself he has delegated to his assistants, and he does not seem to be cognisant of just what the several boys are engaged at from day to day.

All the assistants should not be allowed to inflict corporal punishment, but this authority should be reserved for the Superintendent himself, vide Regulation 24.

More of the detailed work of the Institution should be at his finger tips.

An interest should be taken in the boys' personal appearance and they should be encouraged to take a pride in same. Two of the boys concerned in the recent abscondings needed a haircut - one very badly, which tends to give him an unkempt appearance. This matter should not have escaped the notice of the Superintendent.

The administration needs buttoning up and the Superintendent should make a daily inspection of the Institution and should frequently put in an appearance during meal times.

Library: This needs attention and arrangements are being made to supply additional suitable books.

Sport: Cricket is indulged in during the winter and summer months. Football should be encouraged in the winter months. It is a great help and safety valve for those boys who are inclined to grow above themselves. An institution can hardly afford to be without it. It is not played at Riverview.

There are no gymnastic appliances at the Institution.

Subnormal children: There are several subnormal inmates and the practice of associating normally minded boys with them does not appear to be a proper one. It does not make for a healthy environment, and the subnormals would be better segregated in an institution of their own.

There is only one coloured inmate - a Chinese State boy.

The Institution occasionally also receives as inmates youths of over seventeen years brought before the Court and convicted but not punished, or admonished and discharged. There have not been many such of late and at present there are two - one a man of 48 years and a youth of 17 years. It is doubtful whether the association of boys with elders who have had criminal tendencies is desirable.

Recommendations:

- (1) I recommend that the Salvation Army authorities be informed that the administration at the Institution needs buttoning up;
- (2) that the Superintendent should keep a closer watch on the activities of the Institution, reserve to himself powers affecting discipline, and keep a firm rein thereon. Punishment should be inflicted on an offender in a room in private, in accordance with Regulation 24 of "The State Children Act," which reads as follows:-

"Corporal punishment shall be administered as seldom as possible, and shall be only resorted to when absolutely necessary for discipline, and not for first offences unless of a grave nature. No corporal punishment shall be inflicted except by direction and in the presence of the superintendent."

Where the discipline is proper a Superintendent will find the appreciation and co-operation of the boys themselves will be forthcoming.

- (3) Foolish punishments, similar to that mentioned on Page 2, where ants were put down a boy's back on the instruction of one of the officers, should not be permitted under any circumstances, and the Superintendent should be instructed accordingly.

- (4) A punishment register should be kept, in which should be recorded all punishments issued and the reason for same.
- (5) The requests for additional slices of bread, at the morning and evening meals particularly, should receive due consideration, and the Superintendent himself should frequently be in attendance in the dining room during meal times.
- (6) The association of boys with subnormally minded boys and men does not appear to me to be proper and it is desirable to have them separated. The same applies to the association of boys with young men who have been before the Court.
- (7) A strict watch should be kept on any boy having a tendency to practice self abuse, or sodomy, and the Superintendent should be apprised by officers of all such cases. He should see that such boys are given appropriate tasks to help to keep their surplus energy in check, and should give counsel to the boys in private.

Yours faithfully,

*H. Harris*

Chief Inspector.