

Department of Family Services and
Aboriginal and Islander Affairs

DOCUMENT 23

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Consideration of Recommendations for
Appointment to the Positions of Managers of
Departmental Institutions

Reasons for Decision

I have considered the merit statement and recommendations of the selection panel and documented in a memorandum of 15th May, 1990, from Mr I. Peers, Executive Director (Youth Support), convenor of the selection panel to the Manager, Personnel Services.

I note regulation 12 of the Public Service Management and Employment Regulations, which reads:

12. Basis of assessment for selection. The assessment of the relative merit of each applicant for a vacancy in an office shall have regard to the requirements set out in the position description for that office pursuant to regulation 9(1)(b), (c) and (d).

Regulation 9(1) prescribes the content of a position description. Clause (a) relates to the duties of the office. Clauses (b), (c) and (d) which are referred to in regulation 12, as above, read:

- (b) a description of any minimum academic, trade or professional qualifications required, together with any other academic, trade or professional qualifications considered to be desirable, which have been determined by the chief executive to form part of the qualifications required for holding the office;
- (c) a description of any abilities, aptitudes, skills, knowledge, experience and personal qualities which have been determined by the chief executive to form part of the qualifications required for holding the office;
- (d) any other qualifications required for holding the office.

I have come to the view that I should not at this time proceed with an appointment to the position of Manager, John Oxley Youth Centre, either of the person recommended by the selection panel or of any other applicant, for reasons I now document. I am however satisfied that I am able to proceed with appointments to the positions of Managers of the Westbrook Youth Centre, Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Centre, Cleveland Youth Centre, Garramar and The Outlook, in respect of which the following considerations do not apply.



I need to take into account the provisions of regulation 12 of the Public Service Management and Employment Regulations in considering any appointment and I have taken that into account in considering an appointment to the position of Manager, John Oxley Youth Centre. There are however in respect of any appointment other matters which I also must consider. These other matters as they are relevant to the present consideration include:

- (a) matters of departmental convenience and efficiency;
- (b) the overall best interests of the department, of all staff and where relevant, of clients such as the children in care placed at the John Oxley Youth Centre; and
- (c) the composition of staff at any one work location and the workability of such a staff team.

These are not matters that a selection panel, in performing its role, might necessarily be concerned with. Nor may the members of a selection panel be fully acquainted with all material or information relevant to these broader considerations.

In respect of the John Oxley Youth Centre, I need to refer to the unrest and differences between staff which led to the establishment of an inquiry which became known as the "Heiner Inquiry". That inquiry was terminated by me. None of the material gathered by the inquiry is available to me, nor has it ever been available to me. I specifically do not take any matters in relation to that Inquiry into account in considering the matter of an appointment at the present time to the position of Manager.

Independent of that, there have been reports of unrest and of severe division in the staff team, particularly between the management and professional staff on the one hand and the direct care staff on the other hand. As well, there have been reports of unrest amongst resident children and while I do not apportion responsibility for that, I acknowledge that this institution has been unstable for a period in excess of six months. As evidence of this I refer to -

- .. a memorandum of 23rd January to me from the Deputy Director-General (Community and Youth Support) listing issues to be addressed at the John Oxley Youth Centre which included "re-establishment of management authority". (On 8th May, 1990, I requested of the Deputy Director-General (Community and Youth Support) that he have the Executive Director (Youth Support) and the Acting Manager "report on progress and if necessary present a forward plan for the immediate and longer term".
- .. various reports on incidents between staff and children.
- .. a high level of "staff related issues" as referred to in a memorandum of 1st March, 1990, to the Director, Organisational Services, by the then Acting Manager, Ms Dutney.


When addressing staff at the John Oxley Youth Centre on 13th February, 1990, I considered I needed to make reference to and did acknowledge "some concerns in dealing with allegations being made by staff at various levels about other officers". I proceeded later to say, "What I do ask is that each and everyone of you do your utmost to ensure that in the weeks ahead a more peaceful and less stressful work environment is achieved. Improved staff training and greater attention by Head Office to problems such as staff safety will make things better.

In the end however it comes down to the behaviour of each and everyone of you - it's how people behave and how they interact with one another that matters most.

It is important in a Centre such as this because you are role models for young people - that's the challenge of your job - the children at this Centre need to see adults working harmoniously together - that's the bottom line."

I am not satisfied that the Centre is sufficiently stabilised to consider a permanent appointment to the position of Manager at this time. For that reason and the reasons referred to above. I do not consider that accepting the recommendation of the selection panel would achieve stability or a workable staff team relationship between management and other staff. Rather, in my view, the situation which does at present seem to be achieving some level of stability may well be inflamed between staff, with consequent detriment to resident children.

Thus, my decision is not to proceed at this time to make an appointment to the position of Manager, John Oxley Youth Centre, but to have the position readvertised at a later date.


R.L. Matchett (Ms)
Acting Director-General

1st August, 1990.