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30th October, 1989

Mr L.M.J. Gillespie
General Secretary
Queensland State Service Union
G.P.O. Box 545
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Mr Gillespie,

I refer to your letter of 18th October, 1989, in which you outlined a number of concerns with the John Oxley Youth Centre.

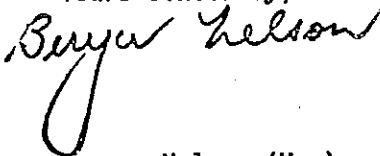
The current situation in relation to these issues is as follows:-

1. A new alarm system is being installed at John Oxley Youth Centre which will contribute to staff safety. Unfortunately, the contractors are experiencing problems with it and, until such time as this proves to be satisfactory, additional staff are being employed to man the original "panic" button alarm system.
2. In relation to the door locks which have caused problems, here again the delays have been caused by the manufacturer. The Works Department advises that because of the type of lock required, they are only made in special runs. The new locks are presently being installed. Some double doors have been upgraded and their suitability tested. Unsatisfactory doors are now going to be replaced.
- 3 & 4. The points raised are acknowledged. Architectural advice has been sought so that the best solution can be found. At this stage, it would appear that the solution will entail capital works which will have to be placed on the loan works program.
5. The problem of lighting in the secure yard has been recognised and the Department of Works was approached. A contractor recently visited the site to provide advice. An officer of the Works Department is currently estimating costs in relation to lighting for the semi-secure and secure yards.
6. At the present time, one of the Centre's cars has a mobile phone which is not effective during searches. A proposal has been put to the Works Department for communication equipment for use in each of the cars and in the semi-secure yard and visitors' area. Citec equipment has been tested and found to be unsatisfactory for the Centre. Depending on the outcome of further discussions with the Works Department, it may be possible to take over some of the Westbrook Youth Centre's "electrophone" equipment.

7. It is acknowledged that the triple rooms do have limited use and are difficult to manage. They cannot be readily converted to two single rooms because of plumbing limitations for an extra toilet. Proposals are being developed by my officers for discussion with the Department of Works in order to redesign the triple room areas for more effective use. The triple rooms have been used frequently in recent months because of high numbers.
8. The provision of electronically-operated gates from within the Centre is to be discussed with the Department of Works. The cost of installation of such a device is not known at this stage. If electronically-operated gates can be installed, it may be possible to develop extra procedures to enhance security at the change of shift at 11.00pm.
9. My Department engaged a firm of consultants to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of youth detention centres. That review did not recommend an increase in staff levels at the John Oxley Youth Centre. However, the question of introducing an upper limit on the number of clients is being closely examined.
- 10, 11 & 12. As you are aware, some in-service training is carried out in work time. The course is voluntary and is part of the award. In relation to induction and basic training, it is proposed to introduce a basic training program in the near future. One of the major impediments to training at the Centre is the necessity to engage officers to replace those attending the training and the resultant cost. However, I have directed that additional funds be found for training and this will enable a scheme to be introduced fairly quickly.

As can be seen from the foregoing, the matters you brought to my attention are receiving active consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Beryce Nelson (Mrs)
Minister for Family Services
and Member for Aspley

Letten & Gillespie

RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED RE JOHN OXLEY YOUTH CENTRE
BY THE QUEENSLAND STATE SERVICE UNION IN A MEETING
WITH THE HONOURABLE THE MINISTER
ON 18TH OCTOBER, 1989

1. Alarm System

The contractors are experiencing problems with the new system. Extra staff are being employed to man the original "panic" button system until the new system is satisfactory.

2. The delay with locks is due to the manufacturer. All possible action is being taken, but certain kinds of locks are made in special runs.

Some double doors have been upgraded, and their suitability tested. Unsatisfactory doors are now going to be replaced.

3. This is acknowledged, but the problem may need to be considered in connection with an isolated area as referred to in point 4.

4. The need for such an isolation area is acknowledged. It is a major problem in the design of the building. Architectural advice will be needed to find the best solution.

5. There is a problem with lighting in the secure yard. The State Works Department have been approached. A contractor visited recently to take action.

An officer of State Works Department is currently estimating costs in relation to lighting for the Semi-secure and Secure yard.

6. One car does have a mobile phone. This does not assist greatly with searches. A proposal has been put to State Works Department for communication equipment for use in each of the cars and in the semi secure yard and visitors' area. This is the same equipment used by Westbrook. Westbrook are currently looking to change to CITEC equipment, but this has been tested and found unsatisfactory for John Oxley Youth Centre. It may be possible for J.O.Y.C. to take over some of Westbrook Youth Centre's "electrophone" equipment. This is to be raised with State Works Department at the next meeting. Some extra equipment e.g., a base station etc. would still need to be installed.

7. Triple rooms do have only limited use. They are difficult to manage. The wings could be modified to convert the current youth worker's office into a single bedroom, and the triple room into a youth worker's office plus wing laundry. This would reduce capacity to 24.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL
(COMMUNITY AND YOUTH SUPPORT)

As discussed, could you please prepare the following:
(1) Minutes of Response for a proposed investigation at John Oxley Youth Centre.
(2) Letter from Minister to Gillespie dated 23/10/89 based on the information in this report & cover during that interview to have an investigation.

The triple rooms cannot be converted to two single rooms because of plumbing limitations for an extra toilet. The triple rooms have been frequently used in recent months because of high numbers. Children do not last there long before having to be moved. Pressure of numbers does prevent limiting to 24 at this time.

8. Gates operated electronically from within the building would be advantageous at night. Intruders do enter the premises in cars and on foot at night. The front area does pose some (only..) risk to staff. The cost of gates is unknown. This is to be discussed with State Works Department at the next meeting.

In relation to security of staff going to their cars at change of shift, the time period concerned is 20 to 30 minutes. It does not seem to be a priority issue to the manager. It may be possible to develop extra procedures to enhance security at this time, particularly if electric gates can be installed.

9. The 1989 Crawford Review into effectiveness and efficiency did not recommend an increase in staff levels.
10. Some inservice training is carried out in work time but the amount is small. The course is however voluntary, and is part of the award. It is not seen as appropriate to change.
11. The proposal for basic training was for youth workers. Other categories of staff can be taken off line for training. This has been done only to a small degree so far. Training for 'other categories of staff' will be enhanced. This is planned to occur when Principal Youth Worker Lynne Draper returns from recreation leave.
12. I strongly endorse the need for basic training. The limitation on this is the money required to employ extra staff while new staff are given basic training before the commencement of their duty. It is considered that a good basic training program may well defuse concerns in a number of others areas. This is judged to be the issue of greatest concern to staff.

Adv. the Minister

There will be a basic training program later this financial year. The proposal is being developed now to overcome the main hold-up - replacement staff for those being trained during working hours. The cost is quite high.

Alan
19/10/89