

REPORT ON OUTING TO LOWER PORTALS -24/5/

by Karen Hersiades

QCPCI

3 E

The group comprised:

Date: 7.12.2012

5 Adults

- Karen Hersiades (Teacher in Charge)
- Bob O'Hanley (Teacher)
- Gordon Cooper (Teacher)
- Jeff Hanitzky (Psychologist)
- Sarah Moynihan (Art Worker)

Exhibit number: 240

7 Young People

Annette Harding



The group arrived at the site by way of two vehicles and proceeded to walk 3.7 kilometres to the Lower Portals.

The group soon became widely spaced apart and I was with the last group which included Sarah, [redacted] and [redacted]. Half way in the journey the first group waited for us. We set off again, the group again quickly separated into two widely spaced groups, and I was in the last group with Sarah, Jeff, [redacted] and [redacted].

On near arrival at the portals my group took an incorrect turn and it was thirty five minutes before we re-joined with the first group at the Portals.

On arrival at the Lower Portals I stayed with my group and went down to the lower pool. The first group had already done this activity and had had lunch.

My group returned to the site chosen for lunch. At this stage the first group were splashing around in the rocks nearby. [redacted] had gone to join them.

I sat down to have lunch near Gordon and [redacted]. It was while I was organising lunch for my group that the young people, [redacted], [redacted], Annette and [redacted] proceeded up a near-by mountain. I was unaware of their departure.

Five to ten minutes passed. I don't know where Bob was but he came over and took [redacted] to the lower pool. Jeff alerted me that he could not see or hear the children. Jeff and Gordon raced up the mountain and I proceeded to the lower pool to alert Bob who was with [redacted] to return as we may have had difficulties.

Five minutes later the children returned with Jeff and Gordon. The children spoke of the views, Annette did not appear at all stressed and I had no idea an incident had occurred during their 15 minutes absence.

I then organised the packing up of the rucksacks while Jeff was supervising the children in the water. [redacted] and Annette remained in my company along with Sarah and Gordon.

We commenced our return to the vehicles. Once again the group separated and was widely spaced. I was in the last group with Sarah, [redacted] and [redacted].

The children were tired and difficult to keep moving. The groups changed formation and I arrived at the vehicles with Sarah, [redacted] and Annette. [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted] were at the toilet. I then had problems with [redacted] and after sorting these out learned from Jeff that an incident may have occurred at the Portals when the children were absent from us. I told Jeff that he must report his fears to the Manager on our return.

At this time during our discussion the boys were sneaking from the toilet into the bush. The other children, Annette, [redacted] and [redacted] were in or near the station wagon.

Bob went to see why the boys were taking so long and reported that the children had disappeared.

Jeff and I immediately went a short way into the bush to call them. We could hear the boys, asked them to come back and asked them to go no further into the bush. We did not chase them as we feared they would go even further. We were in a rainforest area, it was getting dark and cold and I thought there was a very real danger of them becoming lost.

I remained there trying to establish some communication with the boys while Jeff and Sarah organised Bob and Gordon and the three remaining young people to report the absconding to the police and John Oxley Youth Centre.

Jeff retraced the track to the Portals in case the boys had gone there in the hope of acquiring a work vehicle which they had seen.

I waited with Sarah at the vehicle site until Bob and Gordon returned. They told us that the police had been notified and were on their way. They had also rung the deputy Manager at John Oxley Youth Centre and she was aware of the absconding. I instructed Bob and Gordon to return to John Oxley Youth Centre with the three remaining young people.

The police arrived and Sarah and I gave him a description of the boys. He then left to search the local area.

Jeff returned and approximately 1 1/2 hours after the police departure the policeman arrived with the four absconders.

Jeff, Sarah and I transferred the children into the mini-bus and transported them back to John Oxley Youth Centre.

On arrival at the Centre I ensured that the boys were admitted through the secure admissions area into a further secured area. At this point the boys became unco-operative, boisterous and a management problem. We contacted the Senior Youth Worker, Trevor Cox who then phoned for a Youth Worker, Eric Kaltner to come down to offer further assistance.

At this time Jeff rang the Manager, Peter Coyne, at his home and informed him that we had had a difficult outing and that the boys were very unsettled. Peter immediately left his home in Ipswich and came into the Centre.

Upon arrival at the Centre Peter assessed the situation with the boys and then had a conference with Jeff, Sarah and I about the days events. We had discussions for approximately an hour and decided that a meeting would be called first thing next day. All the staff who were on the outing would then be present and we intended to review the outing in full.

*K.M. Merriades*

Karen Merriades (Teacher-in-Charge)