

Ashley Home for Boys Rebuilding Proposals, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Tasmania

1952 – 1952

Details

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works met in October 1952. Its recommendations included a new building and better training of staff at Ashley, and that boys requiring discipline be sent to an institution in New South Wales. The Committee also discussed plans to purchase Wybra Hall.

The members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works were the Chief Secretary, Mr AJ White, the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department, Mr CD Rose, the Chairman of the Ashley Advisory Committee, Mr EG Record, the Superintendent of Ashley Home for Boys, Mr NN Griffin, and the Director of Social Services, Mr WG Patterson. The Committee reported on 28 October 1952.

In May 1950, a fire destroyed the main building at Ashley. Since then, conditions had been 'difficult'. The Standing Committee was apparently appointed to make a decision about the replacement building. The Committee was also appointed to make a decision about better facilities for segregation which the new building was supposed to provide. The government had believed this to be necessary even before the fire.

The Committee followed two inquiries held in 1951. The first was the Inquiry into the Control and Management of Ashley Boys. The second was an inquiry by the Public Service Commissioner into allegations against Ashley made by its former recreation officer.

The Chief Architect, Mr CD Rose, had prepared a master plan so that improvements could be made gradually. The new building would have one storey. There would be two dormitories for 15 boys and a small annex of six single rooms for boys described as 'troublesome'. The annex would be self contained so these boys were kept apart from the others. A recreation room and a reading room would be at the back of the building. There were plans for an additional wing and a two room cottage for a member of staff in the future.

The Committee's report summarises each participant's contribution to the discussion.

MR AJ White said that there was no provision for segregation in Tasmania as in New South Wales where there were separate institutions for boys with different kinds of behaviour. White said that the government would ask parliament for \$11,000 to purchase Wybra Hall. It would be for boys committed to the Social Services Department for truancy from school but not for more serious offences. In the future, White hoped to set up cottage homes at Ashley where boys would be looked after by a married couple in a 'home atmosphere'.

The Director of Social Services, Mr WG Patterson, also favoured cottage homes. He said that at present, the 'scattered nature' of Ashley made supervision difficult. Patterson pointed out that the new plan provided for 30 boys whereas Ashley currently had 42. The old office had been destroyed in the fire so Ashley needed a new one. There were no facilities for the boys' visitors which gave a 'very bad impression'.

Patterson believed that the staff at Ashley should be trained. He planned to appoint a 'senior' man as an attendant on condition that he do an in-house training course similar to that conducted in institutions run by the New South Wales Department of Social Services. The attendant could then pass his training onto other staff at Ashley.

The Superintendent of Ashley, Mr NN Griffin, said that the main problem caused by the fire was that dormitories were 70 yards (about 70 metres) from the bathroom and toilets. The dormitories had cement floors which were very cold and because there was not enough accommodation, beds were too close together. Griffin also favoured staff training and cottage homes for well behaved boys. As in New South Wales, the cottages would be 'privileged'.

MR EG Record, Chairman of the Ashley Advisory Committee, pointed out that the difference between New South Wales and Tasmania was that New South Wales had a variety of homes for boys of different ages and 'types' whereas in Tasmania, these boys were all at Ashley.

The great difficulty in this state was that although we had the same problem on a smaller scale with that which existed in New South Wales we were trying to concentrate the whole of the work in one home which was an extremely difficult task.

Record favoured an arrangement with New South Wales which enabled 'the more difficult' boys to be sent to the old Tamworth Gaol which was for 'the very badly behaved boys'. According to White, it was 'like an army detention barrack and it was found that the discipline and treatment at this Home had a very good effect on this type of boy'. Record also supported effective training for the staff, and segregation. At Ashley, he believed that 'the atmosphere...was bad and, naturally was reflected in the conduct of the boys'.

The Committee made three recommendations:

- That, to allow for better segregation, a new building be erected at Ashley using the plans drawn up by the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department. In the future, cottages should also be built.
- That staff at Ashley receive training.
- That negotiations start with the New South Wales government so that 'incorrigible' boys could be sent to an institution in New South Wales at the Tasmanian government's expense.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Ashley Home for Boys \(1926 - 1999\)](#)
- [Wybra Hall \(1956 - 1988\)](#)

Resources

- Swain, Shurlee, [History of Australian inquiries reviewing institutions providing care for children](#), October 2014

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