

Committee of Inquiry into the State Farm and School for Boys, Deloraine, Tasmania

1925 – 1925

Details

The Committee of Inquiry into the State Farm and School for Boys, Deloraine, also known as the Boys' Training School, was held in 1925. Its recommendations included the classification of the boys and the appointment of a Matron.

The government appointed the Committee of Inquiry in 1925. Its members were, Charles Seager, Secretary of the Children of the State Department, Edmund Morris Miller, Chairman of the Mental Deficiency Board and Director of the State Psychological Clinic, George Brooks, Director of the Education Department, and Edith Waterworth, who represented the Women's Non-Party League. Their task was to inquire into the 'working' of the Boys' Training School also known as the State Farm and School for Boys. The Committee visited the School on 20 and 21 July 1925.

The recommendations of the Committee all emphasised the encouragement of boys rather than harsh discipline. In this way, the Committee agreed with the 1918 *Children of the State Act* which stated that:

as far as practicable every juvenile delinquent shall be treated, not as a criminal, but as a misdirected and misguided child, and one needing aid, encouragement, help, and assistance.

The Committee recommended that the boys be classified according to their 'age, and their mental, moral, social and educational qualifications'. The main classification would be between boys who were school age and those who were over school age. Twelve to 14 younger boys could be placed in the former Farm Manager's house.

The Committee recommended that well behaved boys become 'privileged'. These boys would be rewarded for their behaviour. They would also take on extra responsibilities.

One of the responsibilities was that of group leader. The two main dormitories would be divided into sub-groups. Boys in the rooms upstairs could form another group. These groups would be created according to the boys' behaviour. The better behaved groups would sit at 'higher' tables in the dining room. These groups would be placed under the leadership of a privileged boy. An instructor would guide the privileged boys.

Boys were to be encouraged to work out their own problems with guidance from the staff at the Home. This would help them learn to be responsible.

The underlying principle is that each boy should work out his own problem in his own way, and under guidance. Every effort should be made to get at the boy's point of view, and give him an opportunity to learn and to achieve what he can do for himself. Where everything is done for the boys, and where little responsibilities they might take are overlooked, their opportunities for social rehabilitation are consequently restricted.

Classification is essential for this purpose. The boys thus get nearer to each other, learn to appreciate each other's difficulties and assist one another.

Discipline at the Home was to be 'constructive'. The Committee recommended that:

The boys should be encouraged to analyse their faults and wrong doings, and make their own statements with a view of appreciating penalties when they are deserved. The boys' statements should be recorded so that they will realise that their mis-deeds impede release.

The Committee made recommendations about the boys' clothing and the furnishings of the Home. They suggested giving marks for cleanliness, clothing, and way that boys carried out their house and ground duties.

The Committee stated that: 'Environmental influences are paramount in redeeming character defects'. This led it to note that at the time the Children of the State Department took the State Farm over, it did not make alterations to the buildings so that they were suitable for the boys. The Committee suggested that these alterations should have been made. It recommended that alterations be carried out to the former Farm Manager's house so that it could accommodate younger boys. The Home should have a special room for a library and more books.

Sports and games were important because they could teach the boys about 'fair play'. The Committee placed a great emphasis on sport.

Sports are all important in the development of character. They teach the boys to play the game, to give and take, and conduce themselves towards good fellowship.

The Committee recommended the appointment of an Education Department teacher to oversee sports and games. It also recommended group singing.

In the evenings, the Committee suggested that boys should choose their own activities as long as they were 'harmless'. They could work on hobbies, listen to a story or play games. A Matron and Sub-matron should be appointed to supervise the younger boys and these evening activities.

The Committee agreed with plans at the Children of the State Department to extend the manual work of the school. The Committee praised the extension of teaching in dairying, boot making and repairing as well as ordinary farm work. They recommended that boys engaged in this work should still be regarded as being 'at school':

It is strongly recommended that the boys beyond school age who do these services should be regarded as much 'at school' as the boys who sit in the school room, for the whole school is one of character training and development. So far as schooling is concerned, there should be no distinction between any of the boys. All are in the school of life.

To reduce the stigma attached to the Home, the Committee recommended changing the name to Ashley Home for Boys.

The Committee recommended asking the Navy to remove its ban on boys from reformatories.

The Committee would point out that these boys are quite like other boys and that only a small percentage of them have misbehaved to such a degree as would disqualify them for naval service. Very few indeed of the lads ever reach the gaols, only such as have a marked record of delinquencies or in other words manifest psychopathic trends should be excluded.

According to a letter from the Frances Edwards of the Women's Non-Party League, the government had decided to appoint a Matron and Sub-Matron and to separate the younger boys from the older ones before it appointed the Committee. It did not intend to carry out any of the other recommendations of the Committee. This meant that the work of the Committee was 'fruitless'.

Edwards wanted the government to appoint an Advisory Committee:

Such a committee will ensure the interest of the general public in the Home, and will keep it more human than if it was solely conducted by government officials who have not the time to give the human side of such a home the necessary consideration.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Boys' Training School \(1884 - 1926\)](#)
The Committee of Inquiry was about the Boys' Training School, also known as the State Farm and School for Boys, Deloraine.
- [Education Department, State of Tasmania \(1885 - current\)](#)
The Director of the Education Department was a member of the Committee of Inquiry.
- [Children of the State Department, State of Tasmania \(1918 - 1934\)](#)
The Secretary of the Children of the State Department was a member of the Committee of Inquiry.
- [Mental Deficiency Board \(1922 - 1964\)](#)
The Chairman of the Mental Deficiency Board was a member of the Committee of Inquiry.
- [State Psychological Clinic \(1922 - 1964\)](#)
The Chairman of the State Psychological Clinic was a member of the Committee of Inquiry.

Related Archival Items

- [General Correspondence-21-38, Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the State Farm and School for Boys, Deloraine \(1925\)](#)

Resources

- Swain, Shurlee, [History of Australian inquiries reviewing institutions providing care for children](#), October 2014
 - Parry, Naomi, ['Such a longing': black and white children in welfare in New South Wales and Tasmania, 1880-1940](#), 2007
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