

Mr. Hicks was not enamoured of the present Principal, a Mr. Woods, who incidentally apparently does not see eye to eye with the Headmaster at the Melong State School regarding educational arrangements. Mr. Hicks said he believed Mr. Woods was an Englishman and he certainly did not have an Australian outlook.

Mr. Hicks said he did not want to give the impression that conditions at Melong were bad; it was just that they were not up to the standard at other Homes and in Child Welfare establishments. It did not matter so much about the facilities which were not the best, but the "cottage system" was not being carried out properly.

He indicated that a Mr. Henry, Chairman of Fairbridge Society, Sydney, was amiable but resented anything that may be regarded as "butting in". Inspections of the Melong Home had in the main been "conducted tours".

Mr. Metcalfe explained that in all other States inspections of the Homes of voluntary organisations regularly took place. Fairbridge Pinjarra was inspected quite often. There had been no repercussions of any moment.

Mr. Hicks and Mr. Challoner then mentioned that Child Welfare arrangements in New South Wales were fundamentally different from every other State in so far as that no State wards were placed out with voluntary Homes or foster homes. They were all cared for in Child Welfare Department "cottage home" establishments.

The Guardianship Act regulations laid it down that the duties and obligations of a custodian (i.e. representative of a voluntary organisation or private person) would be "of the like kind to those of a person in relation to a child who is committed to his care, or of whom he becomes the guardian or foster parent, in pursuance of the Child Welfare laws of the State in which the custodian is resident". (Reg. 6(2)). In all States, except N.S.W., Mr. Hicks said, this would be sufficient as under other State Child Welfare laws inspections were permitted of all voluntary Homes who have a responsibility to take State wards and are governmentally subsidised for this purpose.

It was pointed out to Mr. Hicks that under Regulation 4 he was given all powers which he possessed under his State laws covering State wards and it was agreed that on this basis he possibly had powers of inspection but they were not particularly adequate he thought to back up a full unhindered external and internal examination of an all-migrant home like those controlled by Fairbridge and Bernardos.

Note: Admittedly N.S.W. has its difficulties as compared to other States on this matter particularly as Bernardos and Fairbridge were in operation before the Guardianship Act was ever thought of and in addition both have powerful support both in N.S.W. and in London. In other States almost all of the Institutions are new in the field since the war and have been approved by Commonwealth, State, Child Welfare Departments and the United Kingdom authorities. Fairbridge, Melong, Pinjarra; Dr. Bernardos Homes and Lady Northcote Farm School, Vic., have been tacitly recognised by all authorities without the usual full joint report. It is my view, however, that confronted with a discreet request by the Commonwealth for the Minister's delegate to make a comprehensive report the Fairbridge Society would see that it is in their interest to allow the inspections. If the Commonwealth and State were not satisfied Fairbridge could be told just as Roman Catholic Homes in New South Wales and in Western Australia have been told, that no more children would be available until improvements were effected.

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