

Select Committee Inquiry into Ashley Home for Boys, Tasmania

1962 – 1963

Details

The Select Committee Inquiry into Ashley Home for Boys was appointed on 18 October 1962 and again on 20 March 1963. It investigated the rehabilitation, discipline, work, and recreation of the boys at Ashley as well as its staffing. The Select Committee reported in 1963.

The Select Committee seems to have been prompted by public concerns about the number of escapes from Ashley. Charles Best, the Member of the Legislative Council for Meander, which included Deloraine, instigated the Inquiry. The government, led by the Chief Secretary, James Connolly, opposed it, claiming that it was unnecessary because a new secure unit was already planned.

The Select Committee investigated the following issues:

- The efficiency of the Social Welfare Department's administration of Ashley. This included the extent to which the Department could be blamed for the escapes.
- Whether the management of the Home and methods of discipline led to the rehabilitation of boys.
- Whether there was enough 'control' and discipline.
- The need for more segregation.
- The effectiveness of rehabilitation.
- The need for special training of the staff.
- The adequacy of security measures.
- Whether the government should pay compensation for damage caused by boys absconding from Ashley.
- The extent to which the press's 'over dramatisation' of escapes encouraged them.

The Select Committee made nine recommendations. They were:

- That a new Detention Centre for older, more difficult to manage, boys should not be constructed at Ashley but near Risdon Prison. It would provide a 'short highly disciplined' rehabilitation program. This Centre was never built and some of these boys continued to be sent to Risdon Prison or Lachlan Park which had a secure area.
- That the Social Welfare Department work more closely with the Health Department's Mental Hygiene section to provide the services of a psychiatrist and psychologist at Ashley and the new Detention Centre.
- That a welfare officer follow up boys who had been discharged from Ashley. If there were not enough welfare officers, more should be appointed.
- To reduce the amount of administrative work done by Housemasters and other staff at Ashley, a typist clerk should be appointed.
- That members of staff at Ashley receive special training, possibly by seconding them to similar mainland institutions.
- That management should establish an orchard, extend the kitchen garden, and begin grazing sheep and cattle. This was to provide training for the boys and make the Home more self sufficient.
- That staff stop supplying the boys with tobacco and cigarettes. It should be forbidden for staff to smoke while on duty.
- That 'mature' women be appointed as matrons or cottage mothers.

- That the boys earn the same wages as inmates of Risdon Prison and that a proportion of them be saved to give the boys when they left Ashley.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Social Welfare Department, State of Tasmania \(1961 - 1983\)](#)
- [Ashley Home for Boys \(1926 - 1999\)](#)
- [Lachlan Park Hospital \(1937 - 1968\)](#)
- [Risdon Prison \(1960 - current\)](#)

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