

J. Moran

**SECOND
ANNUAL
REPORT
1965**

**CANBERRA - MONARO DISTRICT
CIVIL REHABILITATION
COMMITTEE**

CANBERRA- MONARO DISTRICT
CIVIL REHABILITATION COMMITTEE

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Rev.D.G. Johnson, Church of England

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PAROLE OFFICERS

Mr. Ken Lukes and Mr. Graham Dare

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Miss Morris, Social Worker, Department of Interior
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Mrs. Purcell, Catholic Womens League
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Mr. D. Young, Church of Christ
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The Secretary, Apex Club

CANBERRA-MONARO DISTRICT CIVIL REHABILITATION COMMITTEE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES TO WORK FOR THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:-

1. To provide for released prisoners, the opportunity of personal rehabilitation through material help and counselling. To ensure that any released prisoner, prepared to live a socially acceptable life, will have the chance of achieving this ideal.
2. To co-operate with and extend the field work of the Parole Officers of the Department of Prisons in assistance to and supervision of prisoners released on license
3. To work for better community understanding in the problems associated with the rehabilitation of prisoners.
4. To assist the dependents of prisoners through material help and advice.

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

Two full years have elapsed since the establishment of the Canberra/Monaro District Civil Rehabilitation Committee, but because of the nature of the work undertaken by this Committee, very little is known of its work, outside the members themselves. It is therefore a great pleasure to be able to pass on to you, persons with sufficient interest in this type of community service to attend a meeting such as this, our Annual Report.

May I say at the outset, that we do not propose to present a series of statistics as these would not suggest a true picture of the Committees work. Rather we would like to share with you some of the types of activity which go to make up rehabilitation.

Our regular monthly meeting takes the form of meetings with the Parole Officers of the N.S.W. Department of Prisons, who present cases for consideration of members. This means that there is a selection of cases brought to the notice of the Committee, and as a general rule, those who appear to have the better prospect of rehabilitation are chosen. From this initial discussion, members gain information about the person concerned, his plans and ambitions, and his qualifications to follow a particular line of employment. In many cases the attitude of relatives and families remains a mystery at this stage and during the year the experience of the Committee has shown that a visit to the home by a Committee member is the most effective way of removing doubts or confirming hopes expressed in earlier interviews. An outcome of visits to the home has been that a most acceptable climate has been established which has helped bridge the gap which can become almost insurmountable during the period of imprisonment.

A natural extension of such a visit to the home is for the same Committee member to visit the institution where the prisoner is completing his sentence. Unfortunately there are some cases where this step is prohibited owing to the distance involved, but it would seem true to say that the majority of cases are referred from the Goulburn Training Centre. Some indication of the sincerity and devoted service given by members of the Committee I believe, can be found in the number of such visits made during the year.

The aspect of the Committee's work outlined so far, is we believe, of utmost importance as it establishes a link with both the prisoner and his family which in no small way assists them both to regain a measure of self-respect and a feeling of acceptance within the community from which they have been forcibly separated. One of the greatest obstacles in the path of an ex-prisoner returning to a normal life within the social structure of our community is a feeling of rejection and misunderstanding.

The logical development of the first contact, is to meet the prisoner at the time of his release, or at least see him within hours of his arrival in the city. It is at this point that practical assistance becomes of paramount importance, and although we are all agreed that financial assistance is by no means the sole aim of the Committee, it does have a very practical and essential part to play. In many cases we find that the person has literally nothing with which to maintain himself in the immediate post-release period and even though employment is found almost immediately, this does not solve the problem of maintenance until pay day. With the invaluable assistance of a few generous donors, and in particular the Service Clubs of Canberra and Queanbeyan, the Committee has been able to meet in a careful way some of these needs. I would like at this point to offer the sincere thanks of the Committee to those persons and organisations who have responded to our pleas for assistance. Details of donations will be found in the Treasurers Report published with this Report.

Now that the subject of our work has returned to society and is settled in a job, it might well be thought that our work has ended. However, this is far from true as in many cases we find that there are pressures exerted on the individual by reason of their recent experiences which the average citizen never faces. It may be that former associations are renewed with all the attendant dangers, or that the particular employment proves unsatisfactory and it is in this continuing counselling situation that the Committee member finds his relationship with the person of great value.

We would not want anyone to assume from what has already been said that every case referred to C.R.C. becomes a shining success story. Far from it, and indeed there are a number of persons who were assisted by the Committee, who today are making their own contribution to the prison population. However, it would be most unwise to say that this constitutes a failure for it may well be that the help and assistance they received has in some measure created a climate which at the next and subsequent attempts will result in an acceptable member of society taking his place in the community.

Employment.

The response to the representations made by Committee members to employers throughout the district has been most encouraging, and we are deeply indebted to employers, who for obvious reason must remain anonymous, who have not only made positions available but also taken positive steps to help and encourage the person involved. However, there still remains a real need for Community education on this subject. There are still some, who like the ostrich, bury their heads in the sand and pretend that no such problem exists because they themselves are not directly involved, and there are even some, who would by their actions, continue to exact punishment on the offender, despite the fact that he has paid the penalty imposed by society.

In response to this situation, the Committee has been pleased to accept invitations for a member to address organisations on the whole matter of Rehabilitation of released prisoners and in this way help to dispel many of the misconceptions popularly held. We would welcome more invitations of this nature.

I stated earlier in this report, that I did not intend to quote statistics. However, it may be of interest to know that in the period January-December 1964, 25 cases were referred by Parole Officers and a further 6 from other sources. This by no means represents the number of persons eligible to be referred, but rather the number the Committee felt they were able to assist. With more resources available we are confident that the activities of the Committee in the future will expand.

It would be most unjust if in a report such as this we omitted to pay tribute to the many who have assisted our work during the year. In particular, the Social Welfare Branch of the Department of the Interior, who have provided clerical assistance and wonderful co-operation at all times and other Government Departments and Agencies, who from time to time we have approached for assistance. We are deeply indebted to Dr. Hipsley, Director of the Institute of Anatomy for the use of the Library each month for our meetings and to our many friends who both individually and as members of organisations have provided the only financial assistance so far received. On behalf of the Committee and I believe, those whom we have tried to help, may I offer a sincere, thank you.

In conclusion, as President for this year I offer my thanks to all members of the Committee for their loyal and devoted service in this little publicised, but vitally important work.

Dennis G. Johnson.

President.

