



All Communications to be addressed to The Secretary.

In reply please quote this Number: **1077 JB**

Hospitals Board

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK,
BUNDABERG BASE HOSPITAL,
BUNDABERG. 4670.

4th February, 1972.

Mr. G. Zerk,
Department of Childrens Service,
78 Mary Street,
BRISBANE. 4000.

Dear Graham,

When I made my 'phone call to you yesterday I did so merely to clarify the situation re one patient, having been asked to do so by the sister in charge of the maternity section of the hospital.

Like Topsy, the situation "grewed". Your question re who takes the consents made me realize I would, in the near future, when I start doing this, be really involved. Hence my interest in the whole situation.

I was only half involved when our Secretary was having "words" with the Director - I think it was last year, but my impression was that the Secretary did not consider the words "agreement" to be applicable - "strongly pressured" would probably be more appropriate in his view. The reason for my lack of interest was that it seemed to me that his objection to the present procedure was based on costs, and that is his problem.

My present concern, and this has grown since your 'phone call and following more discussion with the sister-in-charge, is with the effect of the present procedure on the patients, and what seems to me to be an untenable position in which the hospital staff who deal with the patient are placed.

The sister-in-charge tells me that not infrequently it takes 14 days to get V.D.R.L. results back from Brisbane. That means a patient, according to the "gentlemans' agreement" is expected to remain in hospital a week past the time when she expects to sign the papers.

Since the whole procedure of having to give up their babies is an exceedingly painful one for many of these immature women their anguish, and I mean, anguish → aggression, which is usually vented against the staff.

What come back at the patient have the staff got under the present agreement?

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What right have they to tell the woman she has to stay in hospital until she signs the papers but she cannot sign them until the V.D.R.L. results come back?

Equally, what right (and I hope you realize I am not being aggressive when I use the word) has the Department of Childrens Service to put us in the position of doing so? You could answer - we just won't take the baby and then you are stuck with it. True - but if you do, are you morally right?

If you can show me how to answer these women so that they feel obliged to stay in hospital I will be delighted.

I have not said anything of this to the Secretary at this stage as I prefer to do things in a quiet reasonable manner. As I recall the wording of one of the Director's letters was not the most tactful, and I do not want to arouse further anger unnecessarily.

I hope this reaches you before you write to me.

Yours sincerely,

