

Shreddergate scandal

The death-threat letters . . .

Some questions that arise

SERIOUS questions arise about the death-threat letters referred to on page one of this newspaper and reproduced on this page.

The matter they refer to, a claim that a 15-year-old girl in custody was taken by a group of staff members of the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre (most of whom were not security officers) in April 1991 to the Wivenhoe Dam and raped by one of them in the water, was covered extensively in our last edition (see link at www.justiceproject.net).

Significantly, April 1991 was 15 months after an inquiry into the John Oxley centre was abruptly halted by the new Goss government, and all the evidence it had gathered, shredded.

We now know that evidence embraced the abuse of children in the custody of the state.

And April 1991 was just a few months after the manager of the centre at the time of the inquiry was paid (illegally) almost \$30,000 dollars he was not entitled to and required to sign an agreement that he would never talk about what had happened in the centre while he was there.

As well, the events of April 1991 mirrored almost exactly what had happened some time earlier when another girl was taken to remote locations in the countryside and raped by several male inmates of the John Oxley Centre.

Clearly, shutting down the inquiry and destroying everything it had gathered meant that business at John Oxley was able to go on as normal.

Although we have been assured over the years that if there was anything wrong it was fixed when the management at the time of the aborted Heiner inquiry was replaced.

Those assurances have now been utterly trashed.

So back to the questions ... to the Premier, to the Minister for Child Safety or to his new Director-General, or to anyone else prepared to answer them for us.

Who approved the trip to the Wivenhoe Dam and the make-up of the group of staff involved?

How many other such trips took place from that centre?

Who will now answer the question we have been asking for months but have been ignored

... where was the 17-year-old girl referred to by former Minister Sherrin in the media in 1989 raped on an outing from the centre but declined to lay charges against her assailant?

Was the girl Aboriginal or Caucasian?

When did this assault occur?

Were the files of any of the rape incidents referred to above provided to barristers Morris and Howard when they investigated the paper trail involved in the shredding matter in 1997?

In her report into the abuse of children in the care of state and church institutions, Royal Commissioner Leneen Forde says at page 168 that a staff member alleged a girl had been raped by a staff member on an outing, the girl did not proceed with the matter and the man resigned. Given the documentation that exists on the Wivenhoe Dam incident in the department's files, was this material made available to Mrs Forde?

If so, what did she do about it?

If the material was not provided to her, why not?

Given that the girl involved in the Wivenhoe Dam matter had been bashed on her return from the outing and her safety was being threatened (see the letters on this page), who approved her early release - several months early she says?

Given that the release took place in late April 1991, why was the Criminal Justice Commission not officially informed of the matter for three months?

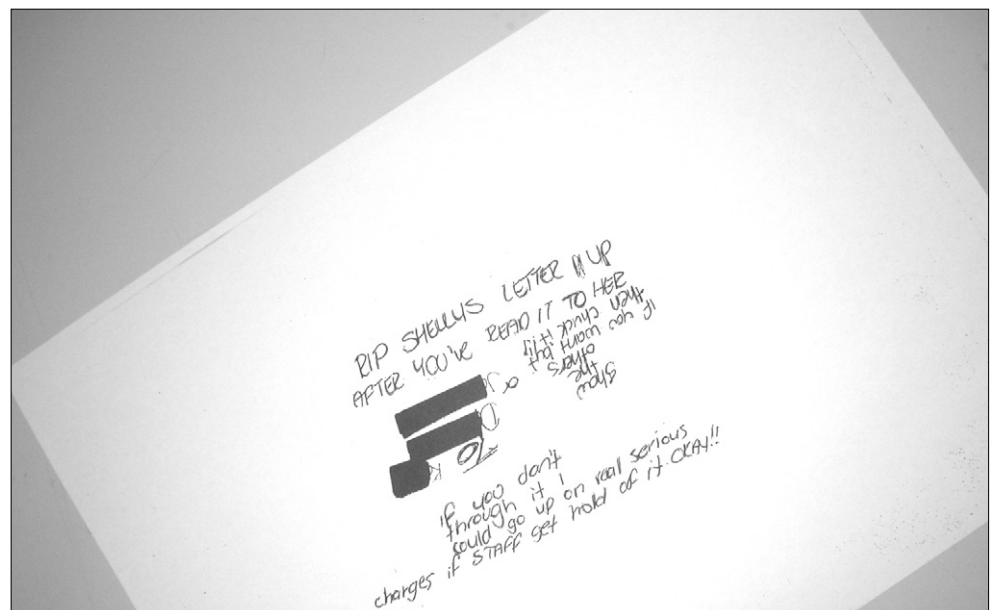
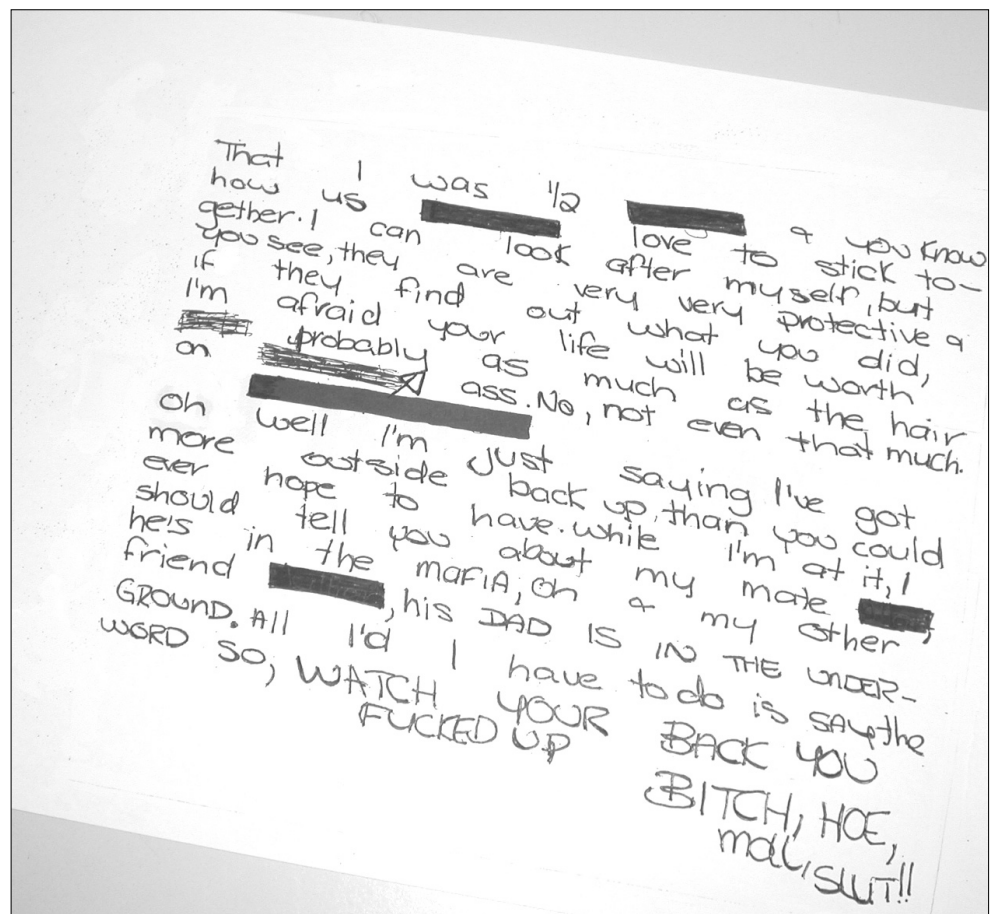
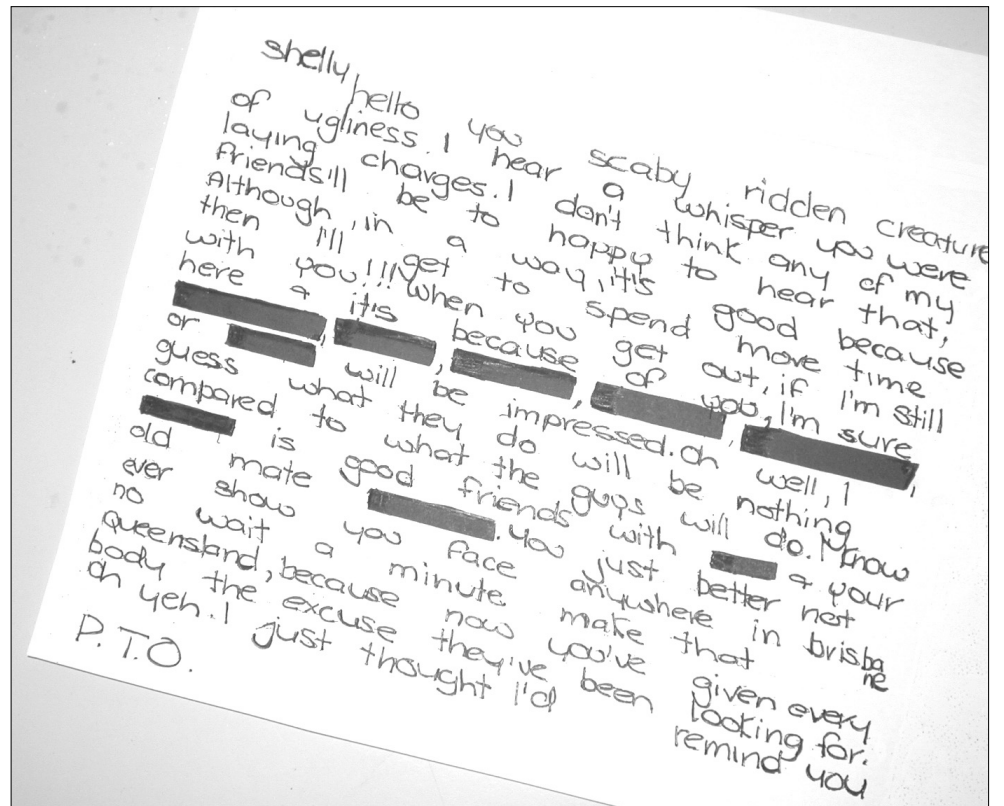
When the girl was released was she given any assistance or protection that might have allowed her to make a statement to the police and pursue charges against her alleged assailant confident that her safety could be assured?

If not, why not?

Could the letters reproduced on this page constitute a prima facie breach of s 140 of the Criminal Code (attempt to pervert the course of justice)?

The above is not necessarily an exhaustive list, but as a start we look forward to publishing specific responses to the above in our next edition.

Bruce Grundy
Editor



One of the letters that convinced a girl in custody not to talk to the police about what happened in the waters at Wivenhoe Dam.



Another John Oxley victim tells of rape

Indigenous Australia at 'crisis point'

ANOTHER former resident of Brisbane's notorious John Oxley Youth Detention Centre has told *The Independent Monthly* she was raped while held in custody in the centre - shortly after her fifteenth birthday in 1991.

The woman said the assault took place on an outing from the Centre at a well-known recreational water reserve and picnic spot an hour's drive from Brisbane.

She is the fourth woman to have made serious allegations of having been raped, either by John Oxley staff or male residents, during the late 1980s or early 1990s.

The woman said she was taken with a group of other residents and four staff to the picnic spot where members of the group went on a



Georgina Robinson

INDIGENOUS affairs in Australia were at "crisis point" following the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), a prominent indigenous lawyer and academic law said.

"We've just lost a national advocacy body and there is no clear indication from government on what sort of arrangements are going to replace it," University of Technology (Sydney) Professor of Law and Indigenous Studies Larissa Behrendt said.

Professor Behrendt also criticised the federal Opposition for acting too quickly on the future of ATSIC and not having a clear idea of its direction on indigenous affairs.

"We are definitely at a crisis point in indigenous affairs," Professor Behrendt said.

She said Labor leader Mark Latham's call for ATSIC to be scrapped back in March was