

In the late eighties I was contacted by several of the boys I had nursed in the Adolescent Unit. I was supportive and had intermitent contact for a number of years. In 1991 I received the letters below:

To: bristab@wave.co.nz

Subject: From Brent Evitt about Mental Health in New Zealand in the 1970's

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=us-ascii Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit

X-UIDL: 4581f8c44b636c58b526fdd9278b34e9 .

Grant Cameron, 18:05 2/03/99 +13, From Brent Evitt

Brian,

My name is Brent Evitt and I am an American attorney at law working as a law clerk here in New Zealand for Grant Cameron Associates. I have been in New Zealand for one year (exactly, tomorrow) .I feel fortunate that this law firm has given me a chance to use my legal skills, but my first case has been an unbelievable one.

My primary responsibility here is the Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit case. I am sure you have been following it in the media recently. Our firm was first approached a couple of years ago by a guy who wanted to tell us about Lake Alice. We had trouble believing his story, but we did some checking and found another lawyer on the North Island who had the same thing happening in his office. We now have more than 100 clients who have told us about their experiences there between 1970 and 1977.

We now have interviewed 106 former Lake Alice children, as well as various psychologists, doctors, nurses, etc. The story is a fascinating one, and we have been discussing a possible arbitration with the Crown for the past year. At this point, it appears that the Crown has adopted the attitude that they would prefer to wait us out and bog us down with years of legal wrangling until we finally give up.

I won't bore you with the legal details here, and I'll try to be honest and direct. We are arguing that our clients were mistreated by the system that was in place at Lake Alice. The government should have done better to look after them, and we think the government should now be willing to say "we're sorry" and help them get over their lifelong Lake Alice fears and health issues.

There are individuals who we blame for what happened. We believe that the medical professionals (doctors, psychiatrists, heads of the department of health) should have stepped in to create an environment where this could not happen. These people failed to do so. We also believe there were nurses who abused the children directly. Our investigation shows that you are NOT one of these nurses, which is why I could even think of contacting you.

Our clients remember you very well, as a very kind but overwhelmed Englishman thrown into the Lake Alice mess and expected to survive. Many mention you specifically as someone who tried to help them. The staff members we have interviewed (teachers and visiting psychologists), also remember you with positive comments .

OK- I will get to my final point. We are having a very difficult time figuring out the fact from the legend in the Lake Alice case. We desperately need an adult with first hand knowledge of the Unit who is not in fear of what will happen if they help us. I want you to be the person who will help us understand it all.

I would like to speak with you and learn from your memories of Lake

Alice. Then we will have a better idea of what legal hurdles we face. This case will likely land in Court, and it is going to be a public spectacle before all is said and done. That does not mean that we expect you to be in the center of the debate in any way. I would welcome your participation in any capacity. -

If you would prefer that any communications between us be kept confidential, I am sure we would be willing to do that. If you want to be our lead witness, we can do that to...

Would you mind dropping me a note back letting me know how you feel about these matters?

I have hesitated to contact you for some time, because most people are very annoyed to have their lives disrupted by something they experienced 25 year's ago. But, we need your help on behalf of our clients .

Thanks,

Brent Evitt

Grant Cameron, 2/03/99 , From Brent Evitt about Mental Health 70s.

To grant.cameron@extra. 5/03/99

From: brian stabb <bristab@wave.co.nz>

:

Dear Brent,

I have indeed followed the Lake Alice affair in the media and your communication is not unexpected. I appreciate your confidence and expect that in your thoroughness to investigate those involved you have become aware of my recent professional history.

It is perhaps best that I respond to you with statements of my position.

Myself and my family suffered incalculably as a result of me putting myself on the line for my professional beliefs, **I will never consciously put us at such risk again.**

I believe that the very worse outcome for all would be a protracted and public courtcase. I see this as a totally negative outcome. Should this eventuate I would not at this time choose to participate. You would need to convince me otherwise.

I will meet with you and tell you my story. Such a meeting must be informal, unrecorded, and confidential. It is my hope that my personal testimony will be so credible and so damning, as to convince those at ministerial level that negotiated settlement is their only viable option.

I await your response,

Regards ~

Organization: Grant Cameron Associates

To: brian stabb <bristab@wave.co.nz>

Subject: From Brent Evitt @ Grant Cameron Associates

Date: 9-3-99

Dear Brian,

I do appreciate the situation you are in, and I can understand that you wish to shield your family.

You do understand our plan very well -we want to blast the Crown with evidence that is so damning and credible that they will be left with no other option but to deal with us out of court.

We think that is the most private and most efficient resolution to the Lake Alice case. It will allow us to shield our clients from even further damage when they deal with court proceedings.

I would like to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss your memories. I understand that this meeting will be confidential, unrecorded and informal. We just appreciate the opportunity to talk to you. You can imagine how hard it is to piece together the Lake Alice story so many years after it happened. Most of the staff members I talk to are afraid that we are trying to blame them for what happened. That has never been the case.

Could you let me know when would be a good time to meet? We may be up on the North Island next week sometime, and could easily meet you at your ` convenience.

Thanks for writing. I look forward to meeting with you!

Brent Evitt

For Attention of Grant Cameron:

March 01

Dear Grant,

18 months ago we spoke at some length about my experiences at Lake Alice. At that time the crown had rejected a settlement solution and were playing hardball. Recently I was visited by a private investigator representing the Crown and I related my truth as I have to you. I gather from him that the Crown is now more acknowledging of the situation, and that it is likely that a process of settlement will ensue .I am pleased that sanity has prevailed and that efforts will be made to avoid the ludicrous prospect of protracted legal proceedings. As I recall this goal was the common ground upon which our meeting was based.

During my meeting with the P.I. he presented for my perusal a list of those people seeking compensation. A number were unknown to me, either being pre-1974, or post-1976, or they had simply slipped from memory over the years. (although my time in the Adolescent Unit was very significant in terms of my personal and professional development, and I believe there are few I would have completely forgotten, if any.)

There are several things that have preyed upon my mind since I viewed that list. I doubt that there is any action I can take to express these concerns other than to savour the cathartic experience of passing them on to you!

There are a number of names on the list who I believe have genuine grievances about aspects of the care they received at Lake Alice.

There are a number of names on the list whose claims are absurd. I have clear memories of the relationships they had with myself and other staff, along with the therapeutic programme they were part of. They received a high standard of care, particularly in the context of those times and circumstances in the mid-seventies. However I can understand the allure of mega bucks, and I suppose that this is to be expected.

What really does surprise me is the notable absence of some names. Names of people I know have genuine grievances, but who have chosen not to revisit that part of their lives despite the potential rewards.

I would be reassured to know that a settlement process will acknowledge some are more deserving than others. I don't believe that an injustice can be rectified by creating another injustice. I don't expect a written response to this communication but if at sometime you could offer me a little peace of mind with a phone call I'd appreciate it

Regards

Brian Stabb

