

# Shock Therapy Case Inquiry

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Wellington

The Minister of Social Welfare, Mr Walker, announced yesterday that a magisterial inquiry would be held into the case of a 13-year-old Niuean boy who was given shock treatment at Lake Alice Hospital.

He said the inquiry was being made at the request of the Department of Social Welfare because of the serious allegations made about the department's competence to be entrusted with the care and protection of children. Mr Walker expressed his full confidence in the department.

The magisterial inquiry would have access to the full medical records of the boy concerned.

The committee's terms of reference will probably be announced today.

## Inquiry Welcomed

The announcement of the inquiry was welcomed yesterday by a spokesman for the group that first brought the

case to light, writes the Herald medical correspondent.

Dr Oliver Sutherland, spokesman for the Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination, said the holding of an inquiry seemed to indicate a change of heart by the Minister of Social Welfare, Mr Walker.

"This is a surprising but welcome reversal of his earlier statement that there would be no inquiry," Dr Sutherland said. "We are satisfied with the announcement."

Mr Walker, in his statement from Wellington, said the cabinet had approved his request for an inquiry — but this was "in no way" in response to the request from Dr Sutherland's committee.

The New Zealand Psychological Association, the penal reform group Crimanon and the Auckland Council for Civil Liberties yesterday expressed concern to the Herald over the use of electric shock therapy on children at Lake Alice Hospital.

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