

St Augustine's Orphanage

1939 – 1966

Details

St Augustine's Orphanage, Highton, was established in 1939 by the Christian Brothers on a large farming property of approximately 180 acres located on South Valley Road, Highton, Geelong. It accommodated boys aged between 9 and 16. In 1966, the Orphanage changed its name to St Augustine's Boys' Home.

In 1939, following several years of campaigning to raise funds for the construction of the new building, St Augustine's Orphanage was opened on a large farming property on South Valley Road, Highton. With a capacity for 343 children the new St Augustine's was the largest children's home in Victoria at this time. Although the new buildings were ready to receive boys from St Augustine's Newtown orphanage in January 1939, construction of the site had not been fully completed at this stage. The boys were required to work to complete the landscaping on the site, including laying lawns and digging out a swimming pool.

With financial assistance from the Victorian government, St Augustine's purchased a property in Albert Park to provide hostel accommodation for young men working in Melbourne. The Young Catholic Workers Hostel (YCW) accommodated 20 boys and was opened by Archbishop Mannix in 1946.

St Augustine's also saw the need for a hostel in the Geelong area, to cater for apprentices leaving its junior Technical School, established in 1947. A property was leased in Skene St, Newtown for this purpose. The Victorian government would not subsidise the purchase of this property, and the hostel closed in 1954.

Leo Cahill was appointed Superior at St Augustine's in 1963. In his short time at St Augustine's (he left in 1967), the institution underwent significant change, as it followed the trend away from congregate care towards a more 'home-like' atmosphere.

When he took over at St Augustine's, Cahill appointed Betty Kelly to work as his secretary. In an interview, she recalled an early conversation with Cahill:

Leo Cahill said, 'Well, what's wrong with the place?' I said, 'There are no women here'. I felt that it was an unnatural atmosphere for trying to prepare boys for the outside world.

A former staff member, Terry O'Brien, reflected on Betty Kelly's impact on St Augustine's: 'Betty was a mother, and she came here and looked at St Augustine's through the eyes of a mother. She could see what was lacking'.

Gallery



St Augustine's Building



Boys at St Augustine's



St Augustine's Orphanage, boys on farm

More info

Chronology

- St Augustine's Boys' Orphanage (c. 1855 - 1939)
 - **St Augustine's Orphanage (1939 – 1966)**
 - St Augustine's Boys' Home (1966 - 1988)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Australasian Province of the Christian Brothers \(1885 - 1953\)](#)
- [St Patrick's Province of the Christian Brothers \(1953 - 1967\)](#)

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, Parliament of Australia \(2003 - 2005\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Young Catholic Workers' Hostel \(1946 - 1963\)](#)
Boys who left St Augustine's for employment in Melbourne were accommodated at the Hostel in Albert Park.

Resources

- Murray, Suellen, John Murphy, Elizabeth Branigan, Jenny Malone, *After the orphanage: life beyond the children's home*, 2009
- Prior, Tom, *A knockabout priest: the story of Father John Brosnan*, 1985
- Wheatley-Kenyon, Patrick, *In the shadow of a legend: an Aussie's search*, 2004
- Miller, Wayne, [Submission no 15 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Davis, William, [Submission no 227 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Sheedy, Anthony James, [Submission no 283 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Couch, Kevin Francis, [Submission no 454 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2004
- Walker, Charlie, *Charlie, the ratbag orphan : an orphan survivor in Australia*, 2010
- St Joseph's College, Geelong, [Our Heritage Buildings](#), 2020

- Johnson, Max, [*Transcript of Max Johnson's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations*](#), 15 February 2013
- Walker, Alan Charlie, [*Transcript of Alan Charlie Walker's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations*](#), 18 February 2013
- Komiazyk, Peter, [*Transcript of Peter Komiazyk's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations*](#), 1 March 2013
- Doyle, Gary and Mary, [*Transcript of Gary and Mary Doyle's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations*](#), 15 March 2013
- [*Heritage Display*](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013
- [*Orphanage Removal: St Augustine's Geelong*](#), The Age, 1 May 1936
- Savidis, Penny, [*Sex abuse Royal Commission urged to hold public meetings in regional Victoria*](#), Ryan Carlisle Thomas Lawyers, 2014
- [*Allan Luchetta interviewed by Carolyn Rasmussen in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\]*](#), 20 October 2010
- [*Charlie Walker interviewed by Rob Willis in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\]*](#), 23 February 2010

Records

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

Records held by other organisations

- [MacKillop Family Services Records, Victorian institutions \(1857 - current\)](#)
 - ['Closed' Agency and General Correspondence Files \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
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