

# Children's Welfare Department, State Government of Victoria

1924 – 1960

**Other Names:** • Children's Welfare Branch

## Details

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The Children's Welfare Department was established in 1924 to replace the Department for Neglected Children. The renaming of the Department signified the Government's awareness of the stigma which had become attached to the term 'neglected child', and did not reflect a change in functional responsibility or status. In 1928 the Department became responsible for the adoption of State wards, and for the regulation of the employment of children in street trading. In 1946, the Director of the Department assumed guardianship of migrants under twenty-one years of age who arrived in Victoria without parents or relatives. In 1954, the Department for Reformatory Schools was abolished, and the responsibility for juvenile offenders and reformatory schools (or juvenile schools) was assumed by the Children's Welfare Department.

The Children's Welfare Act 1924 (No.3351), assented to on 1 October 1924, was enacted to rename the Department for Neglected Children as the Children's Welfare Department. The renaming of the Department signified the Government's awareness of the stigma which had become attached to the term 'neglected child', and did not reflect a change in functional responsibility or status. It is evident that the Department for Reformatory Schools continued to be administered jointly with the Children's Welfare Department.

The Children's Welfare Department subsequently became responsible for the adoption of State wards when the Adoption Act 1928 (No.3605) introduced adoption as a legal transfer of parental rights, and became responsible for the regulation of the employment of children in street trading under the provisions of the Street Trading Act 1928.

By delegation from the Commonwealth Minister of Immigration and under the provisions of the Commonwealth Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946 to 1952, the Director of the Department assumed guardianship of migrants under twenty-one years of age who arrived in Victoria without parents or relatives.

The Children's Welfare Act 1954 (No.5817) provided for the abolition of the Department for Reformatory Schools. Thereafter, responsibility for juvenile offenders and reformatory schools (from 1954 known as juvenile schools) was assumed by the Children's Welfare Department.

The passage of the 1954 Children's Welfare Act led to significant reorganisation within the Department. The new legislation required additional staff at the Department, including a team of trained social workers, to undertake 'field work'.

Leonard Tierney wrote in 1963 that despite the new legislation and new organisational structure, the Department had 'inherited traditions embodied in the original 1864 Act', and little real change had been effected.

From c.1956, the Children's Welfare Department became increasingly involved in delivering institutional care to wards of the state. In December 1956, the Department opened Sutton Grange, a Home for school age and pre

school children. Sutton Grange was established to alleviate overcrowding at the Turana Reception Centre.

From 1956, the Department also established a number of state-run Family Group Homes.

## More info

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### Chronology

- Department for Neglected Children, State Government of Victoria (1901 - 1924)
  - **Children's Welfare Department, State Government of Victoria (1924 – 1960)**
    - Social Welfare Branch, State Government of Victoria (1960 - 1970)

### Related Entries

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- [Royal Park Depot \(c. 1880 - 1955\)](#)  
Date: 1924 - 1955
- [Turana \(1955 - 1993\)](#)  
Date: 1955 - 1960
- [Winlaton \(1956 - c. 1991\)](#)  
Date: 1953 - 1960
- [Family Group Home Program \(1956 - 2000s\)](#)  
Date: 1956 - 1960
- [Departmental Family Group Homes, Victoria \(1956 - 2000s\)](#)  
Date: 1956 - 1960
- [Sutton Grange \(1957 - 1977\)](#)  
Date: 1957 - 1960
- [Hillside Boys' Home \(1959 - c. 1985\)](#)  
Date: 1959 - 1960
- [Sunshine Boys' Hostel \(1959 - 1980s\)](#)  
Date: 1959 - 1960

#### Related Legislation

- [Children's Welfare Act 1924, Victoria \(1924 - 1929\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Act 1928, Victoria \(1929 - 1959\)](#)  
The Children's Welfare Department became responsible for the adoption of State wards at the enactment of the Adoption Act 1928.
- [Children's Welfare Act 1928, Victoria \(1929 - 1955\)](#)
- [Children's Welfare Act 1933, Victoria \(1933 - 1955\)](#)
- [Children's Welfare Act 1954, Victoria \(1955 - 1959\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Department for Reformatory Schools, State Government of Victoria \(1901 - 1954\)](#)  
In 1954 the Children's Welfare Department took over the functions of the Department of Reformatory Schools.

### Resources

- Markiewicz, Anne, [The Child Welfare System in Victoria: changing context and perspective 1945-1995](#), Children Australia, 1996
- [Annual Report of the Director: Children's Welfare Department](#), 1955 - 1960
- *Children's Welfare Department and Reformatory Schools. Report of the Secretary and Inspector.*, 1924 - 1954
- Kerr, Lawrence, [Children must have homes](#), The Argus, 4 September 1953
- Turner, Laurence, [Victoria's Unwanted Children - 7: Government Is Shirking Its Responsibility](#), The Herald, 1 November 1952

- Turner, Laurence, [\*Victoria's Unwanted Children - 8: Other States Shame Our Welfare Department \[title edited from original\]\*](#), The Herald, 3 November 1952
- Morris, Norval, [\*You neglect your children!\*](#), The Herald, 12 November 1952
- Victoria. Children's Welfare Department and Reformatory Schools, [\*Report of the Secretary / Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools\*](#), 1887 - 1895
- Musgrove, Nell, [\*Teresa Wardell: Gender, Catholicism and Social Welfare in Melbourne\*](#), Founders, Firsts and Feminists: Women Leaders in Twentieth-century Australia, 2011
- O'Neill, Cate, [\*"She had always been a difficult case": Jill's short, tragic life in Victoria's institutions, 1952-1955\*](#), Provenance, 2015
- [\*Donella Jaggs interviewed by Jill Barnard in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\]\*](#), 20 January 2011 - 18 February 2011

## Records

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### Records held by other organisations

- [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)
  - [Records of Victorian Adoptions \(c. 1908 - current\)](#)
  - [Welfare Photographs and Publications \(c. 1956 - c. 1960\)](#)
  - [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
  - [Departmental Children's Homes Files \(1955 - 1987\)](#)
  - [Child Migration Files \(1947? - 1971?\)](#)
  - [Children's Overseas Reception Board Files \(1940 - 1946\)](#)
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