

St John's Homes for Boys and Girls – Canterbury

1958 – c. 1997

Other Names: • St John's Home for Boys and Girls
• St John's Homes

Details

St John's Homes for Boys and Girls came into 1958. Previously, it had been called St John's Home for Boys. The name change reflected a decision by the Board of Management in 1956 that St John's was to move towards a cottage system of accommodation and could start to receive both boys and girls. The Homes were located on a large site in Balwyn Road, Canterbury. St John's Homes for Boys and Girls in Canterbury comprised the large "Shrublands" mansion, as well as a number of smaller cottages and hostels that were built on the site from the 1950s onwards. The organisation transitioned away from institutional models of 'care' towards cottages, hostels, family group homes and foster care. In addition to the Homes on the Canterbury site, St John's Homes for Boys and Girls Board of Management also provided out of home care at various sites throughout the eastern and northern suburbs of Melbourne. The organisation continued to be based at the Canterbury site after it ceased to provide institutional care. In 1997, St John's Homes for Boys and Girls became part of Anglicare Victoria.

The Board of Management had decided in 1956 that St John's was to move towards a cottage system of accommodation and could start to receive both boys and girls.

The institution's name change to St John's Homes for Boys and Girls marked the beginning of a period of expansion and deinstitutionalisation. A number of new, smaller buildings were built on the Canterbury site.

In addition to the cottages and hostels in Canterbury, the organisation started to establish other smaller Homes in the eastern suburbs.

A new, L-shaped wing had opened on the Shrublands site in 1955, comprising 4 cottage units under the same roof, accommodating 44 children.

In June 1959, construction work commenced on a new cottage at St John's Homes on the property at 16 Balwyn Road, Canterbury. Reseigh describes the cottage as a "typical suburban house standing in its own grounds". This was the first "family cottage" established by St John's. (Others were established in the suburbs of Doncaster East and Nunawading).

Another cottage on the Canterbury site followed in 1961.

St John's continued its association with Brighton Grammar, which organised Christmas trips to the CEBS camp at Frankston for boys and girls from the Homes. The annual report for 1971 stated that the annual camp had been organised for the past 26 years. "More than one hundred boys from St. John's and Brighton Grammar attend the Camp, which is made possible by the parents and boys of the Grammar School contributing to the Camp Fund during the year" (Annual report 1970/71).

From around the 1960s, the main building at Canterbury housed a hostel for working boys known as Shrublands. The 1962 annual report states that “when schooling is completed the majority go to private board, a number of the boys move into our Hostel for Working Boys, where they live under the supervision of the Hostel Superintendent, Mr Ray Willis and his wife, until they are socially adjusted and can earn sufficient to pay for private board”. Reseigh describes the Shrublands hostel as providing accommodation for “fourteen working boys” (p.9).

In 1965, a family welfare clinic opened on the Canterbury site, it was situated “in front of the old building” (Care, April 1965). The clinic provided support designed to keep families together “in times of domestic stress”.

The annual report for 1971 announced three new units on the Canterbury site, adding accommodation for 24 more children. The units were called Wilson, Reynolds and Butler.

In 1975 Princess Margaret visited St John's Homes for Boys and Girls in October. At that time, the matron was Miss Margaret Gibbs. The Princess met with house parents (Mr and Mrs T Middleton) and their 10 cottage children, and visited Birch Cottage (also known as the John & Clair Birch Cottage).

In 1978, St John's proposed the closure of 'Shrublands', the original building at Canterbury. It was converted into a 'resource unit' for the St John's organisation. In the 1990s, St John's used Shrublands as a Centre for Training and Development.

The 1979 annual report listed the following cottages operating on the Canterbury site: The John & Clair Birch Cottage and The F. Carter Read Cottage. There was also the Wilson pre-school unit, and 3 other units: Reynolds, Butler and Morgan.

Three family units continued to operate on the Canterbury campus. The 1982 annual report described Wilson, Reynolds and Butler as “pre-school units”. It would seem that at least one of the units, Reynolds, was closed around the end of 1982 but was later reopened in July 1983. According to the annual report, “Reynolds Unit for pre-school children on campus was reopened in July to provide care and shelter to another five, aged from one year to ten”.

The 1991 annual report stated that 2 of its “short term” units had been forced to close. St John's described the value of these units as “providing immediate, non stigmatising placements close to their schools and families for sibling groups of children”.

From 1978, St John's Home for Boys Board of Management continued to run a number of facilities in the eastern and northern suburbs of Melbourne, comprising family group homes and cottages, hostels, as well as foster care and preventive family services.

Gallery



St Johns Home for Boys, Canterbury

Description: [St Johns Home for Boys was located at 16 Balwyn Road Canterbury].



St Johns Home for Boys, Canterbury

Description: [St Johns Home for Boys was located at 16 Balwyn Road Canterbury but the property backs on to Rochester Road). 2 photographs : gelatin silver ; 8.8 x 12.5 cm. Approx.



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Opening of St John's cottage home, Nunawading

Description: This is a copy of an image of a cottage home run by St John's Home for Boys and Girls in the suburb of Nunawading.



Former St Martin's House, 20 Balwyn Road, Canterbury

Description: This is an image of St Martin's House, which was located next door to 'Shrublands', the mansion where St John's Home for Boys and Girls was located. The building where St Martin's House was located was demolished in the early 2000s.



Family Welfare Clinic, St John's Homes for Boys and Girls, Canterbury

Description: This is a copy of an image from the front page of a publication by St John's Home for Boys and Girls ("Care", Number 5, April 1965). It shows the newly opened family welfare clinic. The caption reads: "From a fund of 32950 pounds, contributed by St John's supporters two years ago, grew this attractive and highly functional family welfare clinic in Balwyn Rd, Canterbury. The clinic stands in front of the old building."

More info

Chronology

- St John's Home for Boys (c. 1924 - 1958)
 - **St John's Homes for Boys and Girls - Canterbury (1958 – c. 1997)**
 - Anglicare Victoria (1997 - current)

Related Entries

Run by

- [St John's Homes for Boys and Girls Board of Management \(1926 - 1997\)](#)

Related Events

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

Related Organisations

- [Citizens Welfare Service Hostel for Girls, Kew \(1964 - 1967\)](#)

In 1967, St John's Home for Boys and Girls leased the property that previously housed the Citizens Welfare Service Hostel for Girls, Kew.

Resources

- Da Costa-Adams, Robin, [History - St John's Boys' Home](#), Shrublands website, 2008
- Hutchinson, John, [Reminiscences of St. John's Home for Boys](#), 2004
- Heritage Victoria, [Shrublands - 16 Balwyn Road Canterbury, Boroondara City](#), Victorian Heritage Database, 2011
- Walker, Barbara, [Tuned-in Grandfather](#), The Sun News-Pictorial, 14 June 1967

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Anglicare Victoria Records \(1886 - current\)](#)
- [Private and Professional Papers of Leonard Tierney \(1933 - 1992\)](#)
Private and Professional Papers of Leonard Tierney contain records relating to St John's Home for Boys and Girls in the 'Child Welfare History' series.
- [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/st-johns-home-for-boys-and-girls/>