

# Providence Children's Home

1957 – 1978

**Other Names:** • Providence Dutch Hostel

## Details

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The Providence Children's Home was established at Bacchus Marsh in 1957. It accommodated children from Victoria's Dutch community, but was not exclusively for children from any national or religious group. It was established to accommodate children between 2 and 16 years, but also had babies and infants. Providence Children's Home also ran three family group homes in Bacchus Marsh. After Providence Children's Home closed in 1978, it became a hostel for elderly Dutch migrants, called Providence Village.

Providence Children's Home was established in 1957, and was initially a small hostel in a disused private hospital in Bacchus Marsh. Its function was to care for the children of Dutch 'New Australians' whilst their mother or family were indisposed. It also provided some temporary accommodation for migrant families.

The Catholic priest Leo Maas of the Catholic Dutch Migrant Association was instrumental in the establishment of the Home. It was established to cater for children from Victoria's Dutch community, whose population was increased by post-war migration policies.

In 1958 the Catholic Dutch Migrants Committee decided against continuing with short term family care and changed the function of the facility to that of a children's home/hostel for up to 25 residents. This was declared an Approved Children's Home in April 1958 to allow it to accommodate wards of State.

The age range of children accommodated was between 2 and 16 years. However, the annual report of the Department for 1959 stated that 1 infant was living at 'Providence Dutch Hostel' under the Infant Life Protection provisions of the Child Welfare Act. In 2016, a former resident of Providence Children's Home shared her memories of the Home with the Find & Connect web resource, and stated that Providence had a babies' room for children aged under 2 who slept in cots. She also recalled that the staff included nuns from Holland, young women who were themselves Dutch migrants, as well as Australian-born staff.

The Home was not exclusively for children from any national or religious group. Children attended local Catholic primary schools and Bacchus Marsh High School.

In 1963 Providence took possession of an old weatherboard house close to the main home for use as a 'family group home'. This was closed when, in 1965, a new purpose built family group home was opened in Sydney Street, Bacchus Marsh.

In 1967 Providence established three new family group homes on land near the Bacchus Marsh station bringing its capacity to 40 children. The original Standfield Street facility was sold soon after. One further cottage was opened in the early 1970s. At this stage the Home presented as a campus cluster of five cottages in one circular court.

In the late 1970s Providence Children's Home was phased down due to the general decline in the numbers of children coming into care and the introduction of the policy of placing those children who did come into care close

to their families in regionally based facilities. Very few of the children placed at Providence were from Bacchus Marsh and District.

Following the further placement or home release of those children left at Providence, the home formally closed in December 1978.

After Providence Children's Home closed it became a hostel for elderly Dutch migrants, also called Providence.

## National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

In 2021, the Victorian government has agreed to be a funder of last resort for this institution. This means that although the institution is now defunct, it is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and the government has agreed to pay the institution's share of costs of providing redress to a person (as long as the government is found to be equally responsible for the abuse a person experienced).

## Gallery



**Immigration - Migrants in the community - Children's home Bacchus Marsh. Father Leo Maas says a word of thanks at the opening of the new Providence Children's Home at Bacchus Marsh.**

**Description:** This is a copy of a photograph in the Immigration Photographic Archive 1946-today, at the National Archives of Australia about the Providence Children's Home, Bacchus Marsh.



**Immigration - Church and religion in the migrant community - Father Maas establishes an orphanage**

**Description:** This is a copy of an image from the Immigration Photographic Archive, picturing Fr Leo Maas and some children at work at Providence Children's Home in Bacchus Marsh in 1968.

## More info

## Resources

- Spivey, Margaret, *Defying the gatekeeper: one girl's true story of resistance and rebellion*, 2010
- Jupp, James, *The Australian people: an encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins*, 2001.  
*Relevance:* Providence Hostel is mentioned on page 262
- [I am an Australian from Holland](#), The Australian Women's Weekly, 10 October 1979
- [Providence Village Bacchus Marsh](#), Dutch Australian Weekly, 4 November 1991
- Savidis, Penny, [Sex abuse Royal Commission urged to hold public meetings in regional Victoria](#), Ryan Carlisle Thomas Lawyers, 2014
- [Ron Thorpe interviewed by Helen Belle Curzon-Siggers in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(1999\)](#), 19 September 1999

- O'Neill, Cate, [Responding to the film 'Once my mother'](#), Find & Connect web resource blog, 24 July 2015

# Records

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

## Records held by other organisations

- [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)

The Voluntary Children's Homes Files contain records relating to Providence Children's Home, including a single file, 'Child placement records', containing 30 documents with information about children placed at Providence from around 1959 to 1965.

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/providence-childrens-home/>