

Travancore

1933 –

- Other Names:**
- Travancore Developmental Centre
 - Travancore Special School
 - Travancore Psychiatric Development Centre
 - Travancore Child and Family Centre

Details

Travancore was established in 1933 in Flemington. It was a school and residential centre that housed and educated ‘mentally defective’ children up to the age of 14. Since 2009, the Travancore School delivers a number of programs to link the mental health and education sectors.

Travancore was established in 1933, by the newly-formed Department of Mental Hygiene. Initially, Travancore was established for ‘the reception of children who, although mentally defective, are capable of receiving benefit from special instruction’. Travancore comprised a residential centre and a school, as well as a clinic where children were medically and psychologically examined and assessed. Children remained at Travancore until the age of 14.

In 1940, the operations at Travancore were described in an address to the Medico Legal Society:

The school and residential centre takes retarded children following clinic examination. Admission is restricted to types as defined in the new Act [the Mental Deficiency Act 1939] and does not include lower grade defectives. The function of the school is not only to provide education and domestic care, but to promote all-round development, physical, intellectual, emotional and social, to the fullest extent possible; and by so doing, also to prevent psychological disorders and maladjustments. This is in accord with the abundant evidence that many such children are capable of leading happy lives and of becoming socially useful. To achieve this, special emphasis throughout is laid on vocational and social training. It is interesting to note that under this enlightened regime the health and happiness of the children has shown marked improvement, and behaviour problems, formerly not uncommon, are now rare.

A newspaper article from 1941 discussed developments underway at Travancore, and referred to changing attitudes towards ‘mentally retarded children and adults’. Indeed, the article expressed a hope that, now that prejudice was decreasing, ‘they will be able to contribute to the national war effort’!

At the school at Travancore, Flemington, [mentally retarded] children are taught in congenial surroundings, and are helped in every way possible. At a clinic, run apart from Travancore, which is actually the development centre, mentally retarded children are thoroughly examined, and advice is given about their care and management.

The old Travancore building is being pulled down and a new up-to-date building, provided by the Government, is being built. A kindergarten for pre-school mentally handicapped children of four, with accommodation for 25 to 30, will be opened later this year. It is essential that children be admitted to schools like Travancore at an early age, and the kindergarten will fill a long-felt need in this direction.

At Travancore children are taught forms of hand and craft work, and last year two boys trained there obtained employment in cabinet-making industries, two girls in tailoring, one girl in domestic work, and three boys on a farm, where they are living under excellent conditions.

Life at Travancore was disrupted by the war. In early 1942, the Travancore Developmental Centre was evacuated, when the buildings at Flemington were required by the military. Travancore relocated to Hepburn Springs in rural Victoria. According to the annual report of the Department of Mental Hygiene in 1943:

Thus the atmosphere of the city at the time of a grave national crisis was replaced by the security and serenity of country life. The Travancore girls who were in employment at the time of transfer are now engaged at the Textile Mills at Daylesford. They have given complete satisfaction to their employer.

The work placement of young women from Travancore became known as the 'Moorakyne Hostel'. It began at Daylesford in around 1942, and then was housed in the pre-school block at Flemington from 1944. The Moorakyne Hostel relocated to Hawthorn in 1950.

Travancore returned to Flemington in January 1944. At that time, the residents of the Moorakyne Hostel were placed in employment at the Yarra Falls Spinning Mills. The Department reported that the management of the Mills 'has commented favourably both on their behaviour and industrial ability'.

In 1968 Travancore ceased to function as a centre for intellectually disabled children and became a residential centre for emotionally disturbed children. In line with the changeover to the care of emotionally disturbed children the institution became known as Travancore Psychiatric Developmental Centre.

In 2009, the Travancore School delivers a number of programs to provide a link between the mental health and education sectors.

Gallery



Travancore - school and clinic

Description: This image appeared in the Department of Mental Hygiene's annual report for 1953.



Travancore - clinical examination

Description: This image appeared in the Department of Mental Hygiene's annual report for 1953.



Travancore

Description: This image is one of 5 digitised photographs of Travancore available through PROV's photostream on Flickr. This image is part of a series (VPRS 10516) of photographic negatives and prints created by the Victorian Department of Public Works.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department of Mental Hygiene \(1934 - 1944\)](#)
- [Mental Hygiene Branch \(1944 - 1959\)](#)
- [Mental Health Authority, State of Victoria \(1962 - 1978\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Moorakynne Hostel \(1942? - c. 1988\)](#)
The Moorakynne Hostel was located on the same site as Travancore in Flemington.

Resources

- Donnelly, Joan, [Submission no 264 to the Senate Inquiry Into Institutional Care](#), 18 October 2003
- [Backward children - Bill this session - Legislation on English lines](#), The Argus, 1928
- Spivey, Margaret, *Defying the gatekeeper: one girl's true story of resistance and rebellion*, 2010
- Public Record Office Victoria, [Public Record Office Victoria's Photostream](#), 2012
- [Travancore Developmental Centre \(1933-68\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance:* See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Travancore
- Golding, Frank, [Lost & Found: State Children in Victoria](#), Frank Golding: author, researcher, historian and consultant specialising in child welfare, 27 July 2017
- [Paradises, not 'hells' needed: Travancore's lead](#), The Herald, 16 November 1950

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)
 - [Mental Health Photograph Collection \(1850? - 2002\)](#)
 - [General Correspondence Files \(c. 1920 - c. 1981\)](#)
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