

Child Welfare Department, State Government of New South Wales

1923 – 1970

Other Names: • CWD

Details

The Child Welfare Department was created in 1923, when the Child Welfare Act was introduced. Although it continued the work of the State Children's Relief Department, it was supervised by the Minister for Public Instruction, rather than the State Children's Relief Board, and was part of the Department of Public Instruction. The Child Welfare Department took over industrial schools and reformatories, as well as maintaining its supervision of boarded out children and apprentices. As the Child Welfare Act introduced legal adoption, the Child Welfare Department regulated and recorded adoptions. It was renamed the Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare in 1970.

The Child Welfare Department lasted for nearly fifty years. Throughout that period boarding out, or fostering, remained the main focus of the Department's work, but more varied systems were put in place and the numbers of institutions increased.

When the Department was created in 1923 it assumed responsibility for institutions that had been used for reformatory purposes, such as Gosford Farm Home and Parramatta Industrial School for Girls.

During the 1930s and the 1940s a series of inquiries into these homes found they had been poorly administered, that punishments were not recorded properly, and that children were being mistreated. These reports resulted in some improvements, and argued children were in a sensitive developmental phase, and could benefit from guidance. Importantly, the idea that families could be supported to keep their children and that removal was a last resort began to take hold.

From the 1940s the probation system that had been in use since 1905 changed into the idea of 'child guidance', and child guidance clinics were introduced to children's courts, institutions and, in some cases, schools. At the same time the Child Welfare Department began to develop a staff of trained social workers. While children continued to be removed, and many families found social workers overbearing, and Aboriginal families struggled to be recognised by the Department, it was beginning to develop a broader approach to social problems.

In 1952 the Director of the Child Welfare Department promoted the Department in *The Australian Women's Weekly*:

To rehabilitate the family is the first objective of the department ... If we can get the home going properly again, then the children are returned to their parents. The best way for a child to grow up is with its own family.

First, our trained social workers do everything they can to help the family, especially if the home is suffering through the ill-health of the mother or the desertion of one of the parents.

Hicks told the *Women's Weekly* that of the 1700 children who came to the Department's attention in the previous year, 13% had been removed. When that occurred:

The children are taken to special State Homes, where they are medically examined before being sent to homes with other State wards.

"Because one of the most important influences in a child's upbringing is the spiritual and moral influence of good family life, we try to get foster parents for each child," said Mr Hicks. "In many cases the child may remain with the foster parents for the rest of his childhood. In some cases the parents improve their conditions and have the child returned to them," he added.

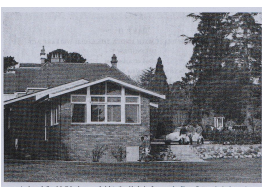
Hicks gave no statistics as to the numbers of children in foster care compared with institutions, but as so many former foster children report multiple placements and being moved from institution to institution, it seems Mr Hicks was painting a rosy picture of his Department's practices. From the 1950s onwards the Department also developed a range of institutions that were designed to provide specialised care to certain categories of children. Often children were placed in them because foster care did not work out or could not be found.

During the 1950s increasing numbers of Aboriginal children were taken into the Child Welfare Department, and its institutions. After 1969, when the Aborigines Protection Board was abolished, the Child Welfare Department assumed responsibility for all Aboriginal children in New South Wales, and for the Aboriginal institutions at Cootamundra and Kinchela.

From the late 1950s the Child Welfare Department was an enthusiastic participant in promoting adoption as an alternative to foster care or institutions, and it and its social workers arranged adoptions. It was also closely associated with forced adoptions.

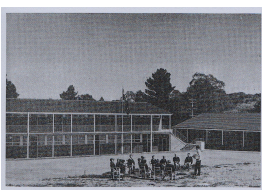
There was a section of the Child Welfare Department called the Special Field Squad. Its officers, often working with police, inspected children who were selling items on the street, performing or engaging in other public work. These officers also inspected fun parlours, transport hubs, picture shows, parks and dance halls seeking children they considered were inadequately supervised by their parents.

Gallery



Anglewood Special School - new administrative block in foreground. Yean Cottage in background.

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1965.



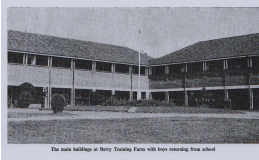
The new school buildings at Anglewood Special School

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1964.



The school library at Berry Training Farm

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1965.



The main buildings at Berry Training Farm with boys returning from school

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1965.



The Dining Room - Bidura

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1968.



Bidura Receiving Home

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1959.



Lessons in the sun at Bidura School

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1963.



School building at Bidura

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In class at Brougham

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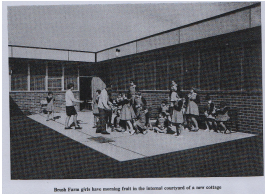
In the classroom at Brougham

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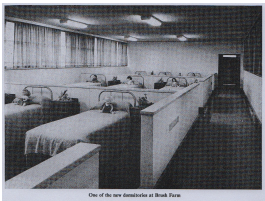
Brougham boys out on a picnic

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1960.



Brush Farm girls have morning fruit in the internal courtyard of a new cottage

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1968.



One of the new dormitories at Brush Farm

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1966.



House parents and girls in a Brush Farm Dormitory

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1968.



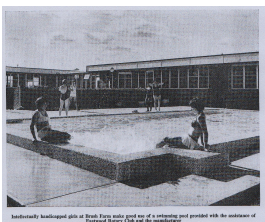
Brush Farm Home

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1959.



The high staff-inmate ratio at Brush Farm Infants Home enables close attention to be given to the developmental needs of each child [original caption]

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1970.



Intellectually handicapped girls at Brush Farm make good use of a swimming pool provided with the assistance of Eastwood Rotary Club and the manufacturer [original caption]

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1970.



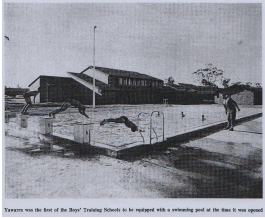
The "old" home, Brush Farm - one of Sydney's historic buildings, it is now unsuitable as a children's home but is to be retained for administrative and other purposes [original caption]

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1965.



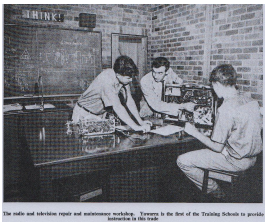
Future Citizens - "Thornbury Lodge"

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1958.



Yawarra was the first of the Boys' Training Schools to be equipped with a swimming pool at the time it was opened

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1969.



The radio and television repair and maintenance workshop. Yawarra is the first of its training schools to provide instruction in this trade

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1969.

More info

Chronology

- State Children's Relief Board (1881 - 1923)
 - **Child Welfare Department, State Government of New South Wales (1923 – 1970)**
 - Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare, State Government of New South Wales (1970 - 1973)

Related Entries

Ran

- [Mittagong Cottage Homes \(1885 - 1976\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1970
- [Mittagong Farm Home for Boys \(1906 - 1947\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1947
- [Newcastle Shelter \(1906 - 1966\)](#)
- [Cottage Home for Invalid Children, Parramatta \(c. 1907 - c. 1940\)](#)
- [Metropolitan Boys' Shelter \(1911 - 1983\)](#)
- [Cicada Home \(1911 - 1930s\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1930
- [Parramatta Girls Training Home \(1912 - 1946\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1946
- [Raymond Terrace Home \(1913 - 1930?\)](#)
- [May Villa \(1919 - 1983?\)](#)
- [Corelli Hospital for Women \(1919 - c. 1945\)](#)
- [Santa Marina \(1919 - 1930?\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1930?
- [Silverton Shelter \(1920s - 1936\)](#)

- [Bidura \(1920 - 1977\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1970
- [Montrose Maternity Hospital \(c. 1920 - c. 1935\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1935
- [Royleston \(1922 - 1983\)](#)
- [Brush Farm Home \(1922 - 1988\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1970
- [Grafton Shelter \(1923? - 1990s\)](#)
- [Kinchela Training Home for Aboriginal Boys \(1923 - 1970\)](#)
- [Gosford Training School \(1923 - 1945\)](#)
Date: 1923 - 1945
- [Metropolitan Girls' Shelter, Glebe \(c. 1923 - 1978\)](#)
- [Garth \(1924 - 1934?\)](#)
- [Myee \(1926 - 1977\)](#)
- [Farm Home for Boys, Narara \(1927 - 1934\)](#)
- [La Perouse Training School for Girls \(28 July 1928 - 1939\)](#)
- [Riverina Welfare Farm for Boys, Yanco \(1928 - 1942\)](#)
- [King Edward Home \(c. 1930 - c. 1985\)](#)
- [Berry Training Farm \(1934 - 1977\)](#)
- [Kurnell Gardens \(1936 - 1942\)](#)
- [Montrose Hostel \(1936 - c. 1949\)](#)
- [Turner Cottage Special School for Truants \(1938 - 1946\)](#)
- [Lynwood Hall \(1939 - 1993\)](#)
- [Yarra Bay House Truant School \(1939 - c. 1955\)](#)
- [Broken Hill Shelter \(1942 - c. 1994\)](#)
- [Anglewood \(1943 - 1994\)](#)
- [Brougham \(1943 - 1993\)](#)
- [Castle Hill House \(1943 - 1982\)](#)
Date: 1943 - 1970
- [St Heliers \(1945 - 1986\)](#)
- [Corelli Babies' Home \(c. 1945 - c. 1970\)](#)
- [Mount Penang Training School for Boys \(1946 - 1987\)](#)
Date: 1946 - 1970
- [Weroona Home \(1946 - 1984\)](#)
- [Yasmar Shelter \(1946 - 1994\)](#)
- [Ormond, Thornleigh \(28 October 1946 - 1962\)](#)
- [Parramatta Girls Training School \(1946 - 1974\)](#)
- [Mittagong Training School For Boys \(1947 - 1976\)](#)
- [Institution for Boys, Tamworth \(1948 - 1976\)](#)
- [Montrose Infants' Home \(c. 1949 - c. 1978\)](#)
Date: 1949 - 1970
- [Winbin \(1954 - 1975\)](#)
Date: 1954 - 1970
- [Yarra Bay Boys' Home \(c. 1955 - 1985\)](#)
- [Thornbury Lodge \(c. 1958 - c. 1990\)](#)
- [Daruk \(1960 - 1985\)](#)
Date: 1960 - 1970
- [Institution for Girls, Hay \(28 July 1961 - 1974\)](#)
Date: 1961 - 1970
- [Raith Lark Hill Hostel \(1964 - 1990?\)](#)
- [Minda \(1966 - 1991\)](#)
Date: 1966 - 1970
- [Worimi Shelter \(1966 - 2000\)](#)
- [Brush Farm Infants' Home \(1968 - 1988\)](#)
Date: 1968 - 1970
- [Clairvaux \(1969 - 1990s\)](#)
- [Yawarra Training School \(1969 - 1979\)](#)

- [Bimbadeen Girls Home \(1969 - 1974\)](#)
Date: 1969 - 1970
- [McCredie Cottage \(1970 - 1993\)](#)
- [Corelli \(1970 - 1991\)](#)
Date: 1970 -
- [Hargrave House \(1971 - 1988\)](#)

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Adoption Practices in NSW, New South Wales Legislative Council \(1998 - 2000\)](#)

Related Legislation

- [Child Welfare Act 1923, New South Wales \(1923 - 1939\)](#)
The Child Welfare Department was regulated by the Child Welfare Act 1923.
Date: 1923 - 1939
- [Juvenile Migrants Apprenticeship Act 1923, New South Wales \(1923 - 1926\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Amendment\) Act 1924, New South Wales \(1924 - 1939\)](#)
- [Juvenile Migrants Act 1926, New South Wales \(1926 - 1999\)](#)
- [Child Welfare Act 1939, New South Wales \(1939 - 1987\)](#)
- [Child Welfare Agreement Ordinance 1941, Commonwealth of Australia \(1941 - 1987\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Commonwealth Agreement Ratification\) Act 1941, New South Wales \(1941 - current\)](#)
- [Child Welfare Ordinance 1957, Australian Capital Territory \(1958 - 1988\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Amendment\) Act 1961, New South Wales \(1961 - 1987\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Further Amendment\) Act 1961, New South Wales \(1961 - 1965\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Commonwealth Agreement Ratification\) Act 1962, New South Wales \(1962 - current\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Amendment\) Act 1966, New South Wales \(1966 - 1987\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Amendment\) Act 1967, New South Wales \(1967 - 1987\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Amendment\) Act 1969, New South Wales \(1969 - 1987\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind \(1869 - 1957\)](#)
The Child Welfare Department sent state wards to the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, and looked after children from the Institution during periods of evacuation
- [State Children's Relief Department \(1881 - 1923\)](#)
The State Children's Relief Department and State Children's Relief Board became the Child Welfare Department.
- [Department of Education, State Government of New South Wales \(1915 - 1989\)](#)
- [Tresillian Petersham \(1921 - 1997\)](#)
In the late 1960s and early 1970s Tresillian Petersham, and other Tresillian homes, housed babies who were waiting for adoption. The adoptions were arranged by other agencies, including the Child Welfare Department.
Date: 1960s - 1970
- [Halloween Children's Home \(c. 1925 - c. 1938\)](#)
The Child Welfare Department placed state wards in Halloween Children's Home.
Date: 1935 -
- [Good Samaritan Training Centre \(1948 - 1982\)](#)
Good Samaritan Training Centre was funded to provide care for girls in the juvenile justice system by the Child Welfare Department
Date: 1948 - 1970
- [Falling Leaves \(c. 1950 - c. 1970\)](#)
The Child Welfare Department licensed 'Falling Leaves' as a children's home.
- [Welfare Section, Australian Capital Territory \(1957 - 1970\)](#)

Related Concepts

- [Probation \(c. 1905 - current\)](#)
- [Adoption in New South Wales \(c. 1923 - current\)](#)

Resources

- Freyne, Catherine, [Tit for Tat: The Story of Sandra Willson](#), 20 November 2011
- Rapley, Judy, [Creating a Space: The Life of Bessie Guthrie](#), 28 October 2007
- Matthews, Bernie, [Getting screwed at the school for crime](#), 3 April 2007
- Matthews, Bernie, [Reap as you sow](#), Griffith Review: Unintended Consequences, May 2007
- Thompson, Geoff, [Boys home turned teenagers into criminals](#), 14 December 2011
- Matthews, Bernie, [Marlene's Story](#), 15 August 2007
- Thompson, Geoff, [Boys home linked to violent deaths](#), 14 December 2011
- Thompson, Geoff, [Tamworth boys may have been falsely imprisoned](#), 16 December 2011
- Thompson, Geoff, [Lawyers say school for crims possibly illegal](#), 16 December 2011
- Hill, David, *The Forgotten Children: Fairbridge Farm School and its betrayal of Australia's child migrants*, 2007
- Djuric, Bonney, *Abandon All Hope: a history of Parramatta Industrial School*, 2011
- Durant (nee Green), Carmel, [Our Story](#), Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions blog, 5 March 2010
- O'Neill, Sharon, [State Secrets](#), 4 June 2004
- [Mr. Walter Bethel](#), The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 March 1929
- [New Parents for "Nobody's Child"](#), The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 August 1939
- Child Welfare Department, [Challenge \(also known as The Challenge\)](#), 1949 - 1975
- Hughes, Dianne, [Submission 272 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare, *Focus*, 1966 - 1973
- Dalton, Trent, [Ron Green and his fellow orphanage kids revisit their childhood hell](#), The Weekend Australian Magazine, 27 July 2013
- Department of Justice, [History](#), Children's Court of New South Wales, 2012
- State Records Authority of New South Wales, [Yawarra Training School for Boys](#), No date
- State Records Authority of New South Wales, [Winbin](#), No date
- Kenneally, Christine, [The Forgotten Ones: half a million lost childhoods](#), The Monthly, August 2012
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- NSW Public Service Board, *Building costs: interim report (Child welfare buildings)*, April 1978
- Barnet, Les; Whitchurch, Peter, [Towards a Clearer Sky](#), 1959
- State Records Authority of New South Wales, [Dept of Community Services](#), No date
- Barnet, Les; Whitchurch, P, [Fresh Fields: Rehabilitation methods used at St. Heliers Training School for Boys near Muswellbrook, N.S.W.](#), 1959
- Keen, A, [The Long Climb](#), 1970
- [Publications - Department of Community Services](#), OpenGov NSW, 2014
- [No More Yancos](#), Truth, 29 April 1934
- [Corporal Punishment](#), Daily Examiner (Grafton, NSW), 2 May 1934
- Matthews, Bernie, *Unintended Consequences for State Raised Children*, No date
- [Joanna Penglase interviewed by Susan Marsden in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 2 June 2010
- [Caroline Carroll interviewed by Karen George in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\]](#), June 2010 - August 2010
- [Ronald Arthur interviewed by Jeannine Baker for the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), August 2011 - September 2011
- [Effie Ray interviewed by Joanna Penglase in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\]](#), 28 November 2010 - 29 November 2010
- [Patrick Sephton interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 2001

Records

Records held by other organisations

- [Departmental Records relating to State Wards, New South Wales \(1918 - current\)](#)
- [Affiliation Files \[Maintenance Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(c. 1963 - 1975\)](#)
- [Immigration Nomination \(Minor 'E'\) Files \[School Attendance/Licensing Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(1962 - 1976\)](#)
- [Registers Of The Arrival And Discharge Of Immigrant Children \[School Attendance/Licensing Branch, Department of Community Services, NSW\] \(1953 - 1964\)](#)

- [Returns Of Employment Changes Made By Young Persons Sponsored By The Fairbridge Farm Scheme \[School Attendance/Licensing Branch, Department of Community Services, NSW\] \(1968 - 1969\)](#)
 - [Miscellaneous files \[Residential Care Division, Department of Community Services\] \(1965 - 1973\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
Item B380 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to the Child Welfare Department, New South Wales
 - [Boarding Out Registers \(Ward Registers\) \(1 August 1923 - 31 December 1936\)](#)
 - [Dependent Children Register Cards \(c. 1945 - 1972\)](#)
 - [Ward maintenance files \[Maintenance Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(1942 - 1960\)](#)
 - [Applications and Adoption files for State wards \[Dependent Children and Adoptions Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(1940 - 1961\)](#)
 - [Adoption Files \[Dependent Children and Adoptions Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(1947 - 1974\)](#)
 - [Private Adoption files \[Dependent Children and Adoptions Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(1954 - 1967\)](#)
 - [Private adoption agency contact files \[Dependent Children and Adoptions Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(1950 - 1975\)](#)
 - [Benevolent Society adoption register \[Dependent Children and Adoptions Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(23 May 1969 - 1 September 1975\)](#)
 - [Presbyterian Adoption Agency adoption registers \[Dependent Children and Adoptions Branch, Department of Community Services\] \(1966 - 1975\)](#)
 - [Index Cards Relating To Institutional Inmates \(1958 - 1986\)](#)
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