United Protestant Association of New South Wales Ltd

1938 –
Other Names: • UPA

URL: http://www.upa.org.au

Details

The United Protestant Association of New South Wales Ltd (UPA) is a Christian welfare organisation established in 1938. By 1953, the UPA had established 13 children's homes throughout New South Wales. Each Home came under the jurisdiction and guidance of a District Executive, who reported to a State Council. More than 3,000 children, including British child migrants, were placed in UPA Homes but, owing to the high costs of providing residential care, most District Executives converted their homes to aged care by the 1990s.

Thomas Agst, a militant Protestant who joined the United Protestant Association of Australia in 1935, established the United Protestant Association of New South Wales (UPA) in 1938. By 1941 UPA had separated from the United Protestant Association of Australian Association.

Agst wrote in his autobiography, published as *The UPA Story*:

> One cause which actuated me to do something to establish Homes for children was the fact that there was a Roman Catholic Convent (now Cowper Homes) in the Clarence District with a large number of Protestant children because there was no Protestant Home for them…To my surprise I received no assistance or encouragement from the Protestant Ministers and in some cases experienced open opposition. Most of them were just not interested in the practical side of Christian work let alone the militant side of the Association's objectives.

After offering a home to a family of Protestant children who were about to be sent to the Catholic convent, Agst and his wife Rosetta ended up with seven children in their care. Agst decided they needed a properly conducted home.

Over the next forty years the UPA expanded services to children and established aged care services at more than twenty centres throughout New South Wales. Agst promoted his work with children and the aged, and his fanatical anti-Catholic beliefs, with weekly radio broadcasts and, from 1946, the Gorton Pty Ltd Printing Works and the newspaper *The Protestant World*.

The UPA Homes were: Melrose (Pendle Hill); Sunnylands (Wollongbar); Adelaide Walker (Strathfield); Woodlands (Newcastle); Rathgar (Grafton); Rathmore (Grafton); Ellimatta and Ellimeek (East Maitland); Glen Eden (Glen Innes); Buena Vista (Orange); Gumleigh (Wagga Wagga); Lillimur (Dubbo); The Laurels (Kogarah); and Murray Vale (Albury), as well as several family group homes. It also ran Strathmore House in Melbourne

(1951-1953).

The length of time that children stayed at the Homes varied, with some children staying for a few days, while others stayed for years. Children came to the homes as babies, young children and teenagers. They were also a receiving agency for child migrants, taking a number of British boys into Melrose.

Each Home had its own committee, called a District Executive, made up of volunteers and business people who lived and worked in the area. Their main role was to oversee the running of the institution, handle day to day issues of staff and children (admissions and discharges) as well as fund raising necessary to keep the homes going, including applying for state and federal government grants. Some also ran opportunity shops. The District Executive reported to the State Council (all UPA members state wide could attend these meetings) and the State Executive which included the General Manager.

From the 1960s into the 1980s the UPA began to close down its children's Homes and convert properties into aged care facilities. The UPA continues to provide support and information to past Care Leavers, including the services of a dedicated counsellor. In 2013, the UPA's surviving children's service is Youth Care UPA in the North Coast region, an accommodation, casework and supervision service.

In 2013, Joanne McCarthy published an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, stating that former residents of Woodlands had given distressing testimony to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and stated that an organised ring of paedophiles, including members of the Anglican and Catholic clergy, had sexually abused boys during a Christian programme held on Sundays at Woodlands in the 1970s. Additionally, a girl from Ellimatta was allegedly abused by a gardener.

In the article, the UPA issued an unreserved apology to children abused while they were living in the Woodlands and Ellimatta Homes, and acknowledged it had paid compensation to victims.

The UPA Board has since issued a further and full apology stating:

> *We sought to be trusted by children, parents, and the State, but we freely acknowledge that in many of our homes we failed to provide the safe and nurturing environment that children need to thrive. Emotional, physical and sexual abuse did occur in those homes. We are ashamed of those failures and offer our sincere and deep apology for the harm caused.*

Gallery

Immigration - Child migration schemes - British Orphans at Melrose House near Parramatta, New South Wales - British orphans at Melrose House, 5 miles from Parramatta. 25 boys on 8 acres of land, exterior of accommodation

Description: This image is part of the National Archives of Australia's digitised photo collections. The United Protestant Association also hold this image and others related to it.

Buena Vista

Ellimatta and Ellimeek

Description: Ellimatta is on the left and Ellimeek is on the right.

Adelaide Walker Home

Description: This image was taken at the time of the Royal Visit by Queen Elizabeth II.

The Laurels

Gumleigh

Glen Eden

Sunnylands

Woodlands Boys Home at Wallsend

Description: This is a digital copy of an image from *Newcastle Morning Herald*, held in the Hunter Photo Bank.

More info

Related Entries

Ran

- [Rathgar (1941 - 1983)](#)
- [Rathmore (1943 - 1948)](#)
- [Woodlands Home (1944 - 1981)](#)

- [Ellimatta (1945 - 1982)](#)
- [Ellimeek (1945 - 1982)](#)
- [Glen Eden Home (1947 - 1961)](#)
- [Lillimur (1947 - 1978)](#)
- [Buena Vista (1950 - 1982)](#)
- [The Laurels (1950 - 9 May 1973)](#)
- [Adelaide Walker Home (1951 - 1980)](#)
- [Melrose (1952 - 1982)](#)
- [Sunnylands (1955 - 1997)](#)
- [Gumleigh (1956 - 1983)](#)
- [Murray Vale (1958 - 1983)](#)
- [Phillips Cottage (1982 - 1990?)](#)
- [George Green Home (1982 - 1993?)](#)
- [Adelaide Walker Family Group Home (1982 - 1990s)](#)
- [Henson Cottage (1982 - 1990s)](#)
- [Hillview Cottage (1983 - 1996)](#)
- [United Protestant Association Family Group Homes, Wagga Wagga (1983 - 1985)](#)
- [Family Group Home, Lismore United Protestant Association (1984 - 1993?)](#)
- [Zuill Home (1984 - 1993?)](#)
- [FRYAR Cottage (1993 - c. 1995)](#)

Related Organisations
- [Strathmore Lodge (1953 - 1955)](#)

Resources

- United Protestant Association of N.S.W., *The Protestant world : official organ of the United Protestant Association of New South Wales.*, 1921 - 1980
- United Protestant Association of N.S.W., *Souvenir pictorial of homes for children and pensioners / United Protestant Association of N.S.W.*, 1956

Records

Records held by this organisation

- [United Protestant Association of New South Wales Records (1932 - current)](#)

Records held by other organisations

- [Commonwealth Records relating to Child and Youth Migration (c. 1911 - 1983?)](#)
- [Correspondence files, multiple number series (policy matters) (1922 - 1968)](#)

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