

Brougham

1943 – 1993

Other Names:

- Brougham Residential Unit
- Brougham Hostel

Details

Brougham, in Woollahra, was run by the Child Welfare Department from 1943. It was first established as a receiving home, then became a boys' home, later becoming a home for boys and girls defined as vulnerable. By the 1980s Brougham was a receiving unit for children aged 1 to 14 years, both state wards and others in protective custody of the Department. In 1993 Brougham was the subject of an Ombudsman's investigation. It closed that year.

Brougham was located on Nelson Street, on the corner of Wallis Street, in Woollahra. The land on which Brougham stands had been subdivided in the 1850s. A house, 'Morianda', was built on the site and expanded in the 1870s. By 1902 the house was complete and was known as Brougham. It was sold to Frederick Hart King, a solicitor, and on 13 July 1918 bought by the Minister for Public Works for £1500.

Brougham was converted to a children's home after a series of scandals over the crowded state of the Albion Street Children's Shelter (Children's Court) and new ideas about child welfare led to government reforms. The ideal for reformers was sites with adequate accommodation and spacious grounds to allow children recreation, playing fields and access to sunshine, where psychologists, social workers and other trained specialists could work with children.

Brougham was refitted and gazetted on 4 June 1943 under Section 49 of the Child Welfare Act as a 'shelter for the reception and temporary detention and maintenance of children or young persons.' The next day 17 boys were admitted, and 101 passed through in first year. It was one of five such shelters in New South Wales, that provided temporary detention for children who were deemed to be neglected, uncontrollable or who were awaiting transfer to another institution or foster placement, or who were on remand and awaiting an appearance at the Children's Court. They also housed children needing medical or psychological treatment.

Brougham was promoted by the Department of Child Welfare and its successors as an institution that provided family-like care. Numbers at the shelter fluctuated from ten to twenty with most boys staying between two or three weeks. The staff included a manager and matron, domestic staff and a teacher. Remedial programmes were initiated to cure the underlying problems of the delinquency and the boys participated in formal education programmes, leisure activities and excursions.

According to Thorp, Brougham was reclassified in 1947 as a "home" for male wards of the state to the age of twelve years. The policy of the institution was to promote socially acceptable behaviour in boys who were insecure or suffered other personal problems and expressed these difficulties through abnormal behaviour, that is, those whose behaviour made them unsuitable for normal foster care. Thorp says play was extensively used to develop personal skills, and institutional routine was minimised in favour of remedial programs rather than formal routines. It held twenty children and was supervised by a married couple.

The Department's annual report for 1947 stated that Brougham also accommodated boys from Mittagong Training School and Anglewood Special School, for the purpose of attending hospital, child guidance clinics etc.

Thorp says by the 1950s Brougham had established a reputation quite different to other homes and 'operated as a replacement family', although this information was taken from Child Welfare Department annual reports. At this time the Home held 20 boy wards of primary school age who were considered to require special training to make them suitable for placement in a foster home. It had an apiary and a cricket pitch. In 1955 Donald McLean, who was reviewing Child Welfare Department homes, said:

Boys placed in 'Brougham' are, more often than not, socially and emotionally maladjusted, and usually a long period of training is necessary.

McLean said that care for the boys was medically and psychologically tailored and the Department tried to maintain an atmosphere of friendliness and avoid repetitive work and over-dependence on the institution. Qualified teachers were on the staff and trips to the National Fitness Council camps at Broken Bay, Narrabeen and Little Marley were part of the home's routine.

In the 1970s Brougham changed markedly. Girls were admitted to the home and numbers jumped from an average of 25 to over 100. By 1978 there were 199 children housed there.

In the 1980s the figures had dropped to just above 100 and care was provided on a much shorter term than had been the case in earlier years. At that stage Brougham was a receiving unit for children in protective custody of the Department and for those who suffered emotional and/or developmental disorders.

At the beginning of the 1990s the Department of Community Services was considering closing the home, which was functioning as a receiving unit for children who had suffered parental or other forms of abuse, many of whom were emotionally disturbed. It was controlled by a superintendent, 'B', who reported to the Metropolitan East division of the Department of Community Services. She had worked at the home since the late 1970s, with her husband, but since his retirement in 1989 had run the home by herself.

In 1993, after staff complaints from Brougham, the New South Wales Ombudsman, David Landa, conducted an investigation. Landa found that 'B' had, for some years, engaged in systematic robbing of petty cash funds, purchasing fraud and theft of children's pocket money. Finding that operations and administration files for Brougham had been destroyed, Landa looked into the Department of Community Services' records storage and disposal systems. He found appalling records management practices and a lack of centralised controls, and identified corruption, mismanagement, misconduct and unit dysfunction within the Department. Senior managers within the Department were apparently protecting 'B', and failing to audit or investigate her financial management and purchasing history. Landa condemned the Department's 'shoddy records and dysfunctional responses to the complaints received.'

These staff were of the view that 'B' could be a very good carer of the children in the home. However the Ombudsman found, since 1988, 'B' had been very different. She had:

... exhibited emotional instability and tantrums, involving screaming at both staff and children, making threats, bursting into tears and extreme mood swings between being friendly and caring one minute and swearing and raving the next.

Even worse, 'B' was physically and emotionally abusive to the children.

Concerning minor assaults there were allegations of hitting children, dragging them along the floor in a very painful fashion, sitting on children and in one case emptying a large basket of keys on a young child's head.

The Ombudsman stated 'even a minor assault can be a very serious matter', but noted that the children at Brougham were particularly vulnerable to this terrifying behaviour.

Although Ombudsman Landa's report was extremely strongly worded, the results of his investigations are unclear. By the time he reported, the Department of Community Services and the Police had referred aspects of the case to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). The Department signalled its intention to comply with Landa's recommendations as to better records management and preservation, and more stringent financial controls. Brougham itself was closed on 20 February 1993.

The New South Wales Government, then led by Premier Nick Greiner, set up a new complaints and appeals mechanism, with a new Commission to deal specifically with the Department of Community Services. The Ombudsman did not see this as improving complaints procedures. He pointed out that his powers to oversee the Department of Community Services were reduced, and the new Commission's terms of reference, set by the *Community Services (Complaints, Appeals and Monitoring Act)* were that complaints could only be made about the provision (or not) of services to a particular person, rather than about criminal behaviour or general practices.

The Ombudsman was extremely critical of this decision, arguing that it was the responsibility of his office to exercise public oversight and apply systemic analysis and systemic correction. He indicated his intention to continue to do so, and ordered the release of the report.

Development controls were placed on the property and it was sold as a 'development opportunity' in 2012.

Gallery



Brougham

Description: This image was included on a real estate listing of the building that Brougham had previously operated in.



Brougham, from the rear

Description: This image was included on a real estate listing of the building that Brougham had previously operated in.



Brougham from the side

Description: This image was included on a real estate listing of the building that Brougham had previously operated in.



In class at Brougham

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



In the classroom at Brougham

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



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.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Child Welfare Department, State Government of New South Wales \(1923 - 1970\)](#)
- [Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare, State Government of New South Wales \(1970 - 1973\)](#)
- [Department of Youth and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1973 - 1975\)](#)
Date: 1973 - 1975
- [Department of Youth and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1976 - 1988\)](#)
Date: 1976 - 1988
- [Department of Family and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1988 - 1991\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Berry Training Farm \(1934 - 1977\)](#)
Boys from Brougham were sent to Berry Training Farm when they reached the age of 14.

Resources

- McLean, Donald, *Children In Need: An account of the administration and functions of the Child Welfare Department, New South Wales, Australia: with an examination of the principles involved in helping deprived and wayward children*, 1955. Relevance: p. 55
- Boyle, Brian, *The Child Welfare Schools: Recollections of these unique schools and the men and women who taught in them often under considerable difficulty*, 1996
- Tenison Woods, Mary, *State and the Child*, Sydney Morning Herald, 2 February 1944

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Departmental Records relating to State Wards, New South Wales \(1918 - current\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/brougham-2/>