

Newcastle Industrial School for Females

6 August 1867 – 20 July 1871

Other Names: • Reformatory for Girls Newcastle

Details

The Newcastle Industrial School was established on 6 August 1867 in the former Military Barracks on the Newcastle Government Domain. It was a place of detention for girls charged with neglect, wandering, street-trading or being 'uncontrollable'. From 1869 the site was shared with the Newcastle Reformatory School for Females. In 1871 the institution was relocated and became the Biloela Industrial School at Cockatoo Island.

The Newcastle Industrial School for Females was established under the *Destitute Children Act* (also known as the Industrial Schools Act) of 1866. It was Australia's first industrial school for girls; that is, an institution defined by legislation and paid for by the government as a place of detention for children charged with neglect, wandering, street-trading or being 'uncontrollable'. It used the convict-built Military Barracks building.

193 girls and young women were sent to the Industrial School and Reformatory between 1867 and 1871. The first girl was sent to the school on 31 August 1867. The institution operated until 1871 under the Comptroller of Prisons. On 19 January 1869, a reformatory was established at the same site, which created twin institutions.

Staffing proved to be a problem for the institutions, as did the behaviour of residents. According to historian Jane Ison:

The Newcastle site was open to public view and the inmates, almost all unused to having to follow rules, protested their confinement with wild rioting, obscene language, lewd behaviour and frequent escapes.

The resulting public outcry forced the government to close the institutions in March 1871 and relocate the industrial school and reformatory to Cockatoo Island (Biloela).

The barracks building became part of the James Fletcher Hospital. In 2011 this was known as the Watt Street Centre.

Gallery



Barracks now part of Watt Street Hospital

More info

Chronology

- **Newcastle Industrial School for Females (6 August 1867 – 20 July 1871)**
 - Biloela Industrial School, Cockatoo Island (1871 - 1887)

Related Entries

Related Legislation

- [Destitute Children Act 1866, New South Wales \(1866 - 1901\)](#)
Newcastle Industrial School for Females was established under the *Destitute Children's Act*.
Date: 1867 - 1871

Related Organisations

- [Newcastle Reformatory School for Females \(19 January 1869 - 20 July 1871\)](#)
The Newcastle Industrial School for Females and the Newcastle Reformatory School for Females were located on the same grounds.

Resources

- Williamson, Noeline, *Life in the industrial and reformatory school for girls in New South Wales [Series of two parts]: Part 1: 1867 to 1887. 'Hymns, songs and blackguard verses'. Part 2: 1887 to 1910. Laundry maids or ladies?*, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 1982 - 1983
- Ramsland, John, *Children of the back lanes: destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales*, 1986
- Scrivener, Gladys, ["Rescuing the rising generation" : industrial schools in New South Wales, 1850-1910](#), 1996
- Museums of History NSW, [Child Care and Protection Guide](#), No date
- Museums of History NSW, [Child Care and Protection Index 1817-1942](#), No date
- New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, [Government Schools of New South Wales from 1848: Special Education 1866-2004](#), 2013
- Department of Justice, [History](#), Children's Court of New South Wales, 2012
- [Stitched Up // In partnership with Timeless Textiles](#), The Lock-Up, 2017

Records

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

Records

- [Records of Girls' Industrial and Training Schools, State Archives NSW \(1867 - 1983\)](#)
-

You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/newcastle-industrial-school-for-females/>