

# John Oxley Youth Detention Centre

1987 – 2001

## Details

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The John Oxley Youth Detention Centre in Wacol opened in 1987. Run by the state government, it catered for children placed in the care and control of the State, and those committed to the custody of the State. Serious offenders were held in the same facility, and shared accommodation with children who were unruly, difficult or disturbed. The facility was closed in 2001 and replaced with the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, also situated at Wacol.

The Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (1998-1999) heard evidence about John Oxley Youth Detention Centre from 37 witnesses. It also held a public hearing specifically in relation to allegations of handcuffing at the Centre, an issue which had a separate section in the Forde Report of 1999.

The Commission's report states that John Oxley was originally established in 1987 as a centre for male and female adolescents, aged 10 to 15 and 10 to 17 years respectively, who had been committed to the care and control of the Director-General or who were on remand for offences.

The closure of Westbrook in 1994 resulted in older boys being transferred from there to John Oxley, and some overcrowding occurred as a consequence. Demountable buildings were constructed to accommodate the extra numbers. These were named Stradbroke, Bribie and Fraser. Other buildings at John Oxley were called Hamilton A, B and C (opened in 1999) and the Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth wings (part of the original structure in 1987). The new demountable buildings were said to be extremely uncomfortable in summer months.

The Forde Inquiry report contains details of several 'major disturbances' that took place at John Oxley, as well as escapes and attempted escapes from the Centre, and incidents of self-harming behaviour by residents. The report also discusses assaults by staff against residents, and between residents.

The Forde report contained the following summary of conditions at John Oxley Youth Detention Centre:

*John Oxley was originally established for a purpose very different from the one it has been required to fulfil in recent years. Its design as an open centre, reflecting family residential models, was unsuitable for the security demands placed on the Centre following the changes in admission policy at Wilson and the closure of Westbrook. A range of problems have resulted, including escapes, major disturbances, and isolated incidences of violence among inmates and between inmates and staff. Furthermore, the Inquiry has found that for many years the numbers, quality and training of many custodial staff, and some managers, did not match the requirements of their work and had consequences in terms of their relationships with and management of residents (p.170).*

## Gallery



## John Oxley Youth Detention Centre

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## More info

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### Chronology

- **John Oxley Youth Detention Centre (1987 – 2001)**
  - Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (July 2001 - current)

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Children's Services Department, State Government of Queensland \(1 August 1966 - 6 June 1987\)](#)
- [Family and Youth Services Department, State Government of Queensland \(9 June 1987 - 14 December 1987\)](#)
- [Family Services Department, State Government of Queensland \(14 December 1987 - 7 December 1989\)](#)
- [Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Department, State Government of Queensland \(7 December 1989 - 25 January 1996\)](#)
- [Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, State Government of Queensland \(26 February 1996 - 22 February 2001\)](#)
- [Department of Family and Community Services, State Government of Queensland \(25 January 1996 - 26 February 1996\)](#)
- [Department of Families, State Government of Queensland \(17 February 2001 - 12 February 2004\)](#)

#### Related Events

- [Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions \(1998 - 1999\)](#)

The Commission of inquiry into abuse of children in Queensland institutions held public hearings relating to the treatment of juvenile offenders at John Oxley Youth Detention Centre in 1989.
- [Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, Parliament of Australia \(2003 - 2005\)](#)

John Oxley Youth Detention Centre was mentioned in Submission 174 to the Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care
- [Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, Queensland \(1 July 2012 - 30 June 2013\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Centre \(1983 - 1993\)](#)

Girls were transferred from Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Centre to the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre when it opened in 1987.
- [Westbrook Youth Detention Centre \(1993 - 30 June 1994\)](#)

Boys were transferred to John Oxley Youth Detention Centre from Westbrook Youth Detention Centre when it closed in 1994.
- [Department of Justice and Attorney General \(2012 - current\)](#)

The Department of Justice and Attorney General controls access to the records of the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre.

### Resources

- Atkinson, Lynn, [An overview of juvenile detention in Australia](#), National Conference on Juvenile Detention: Proceedings of a conference held 10-13 August 1993, 1994

- Child Guardian, [Views of Children and Young People in Detention Centres, Queensland, 2008](#), 2008
- Forde, Leneen et. al., [Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse in Queensland institutions](#), May 1999. Relevance: pp.162-175

## Records

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

### Records

- [Institution Files, Queensland Government-run Institutions \(c. 1871 - c. 2001\)](#)
  - [Forgotten Australians : Micah Pilot Oral History and Digital Story Project \[sound and video recording\] \(March 2011 - April 2011\)](#)  
Shelley Farquar's video recording discusses her time at John Oxley Youth Detention Centre.
  - [Operational Registers, Queensland Government-run Institutions \(c. 1870 - c. 2001\)](#)
  - [Administrative Records, Queensland Government-run Institutions \(c. 1865 - 2001\)](#)
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