

Central Depot

1900 – 1965

Details

The Central Depot operated from 1900 as a government receiving home for State children. Situated on Victoria Place and then, in 1917, in Gawler Place, Adelaide, the Depot provided temporary shelter for children awaiting court appearance, transfer between institutions or foster care. From 1923 it was also a temporary detention Centre. Central Depot closed in 1965 when the Windana Remand Home opened.

The Central Depot was first mentioned in Annual Reports of the State Children's Council in 1903, but according to the 1965 report on its closure, operated from 1900. The Depot was initially housed in a section of the offices of the State Children's Council in Paddock Chambers, Victoria Place, Adelaide (a lane off Wakefield Street).

The Central Depot provided temporary shelter for State children awaiting transfer between institutions and/or other placements. Sometimes children who were not State wards were also accommodated at the Depot overnight, pending transfer to another home or situation. A matron and a number of travelling attendants made up the staff. The attendants accompanied female State children who were being boarded out or were returning from service placements.

In its 1916 Annual Report the Council stated that the offices for departmental staff and the facilities for children temporarily staying at the Depot, were 'altogether inadequate' and inappropriately located in an 'obscure lane'. The following year the Department purchased a cottage in Gawler Place, Adelaide and a vacant property adjoining it. The cottage was renovated to provide new quarters for the matron and her staff. Other parts of the existing building were refurbished to create what the Council referred to at the time as 'commodious detention rooms and wards' and extra bathrooms for children.

As well as temporarily housing children who were in transit, from 1923 the Depot also operated as a temporary detention centre for children under 18 years of age who were arrested by the police. They were detained in a section of the building separated from the other children, until their appearance before the Children's Court. From the 1930s the matron also took charge of a number of State girls who were admitted to the depot to be trained in domestic duties. This practice continued until 1963 with the girls taking on most of the cleaning, yard and laundry work for the Depot.

At the Depot, girls and boys were accommodated in separate wards and had their own dining and recreation areas. Religious instruction and listening to the radio were the main pastimes provided to the of children residing there.

In 1939 a government Inquiry into the treatment of 'Delinquent and other children in the care of the state' described the Central Depot as a 'most depressing' place where children were still detained in cells lit only by an outside light as they had been twenty years earlier.

Although the implementation of many of the recommendations of the Inquiry's report was delayed because of the outbreak of the Second World War, its suggestions about improving the physical appearance and atmosphere of institutions were taken up. The 1940 Annual report, in a clear response to the Inquiry's criticisms, detailed changes to the Central Depot as follows:

The dormitories and the matron's house at the central depot, including the girls' dining room have been painted, garden paths improved, new gas stove, attractive blue bedsteads, new mattresses, easy chairs, curtains, floor matting, and other facilities provided for the boys and girls. The bars have been removed from the windows and strong wire screens substituted.

The Central Depot continued to operate at the Gawler Place site until 24 May 1965 when its functions were transferred to the new Windana Remand Home at Glandore.

Gallery



Gawler Place

Description: The library description states: Gawler Place, west side showing the Children's Welfare Department building before demolition. Right side of the house is 48 yards south of Flinders Street; frontage is 10 yards;.

More info

Chronology

- **Central Depot (1900 – 1965)**
 - Windana Remand Home (1965 - 1975)

Related Entries

Run by

- [State Children's Council \(1886 - 1927\)](#)
Date: 1900 - 1927
- [Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board \(1927 - 1966\)](#)
Date: 1927 - 1965

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Delinquent and other children in the care of the State, State of South Australia \(1938 - 1939\)](#)

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

Records

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

Records

- [Records of the Social Welfare Department and predecessors \(1849 - c. 1987\)](#)
- [Minutes - State Children's Council, later the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board \(1886 - 1965\)](#)
Held by State Records of SA. These large volumes of hand written minutes contain information about the establishment of children's homes, arrangements between the Board and state wards admitted to homes.

- [Annual Reports of the State Children's Council and the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department \(1887 - 1960\)](#)
Held by State Records of SA. These reports contain regular entries relating to the Central Depot.
 - [Correspondence files \('SCD' files\) - State Children's Department \(1887 - 1927\)](#)
Held by State Records of SA. This series covers all aspects of the Department's business including maintenance of State Wards, placement of children suitability of foster homes and more.
 - [Correspondence files \('CW & PRD' and 'SW' files\) -Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department and successors \(1927 - c. 1979\)](#)
Held by State Records of SA. These files contain letters and other documents relating to particular subjects and may include correspondence related to placements at the Central Depot.
 - [Minutes - Gentlemen's Committee, State Children's Council \(1903 - 1911\)](#)
Held by State Records of SA. This volume contains brief minutes relating to all aspects of the business of this committee. Many entries relate to the cases of individual children under the care of the Council.
 - [Minutes - Ladies' Committee, State Children's Council \(1911 - 1916\)](#)
Held by State Records of SA. These brief minutes relate to all aspects of the business of the Ladies' committee. Many relate to the cases of individual children under the care of the Department, including those at the Edwardstown Industrial School.
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