

Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown

1891 – 1898

Details

The Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown, was established by the government at Edwardstown in 1891 and replaced the Girls' Reformatory, Magill. In 1891 the Home housed 19 girls, aged 12 to 18. In 1897-1898 Catholic girls were sent to the Catholic Girls' Reformatory, Kapunda, and Protestant girls to Redruth Girls' Reformatory, Burra. The Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown, closed in 1898.

The Girls' Reformatory at Edwardstown was established by the government at Edwardstown in 1891 and replaced the Girls' Reformatory, Magill. The new institution was established to separate the girls living in the Reformatory from the other children in the Magill Industrial School. The move to Edwardstown also allowed for the Magill site to be redeveloped in preparation for the boys who were to be removed from the Reformatory Hulk.

In October 1891, all girls at the Girls' Reformatory, Magill moved, along with the matron, Mary E Holden, to Edwardstown. The new purpose built Reformatory was set on an eleven-acre (4.4 hectare) property. Three cottage-style housing units, named Charity, Faith and Hope, had been built on part of the property and this area was surrounded by a high galvanised iron fenced topped with barbed wire.

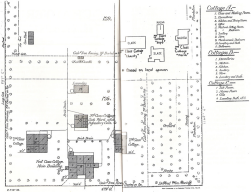
Girls were allocated to dormitories in the cottages based on their standard of behaviour. Charity was the 'First Class' cottage; Faith was for 'Second Class' girls and Hope for those whom the matron considered had serious behavioural problems. Hope also served as a sick ward and included cells used for punishment.

While committed to the Reformatory, girls carried out all the work required to keep the institution running. This included wood chopping, gardening, milking cows, laundry work and sewing for themselves, the reformatory and for other government institutions. The Annual Report of the State Children's Council for the first year at Edwardstown noted that the girls were 'unsettled' on first moving to their new premises and that 'one or two of the worst girls absconded, but were returned'. By June 1891, nineteen girls were housed at Edwardstown, ranging in age from twelve to eighteen years. On discharge from the Reformatory most of the girls were placed in service. Some returned to relatives on probation.

At Edwardstown absconding from the home was a common problem. The train-line, which ran along the northern side of the property, was regarded by the government as an unsettling influence. The Annual Report for 1895 noted sixteen instances of attempted escape, seven of them successful. Most girls were re-apprehended quickly.

In 1897-1898, due to the continuing large number of escapes, girls were removed from the Edwardstown Reformatory and separated into two groups, according to their religious denomination. Each group was sent away from the City to a country area. The Catholic girls were sent to the Catholic Girls' Reformatory, Kapunda in June 1897 and the Protestant girls went to the Redruth Girls' Reformatory in January 1898. The Girls' Reformatory at Edwardstown closed in 1898.

Gallery



Plan of Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown

Description: This is the floor plan for the Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown. It was originally published in the Annual Report of the State Children's Council in 1890.

More info

Chronology

- Girls Reformatory, Magill (1881 - 1891)
 - **Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown (1891 – 1898)**
 - Catholic Girls' Reformatory, Kapunda (1897 - 1909)
 - Redruth Girls' Reformatory (1897 - 1922)

Related Entries

Run by

- [State Children's Council \(1886 - 1927\)](#)
Date: 1890 - 1898

Related Organisations

- [Edwardstown Industrial School \(1898 - 1949\)](#)
The Edwardstown Industrial School opened in the site of the former Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown.

Resources

- Morley, Charles, *The Glandore Story: from Hulk to Haven*, 1995
- Barbalet, Margaret, *Far from a low gutter girl: the forgotten world of state wards: South Australia 1887-1940*, 1983
- Dickey, Brian, *Rations, Residence, Resources: A history of social welfare in South Australia since 1836*, 1986
- Spence, Catherine, *State children in Australia : a history of boarding out and its developments*, 1907

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [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 minutes include some entries related to the Girls Reformatory. Entries include details on admissions and discharges, transfers, cases of particular children and their parents as well as comments regarding the general running of the Reformatory.
- [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. Early volumes of these Annual Reports contain yearly updates on the Girls' Reformatory including information about numbers of girls admitted and discharged, conduct of the girls, and general developments and occurrences at the Reformatory.

- [Correspondence files \('SCD' files\) - State Children's Department \(1887 - 1927\)](#)

Held by State Records of SA. These correspondence files cover all aspects of the business of the State Children's Department and include information relating to Homes under the Department's control.

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