

The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town

1929 – 1972

Other Names: • Kent Town Boys Home

Details

The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town opened at Kent Town in 1929. It provided accommodation for boys placed privately or by the government. Boys from the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Eden Park at Mt Barker were also transferred there. During the 1950s and 1960s the Home accommodated up to 48 boys. The boys attended local schools. The Home closed in 1972.

The Kent Town Boys' Home at 64 Kent Terrace, Kent Town was officially opened by the Salvation Army on 27 April 1929. In January 1929, the Army purchased a two-storey stone building, previously known as 'Lynton'. They reported that this 'beautiful home with delightful surroundings' would be used as a city based Home for up to 50 younger boys. The grounds of Lynton, the former home of a South Australian Member of Parliament Mr Norman Darling, included tennis courts, lawns and established gardens. A separate coach house and garage were converted into lavatories and a playroom. Just prior to opening, a swimming pool was installed, funded by donations.

Prior to the opening of Kent Town Boys' Home, all boys under the care of the Salvation Army were placed at the Salvation Army Boys' Home Eden Park, Mt Barker (also referred to as The Boys' Probationary School). This Home was often overcrowded and younger boys and older boys were not accommodated separately. In early 1929 the Salvation Army wrote to the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board (CWPRB) and requested that the government proclaim the planned new Kent Town Boys' Home as a private institution for the 'reception and detention of wards of the State'. They explained that having a second institution would allow them to 'classify' the boys, separating them by age and 'behaviour'. Boys aged between six and 12 years of age already resident at Eden Park, or newly coming into the care of the Salvation Army, would be placed at Kent Town.

The Board chose not to proclaim Kent Town Boys' Home as a government recognised institution for a number of reasons. These included the fact there were already a number of proclaimed institutions and the Board was concerned that another might cause confusion for Magistrates when it came to sentencing. Kent Town was also considered too central. The Board believed that boys committed to its care for 'delinquency' or truancy (which meant not attending school) were better off living away from the city and further from what they regarded was often the 'disturbing influences by parents'. Additionally, boys from Kent Town were to attend Norwood Primary and Technical Schools and the Board felt that by sending boys to local schools the Salvation Army would be 'daily parading these State boys through the streets to and from school where they become known to the public and marked by their fellow scholars'.

As a result of the Board's decision, the Kent Town Boys' Home opened on 27 April 1929 without being proclaimed as a private institution under the control of the government. Instead it operated as a home for boys placed privately. However, over time, the government did become more involved with the Home. In 1950 when changes were made to the *Maintenance Act Amendment Act 1958*, a piece of legislation related to the care and maintenance of children, Kent Town was classified as a 'benevolent institution' caring for illegitimate children

under the age of seven. This meant that the Home had to be inspected by government welfare officers and periodic inspection reports appear on a departmental file from March 1954 to May 1965. These reports show that the Home generally accommodated between 45 and 48 boys. Sometimes this number included up to eight children under the age of seven. Also by the mid-1950s the government's Aborigines Protection Board placed a number of Aboriginal boys under its control, at Kent Town.

One boy who was placed at the Kent Town Boys' Home at the age of 8 in 1955 recalls sleeping in a ground floor, six bed dormitory, with younger boys. At the age of 8, he was regarded as one of the older residents:

most of these boys that were in the room were the little fellas and therefore they needed attention and they were really missing their folks and life was just miserable for them. And they didn't know really what they were there for...their world just changed so dramatically and they couldn't understand it...a lot of them wet the bed, a lot of them were crying. A lot of them followed you about ... around the yard or followed you wherever you went.

As with many institutions of the time, children were punished for wetting their beds. This led to night time trips to the laundry.

the laundry was a fair way away from the main building and if we got caught, that would be the strap... sometimes some of the kids would get the strap twice because they weren't supposed to be doing that...and they weren't supposed to wet their beds. And so there was a bit of a risk involved in the middle of the night, going down to the laundry and doing the sheets and the blankets.

In the winter months the Home was very cold.

Half the time the reason for wetting the bed was it was cold...I don't think they ever woke up to that, those people that were running the place... we had no heating in those days. Not even a heater, and they wonder why the little kids were wetting their bed...[We had] just a grey blanket and a very light quilt.

The boys' clothing was also grey, a grey jumper and shorts or grey long pants for the older boys. A 1956 departmental inspection report noted that the children were 'dressed suitably and appeared contented'.

The boys attended the Norwood Primary School and marched together to the school each day. They received daily religious instruction from the Salvation Army officers in charge of the institution and were required to say daily prayers. On weekends they attended church and Sunday school, again marching as a group to church, three times every Sunday.

Former residents of the Home strongly remember the closeness of the boys and their support for each other. One said that they were like brothers. This brotherhood was shown to one of the boys who had a physical disability, when they used the Home's swimming pool in the summer months. He remembers that on a hot day instead of all the boys running straight to the pool 'they ran to help me undo my callipers first'. In contrast, after he had attempted to abscond from the Home, the staff took away his callipers:

they took my irons off me because, to stop me from running, from going again. And so I had a big day with no irons. So that was their methods I guess of stopping boys from running away.

Another of the punishments was 'standing on the line' in the yard.

Sometimes up to two hours, you know, just standing there...I know how legs gave up, especially those of us in callipers. But I think that just the other boys walking around and looking at you, it just made you feel no good you know, just standing there all that time.

By the end of the 1960s, Kent Town was home to boys between the ages of 5 and 18, rather than only younger boys as in its earlier years. The Salvation Army's Social Services Annual Report stated that of the 59 boys cared for during 1970, only 14 had been admitted that year, indicating that most boys stayed 'for long terms'. The report also stated that most boys came to be placed at Kent Town because of 'family break-up, parental neglect and behaviour problems'. The SA and NT Welfare Departments also used the home for placing State children. Of the boys in care in 1970:

Three were placed by their father and 2 by both parents, the remainder being referrals from Social Workers within the Department for Social Welfare and Aboriginal Affairs, the Education Department and its Psychology Branch, the Northern Territory Administration and the Repatriation Department.

Kent Town Boys' Home continued to operate until January 1972, closing just six months before the passing of the Community Welfare Act. Boys resident in the Home at the time of its closure were either transferred to The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Eden Park at Mt Barker or to the Fullarton Children's Home which took the younger boys. Others were sent to private placements.

In 2013 the Kent Town Boys' Home building still stood and was operating as the headquarters of the AIDS Council of South Australia.

Gallery



Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town

Description: This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.



Former building entrance, Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town



Side of former building, Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town

Description: This image shows the side of the former building of The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town.



Former building, Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town



Former building, Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town

Description: This image shows the back of the building where the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town used to operate.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory \(1921 - 2018\)](#)

Related Events

- [Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry, South Australia \(2004 - 2008\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Boys' Probationary School \(1900 - 1945\)](#)
Some children from the Boys' Probationary School were sent to the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town, when it opened in 1929.
Date: 1929 -
- [The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mount Barker \(1945 - 1982\)](#)
When the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town closed in 1972 some older boys were sent to the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mt Barker.
- [Fullarton Children's Home \(1969 - 1986\)](#)
When The Salvation Army Boys' Home at Kent Town closed, some boys were transferred to the Fullarton Children's Home

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

Resources

- [Syd Graham interviewed by Karen George in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2000 - \), 4 September 2000](#)
- Cleland, Sharon, [Caring for the Children: A history of institutional care provided by The Salvation Army for Australian children and youth \(1893-1995\)](#), August 2012
- Steer, Hedley, *Social Salvation, Early development of the Social Wing of The Salvation Army*, 1996
- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territorial Headquarters (Vic), [Submission No. 46 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care: Appendix A: Children's Homes - A list of openings, closings and function](#), July 2003

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Historical records and memorabilia of Salvation Army institutions, Southern Territory](#)
- [Salvation Army Australia, Records of Homes in the former Southern Territory \(c. 1889 - c. 1988\)](#)

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