

# Estcourt House

1894 – 1978

**Other Names:**

- Escourt
- Escort

## Details

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Estcourt House opened at Grange in 1894 as a Home for the elderly and children with disabilities. It was run by the James Brown Memorial Trust. From 1931 it became a convalescent home for children only. It was taken over by the Adelaide Children's Hospital in 1955. It closed in 1978, when it became part of the government-run Strathmont Centre.

Estcourt House opened near the beach in the suburb of Grange, now Tennyson, in 1894. It had been built in 1883 by a successful Adelaide businessman, Mr Frederick Estcourt Bucknall. Financial problems leading to bankruptcy forced him to give up the property in 1886. The building remained empty for many years because the owner, Australian Mutual Provident Society [AMP], was unable to find a purchaser for so large a mansion in such an isolated location.

Mrs Jessie Brown, the widow of wealthy SA pastoralist James Brown, bequeathed money into a trust in her husband's name for the establishment of a home for people in need. In 1892 Estcourt House was purchased by the James Brown Memorial Trust for that purpose. In 1894 Estcourt House opened as a home for the elderly, visually impaired patients and children with physical disabilities.

By December of that year eight children, aged between 4 and 12, and 23 visually impaired elderly people were in residence. At the turn of the century the number of residents had risen to 45. From its beginning schooling was provided for children in the Home. Lessons were run by staff members until the Education Department provided a teacher in 1918. At this time many more children than adults were being admitted because Kalyra Hospital at Belair, also established as part of the Trust, was providing care for elderly people.

During the 1920s and 1930s Estcourt House developed a closer association with the Adelaide Children's Hospital and many children were referred to directly from the hospital. The hospital contributed funds for an open-air extension to be added. From 1931 no more adult patients were admitted and Estcourt House became a convalescent Home for children recovering from medical treatment. It also provided specialist care for survivors of tuberculosis, poliomyelitis and children with rheumatic fever or heart disease. It accommodated up to 40 children at one time.

One resident who was placed at Estcourt House from the Children's Hospital in 1949 and again in the early 1950s remembers large dormitories and the use of strict discipline. A neglected store room with many spider webs was used for confinement of children who were deemed to have misbehaved. The children referred to it as The Spider Room. He also recollects closeness between the children at the Home and how that helped him to cope:

*Somehow I was just put into a world where a lot of disabled kids were all together and...just being together and being hurt together, we became a family...I never experienced in Estcourt House any racism from those kids, there was just sincere brotherly and sisterly love, you know, because we were all in the same boat...and we all supported one another*

As the majority of patients at the Home came from the Adelaide Children's Hospital, the Hospital negotiated the purchase of Estcourt House in 1955. A large sum of money was spent on renovations and additions to the premises, so that it could accommodate up to 100 children.

Estcourt House provided convalescent care for children until 1978, when it was bought by the South Australian Government. It then became part of the Strathmont Centre, and from 1981, it was the location of the Ru Rua Nursing Home for children and young adults with intellectual disabilities.

## Gallery

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**Estcourt House, Grange**

**Description:** This image of Estcourt House shows adults and children who lived in the Home standing on the verandah.



**Estcourt House, Grange**



**Elephant ride at Adelaide Zoo**

**Description:** The library description states: Residents of Estcourt House, the James Brown Home for aged, blind, and crippled children, with Mary the Elephant during a day trip to the Adelaide Zoo on 27 November 1923.



**Elephant ride at Adelaide Zoo**

**Description:** The library description states: Children from Estcourt House at Grange enjoying an outing at Adelaide Zoo; six small boys are riding on the back of an elephant which is resting on the grass with its Keeper standing by its head, adults and other children, two being in wheelchairs, stand in front. This image is part of the Searcy Collection held at the State Library of South Australia.



**Estcourt House - Interior dormitory**

**Description:** This image was donated to the City of Charles Sturt Library from a private collection.

## More info

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## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Adelaide Children's Hospital \(1876 - 1989\)](#)  
Estcourt House was purchased and run by the Adelaide Children's Hospital Board in 1955  
Date: 1955 - 1978
- [James Brown Memorial Trust \(1892 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1894 - 1955

### Related Organisations

- [Strathmont Centre \(1971 - 2014\)](#)  
Estcourt House became a part of the Strathmont Centre between 1978 and 1981.
- [Ru Rua Nursing Home \(1978 - 1989\)](#)  
The Ru Rua Nursing Home moved from North Adelaide and took over the building that was Estcourt House in 1981.

### 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](#)

## Records

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

### Records held by other organisations

- [Records of the Hospitals Department and Predecessors \(1836 - current\)](#)
- [Admission registers - Estcourt House \(1941 - 1978\)](#)  
Held by State Records of SA. These two volumes of registers list admissions to Escourt House between 1941 and 1978. These records are restricted for 60 years.

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/estcourt-house/>