

Campbell Street Gaol

1821 – 1960

Details

Campbell Street Gaol opened in 1821. Although for adults, it housed a number of children. The Gaol closed in 1960 when the newly built Risdon Prison replaced it.

Campbell Street Gaol opened as a barracks for male convicts in 1821.

Children's presence in the Gaol was widely accepted by nineteenth century society because of the belief that they could be held responsible for their own actions. However, by the 1860s, this idea was changing. In 1867, the *Training Schools Act* provided for the establishment of training schools so that children were not sent to prison, although they might serve a 10 day sentence there first. A letter to *The Mercury* written in 1868 suggests some of the reasoning behind the Act:

There is at this moment a large number of boys confined in the Campbell-street gaol, and we suppose the gaoler does the best he can...to keep them employed, and to provide for their instruction. There is no provision made for the boys on the expiry of their sentences, and the want of occupation for even our respectable youth makes it apparent that the chances of these discharged Arabs, of gaining profitable employment, are very slender. The result is that the lads again find their way to gaol to "finish" their education, and our rising youth of the neglected classes are left to almost inevitable destruction.

The writer argued for the establishment of industrial and training schools. A Boys' Reformatory did open in 1869. Even so, according to Joan Brown, in 1875, 53 boys aged between eight and 16 years were in Campbell Street Gaol. Some were serving their full sentences there and others were waiting for a transfer to the Reformatory.

Change came slowly with a similar situation emerging in the twentieth century. During the 1950s, a growing number of youths under 18 were imprisoned at the Gaol. Its lack of segregation from the older prisoners and absence of educational programs and preparation for release made it particularly unsuitable for them.

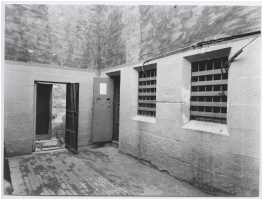
During the twentieth century, conditions at the Gaol were always bad. In 1908, it was in such a state of disrepair that the prisoners' lives were miserable and they could not be easily managed. There was no segregation of them or programs to encourage their reintegration into society after release. Between that year and 1956 there were numerous inquiries into conditions at the Gaol and three Royal Commissions prompted by prisoner escapes.

The condition of the building, the lack of programs for reintegration into society, and numerous escapes finally led the government to build a new prison at Risdon. It was completed in 1960 and Campbell Street Gaol closed.

Gallery

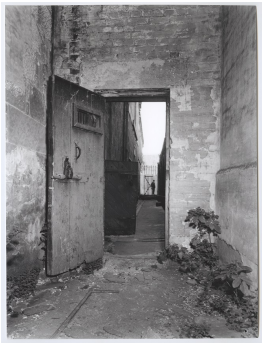


Campbell Street Gaol, Hobart - Internal courtyard showing outside wall, entry gates and outbuildings



Campbell Street Gaol, Hobart - Condemned man's cell

Description: This description was provided by a local photographer who visited the site in 2019. This photo shows the "condemned cell and condemned man's exercise yard at Hobart Gaol, with the door to the gallows visible beyond. The cell and yard have been demolished, but the doorway and gallows yard survive."



Campbell Street Gaol, Hobart - Internal walls and cell doors



Campbell Street Gaol, Hobart - Exterior view of prison buildings



Campbell Street Gaol, Hobart - Courtyard view towards external wall and the Glebe



Campbell Street Gaol, Hobart - Cell Blocks and watchtower from external courtyard



Campbell Street Gaol, Hobart - interior of chapel

More info

Chronology

- **Campbell Street Gaol (1821 – 1960)**
 - Risdon Prison (1960 - current)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Convict Department \(1818 - 1877\)](#)
- [Sherriff and Gaols Department, State of Tasmania \(1901 - 1924\)](#)
- [HM Gaols Department \(1936 - 1944\)](#)
- [Gaols Department \(1944 - 1959\)](#)
- [Prisons Department \(1959 - 1983\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Boys' Reformatory \(1869 - 1876\)](#)
Boys could be sent to the Boys' Reformatory as an alternative to prison.
- [Ashley Home for Boys \(1926 - 1999\)](#)
Adolescents that could not be managed at Ashley, might be sent to Campbell Street Gaol.
- [St John's Park \(1936 - 1994\)](#)
Campbell Street Gaol sometimes sent people to St John's Park.

Records

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

Records

- [Register of the Admission of 'Mental Defectives', New Town Infirmary \(1926 - 1965\)](#)
The Campbell Street Gaol transferred inmates to the Mental Defectives Home.
 - [Returns from the Superintendents of Hobart and Launceston Gaols of Persons Committed and Received under Sentence \(1919 - 1935\)](#)
 - [Prisoners Individual Files, Campbell Street Gaol \(1891 - 1960\)](#)
 - [Deceased Prisoners Individual Files, Risdon Prison and Campbell Street Gaol \(1918 - 1978\)](#)
 - [Prisoners Record Books, Campbell Street Gaol \(1890 - 1962\)](#)
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