

# Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Homes, Gosnells

1920 – 1955

**Other Names:**

- Gosnells Boys' Home
- Seaforth Boys' Colony
- Seaforth Backward Section
- Seaforth General Section
- No 2 Section, Seaforth

## Details

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The Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Home, Gosnells (Kelmscott) was established in 1920. Boys from the Salvation Army Homes at Collie were transferred to Seaforth, and lived in different 'sections', including a separate facility for boys and young men with intellectual disabilities (1922-1950). Seaforth Boys' Home closed in 1955 and remaining boys were transferred to either the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Nedlands, or the Anglican Farm School, Stoneville. Those adults who had been in the 'backward' section remained on the Seaforth property which continued to be used by the Salvation Army as a residential care centre for adults.

The Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Home was established around 1921, on a parcel of land held by the Salvation Army and shared with the Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Reformatory and Seaforth Salvation Army Girls' Home. The Boys' Home had two sections: a general section for children who were described in 1925 as 'orphans or semi-orphans' and a 'backward' section for boys with intellectual disabilities. The general section was also called the 'probationary' section. All Children's Home sections at Seaforth had ceased operation by 30 August 1955.

Seaforth continued to be used by the Salvation Army as a residential facility for adults. Known as the Harry Hunter Rehabilitation Centre in 2014, the site remained active.

A brief overview of the 'general' and 'backward' sections follows:

### General section

In 1925, the 'general' section at Seaforth accommodated 50 boys aged from 5 to 14 years. A large brick building in the centre of the property held the boys' dormitories. The Seaforth Boys' Band, which had been established in 1923, drew its members from this section of the Home. The band not only played at functions in the Home, but was also gave public performances and in 1926 went on a tour of the south-west. The boys' band seems to have been an important part of the Salvation Army's fundraising campaigns.

In 1942, boys from the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Nedlands were evacuated to Seaforth so the army could make use of the Nedlands site. They returned after the army no longer needed Nedlands.

In 1953, the Premier of Western Australia commissioned RH Hicks, Director of Child Welfare and Social Services in New South Wales, to review Western Australian child welfare facilities, including the Seaforth Boys' Home. Hicks' report was never released by the government but certain elements were published in the press, including information that condemned the conditions at Seaforth.

On 30 August 1955, the Seaforth Boys' Home, general section, closed. All remaining boys were transferred to the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Nedlands.

## 'Backward' section

The Salvation Army opened a section for boys with intellectual disabilities at Seaforth in 1922. At the time this section opened, there were a range of terms used to describe children with disabilities – and boys with physical disabilities may also have been sent to this Home. Previously, these children would have been sent to the Claremont Hospital for the Insane. By 1925 there were 50 boys in this section of the Home, and they went to a school run by the Education Department on the Seaforth site. The dormitories, playgrounds, gardens and dining-room of the 'backward' section were separate from the other sections of Seaforth, and, apart from the Manager, had its own staff. Young men as old as 25 years were reportedly resident in the Home in 1929. Boys and young men were trained and worked in raffia and basket-making, embroidery, rug-making, toy-making and cabinetry. Not all boys stayed in the 'backward' section. Those who were deemed suitable for work in the general community were placed with employers.

The 'backward' section closed on 29 July 1950. Some residents, who were no longer children, remained on the Seaforth property which, after August 1955, continued to be used by the Salvation Army as a residential care centre for adults.

The Seaforth Home was mentioned in the Lost Innocents Report (2001) as an institution involved in the migration of children to Australia.

## Gallery

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**Boys in the grounds of Seaforth Boys' Home, Gosnells, 1926-1932**

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photo and is part of the collection of 30 images titled 'Activities at Seaforth Boys' Home, Gosnells [picture]'. The image shows boys on the sports field at Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Home, Gosnells.



**Dormitory at Seaforth Boys' Home, Gosnells, 1926-1932**

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photo and is part of the group of nine images titled 'Buildings at Seaforth Boys' Home, Gosnells [picutre]'. The image shows a long, narrow dormitory room with rows of beds.



**Display of cane furniture made by the boys at Seaforth Boys' Home, Gosnells, 1930**

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photo and is part of the group of 35 images titled 'Canework, woodwork and other goods made by the boys at Seaforth Boys' Home, Gosnells [picture]'. The image shows a display of cane furniture.



**Salvation Army Homes - Seaforth, Gosnells, 1928**

**Description:** 'Salvation Army Homes - Seaforth, Gosnells, 1928' is an image included (after p.6) in the *Annual Report of the Child Welfare Department, 1928*. This image shows a field of haystacks, with a range of what appear to be cottages and dormitory buildings visible in the background.

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### Seaforth House, 1958

**Description:** 'Seaforth House, 1958' is a digital copy of an image held in the *Seaforth photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. A handwritten caption reads: 'Back of Seaforth House, Christmas 1958'.

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### Seaforth Boy's Home circa 1948

**Description:** 'Seaforth Boy's Home circa 1948' is a digital copy of an image mounted on a card titled, 'Young Australians', held in the *Seaforth photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. A typed caption reads in part, 'Seaforth Boy's Home - circa 1948 I counted 73 boys + driver.'

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [The Salvation Army, Australian Territory \(1880 - 1921\)](#)
- [The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory \(1921 - 2018\)](#)

#### Related Events

- [Investigation into the Administration of the Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(1953\)](#)  
The Investigation into the Administration of the Child Welfare Department of Western Australia by RH Hicks reviewed the Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Homes.  
Date: 1953 -

#### Related Organisations

- [Redhill Reformatory School \(1903 - 1922\)](#)  
When Redhill Reformatory School closed, the boys were transferred to Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Homes, Gosnells.  
Date: 1922 -
- [Salvation Army Boys' Home \(1918 - 1965\)](#)  
Boys were transferred between the Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Homes, Gosnells and the Salvation Army Boys' Home in Nedlands (West Subiaco). During World War II, the Nedlands boys all moved to Seaforth temporarily. When Seaforth closed, boys were transferred permanently to Nedlands.  
Date: 1920 - 1955
- [Seaforth Salvation Army Girls' Home \(1920 - 1942\)](#)  
Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Homes, Gosnells was co-located with the Seaforth Salvation Army Girls' Home on the Salvation Army's property at Gosnells.
- [Seaforth Salvation Army Boys' Reformatory \(1920 - 1955\)](#)
- [Anglican Farm School, Stoneville \(1955 - 1961\)](#)  
When Seaforth closed some boys were transferred to Anglican Farm School, Stoneville.

## Resources

- Community Affairs References Committee, [Lost Innocents: Righting the record - Report on child migration](#), 30 August 2001
- 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
- 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

- *West Australia*, The Victory, 1 September 1921
- *Remaking Young Australians*, The War Cry, 26 March 1921
- *Welcomed to West Australia*, The War Cry, 25 September 1926
- *Seaforth Boys on Tour*, The War Cry, 9 October 1926
- *Seaforth Boys' Homes*, The War Cry, 15 December 1923
- *Treated with real affection and concern*, All the World, October 1978

## Other Resources

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**Title:** Backward boys come to the front

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 19 December 1925

[Details](#)



**Title:** Seaforth History

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 1920s - 1950s

[Details](#)



**Title:** Seaforth WA Children's Homes 1920's

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 1920s - 1950s

[Details](#)



**Title:** Seaforth MacKenzie Home at Seaforth Boy's Home, 1951

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 1951

[Details](#)

**Title:** Seaforth School and Reformatory Boys

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 1954?

[Details](#)

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## 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](#)
  - [Children's Homes Files, Western Australian Salvation Army Homes \(1897 - 2012\)](#)
  - [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
  - [Tuart Place Historical Photos Collection](#)
  - [Seaforth Boys' Home \(Gosnells, W.A.\) Photographs \(1926 - 1932\)](#)
  - [Salvation Army Australia, Records of Homes in the former Southern Territory \(c. 1889 - c. 1988\)](#)
  - [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
  - [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
  - [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/seaforth-salvation-army-boys-homes-gosnells/>