

# Commissioner of Native Welfare

1954 – 1972

## Details

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The Commissioner of Native Welfare was an official role created by the Native Welfare Act 1954, replacing the Commissioner for Native Affairs. The Commissioner was the head of the Department of Native Welfare, and the legal guardian of every Aboriginal child in Western Australia to the age of 21 years, except those children made wards of state by the Child Welfare Act 1947. He had the power to remove Aboriginal children and place them in Homes or in 'service' (work). The Commissioner ceased to be guardian of Aboriginal children from 1963, and became responsible for their 'custody, maintenance and education'. The role of Commissioner ended with the creation of the Department of Community Welfare in 1972.

Stanley Middleton, who had been Commissioner for Native Affairs from 1948, continued as Commissioner of Native Welfare from 1954 to 1962. Frank Ellis Gare was Commissioner from 1962 to 1972.

Under the Native Welfare Act 1963, the Commissioner ceased to be the guardian of Aboriginal children ('native minors') and the duties of the Commissioner, as head of the Department of Native Welfare, included providing for 'the custody, maintenance and education of the children of natives', and also regulating 'the control, care and education of the children of natives'. This role was abolished by the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972. The remaining child welfare responsibilities of the Department of Welfare were transferred to the Department of Community Welfare of the Department of Community Welfare in 1972.

## More info

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### Chronology

- Commissioner for Native Affairs (1936 - 1954)
  - **Commissioner of Native Welfare (1954 – 1972)**
    - Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia (1972 - 1985)

### Related Entries

#### Related Organisations

- [St Mary's Mission, New Norcia \(1848 - 1974\)](#)

The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at St Mary's Mission, New Norcia until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.
- [Beagle Bay Mission \(1895 - 1976\)](#)

Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Beagle Bay Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Lombadina \(1909 - 1975\)](#)

The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Lombadina until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of Aboriginal children.

- Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Forrest River Mission \(1913 - 1968\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Forrest River Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Mount Margaret Mission \(1921 - 1975\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Mount Margaret Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)  
The Child Welfare Department shared responsibility for the 'care and control' of Aboriginal children who were Wards with the Commissioner of Native Welfare.
- [Warburton Mission \(1933 - 1977\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Warburton Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home \(1934 - 1980\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of Aboriginal children at Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.
- [Norseman Mission \(1935 - 1985\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Norseman Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Sunday Island Mission \(1937 - 1964\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Sunday Island Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.
- [Halls Creek Mission \(1943? - 1960\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Halls Creek Mission.
- [Wandering Mission \(1944 - 1979\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the guardian of all 'native' children at Wandering Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Carnarvon Mission \(1945 - 1975?\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Carnarvon Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Pallottine Mission, Tardun \(1948 - 2004\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Pallottine Mission, Tardun until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1968?
- [Wotjulum \(1951 - 1956\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Wotjulum.  
Date: 1954 - 1956
- [Kurrawang Mission \(1952 - 1984\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the guardian of all 'native' children at Kurrawang Mission until 1963. After 1963, the Department of Native Welfare could make regulations for the 'control, care and education of the children of natives'.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Cosmo Newbery Mission \(1953 - 1973?\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the guardian of Aboriginal children placed at Cosmo Newbery Mission.  
Date: 1955 - 1963
- [La Grange Mission \(1955 - 1984\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at La Grange Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972

- [Department of Native Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1955 - 1972\)](#)  
The Commissioner was the head of the Department of Native Welfare.
- [Derby Hostel \(1956 - 1994\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the guardian of all 'native' children at Derby Hostel, United Aborigines Mission until 1963. After 1963, the Department of Native Welfare could make regulations for the 'control, care and education of the children of natives'.
- [Mowanjum \(1956 - 1972\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Mowanjum until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972
- [Fairhaven Hostel \(1965 - 1987\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare could make regulations for young people at Fairhaven Hostel under its powers for the 'control, care and education of the children of natives'.  
Date: 1965 - 1972
- [Rangeview Hostel \(1969 - 1973?\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare could regulate the 'care' of Aboriginal children in Rangeview Hostel.
- [Bamburra Hostel \(1970 - current\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare could regulate the 'care' of Aboriginal children at Bamburra Hostel.  
Date: 1970 - 1972

### Related Legislation

- [Aborigines Act 1905, Western Australia \(1906 - 1964\)](#)  
The Commissioner continued the legal authority granted by the *Aborigines Act 1905* until the Act was repealed in 1963.  
Date: 1954 - 1963
- [Native Welfare Act 1954, Western Australia \(1955 - 1964\)](#)  
The *Native Welfare Act 1954* changed the title of the role of Commissioner of Native Affairs to that of Commissioner of Native Welfare.
- [Native Welfare Act Amendment Act 1960, Western Australia \(1960 - 1963\)](#)  
The *Native Welfare Act Amendment Act 1960* exempted the Commissioner of Native Welfare from personal liability in carrying out duties under the Act.  
Date: 1960 - 1972
- [Native Welfare Act 1963, Western Australia \(1963 - 1972\)](#)  
The Native Welfare Act 1963 changed the powers of the Commissioner of Native Welfare; he ceased to be the legal guardian of all Aboriginal children, and became responsible for their 'care'.

### Related Concepts

- [Aboriginal Protection in Western Australia \(c. 1832 - c. 1972\)](#)
- [Assimilation Policy \(1950s - 1960s\)](#)

## Resources

- Western Australia. Department of Native Welfare, *Annual Report: Department of Native Welfare, 1955 - 1972*
- van den Berg, Rosemary, *Aboriginal protectors*, Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia, 2009
- National Library of Australia, [Papers of Frank Gare, circa 1937-2004](#), 2012
- [Interview with Frank Ellis Gare, last Commissioner for Native Welfare \[interviewed by Darren Foster\]](#), 1998
- [He heralded a new era for Aborigines](#), Sydney Morning Herald, 16 February 2004
- [Family Notices - Gare](#), Sunday Times, 15 December 1918
- Middleton, S, [Nullarbor Natives Gain New Life](#), The West Australian, 28 February 1953
- [AU WA A48 - Department of Native Welfare](#), State Records Office of Western Australia - Organisations & People, 2015

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