

BAMBURRA HOSTEL FOR TEENAGED GIRLS IN YOKINE, PERTH.

Bamburra Hostel at 211 Swan Street, Yokine, Perth was owned by the WA Government, Community Welfare Department, and ACCIM was asked to operate this hostel in the late 1960's. This arrangement was finalised, with the first students ready for the 1970 school year.

The hostel catered for up to 12 teenaged girls, together with an ACCIM missionary couple and their children. It was a large, purpose built hostel in a suburban street which had a large swimming pool and games room.

The purpose of the hostel was to provide accommodation and care for teenaged Aboriginal girls from country areas to allow them to attend the local High School, or for further education. A large percentage of girls who stayed at Bamburra came from the Kimberleys, with some coming from the Goldfields, Pilbara and Murchison / Gascoyne areas.

Many of the girls came to Bamburra at the request of their parents. Parents from the north in particular were Christians who had contact with Churches of Christ missionaries (ACCIM) in various ways in the north, and who trusted ACCIM to care for their girls in an appropriate way, to ensure that they went to school every day and were prevented from engaging in any social activities that they would not approve of. There were clear directives from parents in many cases. Many of these parents and /or their community members had sent their teenagers to other ACCIM centres for schooling and the standard of care was acceptable to them, and appreciated by them. Some of the girls came from the Churches of Christ Mission at Carnarvon and other places as requested by Community Welfare.

The five couples who managed the hostel over the 17 year period were ACCIM missionaries and all but the two older couples were experienced in the residential care of children and young people within ACCIM. Two couples were older with families who had left home, one couple had a teenaged family of their own and two couples had primary school aged children or younger. All of these couples were chosen because of their ability and enthusiasm for this particular work. The hostel was their home for the years that they worked there and for each of the couples, the size of their family increased to include the girls who came to Bamburra. They cared for and provided for the physical, educational and social needs of their large family without regular assistance during the school terms although for short periods of time several aboriginal younger women who were also ACCIM missionaries provided additional care and help, living in at the hostel.

At Bamburra, as it was in every ACCIM Residential Childcare Centre and Hostel, advocacy on behalf of the girls (and their families) was always deliberate and strong. The girls at Bamburra certainly knew that their point of view was being upheld by the people caring for them at the hostel as they went to school, and interacted with and lived in a suburban community in Perth. School photos indicate the adherence to school uniform and the girls had a wardrobe of appropriate clothing for all occasions.

Over the years Commonwealth Education paid for the Bamburra Managers to visit the parents at least once a year. Close and lasting friendships were formed with many in the Kimberleys in particular and the parents were welcomed to stay at the hostel if they were visiting Perth.

For the girls new to Perth, attending Mirrabooka High School or Tuart TAFE College and living in the city meant large adjustments in the way they were able to live their lives. Some had siblings or extended family staying with them at Bamburra at least for part of the time and all had come from a relaxed outback lifestyle. A small bus was provided for the hostel, and it enabled them to move around the city easily and safely.

As part of the Hostel routine, each of the girls was taught how to care for their clothes and was involved with the meals for the family. From time to time, the Hostel Managers arranged for the girls to gain the benefit of professionals who gave them advice and help in personal grooming, and in other areas that added to their self esteem and personal development.

The use of tutors and other additional education assistance was part of the Bamburra scene, and many of the girls who have stayed at Bamburra have been able to take jobs in their communities.

Many stayed for three years to complete Year 10 at High School and over the years there were those who went further with their education at High School or at Business College. Bamburra Hostel provided each

one a safe and encouraging environment in which they were able to achieve an education that would have been denied to them in their own communities.

The Bampurra Hostel family attended the nearby Nollamara Church of Christ on Sunday mornings and at least for quite a few of the years, they were able to go to the Nyoongar Church in the City on Sunday night. This provided further opportunities and experiences with a wide range of people. For a number of years, the girls were able to attend the Youth Group on Saturday night which was part of the Aboriginal Church in Perth City. The Hostel Manager/s took the girls to all of these activities and all others outside the hostel.

Because there were a number of ACCIM Centres in WA, including four childcare centres, Bampurra Hostel became the "drop-off" and "pick up" place for people passing through. It made the Bampurra Hostel a very busy cog in the wheel of ACCIM ministry in WA.

The WA Government took back control of Bampurra Hostel at the end of 1986, thus ending 17 years of successful and fruitful care of teenaged girls by ACCIM missionaries..

Phil and June Jackson were the Managers at Bampurra from January 1979 to 1983. Following are some of their memories of this time.

June Jackson comments

Most of the girls went to the Mirabooka High School. Some of the teachers did not know how to deal with the cultural differences eg. The teachers expected that the girls would look at them when they talked to the teacher and this was not part of their culture. The Bampurra girls were the first Aboriginal girls at the school who had come from country / tribal areas where culture remained strong. There were many other Aboriginal students at the school as well so it was a huge difficulty for students and teachers alike to operate cross culturally in this environment. After one incident, Phil Jackson went to talk with the School Principal and he invited Phil to speak to all of the teachers at the school about cultural differences. Once the teachers understood and acted on what they knew, life for the Bampurra girls was much better at school.

Some of the girls went to the Tuart TAFE College. The Bampurra girls encountered the same cultural issues that had occurred at Mirabooka High School. There was a real problem with two teachers who told the class that the Bampurra girls were the closest to the apes. Phil Jackson went to the Principal who was told that he (Phil) did not have the right to tell them what they could teach, so Phil went to the Regional Director and the two teachers were stood down.

The Nyoongar Church had a Youth Group on Saturday Nights and the girls were able to go to this if they wanted to. Should they have been in trouble during the week, they had to stay home from this night that they really enjoyed or other church events at Nollamara!

Other privileges denied them were 'no sweets' at the evening meal which they always really loved. The one they disliked the most was no TV on Friday nights. Every Friday night, all of the girls were allowed to camp in the lounge room and watch TV until late, providing they did not make a lot of noise.

During the years that the Jacksons were Managers at Bampurra, they allowed and encouraged the girls to experience life in the city, with clear boundaries that their parents would expect. They were allowed to go into the city on Saturday morning for a limited time, but they needed to go in pairs, and were to stay together and watch out for each other. Initially, the hostel parents went with them into town and taught them the bus routes etc

Much of this activity gave the girls confidence in living in a different environment in a responsible way and added to the educational advantages that they received from their schooling and further education in the city.

The girls always went home for all of the school holidays, and the Managers were encouraged to visit the parents in the Kimberleys in particular. Phil and June Jackson did so at least once a year, and camped with the families in their communities. Any concerns could be discussed as well as the progress of their girls at school, and relationships with families and community were strengthened. This was a pattern that all ACCIM childcare centres had adopted, particularly with children and teenagers coming into a childcare centre at the request of parents.