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‘Aboriginal Education and Employment Hostels’: Information to supplement the glossary term on the Find & Connect web resource

(<http://findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00635b.htm>), 2012

In May 1971, Katrin Wilson and Michael V. Robinson presented a comparative survey of Aboriginal Hostels to the then Commissioner of Native Welfare, Mr F.E. Gare. This detailed research report provides information that might otherwise have been lost about the accommodation facilities that existed for student and working youth from Indigenous backgrounds. The focus of the report is on metropolitan hostels, but data is also available for the country facilities. Information from this report has been integrated into the entries relating to individual hostels on the Find and Connect WA site. In February 1995, the Department for Community Development, through its Out of Home and Alternative Care (OHAC) program, reviewed the cost and efficiency of hostels. A Departmental report written at the time gave a more somewhat more recent history of the Aboriginal Hostel program. Likewise, information from this report has been incorporated into Find and Connect. Together, these reports provide valuable information about the development and progression of the Aboriginal Hostels program.

When Wilson and Robinson conducted their research into Aboriginal Hostels in 1971, the removal of Indigenous children from their families of origin was not a matter for public debate. Thus, while the researchers were clearly concerned about the purpose and philosophies of the Aboriginal Hostel program as practised and supported by the Department of Native Welfare (DNW), they did not draw attention to, nor provide a critique of, the policy of removing children from families in the first instance. Later histories, however, dealt with this issue directly. In 1994, a Department of Community Services report, 'From Crisis to Prevention: The Community Services Industry Study' outlined the legislation and practices that firstly removed children from their families and eventually resulted in the existence of programs such as Aboriginal Hostels. Aboriginal children, and especially 'part-Aboriginal' children were seen to gain no benefit at all from staying with their families and so their removal to missions was seen as a type of 'rescue'. As the twentieth century wore on, policies and laws sought to keep Indigenous people out of mainstream society. For example, in 1927, Aborigines were banned from walking through Perth's central city streets and it wasn't even possible for adults to 'apply' for citizenship until 1944. There were special regulations about employing Indigenous people, even about having sexual intercourse with an Indigenous person. It wasn't until the Native Welfare Act was amended in 1963 that these restrictions were lifted and the Commissioner of Native Welfare was no longer the guardian of all Indigenous children.

Gradually, it became more common for Aboriginal children to be admitted to mainstream schools and two hostels were set up for Indigenous high school students in 1951 and 1952. Indigenous families, however, still suffered the legacy of generations of restrictive laws and many continued to live in poverty. Some children were still being removed to missions or

Children's Homes for 'welfare' reasons, and many were placed with white families. It was not until the 1980s that policies changed to make it important to try and place an Aboriginal child with either a family member or at least another Indigenous family. So when Wilson and Robinson wrote their report on Aboriginal Hostels in 1971 they were looking at a system which at that time probably seemed like a great improvement from what was on offer in the 1950s, for example.

The history of state involvement in metropolitan hostel accommodation for students and young workers from Indigenous backgrounds began shortly after a change in policy and administration of the (then) Department of Native Affairs in the late 1940s. Commissioner Middleton, who was a very keen advocate of assimilation, set up an 'accommodation centre' for 'near white' student girls at Alvan House in 1950. This caused a lot of controversy at the time. Upset ratepayers and neighbours in Mount Lawley tried to have the hostel closed or moved to another suburb. However, Middleton was determined and went on to start a similar hostel for student boys in West Perth (McDonald House). It is notable that both these hostels were for 'near white' young people, which was the policy at the time. The DNW appointed staff to manage the hostels and there were a few problems at the start and high costs.

Other groups and individuals were also making efforts to provide accommodation for young Indigenous people who were living away from home in Perth. The Pallottines opened a metropolitan centre in the mid-1950s and expanded to the Riverton site in 1956. In 1958, Mr. R. McKeich, a member of the Baptist Union, established a private hostel to accommodate Aboriginal working boys coming to Perth. This project was the origin of what later became known as Katakutu. In the 1960s, people who had been foster-carers associated with the United Aborigines Mission founded Bethel Inc., an independent body whose aim was to provide accommodation in Perth for Indigenous students, coordinated by Mr. and Mrs. Shedley. The Shedleys provided accommodation for several students at their home in Applecross, and Bethel Inc later bought two more homes.

By 1959, the DNW was faced with two issues. They wanted to be able to find jobs and accommodation for young Indigenous people in the metropolitan area, but they didn't want to be in the business of running hostels. After a process of negotiation, Alvan House and McDonald House were handed over to church bodies. The Baptist Union took over Alvan House, and McDonald House went to the Anglican Church according to Wilson and Robinson. After the change-over, both hostels accommodated only young males. Mr. and Mrs. McKeich moved from their original location and renamed Alvan House 'Katukutu'. As the Department was very active in finding jobs for young Indigenous people in the city in the 1960s, they needed more hostels. But they wanted other agencies to manage them. In 1966, the first of these new hostels was opened in Queen's Crescent Mt Lawley. This was 'Cooinda' and it was run by the Methodist Homes for Children. After the 1967 constitutional changes the Commonwealth Government made more funding available for accommodation centres, study grants, traineeships and subsidies for young Indigenous workers and students. The metropolitan hostel program was expanded with Warminda in Welshpool,

Rangevue at Mt Lawley, Oceanview in Cottesloe, and Kyewong in Como. These hostels, and a 'scatter cottage' for children from Mogumber (Ardross House), opened between 1968 and 1970.

The hostels were all owned, renovated and equipped by the DNW, except for Rangevue, which had been purchased by the Presbyterian Church with a Grant-in-Aid. They were run by a number of different church agencies. At the same time, the earlier hostels were also expanding. Bethel had three hostels in the Applecross-Melville area and another at Kununurra. These operated independently of the DNW and the managers, Mr and Mrs Shedley, made their own placement decisions. By 1970, the Pallottine Centre at Riverton could accommodate 70 residents. There was also a small home for students at Tuart Hill (Ebenezer Homes) which was run by people with 'strong religious convictions' according to Wilson and Robinson. The Pallottine Centre had an off-site small hostel for boys. Another small-scale enterprise was Miss Elphick's boarding house in Shenton Park. Miss Elphick was a member of the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship (NEAF) Incorporated. Some students at this time also went to private boarding schools.

Another factor was the introduction of Commonwealth Secondary Grants to all Aboriginal students over 14 years of age, particularly as most of the State's high schools were in the metropolitan area and there were no high schools beyond 'junior' certificate level north of Geraldton. A new hostel for teenage girls going to Business College was opened in Bedford and in 1970 there were plans to open more hostels in Morley, Fremantle and other suburbs to meet the growing demand. Looking at this in 1971, Wilson and Robinson noted, that with 'such rapid and recent developments, it is difficult to separate clear policy lines and methods. As one officer put it to us *the thing is growing like topsy.*'

In 1970 there were a lot of new hostels in country areas too. Hostels for Indigenous primary school age children were all around the State. New hostels for high school students or young people in employment were being opened or planned for in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Albany, Geraldton and Port Hedland. Wilson and Robinson discussed the DNW's policy towards these hostels as it stood in 1971, providing an insightful examination of how the DNW perceived the needs of these students, and how those needs should be met. The first policy consideration was to decide whether hostel or private board should be the main type of accommodation. The DNW preferred the young people to board in private homes but there was some 'difficulty' in finding people who were prepared to 'accept Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal boarders'. Also, the DNW believed it would be harder to supervise what was happening if students were scattered about in private homes. Another factor was that young people who had come from communities would rather be with a few other Aboriginal students than being just on their own with a new family for company.

Once a hostel program had been agreed, questions about whether to use existing hostels (such as the YMCA) or establish new ones arose. Then there were the issues of converting

old houses or building new ones, and how many young people should live there. Administrators felt 10 to 14 was a good number, while hostel staff thought 8 to 10 young people was preferable. Local authorities sometimes also put conditions on the number of residents. Ideally, hostels should have been close to schools or work locations, but the reality was that the attitudes of local authorities and neighbours often meant that hostels were located wherever it was possible to put them, as the following example from Wilson and Robinson shows:

An example of recent Shire Council intervention in the proposed establishment of hostels is revealed in Departmental dealings with the Melville City Council concerning the purchase of the property at Hallin Court, Ardross. In opposing the establishment of this hostel, the Melville City Council claimed that the proposed use of the premises contravened the Town Planning Act. The then Minister for Town Planning supported the Council, and the Department of Native Welfare referred the matter to the Crown Law Department. This Department gave the opinion that the Town Planning Act was not contravened by the establishment of a hostel in the area. However, rather than alter the house to take more residents as had been planned, the then Minister for Native Welfare sought a compromise in reducing the number to be accommodated to six. However the Melville Town Clerk again referred the matter to the Premier ...

The matter, as outlined by the authors, went to and fro until the six residents were accommodated at Hallin Court. And this type of issue was the norm, with Alvan House, Oceanview and Applecross Cottage also facing great difficulties at the local authority level. One exception was the Bedford Park Hostel which was approved by the Bayswater Shire Council. That approval gave them a good reputation in DNW at the time.

These local authority hurdles meant that the DNW's policy of separating students from young workers was often compromised, though it was the norm in 1971 to keep students together and have separate hostels for young workers. Generally, the hostels were segregated by sex and they were managed by non-Departmental, mostly church-run, agencies. The DNW's policy was to place people in the hostels and coordinate the welfare activities, but Wilson and Robinson found that this often didn't happen, which made it very difficult for the Department to evaluate the effectiveness of individual hostels or the system as a whole. They found that in the 'absence of follow-up, the Department tends to measure success in terms of overall hostel efficiency. A hostel (and, by extension, its residents) displays success if the residents and staff do little complaining or refrain from *messing up*'.

The policy of the DNW in 1971 was to 'purchase, renovate and equip existing suburban homes for the accommodation of segregated groups of students and workers, with each hostel managed by an independent controlling authority' in a setting which familiarised them

with 'the life-styles and methods' of 'European' society. From 1 July 1972, responsibility for the hostels was transferred from the Department of Native Welfare to the Department for Community Welfare. The hostels mostly kept the same purpose, which was to give young Indigenous people accommodation and support while they went to school or were in employment in areas where they could not stay with family. But the hostels were also meant to give these young people opportunities to mix with new people and gain new skills and confidence.

There were a number of government and community sector organisations involved in the Aboriginal hostels program in some way. Three Commonwealth agencies had a direct involvement:

- The Department of Education and Science, which administered the Aboriginal Secondary Grants and Aboriginal Study Grants schemes.
- The Office of Aboriginal Affairs, which gave grants to DNW for general welfare purposes and to buy or build hostels for students receiving Aboriginal Secondary or Study Grants.
- The Department of Labour and National Service, which administered the Employment Training Scheme for Aborigines and sometimes found accommodation for young Indigenous workers, independently of the DNW, through its Commonwealth Employment Service arm.

In addition to the DNW, four other State government agencies played important direct roles in the Aboriginal Hostels program in 1971.

- The Child Welfare Department, which shared responsibility for the 'care and control' of Aboriginal children with the DNW and also ran its own hostel program for children, students and young workers.
- The Public Works Department, which gave practical support and services for purchasing, renovating, equipping and maintaining the hostels.
- The Education Department and its schools, which had a direct impact on the need for city and town hostels through what Wilson and Robinson considered inadequate planning for local education services to Aboriginal children.
- The Country High Schools Hostels Authority (CHSHA), whose Act also enabled them to accommodate primary school children where the Minister thought it necessary.

There were twelve CHSHA hostels in 1971:

- Albany had 3 hostels.
- Geraldton had 2 hostels. The John Frewer Hostel had 6 Indigenous students in 1970 and 5 in 1971.
- Northam had 2 hostels, with an overall capacity for 79 girls and 133 boys. There was one Indigenous student in 1971.
- Merredin, with capacity for 128 students, and no Indigenous students in 1971.

- Esperance, Katanning and Narrogin had one hostel each, but only a small minority of Indigenous students.
- Carnarvon, with capacity for 48-66 high school students, had 8 Indigenous students in 1970 and 16 in 1971.
- Overall, there was a total student capacity estimated at around 600 students in 1971.

In addition to the church and other independent agencies involved in running the hostels, there were two other key agencies involved in 1971. The New Era Aboriginal Fellowship Incorporated (NEAF) was an organisation concerned with the 'advancement' of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. In 1970, it had considered developing a Host Family Scheme for young people in the metropolitan hostels. Under the chairmanship of Mr WA Carson a NEAF Hostels Committee reviewed the current DNW hostels system and made a series of recommendations about how hostels for Indigenous young people should be funded and operate. As the committee's conclusions form a unique piece of Western Australian social history that may not be readily accessible elsewhere, they have been reproduced here in full.

- Houseparents should have the final say regarding whom they will accommodate. There are a great many factors which have to be considered to keep a hostel in balance and houseparents should not be asked to accommodate anyone without an interview and without knowing the background. It is of the greatest importance for those already in a hostel that any newcomers should fit in and it is of the greatest importance to any newcomers that they should have attributes which give them a reasonable chance of success.
- The community is not willing to allocate sufficient resources to enable whole families to be rehabilitated and therefore the hostel system is relied on to an extraordinary degree. A sophisticated form of total management of the hostel system is required to ensure, on the one hand, that hostels have as much autonomy as possible, and to ensure, on the other hand, that individual hostels are effective and all the varying needs of the Aboriginal population for hostel accommodation are met.
- Hostels present some young Aboriginal people with their only opportunity to acquire the skills and sophistication needed to fit into European society. To make sure this opportunity is not unnecessarily thrown away, houseparents need to have ready access to the best advice the community can provide. They should not hesitate to seek this advice to help them cope with any adjustment problems which arise. Only in extreme cases should Aborigines with an adjustment problem be referred to outside experts. When outside experts are used, the houseparents should be kept in the picture.
- To give the houseparents a chance to get to know and cope with their "families", the private home type of hostel should be limited to an absolute maximum of ten boys or girls - or indeed to ten boys and girls if the accommodation is suitable and the houseparents game. Seven

or eight is much more satisfactory than ten. Thirteen, fourteen or fifteen is impossible.

- All residents of hostels should pay a realistic amount for board. Commonwealth and State grants or bursaries should be sufficient to enable the recipients to pay a realistic amount. \$10 was the usual board figure this year and it was quite inadequate to enable a hostel of even 14 to pay its way. With smaller numbers, the \$10 is even more inadequate.
- Young apprentices or working people who cannot afford to pay a realistic amount should continue to be subsidised.
- Hostels are a heavy financial burden on the community and the community should realise this. In the long term, it might well be cheaper to rehabilitate whole families. The Committee confesses it has not had time to study the economics involved.
- In addition to having access to the best possible expert advice, houseparents should have access to one or more church representatives with whom they can freely discuss their troubles. They should also have adequate time off each week, regular annual holidays and should not be overburdened with domestic trivia. Although they should have adequate time-off and holidays, the difficulties organisations which run hostels may have in providing relieving staff should not be under-estimated.
- Houseparents from both metropolitan and country hostels should meet together from time to time to discuss mutual problems, to help plan the future development of Aboriginal hostels for both Aborigines and Europeans, and to put on the record some of the vast amount of know-how which has already been acquired and could so easily be wasted. How these meetings should be arranged and conducted is for the houseparents to decide. N.E.A.F. might offer its services to get this idea off the ground.
- The need to build up and preserve a body of knowledge about Aboriginal hostels is important. Outside the Pallottine Training Centre, which is a special case, there is no body of knowledge available to any person or organisation interested in building a hostel. There is a danger that plans for new hostels may be prepared out of the air.
- Although different types of hostel have their special problems, there should be a great deal of know-how within the Child Welfare Department and other agencies which could be useful to the houseparents of Aboriginal hostels. If houseparents meet regularly, they could tap this knowledge.
- To get back to the young people themselves, we suggest students with a heavy homework load should be accommodated separately and not mixed with young people who have little or no homework. Tutorial assistance should be readily available to those with homework problems.
- On the all-important subject of recreation, it is hoped that young Aborigines will find increasing opportunities for recreation through the

contacts they make at work, at school, through the church and so on. Nevertheless houseparents have a big responsibility to help them fit into a sporting team and to help them find and pursue hobbies.

- Rather than establish a Host Family Scheme, which is not wanted by the private home type of hostel which the Committee visited*, N.E.A.F. should let it be known that its members are available to help young Aborigines find opportunities to take part in sport or other recreational activities. Members should also invite them on outings (this is best done spontaneously) and, if they have the accommodation, invite them to stay.

* There may be a need for a Host Family Scheme for younger children accommodated in Children's Homes.

- As the churches are prepared to accept the responsibility of running hostels, it appears to be inescapable that N.E.A.F. should at some stage also be prepared to accept this responsibility. The Justice Committee of N.E.A.F. should examine the actions of local authorities which are hindering the development of hostels in their areas. In defence of miserable by-laws, are they violating the basic human rights which democracy is all about?
- How young Aborigines who leave hostels (voluntarily or involuntarily) subsequently cope is a cause of great concern. N.E.A.F. should investigate what a survey into the problem of both graduates and drop-outs from hostels would entail. Residents and ex-residents of hostels would be valuable members of N.E.A.F. and N.E.A.F. should plan meetings and activities which might attract them.
- The N.E.A.F. Hostels Committee respectfully suggests that it should remain in existence for some time yet to follow through some of its suggestions.

At the time of Wilson and Robinson's research, the NEAF was still in existence and it is not clear whether they were the precursor of the Aboriginal Student Accommodation Service or whether that organisation might have had its roots in the other key agency identified in the survey, the Aboriginal Citizens Trust of Western Australia. The Aboriginal Citizens Trust had Indigenous and European individual and organisational members. In 1970, they had sought funding from the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs to build an Educational Hostel. At the time of the survey in 1971, funds had been secured pending Ministerial approval and some amendments to the initial proposal.

As we have seen, a number of church groups had been involved in hostel management almost from the start, mostly because this decreased the cost to the DNW. Wilson and Robinson noted in 1971 that the DNW expected even paying a boarding subsidy of up to £5 per week per resident would still be less than the 'average inmate cost' of the hostel, but this didn't take account of departmental administrative costs involved in managing external operators and the actual cost of operations was not evaluated in terms of the social cost to residents (that is, their 'adjustment' and 'success').

From October 1969, hostels that were not managed by the DNW (even if they were Departmentally-owned) were not proclaimed as Native Institutions. As reported by Wilson and Robinson, this was so that 'the Department retains control of admissions'. The Department owned and equipped the hostels because it was seen to be cheaper to let other controlling authorities administer them. This avoided 'conflict with Treasury over an increased payroll'; it also saved the Department the 'headache of appointing houseparents' and, it was suggested, having 'people from church organisations manage hostels adds something good, which could not be expected of Government employees working on a shift basis' (though Wilson and Robinson noted that the DNW hostels outside the metropolitan area were staffed by Government employees and, at the time of writing in 1971 the Edwards Business College was administering Bedford Park Hostel without a church orientation). On the other side of the ledger, though, the Department did have to trade off some control in operations.

Wilson and Robinson reported on the tension that sometimes existed between the DNW and the agencies running the hostels. Sometimes, the DNW, rather than being applied to for assistance with the welfare of their young charges, was seen by the agencies as 'an organisation to be circumvented and disregarded, except in terms of receiving financial assistance from them.' In this respect, the relationship between the DNW and hostel authorities was probably little different from the residential care sector generally - depending on the policies and personalities of the day, the relationship between what we would now recognise as 'purchaser' and 'provider' of residential 'care' waxed and waned in terms of how mutually supportive it was perceived to be. Then as now, the effectiveness of the relationship in terms of outcomes for children will generally suffer if the parties are not working together towards common goals.

Throughout their report, Wilson and Robinson emphasised that placement strategies and practices were poorly implemented. The following is an illustrative quote, and leaves the reader with a disturbing picture of a young, unaccompanied youngster with no experience of the city or town to which they have come with no ready welcome: 'For a number of reasons, including the poor relationship between Central Division and Head Office, and Central Division and other Divisions, placement of residents appears to be made as a continuing series of crises. Someone appears, often without warning or prior notice, and has to be placed, virtually immediately.'

Apparently, the record-keeping practices were no better than placement practices, with very little coordination between administrators and the field and no one DNW officer with full oversight of the hostels program. Wilson and Robinson found that the DNW's record and recall system was 'totally inadequate....Changes in houseparents at hostels owned by the Department of Native Welfare often do not appear on file till very many months later and no up to date lists of hostel residents are kept.'

The hostels program also suffered from a common problem with all types of residential 'care' - there was no systematic process for 'following up' students or young workers when they left the hostel. The fact that the DNW had no control over discharges meant that it would have to rely on good communication and record-keeping to even know when or how to follow up. In short, any contact with the young people when they left the hostel was haphazard. Apart from the impact on the young people themselves, this made evaluation of the effectiveness of the hostel program impossible.

As mentioned earlier, the Department for Community Welfare (DCW) took over responsibility for Aboriginal Hostels on 1 July 1972, when its new Act became effective. Thereafter, information about the policies and practices relating to these hostels was included in Annual Reports and other Departmental documents. Illustrative information from these sources is presented below, in chronological order according to the year in which the information was published. A sense of the changing role of the Education and Employment Hostels, and the way they were managed, thus emerges.

By 1974 a cottage model of accommodation was being extended to hostels except for those 'older established ones in the country'. The cottage model meant smaller hostels with 6 to 14 young people run by hostel 'parents'. The DCW said in 1974 that this more homely atmosphere would also provide an opportunity for more individual help with 'both education and social development.' With its usual models of out of home care, the DCW had a policy of trying to place children near to their family of origin. With the Education and Employment Hostels, this was not feasible and in the 1975 Annual Report said that the location of the hostels had to be 'largely determined by the availability of schools, technical centres and employment opportunities. Additional hostels are planned for areas where industrial and residential development has resulted in school and employment facilities becoming available.'

The role of hostels in 'socialising' Indigenous youth into western society was gaining increased significance and the DCW reported in 1976 that young people in hostels were being engaged in 'special discussions' aimed at helping them 'to gain knowledge of themselves which in turn helped them to become more proficient in the utilization of already acquired skills.' The DCW was also keen for hostel parents to improve the way they related to the young people and held 'discussions' with them 'relating to how to recognise and evaluate changes in the behaviour of children'. By 1977, the DCW had identified a number key elements that would impact on the young people's ability to get the most out of the hostel experience. These were cultural identity and family ties; appropriate non-academic training inputs (i.e. training likely to have most future relevance to the children); standards of care, including building design that was suited to the needs of Indigenous children; the evaluation of new and different models of care; the welfare role of the hostels particularly with 'neglected and delinquent children'; and the type of staff, especially in terms of their training, their numbers and their Aboriginality.

The education and employment hostels were reported by the DCW in 1978 as being increasingly popular with parents, and parents were interested in the environment in the hostels. Indigenous parents had the expectation that their 'children live in a well supervised environment' and got an education that was relevant to their 'own situation'. Hostel staff were meant to liaise closely with schools and tutors were engaged to support all hostels with high school students living there. There was some recognition that the Indigenous children came to the hostels from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from 'those who come from a tribally oriented aboriginal community to those who are more sophisticated from large country centres'.

By 1980, the role of these facilities was becoming more open to community and family involvement with the DCW reporting its role as more of a 'back-up service for families who may wish to use the facility to provide an occasional meal, a laundry service and provide homework supervision', particularly if families were making the transition from outlying communities into towns. The DCW also helped out with camping facilities for visiting parents in regional areas. The role of hostels that provided for working age children was also a matter of concern in a time of high youth unemployment, particularly in the regions. Teaching job skills was important, but staff in the hostels were also asked to 'teach' the young people 'social skills in the areas of budgeting, planning leisure time and involvement in community projects' so that they could 'move more successfully on to independent living situations.'

In 1981, there were 13 Educational Hostels in the metropolitan area and 14 Student and Working Hostels in country areas. This latter group could house between 20 and 60 children, and numbers were hard to predict or plan for. These planning difficulties were seen by the DCW to be caused by the 'family mobility' associated with looking for employment, the desire to return to traditional areas, or to 'renew ties with family members in other regions'. This impacted on the demand for services in an unpredictable way. The ongoing attempt to provide culturally-appropriate services to Indigenous children and youth saw the continuation of the training program for Indigenous hostel assistants. In 1981, the DCW reported with a sense of achievement that 'it was possible to appoint an Aboriginal couple to a suburban hostel.' In 1982, there were thirteen Indigenous people 'holding child care positions and a further six in training' at the Community Services Training Centre, which provided one term's academic study followed by six months on-the-job training in country hostels. Successful trainees were offered permanent positions when vacancies arose.

Until 1982, the administrative responsibility for hostels sat with the Institutional Services section of the DCW. The transfer to Field Services, which occurred in the 1981/82 year, increased the placement resources available particularly in country areas and in the eyes of the Department allowed the operation of the hostel service 'to be more readily adapted' to changing needs in particular regions. In 1985, along with a change in the line of reporting from Field Services to the new Substitute Care Service Programme in the Programmes

Directorate, the Educational Hostels were now called 'Aboriginal Hostels', and reported under that heading in the Annual Report.

By June 1985, the Department reported that it maintained eight hostels in the Perth Metropolitan area and 11 hostels in the country under this banner. The Department (now called the Department for Community Services, or DCS) was maintaining the hostels more as an historical legacy rather than as a program it wanted to expand and its policy was to promote the education of Indigenous children within their own communities. The provision of educational opportunities in more remote and isolated areas of the State was having an effect and the hostels service had witnessed a 'significant decline in the numbers of children requiring hostel accommodation.' Thus, as hostels became vacant, negotiations with Local Government Authorities and local community groups to determine the future use of those properties began. In the meantime, for those hostels that continued to function, the Department's policy of employing and training Indigenous hostel staff 'to manage and operate the centres' had proved reasonably successful, and a third of the hostel child care workforce were Indigenous staff by 1985.

During 1986, there were more steps taken to 'regionalise' the Aboriginal Hostels program with Divisional Supervisors being given responsibility for the day to day management and staffing of each hostel. Along with that reform was an intention to continue to use the hostels more broadly and 'with that in mind training programmes designed more specifically for residential child care staff' were planned for the following year. 1987 saw the employment of a number of new Hostel Managers and Assistant Managers, with a 'majority' from Indigenous backgrounds. Hostels were reported to 'continue to provide a caring and nurturing environment, particularly for young primary school children'. As Wilson and Robinson had found in 1971, the high school hostels were not generally very successful at attracting and retaining Indigenous students. The exceptions in 1987 were identified by the DCS as two high school hostels in the Northern Country Region. These were probably the Charles Perkins Hostel (now called Yurag-Man-Gu) at Halls Creek and the Amy Bethell Hostel at Derby, each of which provided accommodation and support for children attending the local high schools.

In its response to the inter-Departmental Residential Planning Review Taskforce, the DCS described how the Aboriginal Education Hostels operated in 1987:

Aboriginal students from remote country areas may have the opportunity to obtain primary or secondary education at metropolitan or regional schools. This enables them to obtain a level of education not otherwise available. Some of these students board out at aboriginal educational hostels. They live as close to their own communities as practical, and return to their community at the end of term. In the metropolitan areas numbers are limited to approximately ten to twelve secondary students per hostel, with no primary aged students.

Care in aboriginal educational hostels is provided by couples who live-in fulltime. Country facilities have live-in wages staff. In the metropolitan area the married couple receive an honorarium and the hostel father maintains outside employment.

Aboriginal education hostels have been long standing, generally established in the early days of the Native Welfare Department during the early 1960's. Many of these facilities have now been closed down and converted to other purposes.

By 1988, these hostels were collectively described by the DCS in its annual report as 'Country Hostel Services', even though they included seven student hostels in Perth, and reports were made on the activities in each of the relevant country regions. The Northern Country Region, which covered all areas of the State north of Newman, reported a renewed 'emphasis on the importance of students reaching their academic potential', though 'offering students increased support from the hostel staff and formal tutoring, and also by stimulating parental interest in their children's school achievements.' Primary and secondary students from Indigenous backgrounds were resident in the hostels, and five of the Region's seven hostels were managed by Indigenous staff. In the Eastern Country Region, which included the remainder of the State except the south-west corner and metropolitan areas, the services offered by the hostels were reported to include:

- Programmes for offending youth.
- Short term care for young persons in cases of family breakdown.
- Short term care for mainly preschool children with welfare-medical difficulties.
- Short term care for isolated expectant mothers and children with welfare related problems.
- Short term care for children in cases of family breakdown.

The Department also ran seven student hostels in Perth, three of which had previously been run by Sister Kate's. The DCS felt it was important to continue to have Aboriginal Hostels in Perth as demand from Indigenous students in the senior high school years was still quite strong. The emphasis in the metropolitan hostels was on students being able to reach their academic potential, then moving to tertiary courses and independent living. Indigenous house parents staffed 6 of the 7 hostels but the DCS reported in 1988 that a 'major issue is still that of student adjustment from country to urban school and living situations.'

In 1990, the Eastern Country Region, which by then had responsibility for all the DCS Education Hostels, developed a Hostel Information System to enable 'relevant data on all admissions and discharges...to be analysed to identify the type and needs of users of Hostel services.' In 1991, the DCS reported a downturn in demand for country hostel services

because the 'numbers of young students requiring accommodation away from home has reduced or alternative accommodation is found.' The Metropolitan Student Hostels were continuing, but it seems that their focus was now on providing 'Aboriginal students from remote areas with accommodation while attending tertiary education facilities' rather than high schools.

By February 1995, the Department, which was now the Department for Community Development (DCD), and the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship were the only parties providing metropolitan hostel accommodation for high school students from Indigenous backgrounds. The Metropolitan Students Hostels, with the exception of Kewdale, were subject to a Ministerial Agreement between the Minister for Community Services and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 'for the transfer of surplus assets to the Aboriginal Lands Trust'. A report about these hostels, the *Out of Home Alternative Care Cost Project* noted that hostel parents were paid an honorarium, with the DCS paying for operating expenses. The children were required to pay for food, clothing, and books. At the time of this report, hostels typically had up to 15 people, including 10 students and the hostel parent and family. The profile of students in these hostels was described in the report as young Indigenous people from country areas who may or may not have been Wards of State and who:

- Were eligible for ABSTUDY, or had their board paid for by parents or others.
- Had been recommended by their previous school as likely to succeed at Year 11 or 12, or having a potential to succeed with employment training not available in their local area.
- Had no history of offending, or only 'minimal' offences.

As the list above shows, enabling students to attend the senior high schools was an important reason for keeping the hostel program going, but the program also aimed to support young people at TAFE, Clontarf Aboriginal College and other tertiary institutions. The hostels program also provided an 'educational counselling service' for hostel residents and some students who were boarding privately. The historical objective of providing a program for 'social development and personal growth' was also an aim in 1995. And the aim to involve country parents and other 'care givers' in the student's educational life was also continued, particularly in relation to the choice of school and subjects, and the selection of TAFE and University courses. Indigenous house parents were preferred, ideally couples with one partner in the external workforce and with experience working with young people in welfare or related fields. While it was desirable to the DCD that the house parents had formal training, this wasn't essential. House parents 'lived in' 24 hours per day, in a large domestic home setting. They had a contract with the Minister and were paid an honorarium of \$300 per week for 52 weeks of the year in 1995. They received an 'additional entitlement' of \$170 per week while the students were in residence and received \$143 per fortnight board from the students. The aim was to provide students with a supportive model of care that included having house rules for the 'safety and protection' of all hostel residents, supervised homework and study with assistance from tutors paid by the Department of Education and Training, and 'community involvement' through students being encouraged to participate in sporting clubs or music or other group activities. The operation of the hostel was supervised

by a DCD Hostel Liaison Officer. In 1995, just under 50% of students remained in the Metropolitan Hostels for six months or longer.

The *Out of Home Alternative Care Cost Project* also outlined the rationale for continuing to provide a country hostel program in 'strategic locations' where a community support hostel model was needed. The review found that some DCD district offices had an ongoing need for short to medium 'supervised care of high risk children' and that there was not often a supply of 'suitably qualified' foster carers to match this demand, particularly in isolated rural areas which also suffered from a lack of support services to prevent or resolve crises. There was also an ongoing need in the Northern and Eastern divisions to address the 'central problems' of alcohol and violence. In short, DCD district managers 'consistently identified the need for a core residential service which could be integrated with field services and intervention strategies to meet local needs'. Such services should not stand in isolation, but be one of the mechanisms for exchanging skills between hostel workers, family and field staff and which included 'planned outreach' services when children were discharged.

In the course of 40 years, education and employment hostels for young Indigenous children from country Western Australia had acted as a mirror on the wider social values of the State, moving from a desire to separate children from their parents for a 'better chance' in the city to attempts to appreciate the value of the culture and practices that the young people brought with them to the hostels. The ultimate judgement of the effectiveness of this program will be made by the people who lived in the hostels during their youth.

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