Kildonan, Burwood

1937 – c. 1961

Details

Kildonan was a children's Home in Burwood run by the Presbyterian Church of Victoria from 1937. Formerly, Kildonan had operated a children's home in North Melbourne. Kildonan accommodated boys and girls, aged between 2 and 15. In 1961 the government-run Allambie Reception Centre opened on the site.

The Kildonan home in Elgar Road, Burwood was purchased in 1929 but did not receive any children until December 1937.

The maximum accommodation for children at Burwood was 100 (in two dormitories). This was roughly double the size of the original Kildonan home at North Melbourne.

The Home was built and conducted on a 'cottage system' and included a State school and a kindergarten. The 'cottages' were larger than later 'family group homes', and accommodated up to 28 children supervised by rostered staff. An additional block accommodating 25 toddlers was completed in 1941.

Kildonan received a government grant in February 1949 to receive child migrants. The *Argus* reported that Kildonan planned to build more cottage homes on land adjoining the home at Burwood, to house 125 'orphans' from the UK. However, it would seem that no child migrants ever lived at Kildonan.

By 1955 the Home was caring for up to 105 children. In 1958 Kildonan opened a family group home within the Home's grounds. This provided care for up to eight children supervised by a cottage mother and father.

In January 1956, Kildonan was declared an approved children's home under the Children's Welfare Act 1954 (under the full name 'Presbyterian and Scots' Church Children's Aid Society [Kildonan Home]).

By the late 1950s Kildonan and the Presbyterian Church had recognised some of the drawbacks of large scale institutional care.

In around 1958 Kildonan opened its first family group home in property within the grounds of the Children's Home in Burwood. It housed up to eight children with a cottage father and mother.

In 1960 Kildonan began the development of a larger scale family group home program. Initially this was to consist of up to eight family group homes and accommodation units as well as a separate Admission Centre.

The Victorian government offered to buy the property in the early 1960s, and the new reception centre. Allambie opened in 1961 on the site in Burwood.
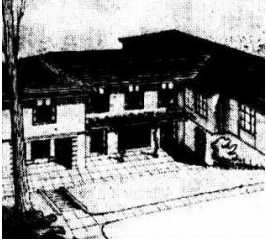
The proceeds of this sale funded Kildonan's new program of residential services. The children at Kildonan were moved out into family group homes in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. By 1962 Kildonan was operating family group homes in Blackburn, Box Hill, Syndal, North Balwyn and Surrey Hills.

In 2007, Kildonan Uniting Care became the custodian of records of the Kildonan home in Burwood.

In 2017, the building was part of the Burwood campus of Deakin University. In 2016, the City of Whitehorse added the 'Former Kildonan Children's Home' to its Heritage Overlay.
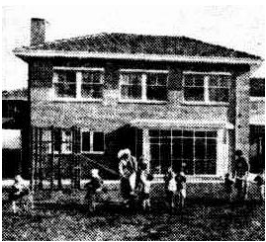
Gallery

The New Cottage

Description: This is a copy of an image published in *The Argus* on Saturday 30 August 1947. The image shows a drawing of the new cottage at Kildonan, Burwood. Caption reads, 'The new cottage block being built for the Presbyterian and Scots Church Children's Aid Society, Kildonan Home, Burwood, to accommodate twenty adolescent girls and the staff. Martin and Tribe are the architects.'

Block for infant children at Kildonan, Burwood.

Description: This is a copy of an image published in *The Argus* on Saturday 12 July 1947. The image shows the building for infants at Kildonan, Burwood.

Former site of Kildonan and Allambie, Deakin University, Burwood campus

Description: This is a copy of a photograph of a building on the Burwood campus of Deakin University. Situated on Elgar Road, the building was the former site of Kildonan, Burwood (1937-1961) and the former site of Allambie Reception Centre (1961-1990).

Kildonan - Xmas 1951

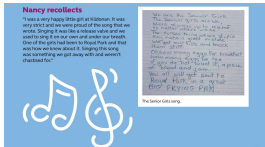**Description:** This is a copy of an image of an empty classroom at Kildonan.
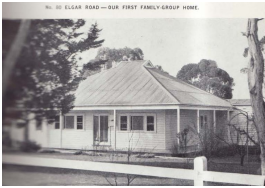

Kildonan - Xmas 1951

Description: This is a copy of an image of an empty dormitory at Kildonan.

The Senior girls song, Kildonan Burwood

Description: This is an excerpt from the Uniting Heritage newsletter from [March 2020.](#) It shows a handwritten version of the lyrics of a song sung by the Senior girls at Kildonan in the years following World War Two. At a reunion in 2018, Bev and Nancy recollected about the songs they had sung as children at Kildonan. The newsletter contains this recollection from Nancy: "I was a very happy little girl at Kildonan. It was very strict and we were proud of that song that we wrote. Singing it was like a release valve and we used to sing it on our own and under our breath. One of the girls had been to Royal Park and that was how we knew about it. Singing this song was something we got away with and weren't chastised for". The lyrics of the Senior girls song are: We are the senior girls The senior girls are we We're always up to mischief No matter where we be The nurses think we're stupid They make a great mistake We get our fists and knock them stiff Oh how many eggs for breakfast How many eggs for tea If you do not want it, a piece of bread and jam You all will get sent to Royal Park in a great BIG FRYING PAN

No. 80 Elgar Road - Our first family group home

Description: This is an image of the first Family Group Home opened by Kildonan Homes for Children at their main site, 80 Elgar Road Burwood. It shows a small weatherboard cottage with a tin roof surrounded by lawn and small trees. This photograph was published in Kildonan's annual report for either 1958 or 1959.

More info

Chronology

- Kildonan, North Melbourne (1890 - c. 1937)
  - **Kildonan, Burwood (1937 – c. 1961)**
    - Kildonan Homes for Children (c. 1960 - c. 1993)
      - Kildonan Child and Family Services (c. 1993 - 2007)
        - Kildonan UnitingCare (2007 - 2017)
          - Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited (2017 - current)

Related Entries

Run by
- [The Presbyterian and Scots' Church Children's Aid Society (1895 - 1965?)](#)
- [Presbyterian Church of Victoria (c. 1838 - current)](#)

Related Organisations
- [Kilmany Park Farm Home for Boys (1923 - 1978)](#)
  At the age of eleven, boys were moved from Kildonan in Burwood to Kilmany Park in Sale for training in farm work.
- [Allambie Reception Centre (1961 - 1990)](#)
  The Victorian Government purchased the Kildonan site in Burwood and opened the Allambie Reception Centre in 1961.
- [Dhurringile Rural Training Farm (1951 - 1964)](#)
  Some boys who were at Kildonan were sent to Dhurringile Rural Training Farm.

Resources

- Kitson, Janice, *Submission no 492 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care*, 2005
- Stevenson, Pauline, *Submission no 408 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care*, 2005
- Price, Sylvia, *Submission no 413 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care*, 2005
- *There was lots of fun at the Lord Mayor's party*, The Argus, 18 July 1952
- *In the churches: social service for young to be extended*, The Argus, 12 July 1947
- *Architecture: Modern kindergarten*, The Argus, 24 October 1940
- Coleman Architects Pty Ltd, *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review: Former Kildonan Children's Home, Elgar Road, Burwood, HO No. 249.*, 16 March 2015 - current
- *Elgar Road, Site History Project - a Deakin University weblog*, 2017
- *Kildonan Homes for Children (1881-2001)*, Finding Records, No date. *Relevance:* See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Kildonan, Burwood
- *Helen Baldwin interviewed by Helen Belle Curzon-Siggers in the Bringing them home oral history project [sound recording] (1999)*, 10 September 1999

Other Resources

Title: Kildonan Annual Reports Front Covers and extracts
Type: Image
Date: 1957 - 1962
Details

Records

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

Records

- Kildonan UnitingCare Records (1881 - 2001)
- Records held by Uniting Church Archives (1923 - 1994)
- Voluntary Children's Homes Files (1921 - 1989)

You can view this page online by visiting https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/kildonan-burwood/