

# St Vincent de Paul Children's Home

1962 – 1992

## Details

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St Vincent de Paul Children's Home was renamed from St Vincent de Paul Girls' Orphanage in 1962, and was run by the Sisters of Mercy. In 1966, the Home relocated from South Melbourne to Black Rock where children were housed in family group homes. In 1992, its name changed to St Vincent de Paul Child and Family Services.

The St Vincent de Paul Children's Home opened in the former St Vincent de Paul Girls' Orphanage building in South Melbourne, however it also had family group homes in Black Rock and Bentleigh. In 1966, all remaining children were moved from the South Melbourne building into family group homes, with Black Rock becoming the administrative centre.

Two more family group homes were built next to the centre in Black Rock to house incoming children, these accommodated up to 11 children, operating as assessment centres for new admissions. By 1965 there were ten family group homes around Black Rock and its surrounding suburbs. For the first time, lay staff cared for the children, rather than the Sisters.

According to *Holding onto Hope* in 1967, 85% of children in the Home were state wards, and the group homes were operated on a staff to child ratio of 1:7.

As part of the transition to being a children's Home, both boys and girls were now accepted. However, in the earlier years of the Home it was still the case that once boys reached a certain age they would be sent to the St Vincent de Paul Orphanage for Boys.

By the 1970s, the need for professionally trained staff to care for children was beginning to be recognised. Some Sisters undertook professional training, and professionally trained staff were employed, including social workers, education psychologists, and welfare officers.

Two small hostels were also established for girls in employment, generally aged over fifteen, to establish independent living skills or for young people on probation. Girls in the hostel commonly worked full time, however some girls were still in school and worked part time. Girls in the hostels were given more freedom, with only two girls to a room, and eight in total.

Children usually attended the local schools, but for those with gaps in their education, remedial classes were provided. In 1975, the Remedial and Therapeutic Centre was opened at the Black Rock site, and it was designed to assist those already in care, but also to prevent children going into care.

By the 1980s some of the outer suburban family group homes were sold, and at the request of the Government, new homes were purchased in Elwood and Albert Park, as these areas were considered to be under-resourced.

By 1985, only the Director remained a religious staff member. Originally, lay staff were employed as cottage parents, but it proved difficult to get people to do this, and instead rostered staff were employed in residential units.

It is known that members of the Stolen Generations were in St Vincent de Paul Children's Home.

In 1992 its name changed to St Vincent de Paul Child and Family Services.

## Gallery

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### Former St. Vincent de Paul Girls' Orphanage

**Description:** Orphanage located at 179-197 Napier St and 114-128 Raglan St and 25 Church St, South Melbourne. This image is one of a series of images available from the Victorian Heritage Register.

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### St Vincent de Paul's Children's Home, Balcombe Road, Black Rock, 1960s

**Description:** This is a digital copy of a photograph of St Vincent de Paul's Children's Home. It is published in the book  *Holding on to hope*  (2004) with the following caption: 'The double-story, red brick building, constructed on an elevated site close to the beach in 1938, originally functioned as a convent and holiday home. It became the administrative centre for St Vincent de Paul's Children's Home after it relocated to Black Rock in 1966'.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- St Vincent de Paul Orphanage, Prahran (1854 - 1857)
  - St Vincent de Paul Orphanage (1857 - 1874)
    - St Vincent de Paul Girls' Orphanage (1874 - 1962)
- **St Vincent de Paul Children's Home (1962 – 1992)**
  - St Vincent de Paul Child and Family Services (1992 - 1997)
    - MacKillop Family Services (1997 - current)

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation \(1857 - 2011\)](#)  
Date: 1962 - 1992

#### Related Events

- [Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, Parliament of Australia \(2003 - 2005\)](#)

### Resources

- Twigg, Karen, [St Vincent de Paul Orphanage](#), eMelbourne: the city past and present, 2008
- James Jenkinson Consulting, [Guide to out-of-home care services 1940-2000 - Volume One: Agency Descriptions](#), November 2001
- Rogers, Agatha, *The tracing problem: an aspect of outcome studies in child welfare. - Tracing former residents of the St Vincent de Paul's Children's Homes at Black Rock and South Melbourne, Victoria*, Children Australia, 1992

- [Annual report: Social Welfare Department](#), 1960 - 1978. Relevance: 1971, p.38
- Spivey, Margaret, *Defying the gatekeeper: one girl's true story of resistance and rebellion*, 2010
- Heritage Victoria, [Former St Vincent de Paul Girls' Orphanage: Victorian Heritage Register \(VHR\) Number H0212](#), 20 December 2011
- Meikle, Annette; Waters, Elizabeth, *Sandringham sketchbook*, 1998
- Halliday, Claire, [Who cares?](#), The Age, 4 July 2004
- [Heritage Display](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013
- Green, S., & Jones, M., [All the little travellers: the children of 'Morningtown Ride'](#), Find & Connect web resource blog, 29 February 2016
- Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, *A piece of the story : national directory of records of Catholic organisations caring for children separated from families*, November 1999

## Records

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

### Records

- [MacKillop Family Services Records, Victorian institutions \(1857 - current\)](#)
  - [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-vincent-de-paul-childrens-home/>