Family Group Home Program

1956 – 2000s

Details

The Victorian Children's Welfare Department began its Family Group Home Program in 1956. At first, each of the Department's group homes accommodated eight children, under the care of a cottage mother (and often a cottage father too). By 1974 there were 40 Departmental homes housing 209 children in the inner and outer suburbs of Melbourne as well as more regional area across Victoria. From the 1980s, the Department offered other models of residential 'care' services, in addition to family group homes.

In 1956, the Children's Welfare Department began to offer family group home accommodation partly to relieve overcrowding at Turana, the sole reception centre (from 1955 to 1961) for children committed to State care.

Dr Phyllis Tewsley, Medical Superintendent at Royal Park Depot and Turana from 1948 until her retirement in 1959, was one of the pioneers of the small family group idea for children as an alternative to the established system of caring for them in large institutions.

In 1957, the Department's annual report described the family group homes as 'an adjunct of Turana'. It also reflected the growing popularity of the Family Group Home model of 'care', which occurred at the same time as large-scale, 'congregate care' was being phased out.

The first family group homes established by the Department were manufactured by the 'Concrete House Project' of the Housing Commission in northern metropolitan Melbourne.

Each house was under the care of a cottage mother, although seven of the homes had a 'cottage father' as well. Within the Department, the family group homes were supervised by a trained social worker.

By 1958, there were four houses in Preston, and two houses in Heidelberg, Northcote and Coburg respectively. Each home was given a name (e.g. Kanangra, Moonyah, Bunyarra, Lentara, and Arunga). In 1960, the Department established another two family group homes, in the rural town of Ararat.

By 1974, the Department operated 40 family group homes around Victoria, housing 209 children. It also reported plans to establish another 11 homes by the end of 1974.
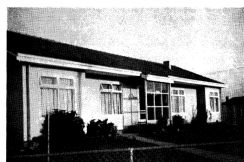
From the 1980s, the Department offered other models of residential 'care' services, in addition to family group homes.

Gallery

The Premier, the Hon. H.E. Bolte, discusses 'Moonyah' Family Group Home at Coburg with Cottage Mother, Catherine Kurth

Description: This is a copy of an image published in the annual report for the Victorian Children's Welfare Department for 1957.

A family group home

Description: This image appeared in the Department's annual report for 1960.

New family group home at Thornbury, to accommodate four children

Description: This is a copy of an image published in the annual report of the Social Welfare Department for 1969-70

At a "Family Group" home

Description: This is a copy of an image published in the annual report for the Children's Welfare Department for 1958.

"Kalimna" family group

Description: This is a copy of an image published in the annual report for the Children's Welfare Department for 1958. "Kalimna" was one of the ten family group homes operated by the Children's Welfare Department in 1958, all located in Melbourne's northern suburbs.

More info

Related Entries

Run by
- Children's Welfare Department, State Government of Victoria (1924 - 1960)
  Date: 1956 - 1960
- Social Welfare Branch, State Government of Victoria (1960 - 1970)
  Date: 1960 - 1970
- Social Welfare Department, State Government of Victoria (1970 - 1978)
  Date: 1970 - 1978
- Department of Community Welfare Services, State Government of Victoria (1978 - 1985)
  Date: 1978 - 1985

Related Organisations

- [Departmental Family Group Homes, Victoria (1956 - 2000s)](#)

Resources

- Behrendorff, Elizabeth, *Submission no 239 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care*, 2005

Other Resources

Title: Departmental Family Group Homes, November 1977
Type: Image
Date: 11 November 2014
[Details](#)

Records

Records

- [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records (1864 - current)](#)
- [Welfare Photographs and Publications (c. 1956 - c. 1960)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/family-group-home-program/