

# Kew Children's Cottages

1887 – 2008

**Other Names:**

- Kew Asylum
- Kew Cottages
- Idiot Ward
- Kew Residential Services

## Details

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Kew Children's Cottages date back to 1887. They were located adjacent to the Kew Asylum and were also known as the 'idiot ward'. They provided accommodation and education to children with intellectual disabilities. They were closed in 2008.

Kew Children's Cottages became known by that name from around 1929, although the Kew Asylum had housed children throughout its history.

At around 1929, the Department of Education established the Kew Cottages Special School (State School 4431). It was the first school in Victoria for children with intellectual disabilities. The school remained in operation until the end of 1991.

In 1937, over 200 residents of the Cottages were transferred to the institution at Janefield.

The Victorian branch of the Save the Children Fund organised annual Christmas parties for children at Kew Cottages in the 1940s and 1950s. During this period, Save the Children records indicate that at least 400 children lived at Kew Cottages. The Brighton sub-branch of Save the Children also organised an event in 1950, hosting refreshments from 110 children from Kew, and taking them on an outing to Brighton Beach ("Save the Children (Vic. Branch), Leeper Family Papers, University of Melbourne Archives).

In 1957 the administration of Kew Cottages was separated from that of the Kew Mental Hospital.

In 1962 the Cottages were proclaimed a 'training centre' under the provisions of the 1959 Mental Health Act (No.6605).

In 1996, nine residents died in a fire at the institution.

In 2001, the Victorian government announced its intentions to close Kew Cottages. It finally closed in 2008.

## Gallery



## Idiot Asylum, Kew

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Department of Mental Hygiene \(1934 - 1944\)](#)  
Date: 1934 - 1944
- [Mental Hygiene Branch \(1944 - 1959\)](#)  
Date: 1944 -
- [Mental Health Authority, State of Victoria \(1962 - 1978\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Janefield Colony \(1937 - 1996\)](#)  
Some children were transferred from Kew to Janefield when it opened in 1937.
- [Chief Secretary's Department \(1855 - 1901\)](#)

### Resources

- Australian Heritage Council, [A thematic heritage study on Australia's benevolent and other care institutions](#), 2016
- Brown, Janet, *Dolly Stainer of Kew Cottages*, 2006
- Crawford, Anne, [Dolly's world](#), The Age, 10 December 2002
- Judge, Cliff; van Brummelen, Fran, *Kew Cottages: the world of Dolly Stainer*, 2002
- Manning, Corinne, *Bye-Bye Charlie: stories from the vanishing world of Kew Cottages*, 2008
- Reeves, Keir and David Nichols, *"No less than a palace": Kew Asylum, its planned surrounds and its present day residents*, Places of pain and shame: dealing with 'difficult heritage', 2009
- Larkin, John, *Hands reach out to children of sadness*, The Age, 13 December 1974
- Judge, Astrid, [Reflections, memories and sources: growing up at Kew Cottages](#), Health and History, 2007
- *Kew Cottages: a history (website)*, La Trobe University, 2010
- Monk, Lee-Ann, ["Made enquiries, can elicit no history of injury": researching the history of institutional abuse in the archives](#), Provenance, September 2007
- Manning, Corinne, *Imprisoned in State Care: Life Inside Kew Cottages, 1925-2008*, Health and History, May 2009
- [Kew Asylum](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance*: See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Kew Children's Cottages
- [Kew Cottages \(1887-2008\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance*: See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Kew Children's Cottages

## Records

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

### Records

- [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)
  - [Mental Health Photograph Collection \(1850? - 2002\)](#)
  - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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