

Turana

1955 – 1993

Other Names:

- Turana Reception Centre
- Turana Remand Centre
- Turana Youth Training Centre
- Turana Juvenile School

Details

Turana was a government-run reception centre established in 1955 in Royal Park, Parkville. It was formerly known as the Royal Park Depot. Turana was the sole reception centre for children committed to State 'care' until 1961 when Allambie became the main government reception centre. From 1961, the site housed the Turana Remand Centre and the Turana Youth Training Centre. (Baltara reception Centre was located on the same site from 1968 to 1992.) In 1993, the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre opened on the site of Turana.

The change of name from Royal Park Depot to 'Turana' occurred in 1955, an initiative of the new Chief Secretary, Mr Rylah. The Department's annual report for that year stated: 'The Chief Secretary, soon after taking office, recognized the oddity of this coldly official title [Children's Welfare Department's Receiving Depots for Girls and Boys] of an establishment where in fact there was extremely warm and loving care of children.' They chose Turana (said to be an Aboriginal word meaning 'rainbow') as the new name, to provide a 'bright and stimulating title' for the institution.

In the annual report for 1955, the Secretary reported that overcrowding was a serious problem at Turana. It was particularly difficult to place babies and school children, family groups, 'problem' school-age boys, as well as children with health problems and physical or intellectual disabilities. (Since 1953, 'problem' teenage girls could be sent to Winlaton in Nunawading.) The Secretary also stated that the cottage groups at Turana (first established in 1952) were continuing 'in the happiest fashion'.

From 1955 until 1961, Poplar House (originally built to house 'problem girls' at Turana), was the Turana Juvenile School for male offenders. The Royal Commission described Poplar House as a "maximum-security section that catered for boys who were deemed emotionally unstable or who presented a serious risk to themselves or the community. It accommodated approximately 28 boys" (Case Study 30, p.25).

Serious overcrowding continued throughout the late 1950s. At this time, the government also established a Boys' Hostel at Sunshine and the [Hillside Boys' Home](#). Hillside was established to cater particularly for 'Roman Catholic boys accumulated at Turana with no available alternative placements for them'.

Turana also had the Billabong reception centre, and the Parkside classification centre. Warrawong was constructed as a security unit, but was initially used as a short-term placement unit for children awaiting transfer elsewhere.

In 1955, Turana comprised:

- an assessment and classification centre, which aimed to assess and classify children for placement in a facility appropriate to the child's needs and circumstances

- a residential facility for wards of the Department aged 14 to 17 years who could not be accommodated elsewhere • a reception centre for children admitted to the care of the Department
- a remand centre for boys aged 10 to 16 charged with an offence or awaiting the hearing of a protection application or similar
- a youth training centre for boys aged 15 to 21 years who had been sentenced to a youth training facility (Case Study 30, p.25).

The Gables and Sunnyside were open sections designed to get boys ready to return to the community. Each of these sections accommodated between 15 and 20 boys. Quamby and Coolibah were medium-security sections that accommodated both wards of the Department and trainees who were seen to require closer supervision. Each of these sections accommodated approximately 30 boys (Case Study 30, p.25).

Despite there being various sections of the institution, different 'categories' of young people were accommodated at Turana together. One witness to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse gave evidence that, "in her view, no efforts were made to separate children in need of care and protection from sentenced juveniles. She said that Turana was 'like a training ground for institutionalisation and gaol'" (Case Study 30, p.24).

In the biography of poet Shelton Lea, *Delinquent Angel*, Victoria Police officers call Turana "the rat bins". The book describes the institution as a "compound of dilapidated buildings constructed before the turn of the century. Around it were parklands and paddocks, and the neighbours were an institution for girls and a psychiatric hospital. The remand section was separate from the rest where another 500 boys were held permanently". Shelton's arrival by van at the remand section of Turana is described as a "sequence of grim exchanges between Turana officers and the police. I was escorted in through locked sections one after the other. Upstairs, unlock, pass through, lock. Next section, unlock, pass through, lock. The police stayed with us. The Turana officers were in blue, like the police, with badges on their pockets and sleeves, and they all carried old keys on big solid rings. They were keys out of another time, huge keys for turning large locks in heavy doors. They were almost comical, like the keys to medieval castles in cartoons".

After being processed, Shelton is weighed and measured, his own clothes put in a bag and he was given Turana clothes of the wrong size. "There were corridors of cells on two floors, and there was another floor of cells down in the basement, called the 'dungeon'. Windows were latticed with metal, the bathroom block had metal troughs, heavy doors were metal-framed, and each section of the building was divided by a metal meshing and bars". Remand at Turana is described as a "holding bay, a limbo in the lives of the boys who were awaiting their court hearing" (Georgeff, 2007, pp.69-72).

Shelton Lea later returns to Turana, this time being held in Quamby. "Quamby was called a semi secure section, which meant the outside world could be seen through the wire fence. It had a view out over Royal Park to the psychiatric hospital". The book states that some boys in Quamby had committed terrible crimes, and others had committed no crimes at all "but were considered to be at risk in other parts of Turana. There was no wisdom in the decision to put them all in together, but there was no alternative. In Quamby, they were always agitated and most were medicated" (pp.101-102).

The Royal Commission found that many young people came to Turana after having absconded from other Victorian institutions (Case Study 30, p.30).

During the 1960s, Turana accommodated up to 64 male wards of state, aged between 10 and 14. Four new sections were added to Turana from the late 1960s to early 1970s, each accommodating around 25 boys or young men. They were: Warrina, Akora, Kinta (a medium-term 'open' section that accommodated wards unable to be placed in children's Homes) and Mawarra (a short-term treatment section for wards aiming to return home or to placement).

From the 1960s, the government continued to establish state-run reception centres, youth training centres and children's homes in metropolitan and regional Victoria. Baltara Reception Centre was established in 1968 on the same site as Parkside classification centre.

These new departmental institutions were established partly in an effort to ease the overcrowding at Turana, as well as to provide institutions appropriate to the varying circumstances and needs of children and young people coming into care.

In the 1980s, the Victorian government implemented policies to decentralise 'care' from large institutions like Turana, and replace them with community-based alternatives. From about 1985, Turana (along with Winlaton and Baltara) continued to operate, but only as a youth training centre to provide appropriate programs for young people sentenced to detention.

The numbers at Turana fell from 167 in 1981 to 50 in 1992. The total number of under-17s remanded or detained in youth training centres fell from 266 in 1981 to 40 in 1992.

In 1993, the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre opened on the site.

Turana was investigated by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Case Study 30: Youth detention centres, Victoria. The report of this case study stated: "At Turana, the punishments that some staff members inflicted, such as scrubbing brickwork with a toothbrush, were designed to keep residents occupied and compliant and were an informal means of command and control. The forms of punishment were a feature of the culture of the institution and were not mandated by formal policies or procedures (p.7)". The Royal Commission found that young people at Turana experienced sexual, physical and emotional abuse and punishments including solitary confinement (Case Study 30, p.36).

Gallery



Children in the nursery - "Turana"

Description: This is a copy of an image published in the annual report for the Victorian Children's Welfare Department for 1956.



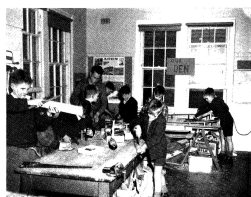
A cottage group - "Turana"

Description: This is a copy of an image published in the annual report for the Victorian Children's Welfare Department for 1956.



Section of the new kindergarten - 'Turana'

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



Hobbies at 'Billabong' - Turana

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



In the playground, junior section, Turana

Description: This image appeared in the Department's annual report for 1958.



Presentation of St John's Ambulance certificates to lads at Poplar House, Juvenile School Section, "Turana"

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



Turana

Description: This is a copy of an image published in a 2017 history of The Brosnan Centre. It has the caption: 'Turana Youth Training Centre in Parkville, now known as Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre'. The image shows a sign that reads: 'Turana. Enquiries. Social Welfare Department, Youth Welfare Division'.

More info

Chronology

- Royal Park Industrial School [Girls] (1875 - c.1879)
 - Royal Park Depot (c. 1880 - 1955)
- **Turana (1955 – 1993)**
 - Melbourne Youth Justice Centre (1993 - current)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Children's Welfare Department, State Government of Victoria \(1924 - 1960\)](#)
Date: 1955 - 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
- [Community Services Victoria, State Government of Victoria \(1985 - 1992\)](#)
Date: 1985 - 1992

Related Events

- [Case Study 30: Youth detention centres, Victoria, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse \(2015\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Foster Care Westernport \(1979 - 1991\)](#)
Sometimes children from Turana spent holidays in foster homes provided by Foster Care Westernport.
- [Lismore House \(c. 1982 - 1995\)](#)
Some of the first residents of Lismore House came from Turana
- [Kilmany Park Farm Home for Boys \(1923 - 1978\)](#)
By the 1960s, Kilmany Park was seen by the State of Victoria as a valuable alternative to Turana in Melbourne.
- [Allambie Reception Centre \(1961 - 1990\)](#)
The Victorian Government opened the Allambie reception centre in 1961 to address overcrowding issues at Turana and to separate neglected children from juvenile offenders.
Date: 1961 -
- [Baltara Reception Centre \(1968 - c. 1992\)](#)
Baltara was situated on the same site as Turana.
- [Hillside Boys' Home \(1959 - c. 1985\)](#)
Hillside Boys' Home was established to ease overcrowding at Turana.
- [Sunshine Boys' Hostel \(1959 - 1980s\)](#)
The Sunshine Boys' Hostel was established to ease overcrowding at Turana.

Related Concepts

- [Medical experiments \(1803 - 1970s\)](#)
CSL conducted trials at Turana.
Date: 1959 - 1961

Resources

- Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation, [Stolen Generations' Testimonies](#), 2009. *Relevance:* See testimonies of Howard Edwards and Kennedy Edwards
- Atkinson, Lynn, [An overview of juvenile detention in Australia](#), National Conference on Juvenile Detention: Proceedings of a conference held 10-13 August 1993, 1994
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- James Jenkinson Consulting, [Guide to out-of-home care services 1940-2000 - Volume One: Agency Descriptions](#), November 2001
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- Donnely, Joan, [Submission no 264 to the Senate Inquiry Into Institutional Care](#), 18 October 2003
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- Gordon, Michael, [Sorry not enough for stolen generations](#), The Age, 13 February 2010
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- Horne, John, [Submission no 268 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
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- Name withheld, [Submission no 465 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Harrison, Stephen, [Submission no 401 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
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- [Women Share in Honours Bestowed by Queen](#), The Age, 1 January 1962

- Sterel, Elizabeth, [Attack delinquency 'at start'](#), The Age, 17 February 1972
- Davis, Wayne, [Transcript of Wayne Davis's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations](#), 25 March 2013
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- Johnson, Max, [Transcript of Max Johnson's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations](#), 15 February 2013
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- Lawson, Dean, [Support for 'Forgotten Australians'](#), Weekly Advertiser (Horsham), 23 December 2015
- Cook, Henrietta, [Child sex abuse survivor wins payout after electric shock "therapy"](#), The Age, 15 November 2020
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- [Ron Thorpe interviewed by Helen Belle Curzon-Siggers in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(1999\)](#), 19 September 1999
- Borowski, Allan, [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#), 2016

Records

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

Records

- [Child Information and Departmental Administration records, Turana, Baltara Reception Centre, Langi Kal Kal and Malmsbury Youth Training Centres, Melbourne Youth Justice Centre \(c. 1950 - c. 2005\)](#)
 - [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)
 - [Departmental Children's Homes Files \(1955 - 1987\)](#)
 - [Children's Court of Victoria records \(1933 - 1964\)](#)
 - [Welfare Photographs and Publications \(c. 1956 - c. 1960\)](#)
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