

Parramatta Girls Industrial School

1887 – 1912

Other Names:

- Parramatta Training School for Girls
- Industrial School for Females
- Bethel House

Details

The Parramatta Girls Industrial School was established in 1887 in the old Roman Catholic Orphan School buildings at Parramatta by the Department of Public Instruction. It accommodated around 160 to 200 girls at a time, and some younger boys, most of whom had been charged with crimes or committed for welfare reasons. In 1912 the Parramatta Girls Industrial School moved to the control of the State Children's Relief Board and became the Parramatta Girls Training Home.

The institution at Parramatta has a long history including several name changes from 1887 to 1975. It has been estimated that up to 30,000 girls passed through Parramatta over this time; it is a significant site in Australian women's and child welfare history.

Parramatta Girls Industrial School was founded in 1887 when the Biloela Industrial School at Cockatoo Island was closed down in the aftermath of rioting and scandals and the girls were transferred to the Roman Catholic Orphanage buildings in Fleet Street. Like Biloela, it was an industrial school, governed by the *Destitute Children's Act* and run by the Department of Public Instruction.

Girls were committed to Parramatta for a variety of reasons: they had been committed by welfare organisations; were classed as 'uncontrollable'; had been charged with crimes; been before a children's court; were on remand or because they had not settled into foster placements (boarding out) or other institutions.

Parramatta, and the subsequent organisations that used the site, combined the functions of training school (or industrial school), for girls in the welfare stream, and reformatory, for girls on criminal charges. Overcrowding within the walls of the complex meant the lines were often blurred between the reformatory and the training school. In addition, until 1904 a small number of boys under the age of 7 years were also sent to Parramatta.

The buildings of the Parramatta Girls Industrial School were bleak and run down and there were riots and complaints by girls, which attracted a number of inquiries. These inquiries, held at intervals from 1889, reveal persistent problems with overcrowding, discipline and management. They also reveal the complexity and intensity of the relationships between the girls. Oral histories of the home confirm the strong bonds that developed within the home, and the girls' awareness of abuse and exploitation.

Parramatta Girls Industrial School was investigated by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Case Study 07: Parramatta Training School for Girls.

In 1912 the Parramatta Girls Industrial School became the Parramatta Girls Training Home, after the institution was transferred to the State Children's Relief Department.

The site of Parramatta Girls Industrial School is part of the Parramatta Female Factories and Institutions Precinct. In November 2017, the Precinct was added to the National Heritage List. The inscription notes that "the Precinct

is outstanding in its capacity to tell the stories of women and children in institutions over the course of Australian history". It has also been listed on the Register of the National Estate since 21 March 1978.

Gallery



Abandon All Hope - a history of Parramatta Girls Home

Description: Caption taken from YouTube: Abandon All Hope is the first documented history of the Parramatta Girls Home - a project made possible through the Parrastories Heritage and Stories fund, Parramatta City Council. Until now the story of this State operated welfare institution has remained relatively unknown. The document examines the site's archaeological heritage together with an overview of the statutory and societal forces and the individual and collective experiences of the young people who once resided within its walls.



Visit by Mrs May to Girls' Institution, Parramatta

Description: This image shows a group of adults shaking hands at the entrance to the Parramatta Girls Training Home.



Girls Training School Precinct

Description: This is a picture of the front of what was formerly the Parramatta Girls Training School.

More info

Chronology

- Newcastle Industrial School for Females (6 August 1867 - 20 July 1871)
 - Biloela Industrial School, Cockatoo Island (1871 - 1887)
- **Parramatta Girls Industrial School (1887 – 1912)**
 - Parramatta Girls Training Home (1912 - 1946)
 - Parramatta Girls Training School (1946 - 1974)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department of Public Instruction \(1880 - 1915\)](#)

The Department of Public Instruction ran Parramatta Girls Industrial School until the Child Welfare Act was introduced in 1923.

Date: 1887 - 1923

Related Events

- [Case Study 07: Parramatta Training School for Girls, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse \(2014\)](#)

Related Legislation

- [Reformatory Schools Act 1866, New South Wales \(1869 - 1901\)](#)
Parramatta Girls Industrial School was established under the *Reformatory Schools Act*.
- [Destitute Children Act 1866, New South Wales \(1866 - 1901\)](#)
Parramatta Girls' Industrial School was created under the *Destitute Children's Act 1866*.
- [Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act 1905, New South Wales \(1905 - 1923\)](#)
- [Reformatory and Industrial Schools Act 1901, New South Wales \(1901 - 1905\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Roman Catholic Orphan School \(8 March 1844 - 1886\)](#)
The Parramatta Girls Industrial School was established in the buildings vacated by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in 1886.
Date: 1887 - 1975

Resources

- Williamson, Noeline, *Life in the industrial and reformatory school for girls in New South Wales [Series of two parts]: Part 1: 1867 to 1887. 'Hymns, songs and blackguard verses'. Part 2: 1887 to 1910. Laundry maids or ladies?*, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 1982 - 1983
- Ramsland, John, *Children of the back lanes: destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales*, 1986
- Scrivener, Gladys, ["Rescuing the rising generation" : industrial schools in New South Wales, 1850-1910](#), 1996
- Valentine, Alana, *Parramatta girls (A Play)*, 2007
- Stockell, Poppy, [Bonney Djuric on Parramatta Girls' Home 2009](#), Dictionary of Sydney, 2009
- Quinn, Peter E, [Unenlightened efficiency: the administration of the juvenile correction system in New South Wales 1905-1988](#), 27 March 2006
- *Dismay after Parramatta's historic Norma Parker Detention Centre orphanage damaged by fire*, Parramatta Advertiser, 10 January 2013
- Benns, Matthew, [Rees offers apology to casualties of care system](#), The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 September 2009
- Department of Justice, [History](#), Children's Court of New South Wales, 2012
- Watson, Vanessa, [Parramatta Girls: 'exposed to moral danger'](#), Parramatta Sun, 8 May 2014
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, [Report of Case Study No. 7: child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay](#), October 2014
- Parry, Naomi, [The Parramatta Girls Home](#), The Dictionary of Sydney, 2015

Records

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

Records

- [Records of Girls' Industrial and Training Schools, State Archives NSW \(1867 - 1983\)](#)
- [Copies of letters sent concerning the administration of public schools \(1880 - 1896\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/parramatta-girls-industrial-school/>