

# Riverina Welfare Farm for Boys, Yanco

1928 – 1942

**Other Names:**

- Yanco
- Yanco Experiment Farm

## Details

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Riverina Welfare Farm for Boys, Yanco was an industrial school, or juvenile detention centre, in the Riverina. It was established at the former Yanco Experiment Farm in 1928 by the Child Welfare Department and held up to 128 boys. It functioned as a training farm and the New South Wales Department of Agriculture trained the boys and conducted crop trials and sheep breeding on the site during its use as a boys' home.

When World War II started the farm became a major producer of vegetables for the armed forces. Yanco was resumed by the military in 1942 and the boys were transferred to Gosford Home. The site became a prisoner of war camp, housing 750 Italian POWs. The site remains in the ownership of the New South Wales Government, and has functioned as an agricultural facility and college. In 2013 it was known as the Murrumbidgee Rural Studies Centre.

At the time Riverina Welfare Farm was established it was intended to take boys nearing the end of their sentence at Gosford, who had responded to the training programme there and had their parents' permission. The goal was to provide a 12 month period of farm training, and prepare them for integration into rural communities. From 1932 some boys from Mittagong and Royleston Depot were sent to Yanco, to alleviate crowding that resulted from increasing numbers of older boys, as guardians refused to pay proper apprenticeship rates during the Depression.

In 1934 a government inquiry led by JE McCulloch condemned the home. One of the factors leading to the inquiry was allegations of abusive behaviour towards the boys by the Superintendent, Major Arthur Parsonage. Parsonage had transferred from Gosford, bringing a regime of brutal punishments that had been phased out at the older institution in the 1920s. McCulloch found evidence that boys were forced to deliver physical punishments to other boys, and hard labour and humiliations were used regularly. McCulloch also noted that boys who were state wards for welfare reasons were housed with those who were in the institution for disciplinary reasons, and subjected to the same harsh treatment. Parsonage did not return to the institution. It is not clear whether other changes resulted from McCulloch's criticisms.

From 1933 to 1936 new dormitory buildings, arranged around a main quadrangle, were constructed, with the help of the boys. The foundation stone was set in the Main Administration building by the Hon. D Drummond (MLA), Minister for Education for the Child Welfare Department. The new accommodation increased the capacity of the institution to 200. A gaol was also constructed by the Child Welfare Department, consisting of three cells and a separate solitary confinement cell at the rear for the worst offenders. These buildings, with the exception of the gaol, remain in use in 2013.

By the middle of the 1930s most of the boys in the home were considered to be lower than average intelligence, and Department of Education teachers were employed to assist them with general education.

## Gallery



### The quarters, Yanco Experimental Farm

**Description:** This image predates the Riverina Welfare Farm for Boys, but the buildings were the same.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Child Welfare Department, State Government of New South Wales \(1923 - 1970\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Gosford Training School \(1923 - 1945\)](#)

Boys from Gosford Training School were sent to Yanco, and staff also transferred between the two institutions.

### Resources

- Quinn, Peter E, [Unenlightened efficiency: the administration of the juvenile correction system in New South Wales 1905-1988](#), 27 March 2006
- McCulloch, J.E., *Child Welfare Department : report on the general organisation, control and administration of, with special reference to state welfare institutions*, 1934
- [No More Yancos](#), Truth, 29 April 1934

## Records

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

### Records

- [Departmental Records relating to State Wards, New South Wales \(1918 - current\)](#)
  - [Riverina Welfare Farm for Boys, Yanco records, State Archives NSW \(1928 - 1942\)](#)
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