

Ormond Regional Youth Centre

1985 – 1998

Other Names:

- Ormond School for Specific Purposes
- Ormond Youth Centre

Details

Ormond Regional Youth Centre was established at Westleigh (formerly part of Thornleigh) by the Department of Youth and Community Services in 1985. It used the same buildings in Duffy Avenue that had been used by the Ormond Training School and the Ormond School. The Centre accommodated children aged 9 to 15 years who had been sentenced by the Courts or who entered voluntarily. Like Ormond School, it was a School for Specific Purposes. Ormond Regional Youth Centre closed in 1998. The buildings were later demolished.

The Ormond Regional Youth Centre opened in the premises of the former Ormond School in 1985.

The closure of the training school and re-opening as the Ormond Regional Youth Centre in 1985 was part of the Department's reorganisation of young offender services (McFarlane, p.70).

In its annual report for 1986-87, the Department stated that it had expanded its Home School Liaison Scheme as a new approach to tackling school truancy, in conjunction with the Department of Education (p.27). In fact, only one child was made a ward of the state for the reason of truancy in 1987 (p.93).

McFarlane writes that, despite the Department's reform program in juvenile justice from the mid 1980s, and the change in philosophy and purpose at Ormond, staff at the Ormond Regional Youth Centre invariably 'resorted to what they knew best ... adopting a custodial model of care' (p.71). The 1999 report by the NSW Community Services Commission 'The Ormond Centre: a Complaint Investigation into the Institutional Care of Children' was scathing about the way staff at Ormond responded to challenging behaviour by the children, with the result that 'most children received their first arrest and conviction within weeks' of arriving at Ormond (cited in McFarlane, p.92).

McFarlane concludes that although Ormond was one institution promoted by the Department as a 'therapeutic flagship providing intensive support', its children and young people received a very poor standard of care (p.101).

The average period in residence was 20 weeks. In a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care (2004), the mother of a boy sent to the facility at that time wrote:

My son suffered great anguish while he was there, it was criminal that my son remained there for [nine months] at the age of 11 years ... My son was suicidal when he came home ... I would like my son's story exposed and for him to understand the number of kids who have gone through assaults and abuse by both the staff at Ormond and the so called 'normal kids', who were no way near the intellect level of my son ... Ormond was nothing more than a dumping ground for kids.

In 1997, an anonymous letter detailing 38 allegations – including serious accusations of the sexual abuse of young residents at the hands of a paedophile network of tow-truck drivers – was published in the media and subsequently tabled in the NSW Parliament (McFarlane, p.101). Shortly thereafter, in November 1997 the Minister for Community Services, then Ron Dyer, told the Parliament ‘I took a decision for good and well understood reasons to close both the Ormond and Minali institutions.’ According to Hansard:

They will close at such time as there are no longer any children receiving services within them. Ormond and Minali are congregate care centres. They are being closed to provide smaller community-based or family setting accommodation for children who are in need of State care. Worldwide developments in substitute care support the move away from institutional settings for young people who, I would remind the House, have done nothing wrong – they have not offended against the criminal law – but are in need of State care. The redesign and relocation of Ormond and Minali are occurring in a staged manner with both institutions to be closed during 1998. However, current services will not close before new service arrangements are in place to better meet the individual needs of these young people.

After Ormond had closed, in 1999, Carmel Niland, Director General of the Department, declared that ‘world experience has shown that this model of care, which starts with the best intentions and the best staff, can deteriorate over time to the worst model of care for troubled youth’ (NSW Department of Community Services 1999, cited by McFarlane, p.103).

The buildings were demolished and have been replaced by housing.

Gallery



Morning assembly at Ormond School. The new classrooms adjoin the Recreation Room (showing on extreme left)

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1968.

More info

Chronology

- Ormond, Thornleigh (28 October 1946 - 1962)
 - Ormond Training School (1962 - 1980)
 - Ormond School (1980 - 1984)
- **Ormond Regional Youth Centre (1985 – 1998)**

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department of Youth and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1976 - 1988\)](#)
Date: 1985 - 1988
- [Department of Health and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1991 - 1992\)](#)
- [Department of Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1992 - 2009\)](#)
Date: 1992 - 1998

- [Department of Family and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1988 - 1991\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Minali Receiving and Assessment Centre \(1975 - 1998\)](#)
Ormond and Minali were the last residential care facilities operated by the Department of Community Services.

Resources

- Krol, Teresa, [Submission no 26 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Boyle, Brian, *The Child Welfare Schools: Recollections of these unique schools and the men and women who taught in them often under considerable difficulty*, 1996
- NSW Community Services Commission, *Just Solutions: Wards and Juvenile Justice*, 1999
- NSW Community Services Commission, *The Ormond Centre: a Complaint Investigation into the Institutional Care of Children*, 1999
- NSW Community Services Commission, *Service Closures Inquiry: An inquiry into the experiences of children and young people affected by the 1997/98 closure of substitute care services*, 2000
- McFarlane, Katherine, *From Care to Custody: Young Women in Out-of-home Care in the Criminal Justice System*, Current Issues in Criminal Justice, 2011

Records

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

Records

- [Departmental Records relating to State Wards, New South Wales \(1918 - current\)](#)
- [Ormond Regional Youth Centre, Thornleigh: Institutional files \(\[I\] "B" files\) \(1979 - 1985\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/ormond-regional-youth-centre/>