

Parramatta Girls Training Home

1912 – 1946

Details

The Parramatta Girls Training Home was the name given in 1912 to the former Parramatta Girls Industrial School. It accommodated around 160 to 200 older girls at a time. The girls had been charged with crimes, or committed by welfare organisations. In 1946, after a public controversy, its name changed again to the Parramatta Girls Training School.

Girls were placed in Parramatta for a variety of reasons: they had been committed by welfare organisations; had been charged with crimes; were on remand or because they had not settled into foster placements or other institutions. For most of its existence, Parramatta combined the functions of training school, for girls in the welfare stream, and reformatory, for girls on criminal charges. Until 1928 it received girls as young as two years of age.

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. Girls in the Australian Capital Territory who were charged with juvenile offences or committed to an institution under welfare laws were also sent to Parramatta.

Overcrowding within the walls of the Parramatta complex meant the lines were often blurred between the reformatory and the training school, although various attempts were made to set up specialised institutions, such as Bethel and Keller House. La Perouse was established as annexe to the Parramatta Home, partly to alleviate crowding. It served as a privilege home, which means being sent there was a reward for good behaviour. Discipline was lighter, and the beach environment at La Perouse, was much more pleasant than Parramatta.

Throughout the history of Parramatta Girls' Home the buildings 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 to 1961, reveal persistent problems with overcrowding, discipline and management. They also reveal the complex and intense 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.

One of the most significant inquiries into the home was the Child Welfare Council Delinquency Committee Report, which followed an inquiry by Mrs Mary Tenison-Woods. That inquiry documented mismanagement in the home, abusive punishments and other failings. It also recorded a strong subculture within the home, and the depth of relationships (both positive and negative) between the girls. Tenison-Woods advocated a range of positive measures, including better child guidance and educational opportunities for the girls.

The reaction to the Tenison-Woods inquiry was immediate. In 1946 the New South Wales Government announced that the Parramatta Girls Training Home would be renamed as the Parramatta Girls Training School and reforms would be introduced. However the buildings, and most of the staff, remained exactly the same.

Parramatta Girls' Home was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families.

The site of Parramatta Girls Training Home 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.

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

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

Date: 1923 - 1946

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

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

Date: 1912 - 1923

Related Glossary Terms

- [Juvenile Delinquency \(1850s - 1990s\)](#)

Related Legislation

- [Child Welfare Act 1939, New South Wales \(1939 - 1987\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [La Perouse Training School for Girls \(28 July 1928 - 1939\)](#)

La Perouse Training School for Girls was an annexe of Parramatta Girls Training Home.

Resources

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, [Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families](#), 1997. Relevance: Parramatta Girls' Home was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families
- 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
- 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
- Lyon, Junita, [A chilling account](#), Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions blog, 1 March 2010
- [They'll All Enjoy Christmas Parties](#), The Australian Women's Weekly, 9 December 1933
- Quinn, Peter E, [Unenlightened efficiency: the administration of the juvenile correction system in New South Wales 1905-1988](#), 27 March 2006
- Benns, Matthew, [Rees offers apology to casualties of care system](#), The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 September 2009
- Watson, Vanessa, [Parramatta Girls: 'exposed to moral danger'](#), Parramatta Sun, 8 May 2014
- Parry, Naomi, [The Parramatta Girls Home](#), The Dictionary of Sydney, 2015
- Tenison Woods, Mary, [State and the Child](#), Sydney Morning Herald, 3 February 1944
- Hibberd, Lily with Djuric, Bonney (editors), *Parragirls: Reimagining Parramatta Girls Home through art and memory*, 2019
- [Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct](#), National Heritage List, 2017
- [Fifth Sectional Report Covering the Administration of the Acts relating to State Children](#), Royal Commission to Inquire into the Public Service of New South Wales, August 1920

Records

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

Records

- [Records of Girls' Industrial and Training Schools, State Archives NSW \(1867 - 1983\)](#)
- [Departmental Records relating to State Wards, New South Wales \(1918 - current\)](#)

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