

Basil Stafford Centre

1968 – 2013

Other Names:

- Farm Ward Complex
- Basil Stafford Training Centre

Details

The Basil Stafford Centre was established in 1968. The Centre provided accommodation and associated care services for intellectually disabled people, including children.

The Centre was originally part of the Wolston Park Special Hospital, then in 1960 a separate centre providing institutional accommodation for children was established adjacent to the Hospital. It was named the Basil Stafford Centre in 1968. Children from the Challinor Centre were transferred to the Basil Stafford Centre in 1977. Villas for accommodation were constructed by 1978.

The Centre housed people “with severe or profound levels of intellectual disability” (Stewart Report, p.4). The maximum number of people there was 241 in 1980. By 1994, there were around 120 residents, 17 of which were children aged 16 years or below (Stewart Report p.71). Most residents lived there permanently, however the Centre also had six beds for temporary respite care.

Residents were housed in one of five units: four were house-style accommodation, grouped into villas and housing around 6 residents per house. The last unit accommodated around 30 residents and was dormitory-style, often referred to as “wards”. Each unit was named after an Australian floral species (Stewart report, pp. 72-3).

Facilities for the residents included a swimming pool, garden areas, a recreation hall, and buses to transport residents on outings. However, by 1990 it was noted that fewer activities were available to residents, as there were not enough staff to supervise them (Stewart Report, p.106).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, there were media reports and some police investigations of reports of assaults against residents at the Centre. Many of these assaults were perpetrated against the children living there.

In 1993, an inquiry was established to investigate alleged “client abuse and gross neglect” at the Centre, by the Criminal Justice Commission and led by The Honourable DG Stewart. The Inquiry was also to investigate claims of harassment or intimidation of people who drew attention to these assaults and neglect, and to consider what frameworks needed to be in place “relevant to the treatments of clients at the Centre or the reporting of treatment of such clients”.

The first hearing was held in December 1993 and hearings concluded in August 1994. The Inquiry investigated six complaints of alleged “client abuse and gross neglect” through public hearings, and it was stated that these six were chosen as they were “illustrative” of broader issues at the Centre (Stewart Report, p.11). The complaints investigated included the neglect and possible physical assault on a 12 year old, and the death of an 11 year old who was left unsupervised.

The report of the Inquiry was published in March 1995, and was known as the Stewart Report after the Inquiry’s Commissioner. It recommended the immediate closure of the Centre, referred some staff to prosecution or

misconduct proceedings, and recommended legislative changes and systemic departmental changes when providing care to people with intellectual disabilities.

The Inquiry also found that “a number of unlawful assaults” had occurred by staff members on residents, that there were instances of residents being neglected by staff, and in some cases that neglect was severe. The Inquiry also highlighted the “insidious institutional culture” at the Centre, where people who wanted to make complaints or highlight poor behaviour were intimidated and harassed (Stewart Report, p.283).

Despite a strong recommendation to close the Centre, and the government's undertakings to do so, a change in government after the report release reversed this decision and the Centre remained open.

In 2000, the Criminal Justice Commission reviewed implementation of the recommendations of the Stewart Report. It noted that the Centre had not been closed, nor had legislative reform happened, but other changes had been made at the Centre, which altered the question of whether it should be closed.

By 2000 there were 69 residents at the Centre, with many already planned to move into other housing. It was determined that the Centre could remain open for the rest of the residents, “with a reduced client population with significantly less staff” (Carter Report, p.8). It was noted that staff to resident ratios had improved and that training and reporting processes had been improved. It concluded by noting “it is unlikely the state of affairs that justified the inquiry in 1994-95 will re-emerge” (Carter Report, p.22). However, news reports in the mid-2000s reported ongoing mistreatment of residents, including one case where a teenager was kept in isolation for 24 hours a day.

In 2007, a report investigating *Challenging Behaviour and Disability* described the conditions at the Centre as “prison-like” and stated that “the present unacceptable accommodation regime at the Basil Stafford Centre has to be terminated as soon as possible” (“Challenging Behaviour” report, p.90).

However, despite these comments, the Centre remained open, with fewer and fewer residents, until eventually closing in 2013.

The Basil Stafford Centre is listed on the Queensland Heritage Register as part of the [Wolston Park Hospital](#) complex.

Gallery



Basil Stafford Centre Villas, 1977

Description: This is a photograph of the villas at the Basil Stafford Centre, taken in 1977 when the villas were newly constructed. There are more photos available at the [State Library of Queensland](#) link.



Basil Stafford Villas, 1977

Description: This is a photograph of the villas at the Basil Stafford Centre, taken in 1977 when the villas were newly constructed. There are more photos available at the [State Library of Queensland](#) link.



Exterior of Banksia Flats, Basil Stafford Centre

Description: This is an image of the Banksia Flats, part of the Basil Stafford Centre, taken in 2009 as part of the heritage listing of the Wolston Park complex. There are more photographs available at the [State Library of Queensland link](#).



Interior of Banksia Flats, Basil Stafford Centre

Description: This is an image of the interior of one of the Banksia Flats buildings, part of the Basil Stafford Centre, taken in 2009 as part of the heritage listing of the Wolston Park complex. There are more photographs available at the [State Library of Queensland link](#).

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Health Department, State Government of Queensland \(26 September 1963 - 3 April 2012\)](#)
- [Queensland Health \(3 April 2012 - current\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Challinor Centre \(1968 - 1998\)](#)

Children from the Challinor Centre were transferred to the Basil Stafford Centre in 1977.

Resources

- [Wolston Park Hospital Complex](#), Queensland Heritage Register, February 2022
 - Wenham, Margaret, *Disturbed teen 'kept in isolation'*, The Courier-Mail, 13 February 2006
-

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