

# The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mount Barker

1945 – 1982

**Other Names:**

- Eden Park Boys Home
- Salvation Army Probationary School for Boys, Mount Barker
- Mount Barker Boys Home

## Details

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The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mount Barker, also known as Eden Park, was the new name given to the Boys' Probationary School at Wistow in 1945. Run by the Salvation Army, the Home accommodated boys deemed to have emotional or behavioural problems. Some Aboriginal boys were also admitted. From 1950 the Home was subject to regular government inspections. The Home closed in 1982.

The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mount Barker, also referred to as 'Eden Park', was the new name given to the Boys' Probationary School at Wistow, near Mt Barker in 1945. The name change reflected the fact the Home was no longer under the control of the government and was not used as an institution for State children. From that time Eden Park, as it was commonly known, took in children placed privately by their parents or by non-government agencies. The majority were regarded as having emotional or behavioural problems. Some were young offenders. Aboriginal boys were also placed at the Home.

In 1950, after amendments were made to the Maintenance Act 1926-1937, the Home came under the supervision of the government. The amendments required that any child under the age of seven who was living in a 'benevolent institution' had to be visited. This meant that Departmental officers regularly inspected Eden Park, approximately every four months and reported back to the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board on living conditions, staffing and management. From this time some State children were sent to Eden Park.

During the 1950s the Home was described as 'pleasing' and 'well run' and the boys as 'happy' but the supervision of the boys, particularly at night was reported as being 'passive'. In 1959 a departmental inspector reported on the use of a 'dark punishment room'. The Board asked the inspector to make 'discreet inquiries about the segregation room and for how long children are placed in it'. Although no further evidence about this room was discovered at that time, information about a small 'lock-up room' with no light or windows arose again in the 1970s and its use for punishment was confirmed.

The Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry (2004-2008) received evidence from 18 men who had resided in the Home as boys and had suffered abuse. Government records also revealed allegations of abuse, harsh discipline and punitive methods which were investigated during the 1960s-1980s.

Up until the early 1970s boys at Eden Park slept in dormitories in the large main building. By 1976, the Home was divided into three smaller units of 12 boys each. These were named Aroona, Barmera and Coorong. Each unit was supervised by a residential care worker and had its own bathroom and lounge area. The Home continued to take in boys with emotional and behavioural problems.

In 1981 The Boys' Home was described in a departmental report as having become 'a dumping ground for problem children'. Both the physical isolation of the Home and the lack of contact boys were allowed to have with their families were criticised. The management style was described as being 'geared to discipline and efficiency' rather than considering the individual needs of each boy.

Concern about the institution continued into the early 1980s. In a 1982 report, a departmental officer stated that management of the Home was based on a 'punitive and controlling philosophy of care'. The officer further stated that:

*the overall philosophy of care is based on a staff philosophy that reflects emphasis on control and punishment rather than more modern and appropriate styles of managing difficult children.*

Not long after this report was written, the Salvation Army made the decision that the services provided by the Boys' Home were no longer required. They noted that there had been 'a change in the pattern of child-care which we must recognise'.

Eden Park ceased to operate as a Boys' Home on 31 December 1982. The property was retained by the Salvation Army and used as the country site for an alcohol rehabilitation program. The property was sold into private hands in 1997.

The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mount Barker, was investigated by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Case Study 33: The Salvation Army children's Homes, Australia Southern Territory.

## Gallery

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### Salvation Army's Boy's Home at Mount Barker

**Description:** The library description states: MOUNT BARKER: 'Eden Park', a Salvation Army Boy's Home established at Mount Barker in 1901.



### Salvation Army Boys' Home, Eden Park [Mount Barker]

**Description:** This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- Boys' Probationary School (1900 - 1945)
  - **The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mount Barker (1945 – 1982)**

### Related Entries

Run by

- [The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory \(1921 - 2018\)](#)

### Related Events

- [Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry, South Australia \(2004 - 2008\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [Department for Community Welfare, South Australian Government \(1972 - 1990\)](#)  
The Department for Community Welfare conducted regular inspections of The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mt Barker as part of its legislative requirements  
Date: 1972 - 1982
- [The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town \(1929 - 1972\)](#)  
When the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town closed in 1972 some older boys were sent to the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mt Barker.
- [Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board \(1927 - 1966\)](#)  
The Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board conducted regular inspections of The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mt Barker as part of its legislative requirements  
Date: 1950 - 1966
- [Department of Social Welfare, South Australian Government \(1966 - 1970\)](#)  
The Department of Social Welfare conducted regular inspections of The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mt Barker as part of its legislative requirements  
Date: 1966 - 1970
- [Department of Social Welfare and Aboriginal Affairs, South Australian Government \(1970 - 1972\)](#)  
The Department of Social Welfare and Aboriginal Affairs conducted regular inspections of The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mt Barker as part of its legislative requirements  
Date: 1970 - 1972

### Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

## Resources

- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No. 33: The response of the Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated*, July 2016
- Cleland, Sharon, [Caring for the Children: A history of institutional care provided by The Salvation Army for Australian children and youth \(1893-1995\)](#), August 2012
- Steer, Hedley, *Social Salvation, Early development of the Social Wing of The Salvation Army*, 1996
- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territorial Headquarters (Vic), [Submission No. 46 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care: Appendix A: Children's Homes - A list of openings, closings and function](#), July 2003

## Records

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

### Records

- [Historical records and memorabilia of Salvation Army institutions, Southern Territory](#)
- [Records of the Social Welfare Department and predecessors \(1849 - c. 1987\)](#)
- [Salvation Army Australia, Records of Homes in the former Southern Territory \(c. 1889 - c. 1988\)](#)
- [Minutes - State Children's Council, later the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board \(1886 - 1965\)](#)
- [Correspondence files \('CW & PRD' and 'SW' files\) -Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department and successors \(1927 - c. 1979\)](#)
- [State Ward Index Cards, State Children's Department and successors \(1900 - 1992\)](#)

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