

Colebrook Home

1927 – 1981

Other Names: • Colebrook Children's Training Home, Quorn

Details

Colebrook Home was opened in Quorn in 1927 by the United Aborigines Mission as an institution for Aboriginal children. The Matron and 12 children from Oodnadatta Children's Home were the first residents. In 1944 the Home moved to Eden Hills where it accommodated up to 50 children. In 1961 children from Gerard Mission Children's Dormitory moved to Colebrook. In the mid 1960s, 20 to 30 children lived at the Home. This number dropped to five in late 1971. Colebrook Home moved to Blackwood in 1972 and closed in 1981.

The first Children's home run by the UAM had been established three years earlier in Oodnadatta by missionary, Miss Annie Lock. Initially housed in an iron shed, the children were then moved to a small cottage purchased by the UAM in 1926. The following year the twelve children resident in the home were brought to Quorn, along with Matron Ruby Hyde who had been caring for the children since 1925. The children were relocated in order to remove them from the influence of their families so that they could be more easily assimilated into white society. As missionary Violet Turner described in her history of Colebrook at Quorn, the UAM believed the children needed to be in a place where 'they could no longer see the [sic] natives or hear the sounds of corroboree'. It also aspired to raise children in a Christian environment. For many years Matron Hyde, a graduate of the Melbourne Bible Institute, ran the home with the assistance of Sister Rutter who had migrated from England.

The initial home site was plagued by inadequate water supply, so in 1933 it was moved to another location where the water situation was marginally better. In 1944, after drought caused further severe water restrictions, the Government gave permission for the UAM to establish a home in Adelaide. That same year the Mission took up a lease on a ten-acre (4 hectares) property at Eden Hills, a southern suburb of Adelaide.

The property at Eden Hills included a building which was transformed into children's dormitories. By 1950 more than fifty children were resident. Until 1953 they were schooled within the home. After that year they were accepted into the local Blackwood Primary School and Eden Hills Primary School (Fatchen, 1953).

In 1952, as a result of a split within the UAM, Sisters Hyde and Rutter left Colebrook to start their own hostel for girls, Tanderra. Colebrook, which had been under stable and constant management for 27 years, was then run by a succession of superintendents.

An article from 1953 describes the dormitories at Colebrook Home (the article was urging the public to donate to the United Aborigines Mission):

In the dormitories the army type stretchers were neatly made but there were no sheets or pillowships and often no pillows. Many of the windows lacked wire screens. Some of the floors were without coverings (Fatchen, 1953).

Another article from April 1953 (a clipping of which is on Colebrook Home's child endowment file at National Archives of Australia) described conditions at the Home. (This article reported on a visit to Colebrook by two members of parliament, who later claimed that the Home would not be able to continue much longer unless immediate help was obtained.) Mr Tapping MP said:

Accommodation is taxed to the limit. Crowded into one girl's bedroom are 10 beds with barely 12 inches between them. Similar conditions exist in the boys' rooms. There is no hot water system ... A wood stove has to be used to cook for 35 hungry young mouths (The News, 13 April 1953, p.2 – clipping in NAA A885 B98).

In 1954 the local Board of Health inspected the Home and found 'insanitary conditions' which they attributed to lack of staff and lack of funding. Two years later after another inspection, they wrote that the 'appalling conditions' were 'a menace to health, of not only the staff and inmates of the home, but to the residents living in the district'.

During the 1950s discipline and Christian education dominated the life of the children. One of the staff members regularly woke children during the night for Bible readings and prayers. Children who wet the bed were punished by being sent to school without breakfast.

In 1966 after inspections by the Department of Social Welfare, the UAM's licence to accommodate more than 5 children under the age of 12 was revoked. The report stated that the Home was not suitable for a large number of children because the staff lacked an awareness of the emotional and social needs of Aboriginal children. The Home was also lacking in amenities and not enough staff were employed.

In 1969 the lease to the property was not renewed because of community concern about the Home. The UAM were permitted to remain until a decision was made about the buildings and property.

In 1972, the remaining children in the Home were moved to a nearby cottage in Blackwood and the building at Eden Hills was demolished. In 1981 Colebrook was officially closed. During the fifty-four years of its existence Colebrook was 'home' to over 350 children. After the closure a number of former residents came together to form the Colebrook Tji Tji Tjuta. In conjunction with the Blackwood Reconciliation Group, this group secured funding to erect a memorial at the Eden Hills site. It serves as a monument to the many children who went through the home. The figure of a weeping mother serves as a testament to the many mothers whose children grew up without them.

Colebrook Home was one of the institutions that came under the scrutiny of the 2004-2008 Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry. Witnesses described incidents of physical and sexual abuse which occurred during the 1950s and 1960s.

Colebrook 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.

National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

In 2021, the South Australian government has agreed to be a funder of last resort for this institution. This means that although the institution is now defunct, it is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and the government has agreed to pay the institution's share of costs of providing redress to a person (as long as the government is found to be equally responsible for the abuse a person experienced).

Gallery



Colebrook Home, Quorn

Description: This is a copy of an image of the Colebrook Home when it was situated in Quorn, South Australia, between 1927 and 1944. It appeared in a publication by AE Gerard about the history of the United Aborigines Mission, published in 1950. The caption in the book is: "Our third Children's Home. This was our first Colebrook Home at Quorn."



Colebrook Home, Eden Hills

Description: This is a copy of an image of the Colebrook Home when it was situated in Eden Hills, between 1944 and 1971. It appeared in a publication by AE Gerard about the history of the United Aborigines Mission, published in 1950. The caption in the book is: "Our present Colebrook Training Home, Shepherds Hill Road, Eden Hills, South Australia."



Colebrook Home

Description: This image shows buildings at Colebrook.



Colebrook Reconciliation Park

Description: This is a video uploaded to YouTube by Jim Lesses, a member of the campaign in the 1990s to establish a memorial at the former site of Colebrook Home. This successful campaign led to the creation of the Colebrook Reconciliation Park in around 1998. The video features commissioned artworks by Silvio Apponyi: Pool of Tears (1998) and Grieving Mother (1999).

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [United Aborigines Mission \(1929 - 2020\)](#)

Related Events

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

Related Organisations

- [Gerard Mission \(1946 - 1974\)](#)

When Gerard Mission Children's Dormitory closed in 1961 the children were moved to Colebrook Home at Eden Hills

- [Oodnadatta Children's Home \(1924 - 1974\)](#)

The first residents at Colebrook Home at Quorn came from the Oodnadatta Children's Home

- [Tanderra Girls' Home \(1952 - 1973\)](#)

Tanderra Girls' Home was established as accommodation for older Aboriginal girls who had left Colebrook Home.

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

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:* Colebrook 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
- Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation, [*Stolen Generations' Testimonies*](#), 2009. *Relevance:* See testimonies of George Tongerie, Clara Johnson and Ruth Mackenzie
- Atkinson-Phillips, Alison, [*Not a Celebration*](#), 2017
- Telfer, EJ, [*Amongst Australian Aborigines: forty years of missionary work*](#), 1939
- [*Avis Gale interviewed by David Woodgate in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2001\)*](#), 27 April 2001
- [*Clara Coulthard interviewed by Sue Anderson in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2000\)*](#), 12 December 2000
- [*Doreen Maude Kartinyeri interviewed by Sue Anderson in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2000\)*](#), 1 April 2000
- [*Patricia Lear and Frances Shute interviewed by Karen George in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)*](#), 5 December 2000
- [*Syd Graham interviewed by Karen George in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2000 - \)*](#), 4 September 2000
- Finck, E R, [*God is faithful: A leaf in the life of Colebrook Home*](#), 1988
- Kartinyeri, Doris, *Kick the tin*, 2000
- Turner, Violet, [*Pearls from the deep: the story of Colebrook Home for Aboriginal children, Quorn, SA*](#), 1936
- Gerard, A E, *United Aborigines Mission (of Australia): an outline of the history of the mission particularly in South Australia*, 1950
- [*Aboriginal Missions in South Australia*](#), State Library of South Australia - Library Guides, 2013
- Shaw, Bruce, *Our Heart is the Land: Aboriginal Reminiscences from the Western Lake Eyre Basin*, 1995
- [*Colebrook Home*](#), Flinders Ranges Research, No date
- Blencowe, Ian, *Many children of Colebrook Home: a brief history of Colebrook Training Home from Oodnadatta, Quorn to Eden Hills, but this could be anywhere in Australia*, 1998
- Raynes, Cameron, *The last protector: the illegal removal of Aboriginal children from their parents in South Australia*, 2009
- Hosking, Susan, [*Colebrook Home and the disappeared past*](#), Westerly, 2007
- Barnes, Nancy, *Munyi's daughter : a spirited brumby*, 2000
- Hosking, Susan, [*Homeless at home, stolen and saved: three Colebrook autobiographies*](#), Westerly, 2001
- [*Lowitja \(Lois\) O'Donoghue: full interview transcript*](#), Australian Biography, 1994
- Atkinson-Phillips, Alison, *Commemoration as Witnessing: 20 Years of Remembering the Stolen Generations at Colebrook Reconciliation Park*, de arte, 2018
- George, Karen, [*Homes run by the United Aborigines Mission*](#), Finding your own way, 2005
- United Aborigines Mission, [*The United Aborigines messenger*](#), 1929 - 1987

Records

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

Records

- [Records of Aboriginal Missions in South Australia \(1850s - 1970s\)](#)
- [Records of the Aborigines' Office and Successor Agencies \(1866? - 1971?\)](#)
- [Records of Colebrook Home, United Aborigines Mission Archives \(1920s - 1980s\)](#)
- [United Aborigines Mission, records deposited with State Library of South Australia \(c. 1908 - c. 1976\)](#)
- [Papers and photographs of Sister Ruby Hyde \(1889 - 1982\)](#)
- [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
- [Admission Cards, Colebrook Home \(1950s - 1960s\)](#)
- [Records of the Aborigines' Friends' Association \(1925 - 1976\)](#)

- [Lantern slides taken by Ruby Hyde \(c. 1925 - c. 1930\)](#)
 - [SA Places and Events \[Motion Picture\] \(1936 - 1936\)](#)
 - [Faith Thomas \[Photographs\] \(1929 - 1957\)](#)
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