

Kurbingai Hostel

1958 – 1962

Other Names: • Sutton's Boys' Home

Details

Kurbingai Hostel was set up in Semaphore in 1958 by Mr WJL Sutton, a former superintendent of St Francis House. It operated as a private hostel for Aboriginal boys up to the age of 16 attending local schools. Most boys were placed at the Hostel by the Aborigines Protection Board. After numerous complaints the Aborigines Protection Board ordered the closure of the home in 1962.

Kurbingai Hostel was set up in 1958 by Mr WJL Sutton, a former superintendent of St Francis House. It operated as a private hostel for Aboriginal boys up to the age of sixteen. Most of the boys were placed there by the Aborigines Protection Board so that they could further their education at local schools.

The Aborigines Department paid board for the boys and collected child endowment on their behalf which also went towards paying for their accommodation. A small amount of pocket money was also provided by the Department. Parents were requested to send further pocket money to Mr Sutton who was to 'see that it is spent wisely for the boys'. Boys committed to the Hostel were allowed to return to their homes for Christmas. Parents were permitted to take their child out of the home one weekend per month on condition that Mr Sutton was advised where the child would be staying. During the school holidays Mr Sutton, with the approval of the Board, took the boys on a camping trip, usually along the Murray River.

In 1958, 15 boys were accommodated at the Hostel. During that year Mr Sutton advised the Department that his sister and her husband would be taking up residence in a new addition to the existing building and would act as matron and assistant in the home. This did not occur and Mr Sutton continued to care for the boys himself with the assistance of a cook to provide meals. In 1959 the number of boys in the Hostel had risen to 20. Mr Sutton wrote a number of letters to the Protection Board reporting on the home and the educational achievements of the boys.

In September 1961 a number of complaints were made about the running of the home, and Mr Sutton's behaviour, by the parents and relatives of some of the boys resident there. These complaints were investigated by Departmental welfare officers who were concerned about the manner in which the home was run. It was suggested that a resident matron should be appointed. This did not happen.

By 1962 of the approximately 20 boys living at Kurbingai, 10 were in State care. In May 1962, after further complaints were received, two boys were interviewed by departmental officers. Their testimony corroborated complaints regarding Mr Sutton's drinking and inappropriate behaviour. As a result of this the Aborigines Protection Board ordered the closure of the home and arranged foster care for the boys.

Kurbingai Hostel was one of the institutions that came under scrutiny for allegations of abuse during the Children in State Care Inquiry 2004-2008.

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).

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Aborigines Protection Board, South Australian Government \(1940 - 1963\)](#)
Most of the boys at Kurbingai Hostel were sent there by the Aborigines Protection Board. The Board ordered the closure of the Home in 1962.
- [Aborigines Department, South Australian Government \(1912 - 1962\)](#)
The Aborigines Department paid board and collected child endowment on behalf of the boys at Kurbingai Hostel

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Records of the Aborigines' Office and Successor Agencies \(1866 - 2003\)](#)
- [Kurbingai Boys Home General Docket - Prop: WJ Sutton, 128 Esplanade, Semaphore \(1958 - 1962\)](#)
- [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
Item B506 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to Kurbingai Hostel

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