

# Magill Training Centre

1993 – 2012

**Other Names:** • Magill Youth Training Centre

## Details

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The Magill Training Centre was the new name for government's secure care facility, the South Australian Youth Training Centre from 1993. At this time older offenders were moved to the Cavan Training Centre and Magill was used for young people only. Young women were also moved from the South Australian Youth Remand and Assessment Centre to a separate section of the Centre. Conditions at the Magill Training Centre were strongly criticised. This led to its closure and demolition in 2012. It was replaced by the Adelaide Youth Training Centre.

The Magill Training Centre was the new name given to the South Australian Youth Training Centre, SAYTC, in 1993. The name was changed when the new Cavan Training Centre was established as accommodation for older offenders. Magill Training Centre was then used for young offenders only. When the South Australian Youth Remand and Assessment Centre, SAYRAC, closed that same year, a separate facility for young female offenders was created at the Magill Training Centre. The young women moved there in October 1993.

Even before the name change, there was already discussion about the need to replace the out-dated Centre with a new facility. By the 2000s the department acknowledged that this was urgent. They acknowledged that the significant age of the buildings meant that they could not provide appropriate rehabilitation and care for children committed to the institution. The State Government made a number of announcements about plans to fund the building of a new facility but for a long period of time, nothing more was done.

During the 2004-2008 Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry, incidents at The Magill Training Centre were investigated. At this time, the Centre was regarded as failing to appropriately care for and rehabilitate young people.

During this period small attempts were made to improve the lives of children and young people living at Magill. Carclew, a South Australian Youth Arts organisation organised for a sculpture artist to work with residents attending the Youth Education Centre, a Department of Education facility in the grounds of the Youth Training Centre which provided schooling for them. The students designed and sculpted Hebel blocks to create a pathway of sculptures in the grounds. One of the young people involved wrote of his experience:

*I just wish I could take it home – I might become a Stone Mason ? I had to work out how to do it and it wasn't easy, I really like what I've made – Can you take some photos of me and my sculpture to send home? – This is cool. I've always wanted to be a painter but now I'd like to do this.*

In 2009 criticisms of the Centre became more public. The Guardian for Children and Young People, the Minister for Social Inclusion and the Australian Youth representative to the United Nations all spoke out in condemnation of living conditions at the Magill Training Centre.

The Guardian for Children and Young People referred to the Centre as 'barbaric'. In a radio interview in July 2009, she described living conditions inside the facility:

*The cells are two by three metre with a single bunk and no room for a desk or chair. The windows are at 1.5 metres high so for small children they can't even reach the bottom of the window. It's a very, very sad place... if you think about the profile of the children and young people that are there, many of them have already been traumatised by some child abuse or neglect and what we're doing is compounding that.*

The Minister for Social Inclusion also criticised the Magill Training Centre as 'inhumane':

*It is beyond acceptance in a modern society that we have children needing rehabilitation in that sort of environment. So it is clear as anything to me that that centre has got to go... if we just have children left in the centre and this continues we will see more and more depression and mental illness amongst kids, young people who go through that centre and we will see those kids returning to lives of crime.*

The Australian Youth representative to the United Nations who was one of very few people who was allowed access to the insides of the Centre, stated that it failed to meet international standards. He also suggested that the conditions in which the young people in the Centre lived were a breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As a result of complaints about the Centre, in September 2009, The Greens political party moved a motion in Parliament calling for the Legislative Council to note that:

- (a) *The young people detained in the Magill Youth Training Centre in South Australia are being held in degrading conditions; and*
- (b) *In the assessment of the 2009 Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations, Mr Chris Varney, this represents a breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.*
- *2. Recognises that in 2006 the South Australian Labor government acknowledged that the centre was in need of replacement as it breached modern building codes and occupational health and safety requirements; and*
- *3. Calls on the South Australian government to keep its election promise and urgently build a new facility to replace the Magill Youth Training Centre.*

As a result of this Greens parliamentary motion and continuing and growing concern about conditions at the Centre, the government agreed to close Magill and move residents to a new purpose-built facility on the Cavan site, known as the Adelaide Youth Training Centre. In 2012 Magill Training Centre was closed and in March 2014 the buildings were demolished.

## Gallery

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**Magill Training Centre**

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### Mural at Magill Training Centre

**Description:** This is an image of a mural that was situated on the grounds of the Magill Training Centre. It was on a wall in the courtyard. According to a former staff member, the mural was painted in the 1970s, when an Arts Department grant enabled an artist to work with residents of Magill on the design. Magill residents also helped the artist to create the mural. The Find & Connect web resource has not been able to find out the name of the artist. Unfortunately, the mural was destroyed when the buildings on the Magill site were demolished in 2014 to make way for a housing estate. Children had lived in various institutions on the Magill site for over a hundred years.

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### A caged area between wings at Magill Training Centre



### Punishment For Transgression at Magill - Wearing the Wrong Socks

**Description:** This image was part of an article by Dave Walsh about the site of the Magill Training Centre, published shortly after buildings on the site were demolished. The caption for this image refers to the signs taped on lockers, which read: BLACK SOCKS ONLY FOR BEDTIME. IF WHITE SOCKS WORN A CONSEQUENCE WILL BE AWARDED. The signs, and the names of residents, remained on the lockers after Magill Training Centre was closed in 2012.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- South Australian Youth Training Centre (1979 - 1993)
- South Australian Youth Remand and Assessment Centre (1979 - 1993)
  - **Magill Training Centre (1993 – 2012)**
    - Adelaide Youth Training Centre (2012 - current)

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Department for Family and Community Services, South Australian Government \(1990 - 1998\)](#)  
Date: 1993 - 1998
- [Children, Youth and Family Services, Department for Families and Communities, South Australian Government \(2004 - 2006\)](#)  
Date: 2004 - 2006
- [Family and Youth Services, Department of Human Services, South Australian Government \(1998 - 2004\)](#)  
Date: 1998 - 2004
- [Families SA, Department for Families and Communities \(2006 - 2011\)](#)  
Date: 2006 - 2011
- [Department for Communities and Social Inclusion \(2011 - 2018\)](#)  
Date: 2011 - 2012

## Resources

- Walsh, Dave, [Life in Magill Youth Training Centre](#), Weekend Notes, 18 April 2014
- O'Neill, Cate, [Not just paper: the importance of 'non-traditional' records](#), Find & Connect web resource blog, 22 October 2015

## Records

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

### Records

- [Records of the South Australian Youth Training Centre \(1940 - 1999\)](#)
  - [Personal disposition advice forms - Magill Training Centre \(1940 - 1996\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/magill-training-centre-2/>