

# Social Services Department, State of Tasmania

1934 – 1961

**Other Names:**

- Social Services and Children of the State Department
- SSD

## Details

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The Social Services Department replaced the Charitable Grants Department in 1934. It managed outdoor and indoor relief, child welfare services and, between 1934 and 1946, the State Immigration Office. The Social Services Department became the Social Welfare Department in 1961.

The Social Services Department replaced the Charitable Grants Department following an amendment to the Public Service Regulation 4. The Children of the State Department, which had, since 1923 to 1924, been located within Charitable Grants, went with it. In 1935, the *Infant Welfare Act* made it clear that Children of the State was a part of the Social Services, rather than a Department in its own right. However, as a reflection of its former status, Annual Reports were issued by the Social Services and Children of the State Department until well into the 1940s.

The newly formed State Immigration Office was also located within the Social Services Department. This apparently led to the division, in 1936, of the Department into three branches: Social Services, Children of the State, and the State Immigration Office. In 1946, the Department lost the State Immigration Branch when the government established the Tasmanian Government Tourist and Immigration Department.

The first Director of the Social Services Department was Charles Frederick Seager, formerly the Secretary of the Children of the State Department and Administrator of Charitable Grants. Seager had a long association with welfare work, having been appointed a clerk to the Departments in 1901 when his father, FR Seager, was in charge of them. The younger Seager had lived on the grounds of the New Town Charitable Institution, where the Departments were located, with the rest of his family. In 1911, when the Under-Secretary took over direct management of the Departments and moved them into the Chief Secretary's Offices in Hobart, Charles Seager went too, eventually becoming Chief Clerk. In 1923, Charitable Grants acquired full Departmental status and Seager became the Administrator. In addition, he was Secretary of the Children of the State Department.

The next two Directors stayed for much shorter periods of time. The first, HR Reid, who had also been a Chief Clerk in the Chief Secretary's Department, replaced Seager in 1941. The second, William G Patterson, took over in 1951. His career in the Department had begun as an inspector in 1918. Patterson's successor, in 1955, was Gordon Charles Smith, a New Zealander, whose original appointment was in the position of Superintendent of Child Welfare, which had been created in 1954. He remained Director when, in 1961, the Social Services Department became the Social Welfare Department.

The Department made financial and material assistance, or outdoor relief, available to widows, deserted wives, unemployed men (in exchange for work), and people who were elderly. It also provided indoor relief at the Invalids Home in Launceston, and for a short while, the New Town Rest Home.

It managed the boarding out system, that is, its bureaucrats recruited foster mothers, placed children, and arranged for inspecting nurses to visit foster homes. When children reached school leaving age, Departmental employees found them work, often as farm labourers, if boys, or domestic servants, if girls. Departmental inspectors visited these children. In the later years of the Department, state wards were able to undertake a wider range of work.

Inspecting nurses, employed by the Department, inspected the homes of foster mothers looking after babies under the infant life provisions of the Act. These babies had single mothers who placed them in temporary foster homes so that they could earn a living to support them.

The Department managed the already-existing Ashley Home for Boys and Omaru (in Launceston) and Hobart Receiving Homes. It established and managed the Cottage Home, Malmesbury Girls' Home, Rocebank Hostel, Wybra Hall, and Weeroona Girls' Training Centre as well as Kanangra and Gilburn Receiving Homes.

Between 1934 and 1946, another of the Department's functions was to oversee the nominated passage scheme whereby a family member or friend paid the fare of a British immigrant. In the 1930s, to be eligible, the immigrants had to be farm boys or domestic servants. The scheme came to an end in June 1940 because of World War Two. Four years later, the Department was getting ready for a post war migration boom. In particular, it prepared to deal with the adoption of war orphans and youth migration for Fairbridge and Salvation Army Schools. Children did eventually come to Tasmania under the Fairbridge scheme but not with the Salvation Army.

Following the passage of the *Domestic Assistance Service Act*, the Social Services Department took over the Domestic Assistance Service in 1947. This service provided a housekeeper or temporary accommodation for children during a family emergency which meant that there was no one to look after them.

In 1954-5, the Social Services Department took over the Juvenile Probation Service from the Attorney-General's Department.

In 2014, the correspondence created by the Department's work, including the case files of state wards, is in the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office.

## More info

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### Chronology

- Charitable Grants Department, State of Tasmania (1901 - 1934)
- Children of the State Department, State of Tasmania (1918 - 1934)
- **Social Services Department, State of Tasmania (1934 – 1961)**
  - Social Welfare Department, State of Tasmania (1961 - 1983)
  - Department for Community Welfare, State Government of Tasmania (1983 - 1989)
  - Department of Community Services, State of Tasmania (1989 - 1993)
    - Department of Community and Health Services, State of Tasmania (1993 - 1998)
    - Department of Health and Human Services, State of Tasmania (1998 - 2018)

### Related Entries

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- [New Town Rest Home \(1934 - 1936\)](#)
- [Ashley Home for Boys \(1926 - 1999\)](#)  
Date: 1934 - 1961
- [Domestic Service Assistance Scheme - Tasmania \(1947 - c. 1989\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Magdalen Home \(1893 - 1974\)](#)  
Officials at the Social Services Department used the Magdalen Home as a place of last resort for state wards.
- [Tasmanian Government Tourist and Immigration Department, State of Tasmania \(1946 - 1982\)](#)
- [Relief Division \(c. 1953 - 1980?\)](#)  
The Relief Division was part of the Social Services Department.
- [Attorney-General's Department, State of Tasmania \(1901 - 1983\)](#)
- [Fairbridge Society Inc. \(1909 - 1987\)](#)
- [Mental Deficiency Board \(1922 - 1964\)](#)  
A significant number of the children in the care of the Social Services Department were also under the guardianship of the Mental Deficiency Board.
- [Child Welfare Division \(c. 1953 - 1980\)](#)  
The Child Welfare Division was part of the Social Services Department.
- [Children of the State Branch \(1936 - c. 1953\)](#)  
The Children of the State Branch was part of the Social Services Department.

### Related Legislation

- [Domestic Assistance Service Act 1947, Tasmania \(1947 - 1998\)](#)
- [Infants' Welfare Act 1935, Tasmania \(1935 - 1961\)](#)

### Related Places

- [Cape Barren Island Reserve \(1881 - 1951\)](#)  
Some children from Cape Barren Island Reserve became wards of the Social Services Department.

## Resources

- *Social Services Department: report for the year ended 30th June 1960, 1960*
- *Social Services and Children of the State Department: Report for the year ended 1943-44, 1944*
- *Social Services and Children of the State Department: Report for 1934-5, 1935*
- *Social Services Department: Report for year ended 1949-50, 1950*
- *Social Services Department: report for the year ended 30 June 1961, 1961*
- *Social Services Department: report for the year ended 30 June 1963, 1963*

## Records

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### Records

- [M903 \[3\] Big Brother Movement of Tasmania \(1955 - 1969\)](#)
- [M1283 \[1\] St John Bosco Boys Town \(1953 - 1962\)](#)
- [M1283 \[2\] St John Bosco Boys Town \(1948 - 1958\)](#)
- [Record Cards of Infants in the Care of Foster Mothers and Nursing Homes \(1947 - 1961\)](#)
- [Case Files of the Child Welfare Division \(1939 - 1972\)](#)
- [Hobart Area Office - Register/Index of Appearances by Juveniles in the Children's Court in Tasmania \(1941 - 1981\)](#)
- [Hobart Area Office-Register/Index of Wards and Supervision Cases \(1941 - 1983\)](#)
- [Record Cards of "Non-Citizen" Children Including Children Arriving Under the Child Migration Scheme \(1950 - 1989\)](#)
- [Correspondence, Applications & Associated Records Relating to the Custody & Welfare of Children \(Southern Regional Offices\) \(1950 - 1996\)](#)
- [Record Cards of Wards of the State \(1955 - 1990\)](#)
- [Record Cards of Children with Residential Domestic Status \(1955 - 1972\)](#)
- [Record Cards of Children Organised by the Type of Order They Received \(1955 - 1990\)](#)
- [Records Cards of Children who Received Remands and Warrants \(1956 - 1978\)](#)
- [Master Index to Case Files \(1920 - 1989\)](#)
- [Case Files of the Child Welfare Division \(North West Office\) \(1943 - 2002\)](#)
- [Police Reports Received from the Children's Court \(1941 - 1959\)](#)

- [Record Cards of Children Under Legal Supervision \(1955 - 1978\)](#)
  - [Overseas Childrens Reception Committee - Correspondence Concerning Children Brought to Tasmania under the Auspices of the Overseas Childrens Reception Committee \(1940 - 1945\)](#)
  - [Case Files of the Child Welfare Division \(North West Office\) \(1943 - 2002\)](#)
  - [Correspondence Files \(1919 - 1998\)](#)
  - [Register of Wards of State \(1897 - 1989\)](#)
  - [Correspondence Relating to the Custody and Welfare of Children under Various Acts \(1887 - 1954\)](#)
  - [Applications and Associated Correspondence for Compassionate Allowances \(1913 - 1971\)](#)
  - [General Welfare Case Files \(1915 - 1994\)](#)
  - [Case Files of the Child Welfare Division \(Northern Office\) \(1932 - 2003\)](#)
  - [Correspondence Relating to Children Placed in Nursing Homes \(1934 - 1953\)](#)
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