

Neglected Children's Department, Colony of Tasmania

1896 – 1901

Other Names: • NCD

Details

The Neglected Children's Department was established in March 1897. It was the first government department in Tasmania that specifically managed children who were considered to be offenders or neglected. In 1901, following Australian federation, Tasmania became a state and the state government took over the management of the Neglected Children's Department.

The *Youthful Offenders, Destitute and Neglected Children's Act* of 1896 created the Neglected Children's Department. It was located within the Chief Secretary's Department.

George Richardson was the first Secretary, appointed in 1896. When he became Commissioner of the newly created Police Department in 1898, Frederick Seager replaced him.

The Secretary of the Department was the guardian of all wards of state. He decided whether to place them in a receiving home, the boarding out system, in a training school, such as the Boys' Training School, a voluntarily run children's home, or in an apprenticeship in which boys usually learned farm labouring and girls domestic service. The work of the Department included correspondence with children, especially older ones, their parents, foster parents, and employers. The Department also carried out inspections of the homes where wards of state lived.

The Neglected Children's Department was formed at the end of Tasmania's colonial period so that most of its activities took place after Australian federation and the newly formed state government had taken it over. However, a couple of trends were set in the early years.

Firstly, one of Richardson's first acts was to abolish the volunteer Central Boarding Out Committee, which had previously managed the boarding out system. In 1897, he took over some of their administrative responsibilities which led to a dispute. The Committee stopped holding monthly meetings until Richardson restored their powers. He did not and the Committee disappeared in 1898. After that, wards of state were managed by public servants and the role of volunteers continued to decline. One advantage of this arrangement was that the public servants knew the children personally.

Secondly, in 1898, the Premier, Edward Braddon, said that, to save money, the *Youthful Offenders, Destitute and Neglected Children's Act* might have to be repealed. This led to cost cutting which undermined the ability of the employees of the Neglected Children's Department to do their work, a situation that continued until at least 1911.

More info

Chronology

- Charitable Grants Department, Colony of Tasmania (1873 - 1901)
 - **Neglected Children's Department, Colony of Tasmania (1896 – 1901)**
 - Neglected Children's Department, State of Tasmania (1901 - 1918)
 - 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)

Related Entries

Ran

- [Hobart Receiving Home \(1898 - 1958\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [New Town Charitable Institution \(1879 - 1912\)](#)

The offices of the Neglected Children's Department were on the grounds of the New Town Charitable Institution.
- [Glenorchy Infant Orphanage \(1898 - 1912\)](#)

The Secretary of the Neglected Children's Department does not appear to have placed children at the Glenorchy Infant Orphanage.
- [Police Department, State of Tasmania \(1898 - 2004\)](#)

The Police Department assisted the Neglected Children's Department.
- [Chief Secretary's Department, Colony of Tasmania \(1882 - 1901\)](#)

The Neglected Children's Department was located within the Chief Secretary's Department.
- [Boys' Training School \(1884 - 1926\)](#)
- [Central Committee for Boarding Out Destitute Children \(1881 - 1896\)](#)

The Neglected Children's Department took over the day-to-day running of the boarding out system from the Central Committee for Boarding Out Destitute Children

Resources

- Evans, Caroline, *Excellent Women and Troublesome Children: State Foster Care in Tasmania, 1896-1918*, Labour History, 2002
- Evans, Caroline, *Perceptions of fatherhood in Tasmania's Neglected Children's Department, 1896-1918*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association: papers and proceedings, 2003
- Evans, Caroline, *'Poor wand'rers': Tasmanian street children and social policy in the 1890s*, Tasmanian Historical Studies, 1998

Records

Records

- [Correspondence Relating to the Custody and Welfare of Children under Various Acts \(1887 - 1954\)](#)
- [Register of Wards of State \(1897 - 1989\)](#)
- [General Correspondence, Chief Secretary's Department \(1897 - 1946\)](#)

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