

Home of the Good Shepherd, Leederville

1902 – 1979

Other Names:

- Home of the Good Shepherd Industrial School
- Convent of the Good Shepherd, Leederville
- Home of the Good Shepherd for Destitute Women and Girls

Details

The Home of the Good Shepherd, Leederville was established in 1902 in Perth by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd for 'unfortunate' women and girls. The Home supported itself by operating a commercial laundry. In 1904 the institution moved to Leederville to a purpose built property which included an industrial laundry.

At the time of the move to Leederville, there were 50 children already living at the institution. In 1906, the number of people living in the Home were over 100, with girls as young as 14 years old.

The Home of the Good Shepherd Industrial School for Girls opened in June 1909 in buildings alongside the existing home. The Home of the Good Shepherd Industrial School for Girls was a reformatory that was regulated by the *State Children Act 1907*. Its foundation stone was laid on 7 February 1909. Both Homes were run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Girls were sent to the reformatory by the Children's Court and their term could extend until they were 21 years old. The industrial school remained a registered institution until it closed in 1979. In subsequent government inquiries, former residents have raised the hardships endured by young women and girls working in the laundry, and the unfairness of being sent to the reformatory.

Many girls worked in the large laundry at the rear of the Home, but they could also be sent out to domestic service. According to Byrne, by 1937 the Good Shepherd laundry had a reputation as Perth's "most reliable". When the Home was first established in 1902, the Sisters intended for the laundry to be a major feature of the institution. Byrne writes that "the discipline was seen as therapeutic for the 'Children' committed to the Sisters' care ... By supporting the rehabilitation of wayward women and girls, householders could feel that they were contributing to a worthy cause (Byrne, 2002).

In evidence to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the State Children Act Amendment Bill in October 1918, the Catholic Archbishop of Perth explained that the Home of the Good Shepherd had two separate sections: those 'industrial school children who have been sent there in greater numbers since the appointment of women police' and 'over 100' other children who were not sent there, nor paid for, by the state. The industrial school, he said, 'is quite distinct from the other, although it is within the same enclosure. The inmates are not allowed to associate.' At this time, the residents of the industrial school were from 13 to 19 years old. The Archbishop described them as 'girls who were unmanageable by their parents or were found by the women police to be in great danger'.

In 1954, the Home of the Good Shepherd was criticised by an academic study which found that: going to Mass was in practice compulsory for non-Catholics, which was against State regulations; the 'training' conducted in the Home did fit within the regulations but it was 'doubtful' that it would be 'of any great value to the girls on their discharge'; and that the system here as elsewhere in WA was not up to standard with modern practices for

industrial schools.

Like other Good Shepherd institutions around Australia, the residents' lives were controlled by strict routines. One former resident, Eleanor, spoke about the timetable and lack of autonomy in an oral history interview:

you'd get up in the morning and you would go to church, and you'd come home from church ... and then you'd go and work in the laundry and then from the laundry you'd go to the dining room and have breakfast. After that you would go back to the laundry until it was time to go to school then you'd all line up in the basketball court and they'd open the door and you'd go to school, you would stay in the school until lunchtime, you went back to the dining room for lunch then you went back to the school, school finished, you went back to the laundry and worked in the laundry and then depending on what group you were in then your group went off and showered and then after that you would go for your evening meal and then after your evening meal you went into your group and that's where you would do sewing again (quoted in Murray, 2020).

Eleanor recalled more freedom while living in a hostel within the grounds of the Leederville institution in the early 1970s. While the hostel residents could not go out on to the street, they were allowed to walk around the hostel freely, and they had their own bedroom.

Importantly to Eleanor, she could now "go in and shut the door and have a shower" in contrast to when she had been in the Home and showering had involved groups of girls at the same time, with a Sister present and no privacy (Murray, 2020).

The facility closed in 1979 and the buildings were restored for use by the Catholic Education Office. The precinct of buildings is included on the State Heritage Register (Place No. 08880).

Gallery



Our illustrations [Home of the Good Shepherd]

Description: This is a digital copy of a photograph from the *Western Mail* that is published on the National Library of Australia's website, *Trove*. It shows the Home of the Good Shepherd in Leederville in 1911.



Home of the Good Shepherd Industrial School, Leederville

Description: This is a digital copy of an untitled photograph from the *Western Mail* that is published on the National Library of Australia's website, *Trove*. It shows the new building at the Home of the Good Shepherd in Leederville in 1912. In the text describing the photo (p.26) the building is identified as the 'industrial school'.



McCourt Street [Home of the Good Shepherd]

Description: This is a digital copy of a photograph of the Home of the Good Shepherd in 1929, looking up McCourt St to Ruislip St. It is from the State Library of Western Australia's John K. Ewers collection of online images.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Sisters of the Good Shepherd \(1863 - current\)](#)

Related Events

- [Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the Care and Reform of Youthful Delinquents, State of Western Australia \(1943\)](#)

The Home of the Good Shepherd was inspected by members of the Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the Care and Reform of Youthful Delinquents.

Date: 1943 -

Related Organisations

- [Neuville \(1971 - 1987\)](#)
- [St Margaret's Hostel \(1918 - 1971\)](#)

Pregnant women from the Home of the Good Shepherd, Leederville were sent to St Margaret's Hostel to have their babies.

Resources

- Kovesi, Catherine, *Pitch Your Tents on Distant Shores: a history of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Tahiti*, 2006
- [Mary Terszak interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(1999\)](#), 4 November 1999
- Battye, JS, [The Cyclopedia of Western Australia \(1912\)](#), 1912. *Relevance*: p.505-506
- Maison, Barbara, [Submission No 97 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 14 July 2003
- Hetherington, Penelope, [Reformatories](#), Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia, 2009
- Thomas, Ivy, [Submission No 483 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 1 November 2004
- Catholic Education Western Australia, [Our History](#), 2012
- Heritage Council of Western Australia, [Catholic Education Centre \(Church\)](#), inHerit: our heritage places, 8 February 2015
- [Woman's Interest \[Home of the Good Shepherd\]](#), The West Australian, 29 April 1935
- [The Daily News \[Christmas Cheer Fund\]](#), The Daily News, 2 December 1916
- [Question - Child Welfare Act. Delinquent Children](#), Hansard Archive 1870 to 1995, 28 November 1940
- [Motion - youthful delinquents, detention conditions](#), Hansard Archive 1870 to 1995, 2 March 1943. *Relevance*: pp.2609-2610
- [Address-in-reply \[Royal Commission on Child Delinquency 2\]](#), Hansard Archive 1870 to 1995, 26 August 1943. *Relevance*: p.136
- *Applications for Enforcement*, The Western Australian Industrial Gazette, 24 February 1925
- Paterson, Nancy, *History of St Clare's School 1956-2006*, 2007

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Records of the Home of the Good Shepherd Industrial School for Girls, Leederville \(1902 - 1980\)](#)
- [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
- [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
- [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
Item B487 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to Home of the Good Shepherd, Leederville

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/home-of-the-good-shepherd-industrial-school-for-girls/>