

Katukutu Employment Hostel

1958 – 1982?

Details

Katukutu was established in 1958, as an independently-managed hostel in Mount Lawley to accommodate young Aboriginal men coming to Perth to work from rural Western Australia. In 1961, Katukutu moved nearby into premises that had been Alvan House and by 1966 was run by the Baptist Union. It became a government-run facility by 1974, possibly also accommodating students, and operated until at least 1982. In government records, Katukutu is named and spelled various ways including Kath Kutu, Katukuta Hostel and Katakuta Hostel.

Katukutu was established in 1958 by Mr and Mrs Robert and Betty McKeich, as an Aboriginal education and employment hostel, to accommodate young Aboriginal men from the country who came to Perth for training, work or study. Its name means, 'To the top'. At that time, Katukutu was supported by a committee formed from members of the Dalkeith Baptist Church and some people from other denominations. Beginning in rented premises in Almondbury Street, Mount Lawley, Katukutu moved in 1961 to premises at 28 Alvan Street that had been acquired by the Baptist Union from the Department of Native Welfare.

Mr McKeich's stated policy for running the Hostel was

"...to assist assimilation by providing a "home" of sufficiently high quality, and by demanding standards of behaviour approaching those commonly accepted as "white"" (McKeich, 1961, as quoted in Signposts)

By 1966, Katukutu was under the control of the Baptist Union of Western Australia, with management by the Baptist Aborigines Mission committee.

In a survey in 1971, Katukutu was described as being run along principles consistent with a 'fundamentalist Baptist' approach. Residents had to attend a Baptist Church, and staff were selected based on their commitment to their faith.

In 1975, Katukutu provided short-term hostel accommodation for up to fourteen male Aboriginal youth of working age, with an average length of stay being nine months. At that stage, facilities at Katukutu included: six bedrooms (four doubles and two sleeping three or more), three bathrooms and toilets; a lounge and dining room; separate staff toilet; table tennis/pool table; television, radiogram and library.

Katukutu operated under a funding agreement with the Department for Native Welfare until 1972 and then the Department for Community Welfare until 1973. By 1974, Katukutu was government-run for an unknown period, and possibly accommodated students as well as young Aboriginal workers. By 2004, the premises at Alvan Street were used as a Parent Help Centre.

Gallery



Katukutu Aboriginal Young Men's Hostel, 28 Alvan Street, Mt Lawley, 1964

Description: This is a digitised copy of slide and is part of the group of three images titled 'Katukutu Aboriginal Young Men's Hostel, 28 Alvan Street, Mt Lawley [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows the building that Katukutu Employment Hostel was in.



Katukutu Aboriginal Young Men's Hostel, 17 Almondbury Road, Mt Lawley, 1960

Description: This is a digitised copy of a slide and is part of the group of four images titled 'Katukutu Aboriginal Young Men's Hostel, 17 Almondbury Road, Mt Lawley [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows the original building for the Katukutu Employment Hostel.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Baptist Union of WA \(1896 - current\)](#)

Katukutu Employment Hostel was run by members of the Baptist Union (Mr and Mrs McKeich) from 1958, but it is possible that the Baptist Union was not formally responsible for the governance of Katukutu until it moved to the Alvan House premises in 1961.

Date: 1958? - 1973

- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)

The Department for Community Welfare ran Katukutu Employment Hostel from 1974 to at least 1982 and possibly longer.

Date: 1974 - 1982?

Related Organisations

- [Alvan House \(1950 - 1961\)](#)

Katukutu Employment Hostel moved into the premises previously known as Alvan House.

Date: 1961 -

- [Cundeelee \(1949 - 1985\)](#)

Robert McKeich, who had established Katukutu Employment Hostel, had also been involved in establishing Cundeelee.

Date: 1958 - 1964

- [Department of Native Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1955 - 1972\)](#)

Katukutu Employment Hostel was managed by the Baptist Union under agreement with the Department of Native Welfare.

Date: 1961 - 1972

- [Parent Help Centre \(2004? - current\)](#)

Parent Help Centre (2004? -) was located in what had been the Katukutu Employment Hostel.

Date: 2004? - ?

Resources

- Wilson, Katrin and Michael V. Robinson., *Aboriginal Hostels in Perth : A Comparative Survey*, 1971
- State Records Taskforce, Government of Western Australia, [Looking West: A Guide to Aboriginal Sources in Western Australia](#), 2004
- Western Australia. Department for Community Welfare, [Annual Report: Department for Community Welfare](#), 1973 - 1984. *Relevance*: 1973, p.44; 1974, p.57
- [Robert McKeich papers, 1950-2010 \[manuscript\]](#), State Library of Western Australia website, No date

Records

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

Records

- [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/katukutu-employment-hostel/>