

# Perth Girls' Orphanage

1868 – 1942

- Other Names:**
- Perth Orphanage for Girls
  - TheGirls Orphanage, Perth
  - Protestant Orphanage
  - Girls' Protestant Orphanage Industrial School
  - Girls' Protestant Orphanage
  - Orphanage Industrial School for Junior Protestant Girls, Perth
  - Adelaide Terrace Orphanage, Perth, for Protestant Girls

## Details

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Perth Girls' Orphanage was established as the 'Protestant Orphanage' in 1868 with 8 children, including one boy. It operated in a building near the Causeway, for children of all denominations aged 2-14 years. Children who were not orphans were also admitted. The Home was run by the The Committee until 1889, the Orphanages' Committee until 1939 and the Anglican Orphanages Board of Management until it closed. The premises were evacuated in 1942 and the Home became part of Swan Homes in Middle Swan.

The Perth Girls Orphanage opened on 1 June 1868 with seven girls and one boy and plans to increase the number of children 'as the funds allow'. The orphanage was located in two cottages near the Causeway on Adelaide Terrace. At a meeting in Fremantle in November 1868, it was reported that children came from the Perth Workhouse – which was desirable not only because those children were greatly in need but also because the Government gave an allowance for taking those children.

By November 1868, there were 11 orphans living at the orphanage, which had room for up to 20 children in total. The Rules of the orphanage allowed for admission of children from 2-9 years of age and 'honourable dismissal' at age 12-14, into service. Although called an 'orphanage' it seems that the founders intended from the outset to take destitute children who were not orphans, from any locality and any creed. The founders also acknowledged the need to admit boys, but there was a preference to take girls because of 'the greater gain there will be to society by the protection and education of girls' as Archdeacon Brown was reported to say. However, at least one boy was admitted in 1868 and by 1869 a new building for boys was erected on the same property, along with a school room. In an attempt to relieve overcrowding at the orphanage, the boys were moved to the Swan Boys' Orphanage, at Middle Swan, in 1876. Overcrowding remained an issue, and in 1882 additional buildings were added to the Perth Girls' Orphanage. From 1899 to 1904 a brand new, larger orphanage was constructed on the same site.

The Perth Girls' Orphanage was able to be relatively selective in the girls it admitted. In 1881, a case was reported about:

*a girl of seven years old, convicted lately of larceny, the child of abandoned parents, and brought up in misery and vice, for whome the Colonial Secretary had sought refuge in the Protestant Orphanage. A local Act gives the Governor in Council power to send such children to the Orphanages, which it was proposed in such cases to use for the purposes of reformatories, but a condition for the admission of these children*

*was that the directors of the orphanages be 'willing' to receive them...the Manager of the Protestant Orphanage very properly declined to receive the child, fearing, not without good cause, that one practically acquainted with impurity and vice, might have an evil influence upon the rest. The West Australian 21 October 1881, p.3*

In evidence to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the State Children Act Amendment Bill in October 1918, the Anglican Archdeacon of Perth said that there was 'no separate institution for little children' and that although they had two children 'under three and four years' they didn't want to take children that young. The younger children generally had separate dormitories and school work but had to 'live in the same place' with older children.

The removal of the Girls' Orphanage to 'the Swan' nearer to the Boys' Orphanage had been suggested by Bishop Hale as early as February 1888. Recolation was supported by the Colonial Surgeon, Dr Waylen who 'had often said' that yearly cases 'of low fever and diphtheriac throat' were caused by the low, damp and inadequately drained site on Adelaide Terrace.

In 1892 a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Western Australian Parliament agreed to a proposal by the Anglican Church that the lands that had been donated to the Church for use as an orphanage could be sold to 'obtain a more healthy site and to erect more convenient buildings'.

In 1908, the older girls were required to attend East Perth State School. Later, the senior girls went to the James Street Central School. From about 1917, pre-school age boys were no longer admitted to the Swan Boys' Orphanage. Instead, they were admitted to Perth Girls' Orphanage so that they could have kindergarten classes. The boys were transferred to Swan Boys' Orphanage when they reached school age.

A letter of appreciation of the *The Daily News* Orphans' Christmas Cheer Fund in 1915 gives an insight into life at the Perth Girls' Orphanage. The letter shows that donations enabled the children to occasionally have extras that were not part of their daily experience:

*...presents were given to each child, sweets and cakes were provided, and afterwards the children were taken for two picnics to the Zoo. Letter, 23 August 1916 published in The Daily News 2 December 1916, p.10*

Government reports (*Signposts* 2004, p.425) show that Perth Girls' Orphanage was a significant institution in Western Australia. In 1935, it was reported that 638 girls had been admitted to the Home in the period since 1904. There were 67 children, aged from 18 months to 16 years, resident at the Home in September 1935. In 1937, there were 80 children in the Home: including 18 'private cases' and 62 children who were wards of the State. There were 5 boys and 18 children under six years of age. In the five years leading up to the relocation of Perth Girls' Orphanage to Middle Swan, there were around 50 to 59 children at the Home each year who were wards of the State.

The other statistic that was regularly reported (*Signposts* pp.424-425) was the number of young people attached to the Perth Girls' Orphanage who were 'at service' or 'placed at service'. That is, working-age girls who were placed with employers (under a formal agreement) or who worked within the institution. Generally, around 10 to 20 girls of working age were recorded as being 'at service' each year between 1926 and 1942.

In 1942, the Perth Girls' Orphanage relocated to Middle Swan, on the same site as the Swan Boys' Orphanage, and became part of Swan Homes.

## Gallery



### Boans Father Christmas, Perth Girls' Orphanage, 1930s?

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photographic print and is part of the Boans collection of photographs held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows children from the Perth Girls' Orphanage receiving presents from the Boan's department store Father Christmas, in 1930.



### Perth Orphanage

**Description:** 'Perth Orphanage' is a digital copy of an undated image included (p.14) in the *Annual Report 1979* of the Department for Community Welfare. The caption reads, 'Former orphanage at 108 Adelaide Terrace, Perth. ' and the image shows the Perth Girls' Orphanage in its second location on Adelaide Terrace (from 1882). It is part of a history of the department, written to celebrate 150 years of European settlement in Western Australia.



### Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Girls, Perth

**Description:** 'Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Girls, Perth' is an image included (p.21) in the *Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, etc.*, for the year ending 31 December 1900. This image shows a two-storey brick house directly connected to what looks to be a church. Several dozen children in white dresses and staff wearing white aprons are standing in the garden in front of the buildings.



### Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Girls, Perth, 1906

**Description:** 'Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Girls, Perth, 1906' is an image included (before p.17) in the *Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools* for the year ending 31 December 1906. This image shows approximately 70 girls and several staff members standing in front of a large brick building. The words 'Perth Girls Orphanage' can be seen written above the entrance to the building. The girls appear to be aged between about 5 and 16 years old, and are all wearing black dresses with large white collars, with the exception of two of the youngest girls, who are wearing white aprons.



### Old Perth Girls Orphanage building on Adelaide Terrace, Perth

**Description:** [Description from ABC news website:] Old Perth Girls Orphanage building on Adelaide Terrace, Perth. The building is now used as offices by the Department of Housing.

## More info

### Chronology

- **Perth Girls' Orphanage (1868 – 1942)**
  - Swan Homes (1943 - 1959)
  - Swanleigh (1960 - 2010)

### Related Entries

## Run by

- [The Committee \(1868 - 1888\)](#)
- [Anglican Orphanages Board of Management \(1940 - 1954\)](#)
- [Orphanages' Committee \(1889 - 1939\)](#)

## Related Organisations

- [Girls' Friendly Society \(Western Australia\) \(1888 - current\)](#)  
The Girls' Friendly Society was actively involved with fundraising for the Perth Girls' Orphanage.
- [Perth Boys' Orphanage \(1869 - 1876\)](#)  
The Perth Girls' Orphanage was on the same site as the Church of England orphanage for boys, separated from by a 'five-foot high close-picket fence'.  
Date: 1869 - 1876
- [Swan Boys' Orphanage \(1876 - 1942\)](#)  
Girls from the Perth Girls' Orphanage were evacuated during World War II to the site of the Swan Boys' Orphanage.  
Date: 1942 -
- [Ministering Children's League, Western Australian Branch \(1891 - 1957\)](#)  
The Ministering Children's League (MCL) was active in supporting the Perth Girls' Orphanage. Between 1895 and 1899, the MCL held annual picnics at Cottesloe Beach for children from the Perth Girls' Orphanage.  
Date: 1895 - 1899
- [Seaside House, Coogee \(1931 - 1968\)](#)  
Children and young people from the Perth Girls' Orphanage came to the Seaside House at Coogee for annual summer holidays.  
Date: 1931 - 1942

## Related Legislation

- [State Children Act 1907, Western Australia \(1907 - 1948\)](#)  
Perth Girls' Orphanage was classed as an orphanage within the meaning of the *State Children Act 1907*.

## Resources

- Coldrey, Barry, [Good British stock: child and youth migration to Australia](#), 1999
- Name withheld, [Submission No 319 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 17 March 2005
- [Church of England News](#), The Inquirer & Commercial News, 10 November 1875
- [Canning Races \[Anglican Orphanages\]](#), The Inquirer & Commercial News, 3 January 1883
- [Report by the Superintendent of Poor Houses](#), 1882 - 1889. *Relevance*: 1883, 1884, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889
- Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly, *Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly Appointed to Consider the Perth Protestant Orphanage Lands Sale (Private) Bill*, 1892
- Heritage Council of Western Australia, [Perth Girls' Orphanage \(fmr\)](#), inHerit: our heritage places, 8 February 2015
- [State Children](#), The West Australian, 30 April 1904
- *Report by the Superintendent of Poor Relief*, 1890 - 1896. *Relevance*: 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896

## Records

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

## Records

- [Anglican Church. Perth. Girls Orphanage Chapel, State Library of Western Australia](#)
- [Perth Protestant Orphanage / Perth Anglican Orphanages, State Library of Western Australia \(1872 - 1955\)](#)
- [Anglican Diocese of Perth, Western Australia, Records \(1880s - 2010\)](#)
- [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
- [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 \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/perth-girls-orphanage/>