

# Watson Lodge

1967 – 1984

**Other Names:** • Watson Lodge Life Skills Centre  
• Watson

## Details

Watson Lodge, in Perth, opened in 1967 as a government-run hostel that provided close supervision for up to 12 teenage girls, all of whom were wards of the State. From 1976, Watson Lodge was used as one of the community-based hostels attached to Nyandi detention centre. Watson Lodge's residential program closed in 1984. It re-opened as the non-residential Watson Lodge Life Skills Centre in 1987.

Watson Lodge was established by the Child Welfare Department (CWD) in 1967 to provide supported, and closely supervised, accommodation for teenage girls whom authorities felt had not be able to settle in other types of placement. From the outset, departmental reports (*Signposts* 2004, pp.561-562) show that the young residents of Watson Lodge were vulnerable. In 1968 the CWD reported that there had been no instances of 'self-mutilation' among the girls at Watson Lodge (which gives some insight into the girls' prior experiences) and in 1972 'drug-taking' and 'promiscuity' were reported as challenges that the girls faced.

Watson Lodge could accommodate up to 12 girls and young women up to 18 years, all of whom were wards of the State, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. There were two aspects to the original program at Watson Lodge: a program of life-skills development, and a recreational program that involved exercising strict controls over the girls' social activities. The hostel sought to develop a 'home-like' atmosphere and the residents were expected to help with chores. Girls who were not at work received pre-employment and personal skills training before they engaged in job search, those who were in work payed board. All residents' outings were closely supervised during their placement at the hostel.

Reports (*Signposts* pp.559-562) show that Watson Lodge always had a role in providing short-term accommodation for girls who had either been formally referred from the Children's Court, or were deemed to be at risk of what was known as 'juvenile delinquency' (juvenile offending, or youth offending). When Watson Lodge was established, it seems there was a desire for it to be a successful program of helping girls to acquire life skills that would improve their self-esteem and self-respect, and at the same time trying to curb their desire, or at least their ability, to engage in what authorities saw as socially unacceptable behaviours. Staff did not live in, but worked rostered shifts, and sought to orient girls to 'more worthwhile goals'.

By 1972, girls being placed at Watson Lodge were reported as younger than previously, and staying longer. A new training program had been introduced in 1971 and this was reportedly achieving 'better results' – fewer readmissions and girls settling better in their subsequent placements. Admissions to Watson Lodge dropped from 65 in 1968, to 35 by 1972, and 24 by 1978. The number of girls staying at Watson Lodge at any one time fluctuated from 4 to 12. In 1982 there were 14 individuals admitted to Watson Lodge.

The residential program at Watson Lodge closed in 1984.

In 1987, the building was re-opened as the non-residential Watson Lodge Life Skills Centre.

# More info

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## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)
- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [Nyandi \(1970 - 1997\)](#)

Watson Lodge became associated with Nyandi from 1976, offering supported accommodation in the community.

Date: 1976 - 1984

- [Riverbank \(1960 - 1996\)](#)

Boys from Riverbank renovated the house that became Watson Lodge.

Date: 1967 -

## Resources

- Western Australia. Department for Community Welfare, [Annual Report: Department for Community Welfare, 1973 - 1984](#)
- Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia, [Submission No 55 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), July 2003

## Records

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

### Records held by other organisations

- [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 \(1904 - 1974\)](#)  
Item B868 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to Watson Lodge

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