

# Community Welfare Act 1972, Western Australia

1972 – 2006

**Other Names:** • Community Services Act 1972

**URL:** [https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law\\_a158.html](https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a158.html)

## Details

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The Community Welfare Act 1972 (Act no. 1972/031) came into effect on 1 July 1972. The scope of the Act was broader than the Child Welfare Act 1947, as it included a greater emphasis on general welfare services for the community as a whole. It established the Department of Community Welfare, which integrated the child welfare activities previously undertaken by the Department of Native Welfare with the previous functions of the Child Welfare Department, as well as adding wider community welfare functions. The Act was reprinted as the Community Services Act 1972 on 15 October 1986 and was repealed by the Children and Community Services Act 2004 on 1 March 2006.

The *Community Welfare Act 1972* came into effect on 1 July 1972 and established the Department for Community Welfare. In his annual report in 1973 (p.7), the Director of the department, Keith Maine, noted that the 'new functions require the Department to give much more attention to community issues and problems, and all those social matters which effect the well-being of families and individuals'. Maine recalled to this broader emphasis forty years later when he gave evidence to the *Special Inquiry into St Andrew's Hostel, Katanning* (19 March 2012, pp.997-998), recalling how the Act enabled the department to involve itself in areas that might be considered the cause of family disruption. The functions of the new Department for Community Welfare, which included the child welfare functions handed over from the Department of Native Welfare, were (s.10):

- (a) to promote individual and family welfare in the community;
- (b) to prevent the disruption of the welfare of individuals and families in the community, and to mitigate the effects of any disruption;
- (c) to co-ordinate, assist and encourage the provision of social welfare services to the community, and for that purpose to confer and collaborate with other bodies and instrumentalities who offer, or may offer, a social welfare service;
- (d) to conduct, promote and encourage research into the problems of community welfare;
- (e) to conduct, promote and encourage programmes of training or rehabilitation, or which are otherwise of a nature that is concerned with the advancement of the welfare of particular individuals or groups in the community who are disadvantaged;
- (f) to consider and initiate, or to assist in, the provision and development of new or additional welfare services, whether of a general or specific nature, for individuals or groups within the community who are needy or disadvantaged;
- (g) to encourage the development of the greatest possible degree of service and administration at the local level, and to emphasise the value of preventive measures;
- (h) to provide assistance, where the Minister considers it to be necessary, when the welfare of any individual, family or group is threatened or in jeopardy;

- (i) to provide and, where appropriate, to manage facilities, which may include land, buildings and specialized appliances, for specific purposes consistent with the objects of this Act;
- generally, to administer and give effect to the provisions of this Act and to carry out such other functions as may be prescribed, or as the Minister may direct.

The Act was reprinted as the *Community Services Act 1972* on 15 October 1986 and was repealed by the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

## More info

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### Chronology

- **Community Welfare Act 1972, Western Australia (1972 – 2006)**
  - Children and Community Services Act 2004, Western Australia (2004 - current)

### Related Entries

#### Related Organisations

- [Department of Native Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1955 - 1972\)](#)  
The responsibilities to Aboriginal children administered by the Department of Native Welfare were given to the Department for Community Welfare by the *Community Welfare Act 1972*.
- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)
- [Advisory and Co-ordinating Committee on Child Abuse \[ACCCA\] \(c. 1984 - c. 1994\)](#)  
ACCCA operated under Order 1985 of this Act from 10 January 1986 to 28 April 1989.

#### Related Legislation

- [Native Welfare Act 1963, Western Australia \(1963 - 1972\)](#)  
The *Community Welfare Act 1972* made the specific responsibilities to Aboriginal children outlined in *Native Welfare Act 1963* part of the broader responsibilities to all Western Australian children.

#### Is amended by

- [Community Welfare Act Amendment Act 1978, Western Australia \(1980 - 2006\)](#)

### Resources

- [AU WA A39 - Department for Community Welfare](#), State Records Office of Western Australia - Organisations & People, 2015
- Hetherington, Penelope, [Reformatories](#), Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia, 2009
- Public Sector Commission, Western Australia, [St Andrew's Hostel Inquiry](#), 19 September 2012. *Relevance*: St Andrew's Hostel Inquiry Public Hearing Transcript 19 March 2012 pp.997-1002
- Buti, Tony, *After the Removal: A submission by the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA (Inc) to the National Inquiry into Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.*, 1996. *Relevance*: pp.450-452 highlights the inability of people to hold authorities to account for breaches of statutory duty under the *Community Welfare Act 1972*

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