

# St Andrew's Hostel

1964 – 2009

**Other Names:** • Katanning Residential College

## Details

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St Andrew's Hostel was established by the Anglican Diocese of Bunbury in 1964 as a hostel for students going to school in Katanning. It was governed by the Country High School Hostels Authority (the Authority), and built with government funds, but was administered by the Bunbury Diocese until 1971. In 1971, the Diocese withdrew from the management of the Hostel and a board was appointed to run the Hostel under a Letter of Arrangement between the church and the Authority (*St Andrew's Hostel Katanning* report, p.24).

When it was established in 1964, the Hostel had capacity for 48 students. New buildings were constructed in 1968 which meant up to 100 boarders could live there. The Hostel was at this capacity in 1970; however, following the transfer of the Hostel's administration from the Diocese to the Authority, and high number of staff turnovers, numbers declined. By 1974, 69 students were in residence. Building works in the 1970s and 1980s increased its capacity again, and in 1989, there was a peak of 141 students (*St Andrew's Hostel Katanning* report, pp.25, 55).

Day-to-day management of the Hostel was overseen by a Warden, usually assisted by a Matron (and it was often a married couple in these roles). The appointment of staff had always been the responsibility of the Hostel's administrator (the Anglican Diocese of Bunbury until 1970 and the Hostel board from 1971).

In September 1975, the board appointed a new housemaster, Dennis McKenna. By February 1976, McKenna had been made Warden. He remained in that position until arrested for sexual abuse of children in 1990. Dennis McKenna had recruited six members of his family into staff positions in the Hostel and when he was arrested the board upgraded his brother Neil McKenna from supervisor to acting warden.

Life at the Hostel under McKenna was highly regimented and isolated. A daily timetable, regulated by the Hostel siren, was followed. This routine included daily dormitory inspections, compulsory study time in the evening, and little time for any personal activities. Hostel residents were required to wear uniforms, despite the local high school having no enforceable uniform policy. Close relationships between Hostel residents were not permitted, and residents were also discouraged from making friends with "townies" – day students at the high school, or other children not living at the Hostel. Former residents reported that their communications with families was limited or prevented, and that they were subject to emotional and psychological abuse as well as sexual abuse. (*St Andrew's Hostel Katanning* report, pp. 39-44)

The first allegations of sexual abuse by Dennis McKenna were made in 1976 but no action was taken against him for 14 years. He was convicted of 19 offences against five victims in 1991, released from prison in 1993 and convicted of an additional 10 offences against another six victims in 2010. In 2012 he had a further 66 charges pending. In March 2012, Neil McKenna was convicted of three charges of sexual abuse.

In November 2011, the Premier of Western Australia announced that a Special Inquiry would be held to examine why public officers had not acted on reports of abuse at St Andrew's Hostel.

The report from this Inquiry was tabled in Parliament on 19 September 2012 with all recommendations accepted by the government. The Government and Opposition offered apologies to victims and their families, and a payment scheme for people “who were subjected to abuse as a boarder of a hostel operating under the auspices of the Country High School Hostels Authority” was established. Survivors of abuse at the Hostel were also eligible for payments under the Redress WA scheme.

The Hostel, which was known as the Katanning Residential College by the 1990s, struggled to overcome the damage to its reputation. It closed in 2009.

## Gallery

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### Kartanup

**Description:** This is a picture of the property called Reidy House, which was known as Kartanup and St Rita's Hostel during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1985, it became an annexe of St Andrew's Hostel at Katanning. This photograph was taken by Helen Munt.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Country High School Hostels Authority, State of Western Australia \(1960 - 2017\)](#)  
The Country High Schools Hostels Authority governed St Andrew's Hostel, with the day to day management of the Hostel overseen by a Board.
- [Anglican Diocese of Bunbury \(1904 - current\)](#)  
The Anglican Diocese of Bunbury administered the hostel from 1964-1971. However, the Diocese remained on the hostel Board until 1974.

#### Related Events

- [Special Inquiry into St Andrew's Hostel, Katanning, Western Australia \(December 2011 - August 2012\)](#)
- [Apology to the victims of abuse at St Andrew's Hostel, Katanning, Government of Western Australia \(19 September 2012\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Kartanup \(1987 - 1990\)](#)  
Kartanup was an annexe of St Andrew's Hostel.
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