

# Guardians to Child Immigrants Act, Western Australia

1842 – 1964

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## Details

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The Guardians to Child Immigrants Act 1842 (6 Vict. No.8) was to regulate the treatment of young people under the age of 21 ('juvenile immigrants') coming as unaccompanied migrants to be apprenticed in the Colony. A guardian would be appointed for all such people, and that guardian was expected to exercise control over 'the moral, religious and technical instruction, the health, comfort, and general treatment of all such immigrants ... during their apprenticeship' (s.7). A schedule to the Act included a Form of a Deed of Apprenticeship. The Guardians to Child Immigrants Act 1842 was repealed by the Statute Law Revision Act 1964 (Act No.61) on 4 December 1964.

While the Act did provide some protections for the young people, it also gave their guardians and 'Masters' a great deal of control over them. As the Preamble stated, the purpose of the Act was to 'regulate by law the mode and duration of such apprenticeship, and to provide for the due enforcement of relative rights and obligations thereunder, and otherwise for the general superintendence and control of such immigrants.'

The first formal scheme of unaccompanied child migration to Western Australia occurred with the arrival of its first convicts. These convicts were juvenile offenders from Parkhurst Prison in England. In a nine year period from 1842, boys and young men (aged 12 to 21 years) were brought in to provide a source of cheap labour for settlers in the Colony. The first ship to arrive with former Parkhurst prisoners was the 'Simon Taylor', in August 1842.

## Gallery

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**Parkhurst Prison 1847**

**Description:** This is a copy of an image of Parkhurst Prison that was published in a blog post about juvenile immigrants in October 2015. Juvenile inmates from Parkhurst Prison in England were some of the first unaccompanied child migrants to be sent to Western Australia.

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## More info

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## Related Entries

## Related Organisations

- [Colonial Secretary's Office, Crown Colony of Western Australia \(30 December 1828 - 1890\)](#)

## Resources

- Hetherington, Penelope, *Paupers, Poor Relief and Poor Housing in Western Australia 1829 to 1910*, 2009
  - Chate, A.H.; Graham, Bruce; Oakley, Glenda, *Date it!: a Western Australian chronology to 1929*, 1991
  - [Quarter Sessions](#), Inquirer, 10 April 1844
  - Moss, Kellie, [Juvenile Immigrants: An Experiment in Convict Labour?](#), Carceral Archipelago, 2015
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