

Mt Lawley Reception Home

1893 – 1980

- Other Names:**
- Government Industrial School
 - Government Industrial School and Receiving Depot
 - Government Industrial School for Boys and Girls
 - Government Industrial School and Receiving Depot for Boys and Girls
 - Industrial School, Subiaco
 - Government Receiving Depot
 - Government Receiving Home for Children
 - Mt Lawley Children's Reception Centre
 - Mt Lawley Reception Home
 - CWRH
 - Child Welfare Reception Home
 - Child Welfare Receiving Home
 - Child Welfare Department Reception Centre
 - Receiving Depot
 - Receiving Home
 - Walcott Centre

Details

The Mount Lawley Government Reception Home was first established as an industrial school at Claisebrook in 1893 after the passage of the Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1893, moving to Subiaco in 1897. It functioned as a temporary reception centre for children temporarily or permanently placed out of home, which remained largely unchanged until the 1970's despite a number of name changes. It originally housed girls, then older children. By 1902 it was known as the Government Industrial School and Receiving Depot. The Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, 1902 (p.16) noted that the "younger destitute children formerly detained in the Home for Women" were moved to Subiaco. By 1907 after the passing of the [Child Welfare Act](#), the institution's name changed to the Government Receiving Depot, recognising the institution's primary function as a provider of temporary accommodation. All children committed under the Child Welfare Act 1907 were sent to the Home before being boarded out, or placed in an orphanage or industrial school (reformatory). The Home moved twice in this period, to West Perth in 1916 and then Mt Lawley in 1921.

The Home provided temporary accommodation for children awaiting placements with foster parents or institutions, including members of the Stolen Generations. It also accommodated children who were awaiting medical or dental treatment in Perth, or who were scheduled for appearance at the Children's Court. Private admissions were also accommodated.

In 1935, the institution's name changed to the Government Receiving Home, which is how it had been referred to in child welfare statistics since 1926, which remained the official name until 1953 when it became the Child Welfare Reception Home. About [700 children a year passed through the Home in 1935](#), with 40-45 children resident at a time. Around 20 were adopted out each year.

In 1949, the Home was reported as receiving white-passing children who were forcibly removed from their families by the Protector of Aborigines, and placing them into foster care with white families. By 1965, First Nations children stolen from their homes and schools passed through Mt Lawley before being moved to places

such as Roelands Native Mission Farm.

In 1953 the name changed to the Child Welfare Reception Home, changing once again to the Mt Lawley Reception Home in 1973, however department files still referred to the Home by its previous name (or the acronym CWRH) until 1979. In 1953, RH Hicks, the Director of Child Welfare and Social Services in New South Wales, [undertook a review](#) of Western Australian child welfare facilities and administrative structures and practices. The report has never been released, but was provided to some members of the press to report on the recommendations, who instead published parts of the report. Some parliamentarians also received the report in confidence, whilst others had no access beyond what had been published in the newspaper.

The report found that “conditions at subsidised institutions used by the Child Welfare Department varied, but generally they were not good”, and led to an overhaul of the Child Welfare Department (CWD).

In 1954, Peter Brett, a university law lecturer, [published an opinion piece](#) about conditions of Homes in the West Australian, based on the findings of his masters thesis. He was scathing about the solitary cells at Mt Lawley, noting that one nine year old boy had been in the cells for a week after stealing goods worth 5 pounds. He also noted the lack of hot water in the solitary block .

Other newspaper articles from 1954 describe the Home, including the [solitary block for children awaiting court](#) “in absence of a suitable remand home”, but stated that children were housed in the block for short periods of time (1-2 days) largely due to a lack of staff to supervise them. Children were considered “well fed and decently clothed”, however their welfare was impacted by the Home “trying to serve too many purposes,” with a staff of only 22. At this time, the age of the children ranged from a few months old to around 17 years. In addition to temporary accommodation and remand, the Home also acted as a hospital for sick babies, and housed some children with disabilities.

Following the Hicks report and publishing of Brett’s article, The HON. J. G. HISLOP spoke in parliament about the Home, and “concerns [about the] present of child welfare in this State”. He called for a structural overhaul of child welfare in the state.

In the 1970’s, the Home’s emphasis shifted from being that of a holding centre to playing more of a role in the assessment and planning for the resident’s future, in keeping with a shift to prevention and away from reform, from child welfare to child protection.

In 1980, Mt Lawley became known as the Walcott centre, as “part of a system of support hostels that gave increasing emphasis to assessing children’s needs and planning for their future” until finally closing in 1984.

Gallery



Laundry and Nursery Buildings - Government Industrial School, Subiaco, 1906

Description: 'Laundry and Nursery Buildings - Government Industrial School, Subiaco, 1906' is a digital copy of an image included (after p.20) 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 30 children standing in front of two single-storey buildings, accompanied by five adults. The older girls are all wearing white pinafores and standing in neat rows in front of one building, while the younger children are scattered in front of the other building.



Workshops - Government Industrial School, Subiaco, 1906

Description: 'Workshops - Government Industrial School, Subiaco, 1906' is an image included (after p.20) 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 12 teenage boys standing in two groups on the verandah of a long single-storey building, accompanied by three male staff members. The boys and staff all appear to be wearing aprons. Various pieces of equipment are also sitting on the verandah.



Government Industrial School, Subiaco, 1906

Description: 'Government Industrial School, Subiaco, 1906' is an image included (after p.20) 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 30 boys, 30 girls, and several adults standing in groups in front of a large stone building. Most of the boys are holding flutes or drums and are wearing slouch hats. The girls are all wearing dark dresses with white collars. The adults are standing on the steps of the elaborate entrance to the building, which is flanked by two rounded turrets.



Government Receiving Home, Mt Lawley, 1926

Description: 'Government Receiving Home, Mt Lawley, 1926' is an image included (p.2) in the *Annual Report of the State Children Department, 1926*. The caption reads, 'Administrative Section - Government Receiving Home for Children, Mt. Lawley'. This image shows what appear to be two connected single-storey brick and white-washed houses.



Boys Behind Iron Bars

Description: This is a picture from a 1954 article in the *Sunday Times* newspaper titled 'Mt. Lawley Reception Home's Detention Methods Are Primitive - But They Have A Tough Job'. The picture shows the 'solitary confinement' wing of the Child Welfare Reception Home at Mt Lawley, where 'delinquent' children were housed. The article condemned this practice and called for better facilities.



Child Welfare Reception Home

Description: This is a picture from a 1954 article in the *Sunday Times* newspaper titled 'Mt. Lawley Reception Home's Detention Methods Are Primitive - But They Have A Tough Job'. It shows the Child Welfare Reception Home as it looked in 1954, on the corner of Walcott and Lord Streets Mt Lawley.



Reception Home doors, 1921

Description: 'Reception Home doors' is a digital image of a set of interior doors and panels that were saved during the restoration of the government 'reception Home' on the corner of Walcott and Lord Streets, Mt Lawley. The doors are mounted on a wall in the office of the old building, which in 2013 was the Youth Justice Services Centre.



Reception Home front door, 1921

Description: 'Reception Home front door' is a digital image of the stained glass panels that were saved during the restoration of the government 'reception Home' on the corner of Walcott and Lord Streets, Mt Lawley. The building in 2013 was the Youth Justice Services Centre.



Mt Lawley Reception Home, group

Description: 'Mt Lawley Reception Home, group' is a digital copy of an image included (p.45) in the *Annual Report 1975* of the Department for Community Welfare. The caption reads, 'Activities involve guidance and re-assurance'.



Mt Lawley Reception Home

Description: 'Mt Lawley Reception Home' is a digital copy of an image included (p.44) in the *Annual Report 1975* of the Department for Community Welfare.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Superintendent of Poor Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions \(1874 - 1908\)](#)
- [Public Charities and State Children Department, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1908 - 1 January 1917\)](#)
Date: 1908 - 1917
- [State Children Department, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 22 December 1927\)](#)
Date: 1917 - 1927
- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)
Date: 1935 - 1952
- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)

Related Events

- [Coronial Inquiry into the death of George Jones and the management of Swan Boys' Orphanage, State of Western Australia \(2 June 1911 - 13 July 1911\)](#)
The Government Receiving Depot, Subiaco, accommodated boys who were witnesses at the Coronal Inquiry into the death of George Jones and the management of Swan Boys' Orphanage for the duration of the inquiry.
Date: 1911 -
- [Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the Care and Reform of Youthful Delinquents, State of Western Australia \(1943\)](#)
The Government Receiving Home was inspected by members of the Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the Care and Reform of Youthful Delinquents.
Date: 1943 -

Related Legislation

- [Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1893, Western Australia \(1893 - 1907\)](#)
The Government Industrial School was established after the passage of the *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1893*.
- [State Children Act 1907, Western Australia \(1907 - 1948\)](#)
The Government Industrial School was classed as an industrial school within the meaning of the *State Children*

Act 1907. After the Act was proclaimed, the Government Receiving Depot was used for the 'temporary admission of all classes of children committed' under the Act.

Date: 1907 -

Related Organisations

- [Female Home \[Poor House, Perth\] \(1851 - 1909\)](#)
The Female Home had provided temporary accommodation in a Children's Ward, but from 1902 children were sent instead to the Government Industrial School.
Date: 1902 -
- [Princess Margaret Hospital for Children \(1909 - 10 June 2018\)](#)
Children who had to come to Perth for treatment at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, and who had no family to stay with, were often admitted to the Mt Lawley Reception Home.
- [King Edward Memorial Hospital \(1916 - current\)](#)
In 1916 the Government Receiving Depot relocated to West Perth and the Government Receiving Depot building became part of the King Edward Memorial Hospital.
- [Tudor Lodge \(1952 - 2003\)](#)
Tudor Lodge was a hostel attached to the Walcott Centre
Date: 1980 - 1984
- [Andrew House \(1983 - 1984\)](#)
The group home Andrew House was created on the Walcott Centre campus.
Date: 1983 - 1984
- [Stuart House \(1963 - 1988?\)](#)
Stuart House was a hostel attached to the Walcott Centre
Date: 1980 - 1984
- [Cawley House \(1983 - 1984\)](#)
The group home Cawley House was created on the Walcott Centre campus
Date: 1983 - 1984

Resources

- Hetherington, Penelope, [Reformatories](#), Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia, 2009
- Western Australia. Child Welfare Department, [Annual Report of the Child Welfare Department](#), 1928 - 1972.
Relevance: 1953
- Battye, JS, [The Cyclopedia of Western Australia \(1912\)](#), 1912. Relevance: p.506
- Foster, Darren J, [Submission No 347 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 3 April 2004
- [News and Notes \[Government Receiving Depot\]](#), The West Australian, 20 June 1921
- [The Daily News \[Christmas Cheer Fund\]](#), The Daily News, 2 December 1916
- [John Walsh interviewed by Hamish Sewell in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 28 March 2011
- [Joy Milligan interviewed by Mary Hutchison for the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 17 April 2012 - 20 April 2012
- Millicent, [Bringing them Home - Millicent story](#), Australian Human Rights Commission, Website, 2 December 2001
- Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia, [Submission No 55 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), July 2003
- Manning, Lorna, [Submission No 184 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 19 August 2003
- Carruthers, Geoffrey, [Submission No 287 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 23 December 2003
- Name withheld, [Submission No 319 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 17 March 2005
- Foster, Darren J, [Submission No 347 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 3 April 2004
- Foster, Darren J, [She called her coral because it was 'a perfect pink day': The neglecting of Coral Suzanne Dickerson](#), Journal of Australian Studies, 1998
- Western Australia. Department for Community Welfare, [Annual Report: Department for Community Welfare](#), 1973 - 1984. Relevance: 1973
- Hetherington, Penelope, [Reformatories](#), Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia, 2009
- No date
- Heritage Council of Western Australia, [Walcott Centre](#), inHerit: our heritage places, 8 February 2015

- [*Denis Hayden interviewed by Crienda Fitzgerald in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project*](#), 2011
- [Child Welfare Act Amendment Bill Second Reading \[Hansard p2075-2080\]](#), Hansard Archive 1870 to 1995, 4 November 1965
- [Vote - Child Welfare and Outdoor Relief £271,655](#), Hansard Archive 1870 to 1995, 23 November 1954.
Relevance: 'Vote – Child Welfare and Outdoor Relief £271,655' outlines changes made and planned for the Child Welfare Reception Home

Records

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

Records

- [Admission Registers of the Government Receiving Home \[Walcott Street, Mt Lawley\] \(1894 - 1988\)](#)
 - [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
 - [Admission Registers of the Government Receiving Home \[Walcott Street, Mt Lawley\] \(1894 - 1988\)](#)
 - [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Admission Registers of the Government Receiving Home \[Walcott Street, Mt Lawley\] \(1894 - 1988\)](#)
 - [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
 - [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/mt-lawley-reception-home-2/>