

Royal Commission in Lunacy, State of Western Australia

28 September 1921 – 21 September 1922

Details

A 'Royal Commission in Lunacy' ran from 28 September 1921 to 21 September 1922. Commissioners visited and made recommendations about all the mental health institutions, and looked into the administration of the mental health system. The Royal Commission recommended that the existing 'isolation block' at the Claremont Hospital for the Insane should be converted into wards for 'imbecile children'.

The Royal Commission in Lunacy was established to look at accommodation for patients in the hospitals for the insane; administration (that is, control, treatment and rights) of those patients; and legislation relating to the insane.

The Commissioners considered trends in mental health administration and treatment in Australia and elsewhere.

Commissioners also commented on record-keeping in the WA system (Report, page 8) and the 'reliability' of patient complaints.

The Report found that the current system didn't recognise a continuum of mental health and recommended establishing a treatment and assessment facility away from Claremont Hospital. This 'Reception House' would not be for 'incurables' (such as 'mentally defective' children) but for 'recent and recoverable' cases of mental illness in those people who had not been certified insane. The 'Mental Treatment Act 1927' came about as a response to the Royal Commission but it did not have any impact on children with intellectual disabilities as they continued to be seen as 'incurable'.

More info

Related Entries

Related Glossary Terms

- [Eugenics \(1890s - 1950s\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Lunacy Department, State Government of Western Australia \(1903 - 1934\)](#)
- [Whitby Falls Hospital \(1897 - 1972\)](#)
- [Claremont Mental Hospital \(1903 - 1972\)](#)
- [Greenplace \(1914 - 1979\)](#)
- [Heathcote \(1929 - 1994\)](#)

Seven years after the Royal Commission in Lunacy, Heathcote opened as a reception house for 'curable' mental health patients.

Resources

- Swain, Shurlee, [*History of Australian inquiries reviewing institutions providing care for children*](#), October 2014
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