

Female Home [Poor House, Perth]

1851 – 1909

- Other Names:**
- Servants' Home
 - Female Home
 - Immigrants' Home
 - Emigrants' Home
 - Poor House
 - Workhouse
 - Women's Poor House
 - Women's Home
 - Children's Ward, Female Home
 - Government Maternity Home

Details

The Female Home, or Poor House, began in 1851, and was then named the 'Servants' Home'. From 1854, destitute or orphaned children under 10 years of age were admitted. It was first run by the Ladies' Friendly Society, but by the mid-1850s was government-run. From 1902, children were instead admitted to the Government Industrial School and Receiving Depot. The Female Home (Women's Home) in Perth closed in November 1909 and moved to Fremantle.

The Female Home, or Poor House, began in 1851 as a 'Servants' Home', a temporary Home for female servants who had left one position and were searching for another, run by the Ladies' Friendly Society. Mrs Fitzgerald, the wife of the Governor, stimulated interest in the venture. Later in 1851 the Governor, widening its function to include a reception home for 'immigrant' servants awaiting work in the colony, used public funds to pay for a matron and staff, and purchase a building on the corner of Pier and Goderich Streets. Children were admitted, but usually with a parent and would leave when the parent obtained work.

By 1854, children who were orphans or whose parents were 'too poor to support them' were admitted, as were pregnant destitute or single women; women with 'weak intellect'; women of 'immoral character'; deserted wives, and wives of prisoners and drunkards. Most children were admitted with their mothers, or temporarily while a parent was in gaol or hospital. Others were taken from their families, or had nowhere else to live until the first orphanages opened in 1868.

In 1862, Governor Hampton appointed a servant to look after the children in what was now known as the Poor House or Female Home. In 1866, a new Women's Poor House (Female Home) for women and children who were 'paupers' was opened in the enlarged grounds of the existing site on Pier and Goderich Street. By the late 1870s, most children in the Female Home had been transferred to orphanages. However, there continued to be children admitted either with their mothers or for temporary accommodation. Abandoned children and orphans were sent to the Female Home until they were placed elsewhere. Children under 2 years old were also kept in the Female Home until they were old enough to go to an orphanage (though there were children under 2 years in the Perth Girls Orphanage and St Joseph's Girls' Catholic Orphanage).

Aboriginal women were sometimes admitted to the Female Home, but that was the exception rather than the rule.

From 1870, the Government Printer had occupied one end of the Female Home and in 1878, the Poor House building had been taken over by the Government Printing Office. The Female Home moved back into the buildings it had originally occupied until 1866.

In 1895 a maternity ward was built as an extension to the Female Home, facing Pier Street. In his 1897 report, the Superintendent of Relief and Inspector of Charitable Institutions said that a ward was kept for the reception of very young children before they were placed elsewhere. A new children's ward and nursery were built by the end of 1899, but by 1902 children were instead admitted to the Government Industrial School and Receiving Depot at Subiaco.

More info

Chronology

- **Female Home [Poor House, Perth] (1851 – 1909)**
 - Women's Home, Fremantle (1909 - 1941)

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls \(1868 - 1901\)](#)
St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls began with girls transferred from the Female Home (Poor House, Perth).
Date: 1868 -
- [Mt Lawley Reception Home \(1893 - 1980\)](#)
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 -

Resources

- Australian Heritage Council, [A thematic heritage study on Australia's benevolent and other care institutions](#), 2016

Records

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

Records

- [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
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