

St Ann's Reformatory for Protestant Girls

1896 – c. 1905

Other Names: • St Ann's Sub-Reformatory School

Details

St Ann's was established on 3rd March 1896 as a sub-reformatory of the Brookside Reformatory for Protestant Girls. Like the Brookside Reformatory, St Ann's provided reformatory training to girls prior to them being sent to domestic service placements. It was located on a farm a few miles from Heywood in Western Victoria, and was variously described as being situated at Mount Clay, Tyrendarra, and Narrawong. In 1899 St Ann's was declared to be an independent reformatory, separate from the Brookside Reformatory. St Ann's closed some time around 1905.

St Ann's opened with approximately 12 girls in residence, all of whom had been transferred there from the Brookside Reformatory for Protestant Girls. It had between 9 and 12 girls in residence.

In an annual report from 1890, the superintendent of Brookside, Elizabeth Rowe, had stated that she wanted a "depot" in the Wimmera district, with a matron in charge, to make it easier to work with girls who had been placed in service in western Victoria. "This would be a great help, as distance and the awkward railway timetable often hinder us from paying early attention to complaints" (annual report, 1890, p.40).

From 1902, the Matron, Mary Faris, began reducing the intake to St Ann's with a view to closing the institution and selling the land. Three wards had been transferred to Brookside in February 1902. Five others were in service and doing well. She described one other girl as being "too lazy to keep a place" in service. The matron wrote in her 1902 report to the department that only 2 girls remained at St Ann's. Their terms had expired but the doctor had apparently certified that they were "morally unfit" to be trusted and the matron also said they were "very poor workers" (p.11).

In 1904 the Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools reported that there was no intention of sending any more girls to St Ann's, as there were suitable places for them nearer to Melbourne. St Ann's appears to have closed in 1905.

Like Brookside, St Ann's came under scrutiny for the treatment of the girls in residence. In an editorial published in the *Hamilton Spectator* in 1899, the writer, identifying themselves as "Uncle Tom", raised issues with the workload and treatment of girls at the reformatory. They alleged that the girls were expected to "do men's laborious work" such as clearing land, felling trees, cutting timber, and erecting fences, and sometimes received floggings. This complaint was made shortly after reports were published criticising conditions at Brookside, which stated that girls there received harsh treatment, including floggings, bread and water diets, and heavy workloads. In response to these claims the Department conducted inspections primarily of Brookside, but also of St Ann's. The inspector found that in the preceding year there had been one instance of corporal punishment at St Ann's, though publications of the report did not include mention of the working conditions there.

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St Ann's was established as a sub-reformatory of Brookside

Date: 1896 - 1899

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