

Boys' Farm School, Macedon State Nursery

1883 – c.1885

Details

The Boys' Farm School at the Macedon State Nursery was established around late 1882 or early 1883. Boys and young men from industrial schools or in boarding out placements were placed there to be trained in gardening skills. It closed around 1885.

The Macedon State Nursery had been established in 1872, to provide trees to replant native forests that had been cut down for firewood and timber. It also tested a variety of tree species for their adaptability to Victorian climatic and soil conditions.

Industrial school boys had been employed as workers at Melbourne's Botanic Gardens since around the 1870s (according to the 1883 annual report of the Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, in 1872, 70 boys were working there). The department had also had "gratifying success" with the [farm school at Dookie](#), established in 1882. The 1883 annual report stated:

the transfer to one of these Schools is a boon conceded to the better behaved of the boarded-out children of from twelve and a half to thirteen and a half years of age, who may be fairly strong and forward in their studies – not below the 4th class. They work during the day, with a half-holiday on Saturday afternoon, and pursue their studies with some zest for an hour and a half each evening, receiving further lessons on days of excessive wet or heat, and are licensed out to employers after a training of twelve to sixteen months.

In September 1883, the *Argus* reported that 16 boys were at Macedon. Being at the farm school cost the department the same amount as previously was paid to the homes where they previously were boarded out, 5s per week for each boy. The newspaper stated that none of the boys at Macedon were "of the criminal class commonly and officially designated 'reformatory boys'". The greater number were taken from foster homes in which they were boarded by the Industrial Schools Department and some were sent from [Sandhurst](#)" (*Argus*, 8 September 1883).

The 1884 departmental annual report included a report from the Inspector of State Forests and Superintendent of State Nurseries about the Boys' Farm and Nursery School, Macedon. The institution had started and ended the year with 12 boys (p.26).

The school at Macedon had closed by 1885. The annual report stated that because the boarding out system had taken hold in the colony (since a royal commission in 1872, the department had been phasing out industrial schools in favour of foster care), it had become impossible to get volunteers to receive training at Macedon State Nursery, (p.8).

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