FIND & CONNECT FACT SHEET
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ABOUT CHILD WELFARE

This is a guide to the historical background of the child welfare system in each state and territory in Australia, with links to entries in Find & Connect that have more detailed information.

When you're searching for records relating to children placed in institutional 'care', it can be helpful to know something about how the child welfare system worked in the relevant state or territory. Every jurisdiction in Australia has its own system – with unique laws, policies, and bureaucracies.

Understanding the historical background of each system can help you to locate, and to understand, records. For example, in South Australia there was a centralised government department that was usually involved in organising a child's placement in 'care' – so for SA records, it makes sense to start with government records.

But in Victoria, until the 1950s many placements were likely to be arranged more informally by churches or charities (known as "private" or "voluntary placements[1]").

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

In Canberra the practices and laws of child welfare and the care of children were those of New South Wales until 1938. 'Boarding-out', or foster care, was the preferred form of care, with some small institutions and Homes also existing. The ACT system grew only gradually.

In 1938, the first Adoption of Children Ordinance[2] — a special Commonwealth law made for Canberra-regulated the adoption of children in the ACT. Until 1957, young people in Canberra were institutionalised under NSW laws. The ACT did not have its own entirely separate system of child welfare until self-government, in 1989.

Canberra's small population meant that there were relatively few children's homes, and few foster carers, in the Territory, compared to NSW. Because of this, children from the ACT were sometimes placed in institutional and foster care in NSW. Commonwealth Government agencies contracted agencies of the NSW Government to provide services, and to keep the records that went along with them.

FINDING RECORDS FROM THE ACT

If the person whose records you are searching for was in a non-government Home in the ACT, it might be easiest to contact the organisation that now holds records from that Home. After that, or if you don't know the name of the Home, we suggest you follow the instructions for finding New South Wales records.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Homes, orphanages and institutions in New South Wales were often run by religious or community organisations, and took children on what is called a voluntary basis: that is, the child was committed by a relative or family member. When trying to access records, these organisations (known as NGOs[3] in NSW) are often the first port of call.

Children were also made wards of the state, usually at a hearing of the Children's Court[4]. Wards were most commonly placed in foster homes, which was also known as 'boarding out'[5]. Boarding out was introduced in NSW in the late 1870s, after widespread criticism of the treatment of children in large institutions like the Protestant Orphan School[6] and the Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children[7]. The Boarding Out Society, and later, the State Children's Relief Board[8] (established in 1881) removed children from institutions and placed them in foster homes. Within a short period, 70% of children in state care were boarded out, while others were 'apprenticed' (into domestic service) and a few were informally adopted.

However, the New South Wales government ran more than 100 different Homes and institutions for children and young people from the 1880s until the 1990s. Nearly all children who were made wards of the state spent at least some time in one of these homes and some were placed in Homes run by religious or community organisations.

1   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/australia/biogs/FE00071b.htm
2   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/act/biogs/AE00007b.htm

3   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/browse_n_function. htm#F000094
4   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00969b.htm
5   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00966b.htm
6   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE01140b.htm
7   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00497b.htm
8   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00037b.htm

The Child Welfare Department[9] was created in 1923, with broad powers to inspect private institutions, and manage all government institutions, as well as foster care. With the introduction of the Child Welfare Act 1939[10] , fostering remained the focus, but more tailored programs were introduced, particularly around concepts of juvenile delinquency, truancy, child guidance and education. Juvenile justice[11] became more repressive, with the creation of Hay[12] and Tamworth[13] as annexes to Parramatta[14] and Mount Penang[15].

In the 1970s, the Department became known as the Department of Youth and Community Services[16], reflecting the diversity of approaches taken by its staff to children, families and other vulnerable groups. Foster care remained the primary method of caring for children who could not, for whatever reason, live with their families, and NSW, like other Australian jurisdictions, the remaining large institutions for children began to close during a period of deinstitutionalisation.

FINDING RECORDS FROM NSW

If the person whose records you are searching for was a ward of the state in New South Wales (or was from the ACT and was placed in a NSW institution), you can apply to Community Services[17] for access to their records. However, Community Services has advised that only minimal records exist pre-1940.

If the person was in care before 1940, it might be easiest to start by searching for their name in the State Records NSW Child Care and Protection Guide[18]. You can view microfilm copies of the records in the State Records NSW reading room, or you can request photocopies online.

If you do not find the information you were searching for on the State Records website, you can apply to Community Services under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act). You can use the application form or write a letter saying that your request is a formal application under the GIPA Act.

Postal address:
Right to Information Unit
Community Services
Locked Bag 4028
ASHFIELD NSW 2131

You will need to provide a copy of a proof of identity document (e.g. driver's license, birth certificate, health care card) and proof of your relationship to the person who was in care (for example, a birth certificate). There may also be application fees.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The lack of care facilities in the Northern Territory during the first half of the twentieth century affected all children in the care of the government, regardless of their background. When looking for records, it is important to know that many children were moved away from the Territory or placed in inappropriate facilities (for more information, read Interstate movement of Northern Territory children[19]). Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children were sent to institutions interstate and during World War II many were evacuated south for the duration of the war. Children with disabilities were sent to southern institutions and children who had committed offences were sometimes placed in adult prisons in the Northern Territory.

The earliest forms of State Care in the Northern Territory were focused on Aboriginal children. On many Missions[20] across the Territory, including in Central Australia and on islands off the coast, children slept in separate dormitories rather than with family. Aboriginal people were placed in government compounds and institutions as a result of government policies. Many Aboriginal children of mixed descent were removed from their parents and taken to children's institutions in Darwin and Alice Springs. Child removal practices and the later policy of assimilation aimed to separate these children from their families and train them to become part of white society. People affected by these past polices are now known as the Stolen Generations[21].

Records relating to children in State Care in the Northern Territory were created by Commonwealth and local agencies. These bodies each played different parts in the care process. The Northern Territory was under Commonwealth control from 1911 to 1978, but also had a local Northern Territory Administration with branches responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Welfare and Health (for more information, read Law in the Northern Territory[22]).

9   https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00039b.htm
10 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00014b.htm
11 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00986b.htm
12 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE01033b.htm
13 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00412b.htm
14 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE01318b.htm
15 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00427b.htm
16 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00036b.htm
17 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00042b.htm
18 https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/
    guides-and-indexes/child-care-and-protection-guide

19 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nt/biogs/YE00088b.htm
20 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nt/browse_m_function.
    htm#F000090
21 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nt/biogs/YE00369b.htm
22 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nt/biogs/YE00399b.htm

From the mid-1950s and after the passing of the Child Welfare Ordinance[23] in 1958, the Welfare Branch[24] of the NT Administration began to establish Receiving Homes for children taken into care. In the 1960s and 1970s, government-run secure care facilities and family group homes[25] were also opened.

Non-government church based organisations also began to establish cottage homes[26] in the 1960s and 1970s. Children were, however, still sent interstate. During the late 1970s-1980s Homes for children with disabilities and youth hostels/refuges were established both by non-government organisations with Commonwealth and Territory government assistance.

FINDING RECORDS FROM THE NT
Files related to children under the care of the government are primarily held by the Northern Territory Archives Service[27] and the Department for Children and Families. The majority of these have been extensively indexed. Records about children in secure care are held by the Department for Correctional Services. There are also numerous records related to Children's Homes and institutions held by the National Archives of Australia[28].

To get access to Northern Territory government records about a family member, you may need to make a Freedom of Information application. For further information, please visit: https://nt.gov.au/law/rights/freedom-of-information/introduction.

QUEENSLAND
In Queensland a system of orphanages and homes for destitute and neglected children was established from the mid nineteenth century. These institutions were run by the State and by religious or community organisations. Most children were not orphans, but children admitted to State care due to family breakdown or poverty. Indigenous children were placed in 'care' simply because of the colour of their skin.

Up until 1900, the majority of children in State care were in institutions. The government-run Diamantina Orphanage[29] was the first children's institution in Queensland. As well as government-run orphanages and reformatories, the Catholic Church, Salvation Army, Methodist Church, Church of England and other religious organisations ran their own institutions, often with assistance from the government.

Around the turn of the century, the number of children entering institutional-style orphanages or homes began to decrease, with the government moving towards the boarding out of children (or foster care). The Orphanages Act 1879[30] allowed for the boarding out of children to 'any trustworthy or respectable person'. Since the early twentieth century, foster care has been the primary option for children requiring out-of-home care in Queensland.

The State Children Department[31] was established in 1911, to 'provide care, management and control of orphaned, abandoned and convicted children and their property'. The Queensland government ran a number of institutions, including at Wooloowin[32], Townsville[33] and Westbrook[34].

From the mid twentieth-century, large institutions like orphanages to be phased out. By the 1960s family group homes[35] began to replace the dormitory style accommodation associated with the orphanage system. Group homes were run by the non-government sector, for which they received partial government funding. Clustered family group homes were often located on or nearby the former site of an orphanage or a mission. There were also 'scattered' family group homes, single houses 'scattered' around suburbs and towns.

FINDING RECORDS FROM QLD
Records created by private institutions are held by their successor organisation, and this is the organisation you need to contact for access to records. For example, if the person whose records you are searching for was at St Vincent's[36] in Nudgee, you will need to apply for access to the records from the Sisters of Mercy Archives. Each organisation has its own access rules and restrictions.

If the person was ever admitted to an institution run by the State, or if their care was organised by the State, there is likely to be some evidence of their placement in government records.

These records are held at the Queensland State Archives[37]. The amount and quality of these records will vary.

23 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nt/biogs/YE00040b.htm
24 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nt/biogs/YE00195b.htm
25 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nt/biogs/YE00268b.htm
26 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nt/biogs/YE00151b.htm
27 https://artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/northern-territory-archives-service
28 http://www.naa.gov.au
29 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/qld/biogs/QE00192b.htm
30 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/qld/biogs/QE00006b.htm
31 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/qld/biogs/QE00341b.htm
32 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/qld/biogs/QE00193b.htm
33 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/qld/biogs/QE00197b.htm
34 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/qld/biogs/QE00533b.htm
35 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/qld/browse_f_function.htm#F000006
36 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/qld/biogs/QE00155b.htm
37 http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx

You can apply for access to these records by contacting:

Right to Information, Information Privacy and Screening
Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
GPO Box 806, Brisbane QLD 4001
Phone: 1800 809 078 or (07) 3224 2242
Email: rti@communities.qld.gov.au

You will need to provide a copy of a proof of identity document (e.g. driver's licence, birth certificate, health care card) and proof of your relationship to the person who was in care (for example, a birth certificate). There is an application fee.

This page has more information about the Queensland government's Support for Forgotten Australians[38].

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In South Australia the earliest form of 'care' for children who were deemed destitute or neglected was the government-run Destitute Asylum[39] which also took in adults. From the 1860s children began to be accommodated separately in a number of government-run and/or church run institutions. From as early as the 1860s-1870s, boarding out (an early term for foster care[40]) was favoured by the government. South Australia was the first state to introduce boarding out as an alternative to institutional care.

The State Children's Council[41] was established in 1886, and was responsible for matters relating to State Children. Children committed to the care of the state by a magistrate were referred to as State Children or Wards of the State. Following committal, State Children would be sent to the Industrial School at Magill[42], and later Edwardstown[43]. While some stayed there long term, the majority of children were boarded out. Others were transferred to other government institutions, such as Reformatories, or into the care of religious bodies.

By the early twentieth century the Catholic Church, Salvation Army, Methodist Church, Church of England and other religious organisations ran their own institutions, often with assistance from the government. Some organisations recognised the value of smaller group care as opposed to large institutions, and established cottage homes as early as the 1920s.

After the passing of the Community Welfare Act 1972[44], the government began to close large institutions and set up cottage homes, hostels and family group homes. (During the 1970s-1980s cottages were renamed Admission[45] or Assessment Units[46] depending on their purpose.) The outsourcing of care to non-government organisations became increasingly common.

FINDING RECORDS FROM SA

When a child was committed to State Care[47], government files and other government records were created about them. These may include files, admission register records and State Ward Index Cards (from 1900-1992). These are government records so they are held by State Records of South Australia[48]. Records of State Care are restricted for 100 years, so if you go to State Records you will only be able to see very early records. In order to see any records less than 100 years old, you will need to apply for access through Freedom of Information from the Government Department which now controls the records.

The "Request for Access under the Freedom of Information Act 1991" application form can be downloaded here: https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/doc/request-access-under-freedom-information-act-1991-application-form. You can submit that form by email, postal mail or in person.

As in other states, not all children were State children. Some children were placed by parents, relatives or others in religious-run institutions. Records created by these organisations are not held at State Records and are not controlled by the government. They are held by the religious or charitable organisations that succeeded these institutions. For example, if the person whose records you're searching for was placed in a Catholic Home, the records are held by the Professional Standards Record Service of the Catholic Church[49] and you will need to apply for access to them through that body. Each organisation has its own access rules and restrictions. You can find out more by going to the Find & Connect page for the Home you are interested in.

38 http://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/support-for-forgotten-australians
39 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00062b.htm
40 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00799b.htm
41 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00028b.htm
42 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00077b.htm
43 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00064b.htm
44 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00275b.htm
45 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE01341b.htm
46 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00795b.htm
47 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00894b.htm
48 http://www.archives.sa.gov.au
49 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/sa/biogs/SE00025b.htm

TASMANIA

In Tasmania, until the mid 1850s, children's welfare was dominated by the convict system. The major institutions were the Female Factory at Cascades[50], the Queen's Orphan Asylum[51] and Point Puer[52].

In the post-convict era, a number of training and industrial schools opened in Tasmania, including the Hobart Girls' Industrial School[53], the Boys' Reformatory[54] and St Joseph's Orphanage[55]. In 1873, the Charitable Grants Department[56] was established, which included a boarding out[57] system as an alternative to large institutions.

Most wards of state in Tasmania were placed in foster care. However, some were placed in Homes run by the government or by voluntary organisations. Children could also be admitted to these Homes as private placements.

In the late nineteenth century, a number of institutions with an emphasis on the moral 'rescue' of girls and young women were established, including the Home of Mercy[58] in New Town, the Magdalen Home[59], and the Salvation Army's Rock Lynn House[60] and Elim Maternity Hospital[61].

The Children's Charter[62] of 1918 established the Children of the State Department. The government in Tasmania continue to favour the boarding out system, or placing children in Homes run by the charitable or religious sector. The only state-run institution during this period was Ashley Home for Boys[63], a reformatory in Deloraine.

The immediate post war period marked a trend towards greater institutionalisation by the government, and the establishment of some state-run institutions. This was partly in response to inquiries that had recommended the segregation of older from younger boys at Ashley Home. The Tasmanian government established Wybra Hall[64] in 1956 and West Winds Boys' Home[65] in 1967. It also established the Malmesbury Girls' Home[66] in 1950, which was replaced in 1959 by the Weeroona Training Centre[67].

Around this period, in line with national and international trends, new types of care began to emerge in Tasmania – receiving homes[68] and hostels[69] based on a cottage care model. From the 1970s, the government began closing down large institutions, and opened more receiving homes, which were later known as family group homes. Many privately run institutions either closed or were converted to cottages.

FINDING RECORDS FROM TAS

The Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO) holds many of the case files of state wards. Those case files over 75 years old are open to the public. If the person whose records you're searching for left care more than 75 years ago, it's best to start by searching the TAHO website[70].

You can type in a person's name in basic search and if there is a case file about them you will see that listed. You can access that file by visiting TAHO.

If the person was a state ward and they were in care less than 75 years ago, you will need to apply to the Department of Health and Human Services for permission to access their case files.

Contact:
After Care Support Program
Department of Health and Human Services
GPO Box 538 HOBART TAS 7001
Phone: 1300 654 583(free call) or (03) 6166 0422
Web: http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/children/adoption/support_for_care_leavers

If the person was placed in an institution rather than foster care, there may be less information on their case file. You may find the institution also kept records. You can look at records tab on the Find & Connect page for that Home for further information, or you can ask the archivist at TAHO for further suggestions.

50 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00328b.htm
51 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00053b.htm
52 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00236b.htm
53 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00068b.htm
54 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00557b.htm
55 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00026b.htm
56 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00014b.htm
57 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00156b.htm
58 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00323b.htm
59 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00040b.htm
60 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00078b.htm
61 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00080b.htm
62 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00017b.htm
63 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00031b.htm

64 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00033b.htm
65 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00039b.htm
66 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00276b.htm
67 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00038b.htm
68 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00089b.htm
69 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/tas/biogs/TE00258b.htm
70 http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?

VICTORIA

Historically, Victoria's child welfare system has relied heavily on care provided by churches and charitable organisations (for more information, read: Orphanages: the first institutions[71]). Where foster care or 'boarding out'[72] (considered by the government as the best form of care) was not available, children could be placed in homes, reformatories and other institutions. From the 1920s onwards the number of foster homes available began to fall and more children were placed in institutions.

Many of the homes were established by charitable organisations with religious affiliations children were often admitted 'voluntary placements'[73] which may have been arranged by family members. In terms of children who were wards of the state, the Royal Park Depot[74] (later Turana) is a site of enormous significance for care leavers. From approximately 1880 until 1961 it was the only reception centre for children entering state care in Victoria.

The 1954 Children's Welfare Act[75] widened the scope under which children could be committed to state care, which resulted in an increase in children admitted to the care of the department. Until the passage of this Act, children's Homes and orphanages were run by charitable and/or religious organisations, the only institutions in Victoria for children run by the state had been reception centres, reformatories[76] (and in an earlier era, industrial schools) for juvenile offenders and disability institutions. The 1954 legislation contained new requirements for all non-government Homes to be registered with the Children's Welfare Department as 'approved' children's homes, juvenile schools or juvenile hostels, and provided for more inspection of these Homes and the children who lived there. After this Act was passed, the Victorian government began to establish its own state-run children's Homes. From the mid-1950s, the Department began to establish state-run family group homes[77] as well as hostels[78] for young people.

In 1972, the Social Welfare Department[79] commenced a regionalisation program, to develop a statewide network of children's and family welfare services in Victoria. The new system aimed to shift face-to-face activities and decision-making from the centralised Department to new regional centres: Mallee, Wimmera, Loddon-Campaspe, Goulburn, Upper Murray, East Gippsland, Central Gippsland, Barwon, Glenelg, Central Highlands.

Many government and non-government Homes continued to provide large-scale, congregate care into the 1970s when they moved towards smaller arrangements, such as foster care, group homes and residential units, under the broader movement of deinstitutionalisation.

Institutional and congregate care was replaced by home-based care (such as foster care or kinship care) or residential care, with the Out of Home Care system being delivered by Community Service Organisations funded by the Victorian government.

FINDING RECORDS FROM VIC

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) manages records relating to wardship and adoption in Victoria. Some of these records are held at DHHS, and some are held at Public Record Office Victoria (PROV). Generally, records less than 99 years old are not open to the general public because of the personal and private information they contain. If the records are about you, or members of your family, you have a right to access these records.

If you are reasonably sure that the person whose records you are looking for was a Victorian ward of the state, it's best to start by contacting the Care Leaver Records Service (CLRS) team at DHHS:

Freedom of Information Unit, Care Leaver Records Service
Phone: (03) 9096 8449
Email: clrs@dhhs.vic.gov.au
GPO Box 4057 Melbourne VIC 3001
Website: http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/applying-for-documents-and-records/adoption-ward-and-care-leaver-records/former-victorian-state-wards-and-care-leavers

If, however, you are confident they were placed in the Home privately (for example, by a family member), you could start by contacting the organisation that holds records from the Home directly.

71 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000815b.htm
72 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000817b.htm
73 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000668b.htm
74 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000118b.htm
75 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000174b.htm
76 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000816b.htm
77 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000350b.htm
78 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000323b.htm

79 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/vic/biogs/E000131b.htm

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

For any person admitted to a facility run by the Child Welfare Department, or whose care was organised by the department, there is likely to be some evidence of their placement in WA government records. The amount and quality of these records will vary. Sometimes, it will be only a name in a register.

The need to keep records of children in out of home care has been part of the Western Australian legislation since the State Children Act 1907[80]. At the very least, the department responsible for child welfare, the institutions that housed children and licensed foster-mothers were required to keep a register of the child's name, age, sex, nationality, religion, dates of admission and departure, and the names of parents and near relatives. The Children and Community Services Act 2004 (s.128)[81] requires all records created under s.11 of the Child Welfare Act 1947[82] and still in existence in 2005 to be kept forever, along with all records created 'in respect of wards and children placed under the control' of the department after 2005 when the Act came into effect.

The care and protection of children in Western Australia has been regulated by various Acts of Parliament, dating back to the Industrial Schools Act 1874[83] and the Aborigines Protection Act 1886[84]. Until the 1970s, there were separate child welfare systems for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in WA.

State child[85] was a term used in WA from 1907 to describe 'a destitute child or neglected child received into a Government institution or a subsidised institution or apprenticed or placed out' under the authority of the State Children Act 1907[86]. An amendment in 1919 extended the definition to include 'an incorrigible or uncontrollable child'. The term state child was replaced by ward in 1927. At this time the name of the Department was changed, to bring it line with the practice in other states, to the Child Welfare Department[87].

During the 1920s[88], all children committed under the State Children Act 1907 were sent to the Government Receiving Depot[89] at Mt Lawley, before being boarded out (placed in foster care), or placed in an 'orphanage' or industrial school (reformatory).

From 1927 until 1972, the Child Welfare Department (known as the CWD or 'the welfare') had an impact on the lives of many families in WA. The Department ran its own children's Homes, 'placed' children in foster care, or in Homes run by charitable or religious organisations, and it organised adoptions.

In 1972, the CWD was replaced by the new Department for Community Welfare[90]. At this time, the Department took over responsibilities to Aboriginal children that were previously held by the authorities for 'native welfare'.

FINDING RECORDS FROM WA

Government records are held at the State Records Office, but permission to access them must be obtained from Freedom of Information at the Department for Child Protection and Family Support.

Contact:
Freedom of Information, Department for Child Protection and Family Support:
PO Box 6334, East Perth WA 6892
Telephone: (08) 6217 6388 or (08) 6217 6381
Facsimile: (08) 9222 2776
Free call in WA: 1800 000 277
Email: foi@cpfs.wa.gov.au
Web: http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/SupportingIndividualsAndFamilies/Pages/Searchingforyourfamilyhistory.aspx

If, however, the child's placement in a Home was arranged by family, or by family with the informal assistance of a Departmental officer (for example, in the country or one of the suburban regions), it is possible that no Departmental record of that placement or contact was made. In that case, you should contact the organisation where they were placed, or the organisation that now holds the record from that place.

80 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00407b.htm
81 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00394b.htm
82 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00417b.htm
83 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00402b.htm
84 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00403b.htm
85 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00465b.htm
86 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00407b.htm
87 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00364b.htm

88 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00477b.htm
89 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00612b.htm
90 https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/wa/biogs/WE00365b.htm

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