

Mission of St James and St John

1919 – 1997

Other Names: • Mission of St. James and St. John

Details

The Mission of St James and St John was established in 1919. It began as a broad-based city mission, but within a few years the Mission began focusing on the needs of homeless children, lone mothers and families in need. In 1997 the Mission of St James and St John merged with St John's Home for Boys and Girls, and the Mission to the Streets and Lanes to form Anglicare Victoria.

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Its first Missioner, from 1919 to 1921, was the Archdeacon of Melbourne, W.G. Hindley. He was followed by the Rev. Ainslie Yeates, from 1921 to 1924. During Yeates' time, in 1922, the Mission opened St John's Parish Hall. The Hall, at 308 La Trobe Street, was to be the hub of Mission activity until 1956.

From 1926, the Mission was assisted in its work by the efforts of several 'Leagues of Mission Helpers', ladies' auxiliaries who performed a variety of tasks to raise funds. By 1928 there were 40 Leagues in operation. Their activities included organising dances, fetes and fairs, or holding meetings where donations to the Mission were collected. Members also made, washed and repaired clothing for babies and children in the Mission's Homes. The Leagues also ran 'opportunity shops' and jumble sales.

When Yeates resigned in 1924, Canon (later Archdeacon) George Edwin Lambie took over leadership of the Mission of St James and St John. Lambie led the Mission from 1925 to 1939 and was an instrumental figure in the Mission's aim to provide 'homes for the homeless'.

Another important figure in the history of the Mission was Minna Johnson. Ordained as a Deaconess in 1922, Johnson was invited to Melbourne in 1924 by Archbishop Harrington Lees to become Head Deaconess.

The Deaconesses played an important role in decisions about the welfare of toddlers and children in Homes operated by the Mission of St James and St John, as well as the care of unmarried mothers and their babies. They were responsible for the Mission's Adoption Services.

Minna Johnson retired in 1959 after 34 years of active service for the Mission.

Lambie had a vision of 'a chain of Mission homes'. In historian Keith Cole's words: 'the unmarried mother would be cared for at Kedesh, and her baby at the Arms of Jesus. Between the ages of two and five years, the child would be looked after at the Toddlers' Home. When of school age, the child would be transferred to the Glenroy Homes. The dependent child thus would be cared for from birth right through to school leaving age'. Not all of the former residents of mission Homes would have seen this chain as positively as Cole did.

Following the death of Lambie in 1939, the work of the Mission was led by Canon James Leslie Watt for a period of 10 years. Watt was succeeded by the Rev. Stanley Henry Burridge, who was Missioner until 1960.

In 1956, the operations of the Mission moved from St John's Hall to Queensberry Street, North Melbourne. The next year, the Mission moved again to new premises at 468 St Kilda Road. This building burned down in 1973.

From 1961 to 1978, the Mission was led by Canon Guy Harmer. This was a period of transition from congregate care to more 'home-like' forms of accommodation. Some of the Mission's Homes were closed down during this period. A more professional approach to child care was taken under Harmer, with the Mission employing its first qualified social workers.

Reflecting the changing attitudes to child 'care', in 1969 Cole wrote of the Mission, 'nowadays no child passes through the various Homes, as every effort is made at each stage to have them adopted, fostered or returned to their parents'.

Prior to 1963, decisions about the placement of children and babies, and the care of unmarried mothers, were all made by the Missioner and his assistants, especially the Deaconesses on his staff.

Minna Johnson was Head Deaconess of the Mission of St James and St John from 1934 to 1959. A cottage at St Gabriel's Babies' Home was named after her.

From 1963, under the leadership of Canon Harmer, the Mission employed qualified social workers, who took over responsibility for admissions and the general welfare of toddlers and children. Mary Powys was the Mission's first trained social worker, employed in 1962. She was succeeded by Barbara Moore in 1963, who was followed by Joan Gilchrist in 1965. Gilchrist left the Mission and was replaced by Mrs Ruth O'Loughlin in 1969.

Unmarried mothers and their babies remained the province of the Deaconesses, who were responsible for the Mission's Adoption Services. All other admissions went through the Mission's social worker.

Social workers were also responsible for training the staff in the Mission's Homes.

Canon Harmer retired from the Mission in 1978, having overseen a period of transition from congregate care and large institutions, towards a focus on family and specialist services.

From 1978 to 1986, the Mission was led by the Rev Alan Nichols, who made social justice a central concern. It had Family Group Homes in Mornington, Newport, Bendigo and Traralgon.

Archdeacon Howard Dillon took over in 1987 and ran the Mission until 1993.

The Revd. Dr Robert Rayner joined the Mission in 1993.

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Gallery



'Children in our hands'

Description: This image appeared on the front page of the Mission of St James and St John's journal, *The Brothers* in 1961.

More info

Chronology

- **Mission of St James and St John (1919 – 1997)**
 - Anglicare Victoria (1997 - current)

Related Entries

Ran

- [Andrew Kerr Memorial Home \(c. 1921 - c. 1980\)](#)

The Mission of St James and St John took over management of Andrew Kerr Memorial Home in 1941.
Date: 1941 - 1980
- [Ramoith \(1926 - 1927\)](#)
- [Arms of Jesus Babies' Home \(1925 - 1935\)](#)
- [The Horseshoe \(1926 - 1927\)](#)
- [Brady House \(1964 - 1978\)](#)
- [Gippsland Family Services \(1979 - current\)](#)
- [St Paul's Discovery Centre \(1979 - 2004?\)](#)
- [St Paul's Home For Boys \(1955 - 1979\)](#)
- [Kedesh Maternity Home \(1926 - 1986\)](#)
- [Beryl Booth Court \(1978 - 1991\)](#)
- [Family Group Homes run by The Mission of St James and St John, Victoria \(1970s - 2000s\)](#)
- [Blackburn South Cottages \(1963 - 1988\)](#)
- [Buckland House \(c. 1980 - 1994\)](#)
- [Butler House for Homeless Girls \(1934 - 1940s\)](#)
- [Ellen Connell Holiday Home \(1955 - 1973\)](#)
- [Fairhaven \(1927 - 1953\)](#)

Date: 1927 - 1953
- [Ramoith Toddlers' Home \(1927 - c. 1932\)](#)
- [School of Homecrafts Hostel \(c. 1925 - 1976\)](#)

Date: 1935 - 1976
- [St Barnabas' Boys' Home \(1934 - 1939\)](#)

The Mission of St James and St John took over the management of St Barnabas' Boys' Home (previously known as the Seaside Garden Home for Boys) in 1934.
Date: 1934 - 1939
- [St Gabriel's Babies' Home \(1935 - 1975\)](#)
- [St Nicholas' Boys' Home \(1926 - c. 1955\)](#)
- [St Paul's Training School \(1928 - 1955\)](#)
- [St Agnes' Girls' Home \(1926 - 1963\)](#)
- [St Luke's Toddlers' Home \(1932 - 1979\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Peninsula Family Services \(1980 - current\)](#)
- [Family Group Homes and Residential care run by St Luke's, Victoria \(c. 1977 - 2000s\)](#)

Resources

- Swain, Shurlee, [Mission of St James and St John](#), eMelbourne: the city past and present, 2008
- Nunn, H.W., [Social Services \(Chapter VIII of A Short History of the Church of England in Victoria 1847-1947\)](#), Issued by the Editorial Committee of the Centenary Celebrations, Melbourne Diocese, 1947
- *Social service work has personal side*, The Argus, 27 August 1949
- *The Brothers: the journal of the Mission of St James and St John*, 1925 - 1964
- *Mission Journal*, 1965 - 1972

- *Mission News*, 1972 - 1990
- Moore, Barbara, *Our children and their holiday hosts*, The Brothers, 1964
- *The Blackburn Story*, The Brothers, 1961
- *Behind the scenes at Blackburn South*, The Brothers, 1964
- *Who cares?*, The Brothers, 1961
- *Dedication and official opening of the Blackburn South Cottages*, The Brothers, 1963
- *She Collects Babies*, The Argus, 15 July 1949
- Turner, Laurence, [Victoria's Unwanted Children - 7: Government Is Shirking Its Responsibility](#), The Herald, 1 November 1952
- Testro, Ron, [He's a man with a mission](#), The Argus, 26 July 1956
- Pratt, Nigel, *Kids speak out: what it's like being a State Ward*, May 1984
- [Mission of St James and St John \(1919-97\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance:* See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Mission of St James and St John

Other Resources



Title: 'Who Cares?'

Type: Image

Date: c. 1961

[Details](#)



Title: The Blackburn Story

Type: Image

Date: c. 1961

[Details](#)



Title: Our children and their holiday hosts

Type: Image

Date: 1964

[Details](#)

Records

Records

- [Anglicare Victoria Records \(1886 - current\)](#)
 - [Records of Victorian Adoptions \(c. 1908 - current\)](#)
 - ['Closed' Agency and General Correspondence Files \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
 - [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
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