

Department of Mental Hygiene

1934 – 1944

Details

The Department of Mental Hygiene was established in 1934 following the proclamation of the Mental Hygiene Act (No.4157). The Department was responsible for the development and direction of policy governing the treatment of the 'mentally ill, the intellectually handicapped and inebriates' and for the establishment and administration of institutions for their care for the period 1934 to 1944. Previously, this had been overseen by the Lunacy Department. In 1944, this function was taken over by the Mental Hygiene Branch, within the new Department of Health.

By 1937, two branches had been established within the Department of Mental Hygiene. The Mental Defectives Branch was responsible for the care of children and adults with intellectual disabilities, while the Mental Hygiene Branch was responsible for the treatment of the mentally ill.

The Mental Deficiency Act 1939 (No.4703) provided for the establishment of state institutions for the care of 'mental defectives' and 'retarded children' and for the licensing of privately run institutions.

In 1932 a special school, staffed by teachers seconded from the Education Department had been opened at Kew Childrens Cottages (previously the Idiot Ward of Kew Asylum).

In 1933 Travancore had been established for "the reception of children who, although mentally defective, are capable of receiving benefit from special instruction". (See Annual Report 1933.)

In 1937, Janefield was opened to provide accommodation and educational instruction for the 'severely retarded'.

The Department of Mental Hygiene was effectively abolished under the provisions of the Ministry of Health Act 1943 (No.4988). In 1944 following the proclamation of this Act and a major re-organisation and amalgamation of the administration of health services, including mental health services, the responsibilities of the Department of Mental Hygiene were assumed by the Mental Hygiene Branch of the newly established Department of Health.

More info

Chronology

- **Department of Mental Hygiene (1934 – 1944)**
 - Mental Hygiene Branch (1944 - 1959)
 - Mental Health Authority, State of Victoria (1962 - 1978)

Related Entries

Ran

- [Travancore \(1933 - current\)](#)
- [Kew Children's Cottages \(1887 - 2008\)](#)
Date: 1934 - 1944
- [Janefield Colony \(1937 - 1996\)](#)
- [Pleasant Creek Colony \(1937 - 1999\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Royal Park Depot \(c. 1880 - 1955\)](#)

The Department of Mental Hygiene ran institutions for children with intellectual disabilities. Many of these children spent long periods at Royal Park Depot, awaiting a suitable placement.

Date: 1934 - 1944

Related Legislation

- [Mental Deficiency Act 1939, Victoria \(1939 - 1959\)](#)

Resources

- Wright, Katie, ["Help for wayward children": child guidance in 1930s Australia](#), History of Education Review, 2012

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/departments-mental-hygiene/>