

# Mental Hygiene Branch

1944 – 1959

## Details

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The Mental Hygiene Branch was established in 1944. It assumed responsibility for those functions previously administered by the Department of Mental Hygiene, namely the development and direction of policy governing the treatment of the mentally ill, the care of the intellectually disabled, the care and treatment of alcohol and drug dependent persons, and for the establishment and administration of institutions for their care.

The predecessor to the Mental Hygiene Branch, the Department of Mental Hygiene, had been located within the Chief Secretary's Department of the Victorian public service. With the proclamation of the Ministry of Health Act 1943 (No.4988), the responsibility for the administration of 'mental hygiene' and 'mental deficiency' was transferred from the Chief Secretary to the Minister for Health.

The Ministry of Health Act 1943 provided for a major reorganisation and amalgamation of the administration of health services in Victoria, establishing the state's first Department of Health. The Mental Hygiene Branch, as a division of this new government department, represented a continuing change in community attitudes towards mental illness and intellectual disability and led to a significant expansion of services for these people.

The Director of Mental Hygiene, as principal officer, formulated mental health policy and was responsible for the administration of all functions provided for by the Mental Hygiene Acts.

In 1962, the Mental Hygiene Branch was reconstituted as the Mental Health Authority, under the provisions of the Mental Health Act 1959 (No.6605).

The Authority was responsible for policy relating to mental health and control of the Mental Hygiene Branch. Between 1944 and 1978 the Mental Hygiene Branch/Mental Health Authority greatly increased its services to patients and the public with the establishment of several clinics and children's' facilities. It adopted a policy of regionalisation of facilities for people with mental illness and intellectual disabilities, providing local accommodation in a less institutionalised environment.

## Gallery

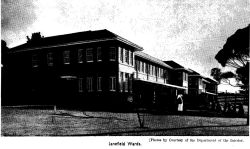
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**Pleasant Creek Special School**

**Description:** This image appeared in the Department of Mental Hygiene's annual report for 1953.

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### Janefield Wards

**Description:** This image appeared in the Department of Mental Hygiene's annual report for 1953.

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### Travancore - school and clinic

**Description:** This image appeared in the Department of Mental Hygiene's annual report for 1953.

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### Travancore - clinical examination

**Description:** This image appeared in the Department of Mental Hygiene's annual report for 1953.

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## More info

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### 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: 1944 -
- [Janefield Colony \(1937 - 1996\)](#)
- [Pleasant Creek Colony \(1937 - 1999\)](#)
- [Sandhurst Boys' Home \(1956 - 2016\)](#)
- [Moorakynne Hostel \(1942? - c. 1988\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Royal Park Depot \(c. 1880 - 1955\)](#)  
The Mental Hygiene Branch ran institutions for children with intellectual disabilities. Many of these children spent long periods at Royal Park Depot, awaiting a suitable placement.  
Date: 1944 - 1959
- [Children's Court Clinic \(1942 - current\)](#)

#### Related Legislation

- [Mental Health Act 1959, Victoria \(1962 - 1987\)](#)
- [Ministry of Health Act 1943, Victoria \(1944 - 1956\)](#)
- [Mental Deficiency Act 1939, Victoria \(1939 - 1959\)](#)

## Resources

- Robson, Belinda, [\*From mental hygiene to community mental health: psychiatrists and Victorian public administration from the 1940s to 1990s\*](#), Provenance, 2008
- O'Neill, Cate, [\*"She had always been a difficult case": Jill's short, tragic life in Victoria's institutions, 1952-1955\*](#), Provenance, 2015
- Department of Mental Hygiene, [\*Report of the Director of Mental Hygiene for the Year Ended 31st December 1948\*](#), 1948

## Records

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### Records

- [General Correspondence Files \(c. 1920 - c. 1981\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/mental-hygiene-branch/>