

Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

1896 – 1971

Details

The Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded in 1896. The Society was a local branch of an international organisation. The Children's Protection Society operated Homes at various times, intended to provide emergency shelter for children while their cases were being investigated. In 1971, the organisation became known as the Children's Protection Society.

The formation of the Victorian Society was an initiative of the Governor's wife, Lady Sybil de Vere Brassey. Its aims were to protect children from cruelty and neglect, to advance the claims of 'neglected', abandoned and orphan children to the general public, to co-operate with existing societies for this purpose and to enforce the existing laws for the protection of 'neglected' children and juvenile offenders.

Internationally, the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was established in 1875, in New York. Its founders were associated with another organisation already in existence, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). One founder, Henry Bergh, remarked, 'The child is an animal. If there is no justice for it as a human being it shall at least have the rights of a stray cur in the street. It shall not be abused.'

British branches of the SPCC were founded in 1883 (Liverpool) and 1884 (London). In 1899, the London branch assumed the status of a National Society, and control of the 31 branches in Britain.

The Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was one of the few secular non government agencies in the child welfare field and it operated on the philosophy of persuading or, in the last resort, compelling parents to fulfil their responsibilities.

The Society employed paid officers to perform its investigatory and prosecution work. Originally, the Society had only one inspector to respond to reports of child abuse.

In 1923, the Society moved into the offices of the Charity Organisation Society.

Renewed concerns about child abuse in the 1960s saw the Victorian Government fund the society to investigate reports across the city (a responsibility it relinquished to the State in 1986).

More info

Chronology

- **Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (1896 – 1971)**
 - Children's Protection Society (1971 - 2018)
 - Kids First Australia (2018 - current)

Related Entries

Ran

- [Robin House \(1962 - 1976\)](#)
Date: 1962 - 1971
- [Swan House \(1968 - 1988\)](#)
Date: 1968 - 1971

Related Organisations

- [Charity Organisation Society of Melbourne \(1887 - 1947\)](#)
In 1923, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children moved into the offices of the Charity Organisation Society.

Resources

- Swain, Shurlee, [Children's Protection Society](#), eMelbourne: the city past and present, 2008
- James Jenkinson Consulting, [Guide to out-of-home care services 1940-2000 - Volume One: Agency Descriptions](#), November 2001
- [Christmas Appeals: special need for help](#), The Argus, 14 December 1916
- Scott, Dorothy and Swain, Shurlee, *Confronting cruelty: historical perspectives on child protection in Australia*, 2002
- Duff, G.B., *Social work of the Church: child rescue agencies of Melbourne*, The Spectator, 23 June 1899
- [Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance*: See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
- Jaggs, Catherine, *The Melbourne Child-Saving Movement, 1888-1910*, 1985

Records

Records

- [Records of Victorian Adoptions \(c. 1908 - current\)](#)
- [Records, 1896-1985, \[manuscript\], Children's Protection Society \(Vic.\) \(1896 - 1985\)](#)
- [Children's Protection Society Records \(1970 - 1995\)](#)
- [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)

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