

Ballarat Probationary School for Boys, Alfredton

1890 – c.1893

Details

The Ballarat Probationary School for Boys opened in August 1890 at Alfredton (Ballarat) to house boys who had not succeeded in boarding out placements. It was located in its own buildings within the grounds of the Ballarat Boys' Reformatory.

In the 1886 annual report from the Ballarat Reformatory, it was stated that a scheme had been submitted for a probationary school for no more than 18 boys, to be located on a portion of the Reformatory Reserve of 200 acres at Alfredton. This institution would be for the “short detention for the reception of recovered absconders, foster-lads returned for insubordinate conduct, and a certain proportion of those newly committed, who, while not proper subjects for a Reformatory, are too undisciplined to be at once placed either in a foster or service home with any reasonable prospect of their being retained”.

The Department had expressed the need for a probationary school, which would provide an institution where they could place offenders under the age of 12 “who are not really vicious or depraved”. A probationary school would be a place where the children could have “a course of treatment” to prepare them for a placement in foster care (annual report, 1888, p.10). In the absence of such an institution, young offenders were sent from the courts to the Royal Park Depot, causing “the greatest anxiety and difficulty, owing to the absence of effective means of separating the more depraved children from the others (p.15).

The Secretary of the Department of Reformatory Schools defined the probationary school as ‘intermediate between the reformatory and the foster-home’.

Following the passage of the [Juvenile Offenders Act](#) 1887, convicted children aged under 12 were required to be committed as neglected children, rather than sent to a reformatory. Offenders aged above 12 who were not “really vicious or depraved” were to be treated similarly. When the placement of these children in foster homes failed, they were sent to the Ballarat Reformatory. The Reformatory argued that this situation would not have occurred if a probationary school had existed in Victoria.

When the Probationary School opened in 1890, the Ballarat Reformatory reported that it was for “the reception of boys belonging to the Neglected Children's Department, who fail to appreciate the comforts and the advantages of their foster homes” (1890 annual report).

The 1891 annual report stated that the Probationary School had opened in August last year, and, “in order to work it with economy as well as efficiency, it was affiliated to the Reformatory in so far as placing it under the management of the Superintendent and a portion of his staff, an arrangement which appears to answer very well. An institution of this kind was long wanted, where unruly boys either newly committed or from foster-homes could be dealt with for a time, to enable the Department to judge how they should be subsequently disposed of. At present the accommodation is fully taken up, and has been so almost since the opening”.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department for Reformatory Schools, Colony of Victoria \(1887 - 1900\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Ballarat Boys' Reformatory \(1879 - 1893\)](#)

The Boys' Probationary School was situated within the grounds of the Ballarat Boys' Reformatory.

Records

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

Records

- [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/ballarat-probationary-school-for-boys-alfredton/>