

# Victorian Children's Aid Society Home

1901 – c. 1966

- Other Names:**
- Somers House
  - Sutherland Home
  - Parkville House
  - Ayr Cottage
  - Swinburne Lodge
  - Swinburne House

## Details

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The Victorian Children's Aid Society Home was opened on 13 November 1901 by the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society. Situated in Leonard Street, Parkville, this Home had a number of different names over time. It was a non denominational children's Home, providing accommodation for boys and girls. From around 1920, it was referred to as the Victorian Children's Aid Society Home, or simply the Victorian Children's Aid Society. In 1957, it was renamed Swinburne Lodge. After the property was sold in late 1966, the Home moved from Parkville to Black Rock and became known as Swinburne House.

The Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society, under the leadership of Selina Sutherland, established the Home in Leonard Street, Parkville in November 1901. In its earliest days, it was known as Ayr Cottage and Miss Sutherland's Home for Children.

On 6 July 1904, *The Herald* reported that 'Considerable additions are to be made to Ayr Cottage, where Miss Sutherland carries on one of the best charitable works in the city. A nursery is to be added ... A dairy has just been completed, and Miss Sutherland now has the use of three cows for the benefit of her young charges' (6 July 1904, p.2).

In May 1908, Sutherland parted ways with the committee of the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society after a very public disagreement. The Home in Parkville presumably was no longer known as the Sutherland Home from around the time of her departure.

The Age newspaper reported that Sutherland and the committee were at "loggerheads". In May 1908, Sutherland refused to leave the premises at Parkville, leading to scuffles about who could enter and exit the Home. The committee appointed a new matron, Mrs Margaret J. Morgan, to run Parkville. Eventually, Sutherland agreed to retire from the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society, and took up residence at what had been the Society's Receiving Home at 68 La Trobe Street. From this address, Sutherland and a number of former staff from the Society ran a new organisation taking in neglected children (The Age, 6 May 1908; The Age, 11 May 1908).

The committee continued its work based at the Victorian Children's Aid Society Home in Parkville. In November 1908, Lady Northcote opened a new wing of the home. In that year's annual report, the Society referred to "very considerable changes in the management of the Home" caused by the departure of Sutherland and her supporters. The report stated that Sutherland's retirement had "thrown a large additional responsibility on the committee" (Annual Report, 1908).

An article in *The Age* from 13 July 1923 reported that the Parkville Home had room for 55 children “but that number is always altering as the children are placed in homes in the country”.

In 1920, the Society was given a property in Gould Street, Frankston which was near Long Beach. This became a holiday camp for children from the Parkville home every summer. The Society made additions to the property to add what were described as ‘chalets’, dormitory pavilions where the children could sleep out. Children were still spending summers in Frankston in 1950.

In 2013, Warren Smith who was at the Home in Parkville in the 1940s wrote to Find & Connect to share his memories:

*Every Sunday morning the kids were all scrubbed and dressed for Sunday school and church, all given a penny for the church plate (slightly less than 1 cent) then we all marched off to the church, dully did the Sunday school bit then into the church for the service where eventually the penny was lodged into the plate.*

*One day on setting out from the home one of the kids (I can't remember if it was a boy or girl) asked me for my penny; I refused, saying it was for the plate. [The kid said] Not to worry give me the penny and you will get money for the plate and you will get a lolly as well. As lollies were few and far apart this proposition sounded good to me and I handed over my penny.*

*The kid disappeared for a short while, came back and handed me a rainbow ball all day sucker and a halfpenny piece. It seemed this kid ducked into a shop on the way and did the deed. The rainbow ball for me, the halfpenny for the church. I don't know how many kids were in on this caper but it seemed good to me. Here I was 8 years old and being totally corrupted by kids more worldly than me.*

*I often wondered what the plate counter thought of all the halfpennies. I have often wondered where this enterprising individual ended up.*

During World War Two children from the Home at Parkville were evacuated to Langi Kal Kal, a farm at Trawalla which later became a youth training centre. Warren wrote:

*One day some cars came into the home and we were divided into groups of 5 or 6 and then told to get into cars. In we got, me sitting next to a lady driver and away we went. This was the first time I had been in a car and I thought it was great.*

*Eventually we turned off the main road into a white gravelled country road with big pine trees growing on either side. We went along this road for a fair way and when we reached the end of this road we came to a huge open area of open country, a vegetable garden and orchard on the left with a running creek below it.*

*Further down the road was a timber bridge going across the creek where the farm workers lived, there was a bake house, cook house, horse stables, blacksmith shop, pig stys and living quarters for the men. The manager's place was across the creek from the garden.*

*On the right hand side up a slight rise was a big tin building (later discovered as being shearing sheds) and about 200 yards was the shearers quarters, this was where we were going to live, after living at Parkville's confined space this looked marvellous . The farm had supplied a milking cow for the home's use and one of the big girls was to become the milk maid.*

*This girl on occasions took me with her while she milked, sometime telling me to open my mouth then she would squirt milk straight from the cow towards my mouth. Although I ended up with milk all over me I did*

*manage to get a good drink. It was wonderful and I have never forgotten how pleasurable little things in life can be.*

By the late-1940s, inspectors from the Department were unhappy with the buildings at Parkville, the lack of play space and overcrowding. In the mid-1950s capacity had been reduced to about 43, including wards of state.

In November 1955, the Victorian Children's Aid Society was declared an approved children's home under the Children's Welfare Act 1954. At that time, it housed boys and girls aged from 4 to 14 years, one of the few institutions in the state that would accommodate children requiring regular medical attention.

In 1957, the Home was renamed Swinburne Lodge (after a former President of the Victorian Children's Aid Society).

In late 1966, the Society sold the Parkville property to the University of Melbourne, and purchased a property known as 'Somers House' in Beach Road, Black Rock. By 1968, this Home at Black Rock was known as Swinburne House.

## Gallery

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**Parkville, Victorian Children's Aid Society, Leonard St**



**23/11/1901 Miss Sutherland's Orphanage**

**Description:** Caption: opening of Miss Sutherland's new home for neglected children at Royal Park.



**Swinburne House, Victorian Children's Aid Society, Leonard Street, Parkville, Victoria.**

**Description:** This is a copy of a photograph from 1965 held by the University of Melbourne Archives, showing the Victorian Children's Aid Society Home in Parkville.



**The new home**

**Description:** This is a copy of a photograph of the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society Home in Leonard Street, Parkville from the inside cover of an annual report.

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## More info

### Chronology

- **Victorian Children's Aid Society Home (1901 – c. 1966)**

- Swinburne House (c. 1968 - 1985)

## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society \(1894 - 1920\)](#)
- [Victorian Children's Aid Society \(1920 - 1991\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [Langi Kal Kal \(1965 - 1993\)](#)  
During World War Two, children from the Parkville Home were evacuated to Langi Kal Kal.  
Date: 1942 -

## Resources

- Francis, Rosemary, [Victorian Children's Aid Society \(1893 - 1991\)](#), Australian Women's Register, 2003
- Cook, David, [Submission no 157 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- McKew, Mim, [Submission no 6 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Cook, Barry, [Submission no 156 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Hilton, Della, [Selina's legacy: from VCAS to Oz Child](#), 1993
- [Betty Jensen interviewed by Carolyn Rasmussen in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\]](#), 24 February 2011
- [Holding the fort](#), The Mercury, 9 May 1908
- [A disagreement develops](#), The Age, 11 May 1908
- [Miss Sutherland](#), The Age, 15 May 1908

## Records

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

### Records

- [OzChild Records \(c. 1956 - current\)](#)
  - [Bates, Smart and McCutcheon Pty Ltd \(1858 - 1995\)](#)
  - [Victorian Children's Aid Society Records \(1893 - 1993\)](#)
  - [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
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