

# Aborigines Welfare Board

1940 – 1969

## Details

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The Aborigines Welfare Board was created in 1940, under the Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act 1940. It replaced the Aborigines Protection Board and was supposed to modernise Aboriginal welfare but it continued many of the Protection Board's policies towards children. It was abolished in 1969 and replaced by the Aborigines Welfare Directorate. Responsibility for Aboriginal children was then transferred to the Department of Youth and Community Services.

When the Aborigines Welfare Board was created the Under Secretary of the Colonial Secretary's Department was appointed chairman and provision was made for ten other members, of whom one was to be a full-blooded Aborigine and one either a full-blooded Aborigine or a person having an admixture of blood, as representatives for their people.

The policy of the Aborigines Welfare Board was to encourage the assimilation of Aborigines into the general community. The Board sponsored the erection of houses for leasing and provided housing loans to the Aborigines. It exercised general supervision over matters affecting the welfare of Aborigines, managed the Aboriginal stations and reserves, provided for the custody and maintenance of Aboriginal children whose parents were unable to care for them and provided scholarships, travelling expenses, uniforms, textbooks, etc. for children of necessitous Aboriginal families.

The Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act 1943 gave the Aborigines Welfare Board the power to issue Exemption Certificates. The Aborigines Welfare Board argued the certificates were a key to 'assimilation', and would enable Aboriginal people to enjoy the rights and privileges of white society so they could eventually blend in. This included the right to leave the state, receive some government benefits (including the old age pension, which was denied to people who lived on reserves or stations), live with less interference from the Board and to drink alcohol. Some Aboriginal people sought exemption certificates as a way of shielding their children from removal by the Aborigines Welfare Board.

However, people who had an exemption certificate were not allowed to enter or stay on Aboriginal reserves and stations, even if they were visiting relatives. This interfered with Aboriginal family life, as it discouraged people from seeing each other. People could also lose their certificates for misdemeanours, intoxication or even arguing with a Board representative. The need to show them to police officers was a source of humiliation, earning them the nickname 'dog tags'.

Exemption certificates were not needed after the 1967 Referendum established that Aboriginal people had full civil rights and they were abolished by the *Aborigines Act 1969*.

The Aborigines Welfare Board held its final meeting on 29 April 1969 and was replaced by the Aborigines Welfare Directorate. Responsibility for Aboriginal children and welfare services to Aboriginal people was transferred to the Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare (later the Aborigines Services Branch, Youth and Community Services).

## Gallery



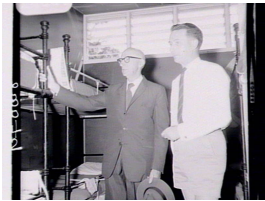
### Murrin Bridge Aboriginal Station

**Description:** The Aborigines Welfare Board managed 19 stations in NSW. This is the signpost for Murrin Bridge Aboriginal Station, and depicts some of the younger residents.



### Back to Cootamundra

**Description:** [This description was taken from the caption published on the SBS Living Black channel on YouTube. This episode aired on 9 June 2012] Its been a long journey of healing for former residents of the Cootamundra Girls Home in southern New South Wales. But nearly a hundred years after it opened members of the stolen generation still find the memories as fresh as they are painful.



### Aborigines Welfare Board. Summer Camp Narrabeen



### Aboriginal childrens camp at La Perouse



### Kinchela Home for Boys 1955, where many Koori boys were ill treated

**Description:** This is a scan of an image that has been reproduced on *A history of Aboriginal Sydney*.

Kinchela Home for Aboriginal Boys, 1955



### One of the original front gates from the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home.

**Description:** This is an image from the National Museum of Australia's Collections pages.

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## More info

### Chronology

- Aborigines Protection Board, State Government of New South Wales (1883 - 1940)
  - **Aborigines Welfare Board (1940 – 1969)**
    - Aborigines Welfare Directorate (1969 - 1975)

### Related Entries

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- [Cootamundra Training Home \(1911 - 1969\)](#)
- [Kinchela Training Home for Aboriginal Boys \(1923 - 1970\)](#)

Date: 1940 - 1969

## Related Legislation

- [Aborigines Protection Act 1909, New South Wales \(1909 - 1969\)](#)
- [Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915, New South Wales \(1915 - 1969\)](#)
- [Child Welfare Act 1939, New South Wales \(1939 - 1987\)](#)  
The provisions of the *Child Welfare Act* began to apply to Aboriginal children, in stages from 1940 until 1969.
- [Child Welfare \(Amendment\) Act 1967, New South Wales \(1967 - 1987\)](#)
- [Aborigines Protection \(Amendment\) Act 1940, New South Wales \(1940 - 1969\)](#)
- [Aborigines Protection \(Amendment\) Act 1943, New South Wales \(1943 - 1969\)](#)
- [Aborigines Protection \(Amendment\) Act 1963, New South Wales \(1963 - 1969\)](#)
- [Aborigines Act 1969, New South Wales \(1969 - 1983\)](#)  
The *Aborigines Welfare Act 1969* abolished the Aborigines Welfare Board.
- [Aborigines Protection \(Amendment\) Act 1936, New South Wales \(1936 - 1969\)](#)
- [Child Welfare \(Further Amendment\) Act 1961, New South Wales \(1961 - 1965\)](#)

## Related Organisations

- [Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation \(2001 - current\)](#)
- [Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home \(1908 - 1988\)](#)  
The Aborigines Welfare Board sent children to Bomaderry and received children who had grown up in Bomaderry.
- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs, State Government of New South Wales \(1997 - current\)](#)  
The Department of Aboriginal Affairs is the custodian of the records of the Aborigines Welfare Board
- [Royal Far West \(1924 - current\)](#)  
Aboriginal children were sent for holidays and hospital care to Royal Far West by the Aborigines Welfare Board.

## Resources

- Museums of History NSW, [Aboriginal Resources: A Guide to NSW State archives](#), No date
- Read, Peter, [The Stolen Generations: The removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969](#), 2007
- Museums of History NSW, [Aboriginal Resources: An Overview of Records](#), No date
- NSW Migration Heritage Centre, [A Changing Landscape and a People Return](#), At The Beach: Contact, Migration and Settlement in South East Sydney, La Perouse, New South Wales, 2011
- University of Sydney, [A history of Aboriginal Sydney](#), 2020
- [Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation Website](#), 2014
- National Museum of Australia, [Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Home Gate](#), 2022
- [Living on Aboriginal reserves and stations](#), NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, No date
- [Patrick Sephton interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 2001

## Records

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### Records

- [Correspondence files, Aborigines Welfare Board \(1938 - 1969\)](#)
- [Ward Registers, Board for the Protection of Aborigines \(18 January 1916 - 7 December 1928\)](#)
- [Property Register - Aboriginal reserves \(14 February 1947 - 31 March 1970\)](#)
- [Property Cards - Reserves \(1961 - 1976\)](#)
- [Minute Books, Aborigines Welfare Board \(25 September 1890 - 29 April 1969\)](#)
- [Aboriginal Boys' Training Home, Kinchela, Case Papers \(1938 - 1967\)](#)
- [Aborigines Welfare Board Photographs \(c. 1916 - c. 1961\)](#)

- [Applications for Certificates of Exemption, Board for the Protection of Aborigines \(1930 - 1964\)](#)
  - [Certificates of Exemption, Aborigines Welfare Board \(1949 - 1954\)](#)
  - [Special Bundles \(1920 - 1958\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/aborigines-welfare-board-2/>