

Biloela Industrial School, Cockatoo Island

1871 – 1887

Other Names:

- Biloela Reformatory
- Biloela Public Industrial School for Girls

Details

Biloela Industrial School was an industrial school for girls that was established on Cockatoo Island by the Comptroller of Prisons in 1871 to replace the Newcastle Industrial School for Girls. It usually held up to 120 girls at any given time aged from about 18 months to 14 years. Biloela Industrial School was located on the same site as Biloela Reformatory School for Females and experienced several problems, including riots. In 1887 Biloela Industrial School was moved and became the Parramatta Girls Industrial School.

The buildings on Cockatoo Island were bleak barracks, built in 1841 for convict re-offenders. The site was renamed Biloela to escape those convict associations but the girls had to sleep in the cells. The Industrial School was established on the same site as Biloela Reformatory School and despite them officially being separate institutions all the girls mixed together.

The institution was managed by a Superintendent and Matron and usually held up to 120 or so girls at any given time ranging in age from 18 months to 14 years – and in some cases up to the age of 19. Most of the girls were there for reasons to do with welfare.

The poor conditions and punitive treatment at Biloela were well known but little was done. Girls protested by rioting, and these became a feature of life at the institution. The closure of the government-owned orphan schools provided the government with an opportunity to relocate the Girls' Industrial School to the former premises occupied by the Roman Catholic Orphan School at Parramatta, so the institution was moved in 1887.

More info

Chronology

- Newcastle Industrial School for Females (6 August 1867 - 20 July 1871)
 - **Biloela Industrial School, Cockatoo Island (1871 – 1887)**
 - Parramatta Girls Industrial School (1887 - 1912)
 - Parramatta Girls Training Home (1912 - 1946)
 - Parramatta Girls Training School (1946 - 1974)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department of Public Instruction \(1880 - 1915\)](#)
The Department of Public Instruction ran Biloela Industrial School.
Date: 1881 - 1887

Related Organisations

- [Nautical School Ship *Vernon* \(1867 - 1892\)](#)
The Nautical School Ship *Vernon*, was moored next to Biloela Industrial School at Cockatoo Island.
Date: 1871 - 1887
- [Inspector of Public Charities \(1866 - 1888\)](#)
The Inspector of Public Charities undertook Inspections of Biloela.
- [Biloela Reformatory School for Females \(1871 - 5 February 1880\)](#)
Biloela Industrial School and Biloela Reformatory School for Females were located on the same site on Cockatoo Island.

Resources

- Williamson, Noeline, *Life in the industrial and reformatory school for girls in New South Wales [Series of two parts]: Part 1: 1867 to 1887. 'Hymns, songs and blackguard verses'. Part 2: 1887 to 1910. Laundry maids or ladies?*, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 1982 - 1983
- Ramsland, John, *Children of the back lanes: destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales*, 1986
- Scrivener, Gladys, ["Rescuing the rising generation" : industrial schools in New South Wales, 1850-1910](#), 1996
- State Records Authority of New South Wales, [Shaftesbury Reformatory](#), No date
- Museums of History NSW, [Child Care and Protection Guide](#), No date
- Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, [Industrial Schools and Reformatory \(1871 to 1911\)](#), Cockatoo Island, No date
- Museums of History NSW, [Child Care and Protection Index 1817-1942](#), No date
- Ison, Jane, [The Newcastle Industrial School for Girls: Their infamy is lost to history](#), 2012
- Department of Justice, [History](#), Children's Court of New South Wales, 2012
- [The Sydney Home of Hope](#), The Daily Telegraph, 27 May 1887

Records

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

Records

- [Records of Girls' Industrial and Training Schools, State Archives NSW \(1867 - 1983\)](#)
- [Copies of letters sent concerning the administration of public schools \(1880 - 1896\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/biloela-industrial-school-cockatoo-island/>