

New South Wales Homeless Children's Association

1980 – 1984?

Details

The New South Wales Homeless Children's Association was formed in 1980. It was an advocacy body for homeless youth and ran a shelter for homeless children and youth in Darlinghurst from 1981 until 1983, and a number of other projects in inner city Sydney. The Association established the Forest Farm Community at Mangrove Mountain near Gosford in 1983. In mid 1983, the organisation was in crisis, with a number of people resigning from the board.

By July 1983, the Association's inner city projects were being run by other organisations. The grand plans for the Forest Farm Community did not eventuate due to a range of problems. The end date for this organisation is unknown, with records of its operation only being located up to the year 1984.

The New South Wales Homeless Children's Association was founded in December 1980. Twelve people met at Sydney's Hilton Hotel, members of the business, political, medical and academic communities, to tackle the issue of homeless youth, which was growing in prominence at that time. The men included Rod Blackmore, a senior Children's Court Magistrate. Former journalist Simon Davies was instrumental in organising this meeting, and he became the Chief Executive Officer of the newly formed New South Wales Homeless Children's Association.

[In November 2022, Simon Davies was convicted of sexually abusing two young people living in the Association's refuge in Darlinghurst.)

The Association's headquarters were at 429 Liverpool Street, Darlinghurst. It also operated a refuge for homeless young people from this address.

In 1981, the Association received a grant of land from the NSW government in an area near Gosford. This land, at Mangrove Mountain, became the focus of a large and very ambitious project to establish a rural community for homeless young people, known as the Forest Farm project. The intention was to establish a village in the style of Israeli kibbutzim. The project attracted support from big business and prominent Australian politicians including future Prime Minister RJ Hawke who joined the board of the Homeless Children's Association in late 1982.

The University of Sydney was closely involved in the Forest Farm project, with staff and students providing over 15,000 hours of work. They undertook a full land analysis, environmental impact study and a schematic plan for the village. The grand plans were officially launched in March 1983. However the project suffered many setbacks, including upheavals of the Association board in mid 1983. There was also significant opposition to the Forest Farm project from the local community. In 1984, a revised and much smaller project was underway at Forest Farm, for a 5 bedroom dwelling on the property that would accommodate 8 young people and 2 adults.

A document from 1983 provides details of a number of projects being run by the Association in Sydney's inner suburbs. In addition to the Refuge at 429 Liverpool Street, there was a facility at 255 Bourke Street, Darlinghurst, and a program in The Rocks, run in conjunction with the NSW Housing Commission. This initiative, known as The Interlink Housing Project was based in two houses at 182 and 184 Cumberland Street, The Rocks. These properties were leased to the Association by the Housing Commission. The plan was for young people who had formerly lived in the Refuge to live in the Cumberland Street houses, and work with tradesmen to renovate and

restore the properties. The project was the result of the Association's discussions with the Master Builders Association and NSW building unions. At one point, the Association employed a married couple to live there and help to supervise the activities of the young people

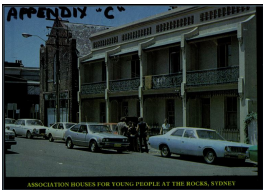
In June 1983, there were significant problems within the Homeless Children's Association. A number of board members resigned, including the President, Ken Richards of Esso. Prime Minister Hawke also resigned from the Association at this time. Documents in the National Archives of Australia refer to "ideological issues" causing conflict amongst the board members, as well as administrative and financial problems. The file also mentions Ken Richards having knowledge of a police dossier relating to Simon Davies (NAA: M3596, 484, page 236).

By July 1983, the Association's projects in the inner city had all been taken over by other organisations. The Association published issues of its Choices magazine in 1984, reporting on progress with the Forest Farm community and appealing for public support.

Find & Connect web resource have been unable to find the end date for the Homeless Children's Association. The most recent documents located about the organisation are from 1984.

At least 5 former staff members of the Homeless Children's Association were later charged with and convicted of sexually abusing young people. In November 2022, former CEO Simon Davies was convicted of offences against 2 young people.

Gallery



Association Houses for Young People at The Rocks, Sydney

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared on the front cover of "Choices", the magazine of the New South Wales Homeless Children's Association, in March 1983. It shows houses in Cumberland Street, The Rocks, that were the location of a residential facility for homeless young people run by the Association.

More info

Related Entries

Ran

- [Forest Farm Community \(c. 1981 - c. 1984\)](#)

Run by

- [Homeless Children's Association Refuge \(1981 - 1983\)](#)

Records

Records

- [\[Personal records of Prime Minister Hawke\] Alternative employment, homeless children, kibbutz development \(1983 - 1984\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/new-south-wales-homeless-childrens-association/>