

Singleton Aboriginal Children's Home

1910 – 1920

Other Names: • Singleton Home

Details

The Singleton Aboriginal Children's Home was run by the Aborigines Inland Mission in the same rented house as the Singleton Home, which had been a girls' home. Singleton Aboriginal Children's Home was for both sexes and the children were aged from birth to 14 years. It was used by the Aborigines Protection Board as an institution for children who had been removed from Aboriginal stations and reserves under the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909*. The property was bought by the Aborigines Protection Board around 1918, although the missionaries stayed on. In 1920 they left and the Home became the Aborigines Protection Board's Singleton Boys Home.

When the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* was passed the Aborigines Protection Board gained powers over all Aboriginal children in New South Wales. By 1912 the Board had appointed a Homefinder to tour Aboriginal reserves, stations and other places Aboriginal people lived to find children and adolescents to place in its homes. The Board wanted to place Aboriginal children in the Singleton Aboriginal Children's Home, and took an interest in children who were already in the Home.

Historian Christine Brett-Vickers wrote to Find & Connect in 2012 about the Singleton Home. According to her, Retta Long, the Home's founder and first superintendent, found it expedient to turn the Singleton Home into a home for boys and girls. Around the same time, she left for Sydney with her husband.

George and Jennie Smith arrived in May 1910 and took over the management of the children's home. The Longs moved to Sydney where they both ran the [Aborigines Inland Mission] as a whole and continued to have babies. So the Smiths were left to manage the Home in conjunction with the board.

The Smiths also took in mothers for a time during the early days and then sent them out to service while the home kept the baby. There was a little boy whose mother came up from Cummeragunja who was adopted by the Smiths in those circumstances around 1912-1913 but who died by 1914. The pressure of the board through the Homefinder continued, as the home was a children's home through to 1918 or so – ie for boys and girls.

I also think that Aboriginal people from St Clair utilised the home to send their children to the local public school. Because the home was within the town precincts it meant that Aboriginal children living there could go to the local school and not be relegated to an Aboriginal school. So there was a mixture of kids who were wards and who were living there as part of an arrangement with the mission.

The Board gained stronger powers to remove children from Aboriginal stations and reserves in 1915. According to Dr Brett-Vickers:

Numbers increased doubly after 1915 with the passing of [amendments to the] Aborigines Protection Act, and the [employment] of [Robert] Donaldson as Inspector. By 1918 there were 50 children living in a home designed for less than 20. The Board did not increase funding and, indeed bought the home from its owner, Sir Albert Gould, and then ousted the mission. There must have been plans then and talk of making the home a boys home ... the missionaries tried to resist this but in the end broke down.

After the Board took over, many of the children were sent to other Aboriginal institutions. Dr Brett-Vickers says:

There was a great transition of children from Singleton in June 1920 as the board sent the younger boys to Bomaderry and the girls to Cootamundra & Bomaderry had to send its older boys, between 10 and 14 in age to Singleton & and the girls to Cootamundra.

Retta Long really failed Aboriginal people in the end.

From 1920 it was referred to as the Singleton Boys Home by the Board. It only took in boys from the ages of 10 to 14. But the home was run down, condemned and demolished in 1923 and the lot [were] moved to Kinchela.

Gallery



Sunday school scholars, teachers, missionaries. Cherbourg AIM Church [Singleton Home]

Description: This image from the Australian Indigenous Ministries pictorial collection 1908 to circa 1960s is described by *History of Aboriginal Sydney* as being of the Singleton Aboriginal Girls' Home.

More info

Chronology

- Singleton Home (1905 - 1910)
 - **Singleton Aboriginal Children's Home (1910 – 1920)**
 - Singleton Boys' Home (1920 - 1923)
 - Kinchela Training Home for Aboriginal Boys (1923 - 1970)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Aborigines Inland Mission \(1905 - 1998\)](#)

Related Legislation

- [Aborigines Protection Act 1909, New South Wales \(1909 - 1969\)](#)
- [Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915, New South Wales \(1915 - 1969\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Aborigines Protection Board, State Government of New South Wales \(1883 - 1940\)](#)
The Aborigines Protection Board placed children it had removed from Aboriginal stations and reserves in the Singleton Children's Home
- [St Clair Aboriginal Mission \(1893 - 1923\)](#)
The Aborigines Inland Mission ran both Singleton Aboriginal Children's Home and St Clair Home and adult residents of St Clair often stayed at Singleton Aboriginal Children's Home

Resources

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, [Remembering the Mission Days: stories from the Aborigines' Inland Mission](#), No date
- Horton, David, *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture*, 1994
- Miller, James, *Koori, a will to win*, 1985
- [Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation Website](#), 2014

Records

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

Records

- [Bartrop family slides relating to the Aborigines Inland Mission, 1909-1930s, 1945-1950, 1971 \(1909 - 1971\)](#)
- [Australian Indigenous Ministries Aggregated Collection of Records and Pictorial Material, 1903-2003 \(1903 - 2003\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/singleton-aboriginal-childrens-home/>