Rehoboth

1924 – 1925?

Details

Rehoboth was a Home for Aboriginal girls run by the Aborigines' Inland Mission. It was officially opened in March 1924. Elizabeth McKenzie Hatton, a white missionary (later secretary of the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association), was instrumental in the establishment of Rehoboth.

According to the Encyclopedia of Women & Leadership, McKenzie Hatton's intention for Rehoboth was:

> to provide a refuge for 'girls – not children – who have proved unsuitable for domestic service and have otherwise given trouble and failed' (Hatton McKenzie, quoted in Maynard, '"Light in the Darkness"'.). These were girls who the NSW Aboriginal Protection Board (APB) had found 'incorrigible'.

McKenzie Hatton had a vision of doing missionary work with indentured young Aboriginal women in Sydney, who were 'in need of a motherly guardian'. In an interview in 1921, she
was critical of the Aborigines Protection Board and its failure to protect these young women:

> It frequently happens that the girls, tired of having been made drudges, have run away from the foster homes, and are now adrift in the cities. It is my hope that these handicapped girls, when given a chance, will be directed into a useful path of congenial service and helped toward an all round development that will assure them independence and happiness. It seems strange that large sums of money can be raised for foreign missions, but nobody seems inclined to give to the people of our own country (The Herald, 21 June 1921).

In late 1923, McKenzie Hatton leased a house in Burlington Road, Homebush and partially furnished it. However, without the permission of the Aborigines Protection Board, the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM) was unable to use the house. McKenzie Hatton found another property on the same street and its first resident was admitted in 1924.

In May 1924, a women's committee, an auxiliary of the AIM, was established to act as an advisory council for Rehoboth. The Home apparently received 'glowing praise' from local women's groups.

Around this time, McKenzie Hatton was becoming increasingly involved with the emerging Aboriginal political movement (she served as secretary of Fred Maynard's Australian Aborigines Progressive Association). This led to conflict between McKenzie Hatton and the Aborigines Protection Board, as well as with the AIM. The Mission ended up severing its ties with Rehoboth after McKenzie Hatton declared it to be the centre of the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association.

The Aborigines Protection Board launched an investigation into McKenzie Hatton and, according to Maynard, 'implemented directives to make life as difficult as possible for her and the Aboriginal political activists with whom she had aligned herself'. John Maynard writes that the Board called for police surveillance and a report on the activities of Rehoboth, 'a clear attempt at intimidation'.

According to John Maynard, the AIM launched a crusade to strip Rehoboth of its furniture. McKenzie Hatton ended up selling the Rehoboth furniture, telling the AIM the money went towards paying her debts.

It would seem that Rehoboth home closed some time in 1925, in an atmosphere of hostility between McKenzie Hatton, the AIM and the Aborigines Protection Board.

Gallery

Rehoboth Aboriginal Girls' Home, Homebush, 1924, was established by Elizabeth McKenzie Hatton. This was also the first home for the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association.

Rehoboth Aboriginal Girls' Home

Description: This is a copy of a phtoograph of Rehoboth which was published in *Fight for Liberty and Freedom* on p.46. Its caption reads: Rehoboth Aboriginal Girls' Home, Homebush, 1924, was established by Elizabeth McKenzie Hatton. This was also the first home for the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association.

More info

Related Entries

Run by
- Aborigines Inland Mission (1905 - 1998)

Related Organisations
- Australian Aborigines Progressive Association (1924 - 1927)
- Aborigines Protection Board, State Government of New South Wales (1883 - 1940)

Resources

- Standish, Ann, *McKenzie Hatton, Elizabeth*, The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, 2014

You can view this page online by visiting https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/rehoboth/