

Mt Maria Re-Education Centre, Mitchelton

1966 – 1973

Details

Mt Maria Re-Education Centre, in Mitchelton, was run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Previously known as the Good Shepherd Home for Girls, it was established in 1966. In 1973 the home was renamed Mt Maria Youth Centre.

Previously known as the Industrial School for Girls, Mitchelton, the home was initially set up in 1930 by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. The Home of the Good Shepherd was a secure rehabilitation centre for adolescent girls, many of whom were viewed as in need of care and protection or in need of care and control by the State Government.

The Home also provided refuge for women with social and intellectual disability. To finance the institution the Sisters ran a commercial laundry which also aimed to provide skills training for those in care.

It was renamed Mt Maria Re-Education Centre in 1966 and licensed under the *Children's Services Act 1965* on 4 August 1966. It was renamed Mt Maria Youth Centre 1973, and closed in 1974.

A publication from 1968 stated that Mt Maria accommodated 100 girls in 6 Family Group Units. Girls were aged from 12 to 18 years.

A few older girls remain as auxiliary helps. Academic and commercial education provided; also courses in dressmaking, cooking, mothercraft, first aid, laundry. Hobbies encouraged and taught – ceramics, handcrafts, stone polishing; sporting facilities available (Social Services Queensland, 1968, p.108).

The report of the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (1999) stated that 13 former residents of Mt Maria (and its predecessor, the Good Shepherd Home for Girls) gave evidence to the Inquiry of which 3 spoke favourably about the institution.

The report included the story of 'A', who was admitted to Mt Maria in 1968, aged 12, after being deemed by the court as being 'in need of care and control in that she is following into a life of crime'. 'A' shared her memories which included working in the laundry, having to wash her own clothes by hand, mistreatment by other residents and by staff, and poor education.

Child care officers from the Department expressed concern about the educational opportunities at Mt Maria in 1972, in particular the institution's policy of new admissions having to work in the laundry 'until it was considered that their behaviour indicated they had settled in'. The sister in charge had responded that Mt Maria did not have sufficient teaching staff to deal with disruptive behaviour. Some former residents who gave evidence to the Commission complained that they had been denied any form of schooling, or only recalled attending school for a

couple of hours per day (p.147).

Reflecting on denominational institutions for juvenile offending girls in Queensland, the report concluded:

For much of their histories, the denominational training schools were large, impersonal institutions where the labour demanded of the girls was both arduous and monotonous, and not likely to significantly enhance their future employment prospects, and where solitary confinement was used to discipline recalcitrant inmates. The emphasis was on punishment, with little or no effort made to assist in the rehabilitation of the girls. However, these were institutions that received little government funding, which made it virtually impossible to implement a more individually focused treatment program or to employ staff more attuned to the problems and sensitivities of the girls. These institutions were components of a wider system that survived on a limited budget, and had done so for many years, and they quickly became redundant as essential improvements were made to that system in the 1970s. It is not surprising that many of the residents believed they were damaged by their experiences at these institutions (pp.148-149).

Gallery



Mt Maria at Mitchelton, operated by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Description: This image is from page 141 of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse in Queensland institutions. The image was sourced for the Inquiry from Queensland Newspapers. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.



Mt Maria dormitory

Description: This image is from page 143 of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse in Queensland institutions. The image was sourced for the Inquiry from Queensland Newspapers. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

More info

Chronology

- Good Shepherd Home for Girls, Mitchelton (1930 - 1966)
 - **Mt Maria Re-Education Centre, Mitchelton (1966 – 1973)**
 - Mt Maria Youth Centre (c. 1973 - 1974)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Sisters of the Good Shepherd \(1863 - current\)](#)

Related Events

- [Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions \(1998 - 1999\)](#)
Mt Maria Re-Education Centre was an institution mentioned by a number of witnesses to the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions.
- [Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, Parliament of Australia \(2003 - 2005\)](#)
Mt Maria Re-Education Centre was mentioned in Submission 222 to the Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care

Records

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

Records

- [Records of Mt Maria, Home of the Good Shepherd, Queensland \(1933 - 1974\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/mt-maria-re-education-centre-mitchelton/>