

# Boys' Probationary School

1900 – 1945

**Other Names:** • Boys' Probationary School, Mount Barker

## Details

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The Boys' Probationary School opened at Wistow near Mount Barker in 1900 as a private institution for boys in State care. It was run by the Salvation Army under the control of the government. Boys who were deemed to have behavioural problems were placed there. In 1945 the government ceased control of the School and it was renamed the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mount Barker, Eden Park.

The Boys' Probationary School opened at Wistow, near Mt Barker in 1900. It was run by the Salvation Army as an alternative probationary home to which State children could be sent rather than being placed in the government run Boys' Reformatory Magill or the St John the Baptist Home for Boys which operated as the Reformatory for Catholic boys.

During the late nineteenth century, the Salvation Army had approached the government with the suggestion that it could take over the care of State children, particularly those who had been committed to a reformatory. The Government however preferred to keep control of its reformatories for Protestant children and instead negotiated with the Salvation Army to develop Probationary Schools, one for boys and one for girls. These Schools were to be intermediate Homes for children who had not been committed to a reformatory but were deemed to require stronger discipline and more training than they would receive at the Edwardstown Industrial School.

The Boys' Probationary School was proclaimed as a private institution under the State Children' Act 1895. This meant that although the School was run by the Salvation Army, it operated under the complete control of the Government.

In 1900 The Salvation Army had leased a stone mansion at Wistow to be used for the new School. The building was the former residence of a member of the Legislative Council and government Minister, the Honourable Mr James G. Ramsay. Set on 53 hectares of farming land, it had seventeen rooms and a number of outbuildings. In 1905 the Ramsay Estate offered the property for sale and The Salvation Army bought it for £2200, with assistance from a number of prominent citizens of Adelaide.

Most boys at the Probationary School were placed there for truancy (meaning continually missing school) or behaviour problems. Some boys committed to the reformatories were moved to the Probationary School, but most came directly from Edwardstown Industrial School. From 1902, the Salvation Army was given permission to take in boys placed privately by their parents or by a non-government organisation. It was required to report any private placements to the State Children's Council and its successor, the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board. Members of these bodies also regularly inspected the institution.

The first Manager of the Boys' Probationary School was Captain Michel and he received the initial group of boys into the home. The Government paid six shillings and six pence per week as a subsidy for each State child. By 1905 the home was providing accommodation for approximately 40 boys of school age and older. Children initially attended a Salvation Army school in Mount Barker but were later allowed to go to a state school in Adelaide. For this purpose some of the younger boys were moved to the Kent Town Boys Home which was

established by the Salvation Army in 1929.

In 1939, a government inquiry into 'Delinquent and other children in the care of the state' criticised conditions at the Boys Probationary School. The report noted the lack of play equipment for the children and suggested that 'the disciplinary methods' used at the School and the minimal amount of vocational training left 'much to be desired'. Although the property was a working farm, limited agricultural training was provided to the boys. Generally they were expected to do chores such as milking, wood chopping and other general work.

The Boys Probationary School continued to operate as a government controlled institution through to the early 1940s. In January 1945 it was abolished as a private institution for the reception of State children, meaning that the government chose not to send State children there or to continue its involvement with the School. This occurred as a result of a series of allegations of sexual abuse at the home during the period 1940-1941. As research during the 2004-2008 Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry discovered:

*The management style and culture of the home, as well as some individuals and particular practices, became the subject of complaints and inquiries. Investigations revealed an ongoing reliance on physical punishment at the home and a culture of older boys taking advantage of younger boys.*

The Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board resolved in 1941 that the Probationary School should be closed. During September to November all State children were moved out and placed in other institutions. The School officially ceased to be recognised as a government controlled institution in January 1945. From that year the Home was known as the Salvation Army Boys Home, Eden Park. It continued to take in boys who were placed privately.

## Gallery



**Salvation Army's Boy's Home at Mount Barker**

**Description:** The library description states: MOUNT BARKER: 'Eden Park', a Salvation Army Boy's Home established at Mount Barker in 1901.



**Salvation Army Boys' Home, Eden Park [Mount Barker]**

**Description:** This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

## More info

### Chronology

- **Boys' Probationary School (1900 – 1945)**
  - The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Mount Barker (1945 - 1982)

### Related Entries

Run by

- [The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory \(1921 - 2018\)](#)
- [The Salvation Army, Australian Territory \(1880 - 1921\)](#)

### Related Events

- [Inquiry into Delinquent and other children in the care of the State, State of South Australia \(1938 - 1939\)](#)
- [Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry, South Australia \(2004 - 2008\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [State Children's Department, South Australian Government \(1886 - 1927\)](#)  
The Boys' Probationary School was run by the Salvation Army under the supervision of the State Children's Department.  
Date: 1900 - 1927
- [Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department, South Australian Government \(1927 - 1966\)](#)  
The Boys' Probationary School was run by the Salvation Army under the supervision of the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department.  
Date: 1927 - 1945
- [The Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town \(1929 - 1972\)](#)  
Some children from the Boys' Probationary School were sent to the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Kent Town, when it opened in 1929.  
Date: 1929 -

### Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)
- [Probation \(c. 1905 - current\)](#)

## Resources

- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territorial Headquarters (Vic), [Submission No. 46 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care: Appendix A: Children's Homes - A list of openings, closings and function](#), July 2003

## Records

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

### Records

- [Historical records and memorabilia of Salvation Army institutions, Southern Territory](#)
  - [Salvation Army Australia, Records of Homes in the former Southern Territory \(c. 1889 - c. 1988\)](#)
  - [Correspondence files \('SCD' files\) - State Children's Department \(1887 - 1927\)](#)
  - [Register of Admissions - Salvation Army Probationary School for Boys, Mount Barker \(1900 - 1928\)](#)
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