

# Contagious Diseases Act 1879, Tasmania

1879 – 1935

URL: [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/num\\_act/tcda187942vn36296/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/num_act/tcda187942vn36296/)

## Details

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The Contagious Diseases Act 1879 also known by its full title 'An Act for the better Prevention of certain Contagious Diseases' (Act No. 42 Vict. No.36) was the first in a series of Acts designed to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, especially syphilis. It gave the police powers to report cases of it in women to the Superintendent of Police. He could order medical examinations and confinement in the Contagious Diseases Hospital for up to 12 weeks. No provision was made to treat men in a similar fashion. In 1935 the Contagious Diseases Act 1879 was repealed by the Public Health Act 1935 (Act no. 26 Geo. V No.42). Between 1879 and the repeal of this act many amendments were made. The first of these occurred in 1879 the same year this legislation was passed.

The Contagious Diseases Act followed a public outcry about the infection of Royal Navy sailors with syphilis. The government feared that the Navy would stop visiting Hobart. In Britain, Josephine Butler led protests about similar acts on the grounds that they breached the civil liberties of women because they might be arrested on suspicion of being a prostitute. However, in Tasmania there was little opposition. Although the acts were repealed in Britain in 1886, they remained on the Tasmanian statute books until 1903.

## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Related Organisations

- [Contagious Diseases Hospital \(1879 - 1900\)](#)

#### Is amended by

- [Contagious Diseases Act 1882, Tasmania \(1882 - 1935\)](#)
- [Contagious Diseases Amendment Act 1879, Tasmania \(1879 - 1935\)](#)
- [The Contagious Diseases Act 1881, Tasmania \(1881 - 1935\)](#)

### Resources

- Daniels, Kay, *Prostitution in Tasmania*, So much hard work: women and prostitution in Australian history, 1984
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