

Derby Hostel

1956 – 1994

Other Names:

- Derby Mission Centre
- Amy Bethell Hostel
- Derby School Hostel

Details

Derby Hostel was established by the United Aborigines Mission in 1956 as a residential child care facility for Aboriginal children going to primary and high school in Derby. Until 1963, the Commissioner of Native Welfare was the guardian of all children at the hostel. In 1975, the Department for Community Welfare took over the running of Derby Hostel and it was subsequently run by the government departments responsible for child welfare until it closed in 1994.

On 20 June 1956, the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) was authorised by the Department of Native Welfare (DNW) to establish a mission at Derby. The mission opened on 1 July 1956, subsidised by the DNW. At first, girls were accommodated in the mission house and there was a dormitory for small boys built by the UAM. It provided accommodation and support for children going to primary and high school in the town. This became the Derby Hostel, which was on township Lot No. 528, an Aboriginal education and employment hostel.

Until 1963, the Commissioner of Native Welfare was the guardian of all children at the hostel. From 1963, the Department of Native Welfare could make regulations for the 'control, care and education of the children of natives'. From 1972, the chief executive officer of the Department for Community Welfare was the guardian of any children at Derby Hostel who were deemed to be 'native wards' or 'wards of the State'.

By the 1970s, possibly earlier, the Derby Hostel was called 'Amy Bethel' or 'Amy Bethell' and when the Department for Community Welfare took over the hostel in 1976, it kept the name, Amy Bethell Hostel. It is possible that Amy Bethell was a spelling mistake, as the State Records Office has archives relating to the Amy Bethel Hostel. By 1977, however, the Amy Bethel(l) names seems to have no longer been used, and the hostel appeared in departmental annual reports as the 'Derby Hostel' or 'Derby School Hostel'.

In 1979, the hostel catered for 25 children from towns, stations and communities including Christmas Creek and Looma Stations; from One Arm Point; and Pandannus Park.

By 1982, the hostel was administered by the Kimberley Division of the Department of Community Welfare, and offered accommodation for high school students. The kitchen and dining areas, staff quarters and dormitories were renovated in that year.

In 1983 the Department built a new cottage at the hostel, as part of a trend towards having facilities that were not so 'institutional' in their design. An excerpt from the *Annual Report* of the Department for Community Welfare in 1984 gives some insight into what departmental field staff learned from parents of children who were potential admissions to the Derby Hostel and group homes in the Kimberley:

Parents are consulted about their children going to hostels away from home and the advantages and disadvantages are discussed. The parents are becoming more reluctant to send their children away and appropriate education in the community is now becoming an important issue in Fitzroy Crossing, Christmas Creek and One Arm Point. The group homes are only used when there are no relatives able or capable of looking after the children of a mother who may have to go to hospital or Perth. Once again, the responsibility is placed on the community and extended family to deal with their problems. Signposts 2004, pp. 186-187

By 1984, Derby Hostel was admitting only those high school students who did not have a high school in their own communities.

The Department for Community Services *Annual Report* in 1987 reported on its new policy of staffing the hostels with Aboriginal caregivers and the challenges faced by students at the hostel, which was 'more successful in attracting and maintaining older Aboriginal children – not always an easy feat, due to adolescents becoming unsettled through having to cope with much larger schools than they are accustomed to' (*Signposts* 2004, p.187).

Derby Hostel continued to be used by the Department until the 1990s. In 1994, it was described as being located in central Derby, on 9 hectares of land. There were two cottages, the original dormitories and some outbuildings. A child care centre was in the complex and the hostel had a 22-seater bus. There had been 32 admissions for 1994 – 15 children for each school term.

Derby Hostel's operations were suspended by the Department for Community Development on 22 September 1994, due to decreased demand.

It is likely that the Derby Hostel was located on Loch Street, in Derby. According to the State Heritage Office listing for Tom Street Mission House, at 45 Loch Street, Derby, 'the old UAM hostel that existed adjacent to the house has been demolished and replaced by a church'.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia \(1 October 1992 - 1 July 1995\)](#)
Date: 1992 - 1994
- [United Aborigines Mission \(1929 - 2020\)](#)
- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)
Date: 1976 - 1985
- [Department for Community Services, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1985 - 1 October 1992\)](#)
Date: 1985 - 1992

Related Glossary Terms

- [Commissioner of Native Welfare \(WA\) \(1954 - 1972\)](#)
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the guardian of all 'native' children at Derby Hostel, United Aborigines Mission until 1963. After 1963, the Department of Native Welfare could make regulations for the 'control, care and education of the children of natives'.

Resources

- [Allan Rees interviewed by Colleen Hattersley in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 25 August 2000

- Information Services, Department for Community Development, [Signposts: A Guide for Children and Young People in Care in WA from 1920](#), 2004. *Relevance*: pp.186-189
- Wilson, Katrin and Michael V. Robinson., *Aboriginal Hostels in Perth : A Comparative Survey*, 1971
- United Aborigines Mission, [The United Aborigines messenger](#), 1929 - 1987

Records

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

Records

- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
 - [United Aborigines Mission, Records of activities in Western Australia \(1929? - 1977?\)](#)
 - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Administration Files - Northern District Office \[N.D.G Sequence\] \(1950 - 1974\)](#)
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