

Methodist Children's Home

1922 – 1959

Other Names:

- Children's Home, Victoria Park
- Victoria Park Children's Home

Details

The Methodist Children's Home opened in 1922 on a property in Sussex Street, East Victoria Park. It was the first child care institution that was run by the Methodist Homes for Children, which was part of the Methodist Church in Western Australia. Children of all ages who were placed by family or who were wards of the State were admitted, mostly for medium or long-term placements. Over time, a number of cottages were built on the site: Mofflyn House (1925), Wesley, Guild, Dowerin and Meckering (1952). Eight child migrants were admitted after World War Two. In 1959 the Methodist Children's Home became known as 'Mofflyn House' (or Mofflyn) which continued to accommodate children on the site.

Methodist Children's Home opened on 14 October 1922 in a building that dated from around 1895, which was built as a 'Mission for Natives' by Canon Garland and known as Dulhi Gunyah. When 'it was decided to remove natives from the vicinity of large towns' the Methodist Church bought the property to use as a Home for children 'bereft of their parents'. A second cottage was built on 11 October 1924.

The Methodist Children's Home was governed by the Methodist Homes for Children (MHC) Board.

When it opened in 1922, it had 8 boys and 1 girl and at an inspection of April 1934 there were 51 children, boys and girls. By 1953, there was accommodation for up to 60 children including girls of all ages and boys up to 9 years. Four new 'modern and attractive cottage homes' on the site were noted in the Child Welfare Department's annual report in 1954 and the 'kiddies' were reportedly (*Signposts*, p.351) 'grouped in small families under the care of house mothers'. Published government reports do not identify the number of children who were privately admitted until 1957. In that year, there were 34 children in total, five of whom were wards of the State and two other children who were described as 'female migrants' (eight unaccompanied child migrants from Britain had been admitted to the Home during the 1950s). The proportion of children who were privately admitted to the Home continued to far exceed children who were wards of the State until the end of the decade.

After the age of 10 years, boys were transferred from Methodist Children's Home to the Werribee Farm School (Tom Allan Memorial Home) as it was 'not considered advisable to keep children over that age of both sexes in the one institution'.

Government reports (*Signposts* 2004, pp.349-351) show that children from the Methodist Children's Home were placed out 'at service' with employers from the 1920s to the 1940s.

From 1932, government reports (*Signposts* 2004, pp.349-351) also recorded the number of children under the age of six years who were accommodated at the Methodist Children's Home. There were two of these young children resident in June of 1932 and 1933; between 7 and 11 children from 1934 to 1940; 12 youngsters in 1941; one child in 1944, no young children in 1945 and generally between 4 and 8 youngsters in the 1940s; and 5-12 young children at the June headcount each year between 1950 and 1959.

In March 1935 the Children's Welfare Department (CWD) Institution Officer gave a description of the cottages and grounds (SRO 1924/0755 v1). 'The approach from the main gate to the Home is a plank road flanked by virgin bush and is not at all impressive. The ground surrounding the Home is dirty black sand' and apart from a 'basket-ball arena' there were no lawns or play areas. There were three cottages. Lynn Cottage was the main building, 'nicely built in brick' and was home to the Matron, some of the staff and 36 children. There were two dormitories 'big airy rooms, very clean but overcrowded. Instead of each inmate having at least 700 cubic feet of air space only 500 feet is given'. There was no lino or curtains or other 'small furnishings required by the regulations'. The Institution Officer was not impressed with the bathroom, writing that it 'passes my comprehension' how the Matron and staff could get the boys clean after they had been playing in the dirty sand. There were two more cottages, 'very old' and wooden which had been 'recently renovated' but were not in good condition. The cottage closest to Lynn Cottage was used as a kitchen and laundry but was 'in disrepair'. The stables and cow-shed were too close to this cottage (and were the cause of continual complaints by the CWD until they were replaced in 1939). The other 'old cottage' had the dining room and more dormitories. The dining room was 'good, but needs renovating' but the dormitories were 'not of the best' and needing more furnishings. There was a south-facing verandah on the side of this building where 'the bed-wetters and some of the younger children sleep'. The dormitories were 'very unsightly' with some beds being 'full-size with short mattresses' and another bed 'repaired with fencing wire' because 'the legs had come adrift'. All in all, the Institution Officer felt that the Home as it was when he inspected it 'compares very unfavourably with other institutions'. The Institution Officer noted that all institutions had been 'hit...very seriously' by falling donations during the Depression but that the time had now come to require the 'Methodist Authorities' who were 'new to institution work' for 'neglected and orphaned children' to bring the Home up to a modern standard. He concluded his description of the Home with praise for the Matron and wrote that the 'children reflect the good food they are receiving, are happy, contented and well-clothed.'

Although the physical conditions did not meet departmental standards, the children reportedly (SRO 1924/0755 v1) had 'more freedom' at this Home than others in the State and this impressed the Secretary of the CWD, according to a note he made on the file below the Inspector's Report of October 1936.

The 25 May 1941 Inspector's Report (SRO 1924/0755 v1) noted that a gravel playground had been built at the Home. A tennis court had been donated by the Como Tennis Club and was finished by the time of the Inspector's Report in December 1941.

Children from the Methodist Children's Home went to East Victoria Park (or Vic Park East) Primary School from 1923 to at least 1938. Some senior girls went to the Kent Street High School. The Inspector's Report on 28 October 1936 noted that the children did not 'march from school in the usual crocodile manner, but are allowed to wander back to the institution acting in the same manner as ordinary children would if returning to their own homes.' In 1953, the annual report of the CWD (*Signposts* 2004, p.351) noted that some of the older girls went to the Perth Technical College to study dressmaking and millinery, hairdressing and commercial courses.

During World War Two, children from the Methodist Children's Home were evacuated on 31 March 1942 to Werribee Farm School. Three girls, all of whom were wards of the State, stayed at the Home so they could go to Kent Street High School. An inspection at the Methodist Home for Children's East Victoria Park site on 1 July 1942 reported that the children were due to return from Werribee Farm School on 7 July 1942 because there was a soldier's camp next to Werribee and the Methodist authorities did not think that proximity was good for the children.

The Inspector's Reports sometimes mentioned special activities (SRO 1924/0755 v1). The Inspector's Report of 25 January 1933 said that 25 children were on holidays 'with Methodist families lasting from 2-5 weeks' in the metropolitan area and country areas such as Kalgoorlie and Albany. This seemed to be a common practice. In the 1920s it was also reported that the children went to the country for the long holidays.

The Inspector's Report of 6 September 1938 said there was a large room in the wooden building that was set up in 1938 for the boys' recreation. However, it was not used very much by the boys because they were 'all small lads' who would 'prefer to go to bed early.' The room was used at night for 'reading and sewing and playing games' by the older girls and it was also used on Sundays for religious services. The Inspector's Report from 17 January 1940 described a 'Model Doll's House with four rooms and an attic' that had been set up and furnished.

The Inspector said this was 'undoubtedly an item of interest to the young girls.' The Sewing Room and Play Room (too hot to use in summer) noted in Reports from the 1930s were not mentioned in the 1940 Report.

General life at the Home was also described from the authorities' viewpoint in Inspector's Reports (SRO 1924/0755 v1). Apparently, a cow was kept at the Home in the 1930s and 1940s so that the children could have milk every day, and it was noted in a 1936 Inspector's Report (July) that there were also 100 head of poultry. At the report of 25 May 1941, the Inspector noted that a 'large stewpan of Melon and Ginger jam' was on the stove and the younger children, 'the tinies' were a 'clean healthy happy looking lot of children'.

The food for children was recorded in the Inspector's Reports from the 1920s to the 1940s (SRO 1924/0755 v1). In 1927 a 'Dietary Table' was drawn up. It shows that children had breakfast (bread and milk or porridge, with bread and jam) very day. Lunch was bread and butter or dripping, with jam and cake. Dinner was meant to be different each night, but it is not clear from the Inspector's Reports that there was much variety. There was generally some kind of meat dish with a pudding.

A sample of meals reported from the various years includes:

- Soup and steamed pudding – evening meal 1925
- Sausages, vegetables and sago milk pudding – evening meal 1926
- Beef stew and sago pudding – 1927
- Pea soup and milk pudding – evening meal 1930
- Pea soup and suet pudding – 1932
- Soup and milk pudding – evening meal 1933
- Rabbit lambs fry, and cheese and bacon – lunch 1933
- Meat pie and milk pudding – evening meal 1933
- Stew and sago pudding – evening meal 1934
- Stew, bread and butter custard – evening meal 1935
- Vegetable soup, stewed apple and custard, followed by a raw apple – evening meal 1936

The health of children in the Home also interested CWD inspectors (SRO 1924/0755 v1). There was an outbreak of mumps in 1939, reportedly even infecting Matron Crowley. There had also been whooping cough at the Home from the end of 1938 to early 1939, with many children suffering. The Inspector's Report of October 1937 noted that the children had been immunized against diphtheria. The 1937 and 1938 Inspector's Reports mentioned that there was no room to isolate children with infectious diseases. Sick children could stay home from school, but this didn't always result in the child getting more rest. An Inspector's Report in December 1935 noted that one of the older girls was home with a sore foot, but was doing the ironing. However, it seems that other conditions merited bed-rest. Another girl was sick in bed with a 'bilious attack' when the Inspector visited and in July 1934 there were three children in bed with the 'flu' during the inspection.

Children's illnesses were treated at a range of hospitals and medical clinics (SRO 1924/0755 v1), including the Children's Hospital; the Infectious Diseases Hospital (1938); and Sr Ballantyne's Hospital (1938 and 1941). In 1939 and 1941, Dr Paton's clinic is mentioned in relation to treating eye complaints. Dr Peacock (1937, 1939, 1940), Dr Crisp (1940) and Dr Williams (1936, 1937) also treated children from the Home. In 1940, children received dental treatment from the practice of Dodd and Herman and the Government Dentist Van was present at the Home during the December 1941 inspection.

The state of the children's dining room was also included in reports of inspections (SRO 1924/0755 v1). In March 1933 the Secretary of the CWD went to the Methodist Children's Home with the inspector. After the inspection, the Secretary declared that the children should not sit on benches (or 'forms') to eat. They should have chairs, for two reasons. Firstly, chairs were more 'homelike'. Also, sitting on benches made the children 'crouch over the tables and not sit up straight, which is undesirable.'

The Inspector's Reports (SRO 1924/0755 v1) contain information about the condition of plumbing and bathrooms and the condition of fly-wire screens. In terms of the dormitories, comments were made in the Inspector's Reports (SRO 1924/0755 v1) about furnishings, bedding and general cleanliness. The supply of water appeared to have been a persistent problem at the Home, which appears to have come from tanks on the property rather than from

Scheme water due to low pressure in the Sussex Street main line and the fact that the Home was on top of a hill.

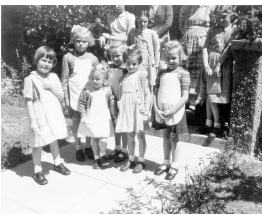
In 1959, the Methodist Children's Home site was renamed collectively by the name of its largest building, 'Mofflyn House'. It quickly became known as 'Mofflyn' and it continued under the Mofflyn name into the 1960s and beyond.

Gallery



The Methodist's Children's Home, Victoria Park - General view of the Home

Description: This is an image of the Methodist Children's Home that was published in the *Western Mail* newspaper on 26 April 1923. It shows the main home building, consisting of two large wings joined by a covered walkway. A small group of people are standing in front of the home. This photo was published alongside a photo of the committee of management of the home.



Child Migrants at Home in Victoria Park, 1950

Description: This is a digitised copy of a photoprint and is part of the group of eight images titled 'Children on the Asturius arriving in Western Australia, October 1950 [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows a group of young girls standing on the steps outside the Methodist Children's Home.



Migrant Girls at Home in Victoria Park, 1950

Description: This is a digitised copy of a photoprint and is part of the group of eight images titled 'Children on the Asturius arriving in Western Australia, October 1950 [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The images shows a group of girls standing on the entrance steps to the Methodist Children's Home.

More info

Chronology

- **Methodist Children's Home (1922 – 1959)**
 - Mofflyn (1959 - 1984)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Methodist Homes for Children \(1922 - 1977\)](#)
Date: 1922 - 1959

Related Events

- [Fact-Finding Mission on Child Migration \(1956\)](#)
- [Child Migration Programmes Investigation, UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse \(2017 - 2018\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Werribee Farm School \(1928 - 1962\)](#)

Werribee Farm School and the Methodist Children's Home were run by the Methodist Homes for Children. At

times, there was quite a lot of contact between them and children (particularly boys) often lived in both Homes.
Date: 1928 - 1959

- [NCH Action for Children, United Kingdom \(1869 - current\)](#)
NCH Action for Children is the organisation that inherited the records about British child migrants who were sent to the Methodist Children's Home in the 1950s.
- [Princess Margaret Hospital for Children \(1909 - 10 June 2018\)](#)
The Methodist Children's Home sometimes sent sick children to the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children for treatment.
- [Victoria Hospital for Infectious Diseases \(1893 - 1938\)](#)
The Methodist Children's Home sometimes sent sick children to the Victoria Hospital for Infectious Diseases for treatment.
- [Dulhi Gunyah \(25 February 1909 - 1918\)](#)
Methodist Children's Home was located on the site of Dulhi Gunyah.

Related Concepts

- [Child Migration \(1800s - 1970s\)](#)

Resources

- Immigration Museum, [Stolen childhoods](#), 2012
- [On their own: Britain's child migrants](#), Australian National Maritime Museum website, 2010
- [REDIRECTED The Methodist Children's Home, Victoria Park](#), Western Mail, 26 April 1923
- 'Archer', [Woman's Realm: Methodist Children's Home](#), The West Australian, 27 November 1936
- Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia, [Submission No 55 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), July 2003
- Mofflyn, [Submission No 160 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), August 2003
- House of Commons Health Committee, [Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 11 June 1998 \(Health - Third Report\)](#), 11 June 1998
- Howard, Philip J., [Their History: History of a Child in Care](#), 2012
- NCH (National Children's Homes) (UK), [Submission No 98 to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration](#), 2001
- NCH Action for Children, [Memorandum by NCH Action for Children](#), Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 11 June 1998, 11 June 1998
- [Central Methodist Mission](#), The West Australian, 9 January 1923

Records

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

Records

- [Uniting WA Records \(1920s - current\)](#)
- [Uniting Church \(Synod of Western Australia\) Archives, Records \(1918 - 1980s\)](#)
- [Commonwealth Child and Youth Migration Records \(1901 - 1983\)](#)
- [John Moss C.B.E. U.K. Child Welfare Expert. Visit to Australia. Part II, National Archives of Australia \(1951 - 1952\)](#)
- [Methodist Home for Children: reports and general correspondence \(Volume 1 of 2\) \(15 November 1923 - 18 July 1942\)](#)
- [UK fact finding mission 1956 part 2, National Archives of Australia \(1955 - 1956\)](#)
- [Correspondence files, multiple number series \(policy matters\) \(1922 - 1968\)](#)
- [Former Child Migrants Referral Index \(1913 - 1968\)](#)
- [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
- [Former Child Migrants Blue Index Cards \(1947 - 1968\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/methodist-childrens-home-2/>