

Kenwick Farm

1947 – 1961

Other Names:

- Kenwick Boys' Home
- Kenwick Farm School

Details

Kenwick Farm was established in 1947 and was a farm property for senior boys from Sister Kate's Children's Home in Queen's Park. It was located in Kenwick along the Canning River, not far from Sister Kate's. Its stated purpose was to train boys in farm work for two years after they left school aged 14. Kenwick Farm closed and the property was sold in 1961.

Kenwick Farm was opened in the 1946-47 financial year. By July 1947, 'a number' of boys were reported as being 'in training' at the farm. In the eyes of sponsors at the time, such a scheme would benefit the boys because it would help 'fit them to take their place in the life of the community later on' and 'train them to become useful citizens'.

The Farm was promoted to the public as a memorial to the work of Sister Kate Clutterbuck as a venture which was one of her 'ambitions', planned before her death but which 'she did not live to see'. The Kenwick Farm received a lot of publicity, particularly in the *Western Mail* newspaper, and the scheme benefited from the fundraising efforts of its readers who were members of the Virgilians.

[The *Western Mail* had a regular women's section, compiled by a columnist known as "Virgilia". It seems articles published in Virgilia's section inspired local groups to engage in community service, raising funds for various charities including children's Homes (notably Sister Kate's and Kenwick Farm). The section often featured reporting on the activities of various branches of Virgilians, as they were known.]

In 1952, there was a public disagreement between a Health Department inspector and Miss Ruth Lefroy, who was the principal at Sister Kate's Children's Home, about the future of a 17 year old young man who was leaving Kenwick Farm. The policy of the farm was that young people should return to the country at the completion of their training. The young man wanted to stay in the city and the inspector supported him in this aim. The following quotes from Miss Lefroy, Inspector Lynn and the young man were printed in the *Sunday Times*:

All young men should go on the land for a period. This has always been the policy of myself and Sister Kate. We owe so much to the men on the land. In addition...there are not so many temptations there and it is a better atmosphere in which to build character. When he is 21 he may do as he pleases. For the time being as I am his guardian he must do as I say. I have only his welfare at heart. (Miss Lefroy)

There is no reason for the boy to be sent to the country if he doesn't want to go. It smacks of slavery. He is old enough to make up his own mind on the matter. (Inspector Lynn)

My whole family (5 of us) have been brought up at the home and I feel grateful to Miss Lefroy. Guess what she says must go. But I'd be happier at Maddington with a job in the district or in the town...I don't drink or smoke. (Young Man)

The *Sunday Times*, with the permission of Miss Lefroy and Inspector Lynn, invited the public to write in with their thoughts about what should happen, and these were published in the following week. One week after a 'flood' of letters had been received by the paper, Sister Kate's Home agreed to 'relax their policy in this case'. The young man took up an apprenticeship in a city boot factory and lived at a private home in Maddington (*Sunday Times*, 'Letters poured in, 25 May 1952 and 'Square gets work', 1 June 1952).

Kenwick Farm was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Presbyterian Church \(1879 - 1977\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home \(1934 - 1980\)](#)

Kenwick Farm was a farm school for older boys from from Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home.

Date: 1947 - 1961

Resources

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, [Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families](#), 1997. Relevance: Kenwick Farm was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families
- [Ken Lindley interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(1999\)](#), 27 November 1999
- Murphy, Ffion, *Western Mail*, Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia, 2009
- [Farm Wanted](#), The Daily News, 27 September 1946
- [Farm for Boys](#), The West Australian, 4 March 1947
- [Cheque for Kenwick Farm School](#), Western Mail, 19 July 1951
- [Virgilia's Friendly Corner](#), Western Mail, 27 March 1947
- [A Farm his Future](#), The Daily News, 25 September 1946
- [Virgilia's Friendly Corner: Corner Generosity](#), Western Mail, 26 July 1951
- [Sister Kate Fete](#), Western Mail, 23 October 1952
- [Farm boys grow vegetables which Virgilians sell](#), Western Mail, 25 November 1954
- [Woman's World](#), Western Mail, 5 July 1934
- Millicent, [Bringing them Home - Millicent story](#), Australian Human Rights Commission, Website, 2 December 2001
- [Half-castes happy in W.A. home](#), The Australian Women's Weekly, 5 March 1949
- O'Neill, Cate, ['It smacks of slavery...'](#), Find & Connect web resource blog, 1 June 2015

Records

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

Records

- [Sister Kate's Child and Family Services records, 1934-2002 \[manuscript\], State Library of Western Australia \(1934 - 2002\)](#)
 - [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/kenwick-farm/>