

# St Joseph's Industrial School

1865 – c. 1895

**Other Names:**

- Geelong Convent Industrial School
- Roman Catholic Industrial School, Geelong
- Girls' Roman Catholic Industrial School, Geelong

## Details

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St Joseph's Industrial School was established in 1865 by the Sisters of Mercy, Geelong Congregation. St Joseph's opened in the grounds of the Convent of Mercy, Geelong and accommodated around 20 to 30 girls. The school was for girls from 8 to 16 years old to finish their education and receive training in domestic service including cooking, needlework and laundry. Upon leaving St Joseph's girls were either sent into service, discharged to family or friends, or returned to the Department. By the 1890s the school had only a handful of girls in it, and it closed around 1895.

St Joseph's Industrial School was established on the site of the Convent of Mercy, Geelong, alongside a boarding school, day school and Our Lady's Orphanage.

In 1867 a Government Inspector raised concerns about the quality of the education girls were receiving at the Industrial School. Geo. O. Duncan wrote the girls were "healthy and cheerful, and apparently well cared for, so far as their food, clothing and lodging were concerned; but their education appears to me to have been somewhat neglected." He goes on to identify that out of fifteen children, none of them could read well, despite most of them being in school for at least a year.

In the same report Mother Maguire describes a regular day at the Industrial School:

*The children in the Industrial School rise at 5.30 a.m., and are employed in domestic duties until breakfast at 7, and afterwards until 10 o'clock, when they assemble for school for two hours. Dinner at half past 12 o'clock, the cooking being done by the children, who take it in turn. The remainder of the day (from 1 o'clock), the children are employed in laundry or needle work. They have supper at 6 o'clock p.m., and recreation from after supper until 20m to 9 o'clock ; part of this time is usually given to needle work, whilst the religious who has charge of them reads a useful or entertaining book to them. They retire to rest at 20 m. to 9 o'clock.*

By the 1872 Royal Commission on Industrial Schools it was reported the girls "appeared not only bright and healthy but natural and homelike", and this was considered to be a benefit of the girls being educated alongside those from Our Lady's Orphanage.

St Joseph's Industrial School operated from a small government grant and was supplemented by donations from the community.

By the 1880s, industrial schools in Victoria were abolished, however St Joseph's Industrial School continued to operate with a handful of girls until all girls had been discharged. It closed around 1895.

# More info

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## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, Geelong Congregation \(1859 - 1907\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [Our Lady's Orphanage \(c. 1862 - 1912\)](#)  
St Joseph's Industrial School operated within the same grounds as Our Lady's Orphanage.

### Related Legislation

- [The Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864, Victoria \(1864 - 1888\)](#)  
St Joseph's Industrial School was established under the provisions of the Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864.

## Resources

- Victoria. Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline., [Report \(No.3\) of the Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline: Industrial and Reformatory Schools](#), 1872
- Victoria. Children's Welfare Department and Reformatory Schools, [Report of the Secretary / Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools](#), 1887 - 1895. *Relevance:* Mentioned in reports dated 1888-1896
- [The Sanitary Condition of Industrial Schools](#), The Argus, 1 April 1872

## Records

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

### Records

- [MacKillop Family Services Records, Victorian institutions \(1857 - current\)](#)

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-josephs-industrial-school/>