

Kalgoorlie Child Welfare Cottage

1930s – c. 1978

Other Names: • Kalgoorlie Juvenile Cottage

Details

The Kalgoorlie Child Welfare Cottage was established in the 1930s by the Child Welfare Department. It provided temporary care to children from the Kalgoorlie area awaiting transport to other child welfare or juvenile justice institutions, children on remand awaiting court appearances, and children, sometimes accompanied by their mothers, experiencing family emergencies. The Cottage was under the control of the Child Welfare Department, but was administered by the Kalgoorlie Police Station, and was located in the grounds of the police station, directly behind the head gaoler's cottage. The only staff member for the cottage was the matron, who was typically the wife of the head gaoler or officer in charge of the station. The Kalgoorlie Child Welfare Cottage was in operation until at least 1978.

The cottage accommodated children of all ages, however children under 4 were more typically cared for at the Kalgoorlie District Hospital instead, as the home did not have appropriate facilities for infants and young children. By the 1960s the majority of children staying at the cottage were between 15 and 17 years old. Children usually stayed at the cottage between 1 and 3 days, although some stayed only for a couple of hours, some for a week, and in at least one instance a child stayed at the cottage for a month. In the 1940s there were typically 40-70 children staying at the cottage per year. By the late 1960s this had increased to around 225 children per year.

Poor conditions at the cottage were an ongoing problem throughout its operation. Files from the State Records Office of Western Australia (Series 1099, item A00136 V2) show that as early as 1940 serious concerns were raised about the inadequate bedding and bathroom facilities. At this time the cottage had two bedrooms, with a total of three sagging and broken beds with dirty mattresses described as "rejects from prison stock", made up with second-hand blankets, and no sheets or pillows. Despite there being only three beds, the cottage would sometimes house up to 6 or 7 children at a time, requiring them to share beds. There were no bathroom facilities in the cottage, and children were required to use the bathroom in the officer's cottage when permitted. Children detained on remand, who were not allowed to leave the cottage, were expected to use a wash basin and bed-pans in the same room in which they slept and ate their meals. One Child Welfare Officer reported "I have never been confronted with such deplorable conditions under which children are required to live and it is hard to realise why these conditions have not been brought under the notice of this Department before."

Renovations in 1942 addressed some of these issues by turning one of the bedrooms into a bathroom, and enclosing a portion of the verandah for use as a lavatory. While the addition of a bathroom did improve conditions, it did result in the cottage having only one bedroom, meaning if boys and girls needed to be housed in the cottage at the same time some children would be required to sleep in the bathroom. Other issues with the cottage persisted, such as the lack of suitable outdoor play space, and intermittent hot water coverage, resulting in children sometimes having to use the adult female section of the gaol to shower. In 1967 the cottage was demolished and rebuilt. The new cottage consisted of two bedrooms, a bathroom with reliable hot water, and lavatory, however suitable outdoor play space or play equipment was still lacking.

The closing date of the cottage is as yet unknown, however by the mid 1970s the Child Welfare Department began considering options to replace the cottage. In 1975 the police sergeant and his wife informed the department that they were not prepared to take on responsibility for the cottage. They also raised concerns about

the unsuitable location of the cottage as it was only accessible through the sergeant's backyard, and was causing disruptions to the sergeant's family. Despite these issues, occasional use of the cottage did continue until at least 1978, providing approval was given by the sergeant each time it was needed.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)
- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)

Records

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

Records

- [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
- [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/kalgoorlie-child-welfare-cottage/>