

# Stirling House

*A place for people*





### WADJUK CLAN CAMPING PLACE

The *Wadjuk* Clan used the North Fremantle area as a summer camping place.

### CONVICT DEPOT

A convict depot was established here in 1851. Convicts from the Fremantle Prison undertook various public works including the construction of the road from Fremantle to Perth (1860) and the first Fremantle traffic bridge (1867).



### NORTH FREMANTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

A Government School opened in a hall in North Fremantle in 1886. Government architect George Temple Poole drew up plans for a new school in 1888, but it was not built until 1894. The design heralded a new era in education in Western Australia where boys and girls attended the same school, although they had separate entrances.

Just over 100 children started at the new school but by 1898 there were more than 300 children on the roll and up to 80 children per class. Classrooms were added and an infants' school operated across the road from 1900-26.

Famous alumni included Ernie Bromley, who played in the Australian XI against England in



1933-34 and Governor General of Australia, Sir Paul Hasluck. Bon Scott, of the rock band AC/DC, had his first public performance playing a recorder duet in a school concert during his time at North Fremantle (1957-58). John Tonkin, Education Minister in the 1940s and then Premier in the 1970s taught at North Fremantle Primary from 1931-33.

Over time the school fell into disrepair and its position between a busy main road and an upgraded railway line made it an unsuitable location for a school. The new North Fremantle Primary School opened in John Street in 1967.



### KUI MENS HOSTEL

In the mid 70s the school was converted to a half way house for men released from prison. Kui is a Maori word meaning welcome. There were cooking and recreation facilities and men had their own rooms. Up to twelve men paid a small fee to live here. Kui relied heavily on subsidies from charities and government.

In 1983 the hostel became the first bail hostel in Australia and the name changed to Stirling House. The hostel was an attempt to reduce the number of people on remand being imprisoned. It was expensive to run, rarely reached capacity and closed in 1995. The Department of Corrective Services stayed on using the place as a training centre for prison officers.



### CLONTARF COLLEGE

Children came back to the place in 2008 when the Clontarf Aboriginal College began using Stirling House as one of its accommodation hostels.

Aboriginal children from across Australia attending the college in Waterford were bussed to and from school each day.

Excursions into the city, to the beach and other destinations were organised for the children on weekends. A new hostel was built at Waterford and opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 2011.



### MORE CHILDREN...

Stirling House is now home to North Fremantle School of Early Learning. Much more than a child care facility, North Fremantle School of Early Learning encourages children to develop at their own pace, following their own interests in an environment that is stimulating and nurturing, supportive and challenging.

The National Trust of Australia (WA) took over care and control of the site in 2011 and sees the early learning centre as a perfect 'compatible reuse' of this significant site which continues to bring a vital social benefit to the North Fremantle community.



## ROOM NAMES

### Poole – Babies

Government architect George Temple Poole's design heralded a new era in Western Australian education with boys and girls attending the same school.

### Cooke – Toddlers 1

The original North Fremantle School was also known as 'Cooke's School' after the first headmaster, Mr AM Cooke.

### Tonkin – Toddlers 2

John Tonkin, Education Minister (1943-47) and Premier (1971-74) taught at North Fremantle Primary School from 1931-33.

### Kui – 3 Year Olds

After the primary school relocated to John St, the building was converted to Kui (welcome) Men's Hostel and later to Australia's first bail hostel and renamed Stirling House.

### Clontarf – 4 Year Olds

From 2008 to 2011, Clontarf Aboriginal College used Stirling House as accommodation for Aboriginal boys from across Western Australia attending its school in Waterford.

In a display of patriotism, school cadets and Red Cross groups were formed and in 1937 a special Coronation Tableau was displayed with children dressed as King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, pages and Ladies in Waiting.



Stories abound of the colourful life of North Fremantle Primary School. Not surprisingly sport was popular, particularly football. Calisthenics displays, concerts, performances by drum and fife bands, a school choir and much anticipated Fancy Dress Balls were all part of the annual calendar.



The Fancy Dress Ball was a highlight of the year. It was held in the North Fremantle Town Hall and supper sometimes had to be served in six sittings to accommodate crowds of around 700 people. There were prizes for the most elaborate costumes and months of marching practice for the Grand Parade.



Images courtesy:

North Fremantle Primary School  
Fremantle History Centre  
National Trust of Australia (WA)  
Adam Wallis (Clontarf Aboriginal College)



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