

# Mercy Family Care Centre

c. 1975 – 1997

## Details

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Mercy Family Care Centre in North Geelong was established by the Sisters of Mercy, following the closure of St Catherine's Children's Home in Highton in 1975. The Centre provided a family-focused model of care, including foster care, residential care, educational services and family support. In July 1997, Mercy Family Care became part of MacKillop Family Services.

According to Jenkinson, in 1972 St Catherine's Children's Home advised the Department that it was reviewing its current program in response to a number of reasons. These included the increasing costs for maintenance and capital equipment, lack of suitable accommodation for secular staff and increasing professional staff costs to provide family support. In line with changing policies in the broader community, St Catherine's planned to move toward smaller, community-based facilities. Subsequently, a new centre was built with administration facilities; residential accommodation was provided for children with special needs who were unable to be placed in family group homes or foster care; six residential homes were acquired to develop family group homes; and the Geelong foster care program was developed.

By 1975, all children who were living at St Catherine's Children's Home were transferred into family group homes or foster care. The Highton property was then sold to finance subsequent programs.

In 1975, the Sisters of Mercy established the North Geelong Community and Family Centre at North Geelong: a new centre that consisted of St Helen's assessment and treatment centre; two residential units; and a foster care program with emergency reception and pre-adoptive foster care facilities.

The North Geelong Community and Family Centre's name was changed to Mercy Family Centre in 1975 /1976.

Mercy Family Care services and professional support were designed to cater to the needs of local families by providing casework support, and substitute care only if appropriate to the individual needs of the child and family. Services included a hostel in North Geelong for young women, and a cake shop set up by Sister Agatha, where girls could work and obtain some life skills.

Mercy program and staffing policies were viewed as part of an integrated and regional program of family and child care services. However, Barnard and Twigg describe the programs delivered by Mercy Family Care from 1975 as 'idealistic'. In the early 1980s, the organisation was facing financial ruin. The Geelong community rallied to raise funds (which were matched by the State government) and the service was saved.

Mercy Family Care was amalgamated with MacKillop Family Services in 1997.

## More info

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### Chronology

- Our Lady's Orphanage (c. 1862 - 1912)

- St Catherine's Orphanage (1912 - 1960)
  - St Catherine's Children's Home (1960 - 1975)
- **Mercy Family Care Centre (c. 1975 – 1997)**
  - MacKillop Family Services (1997 - current)

## Related Entries

### Ran

- [Family Group Homes run by the Sisters of Mercy in Geelong \(1972 - 2000s\)](#)

### Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation \(1857 - 2011\)](#)

Date: 1975 - 1997

## Resources

- *Sister Agatha - This is Your Life, Our Children*, May 1980
- [Heritage Display](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013

## Records

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

### Records

- [MacKillop Family Services Records, Victorian institutions \(1857 - current\)](#)
- [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/mercy-family-care-centre/>