St Joseph's Home for Destitute Children, Sisters of St Joseph

1890 – 1925

Details

St Joseph's Home for Destitute Children in Surrey Hills came under the control of the Sisters of St Joseph in 1890. Previously, it was run by the Society of St Vincent de Paul. It housed 120 children in 1897. In 1925, it became known as St Joseph's Home for Boys.

The superintendence of St Joseph's Home for Destitute Children in Surrey Hills changed in 1890, when it came under the control of the Sisters of St Joseph. Previously, it was run by the Society of St Vincent de Paul, but had long experienced financial problems.

The Sisters assumed management of the Home on 21 May 1890, working under the St Vincent committee.

The first Sisters at Surrey Hills were Bonaventure Mahony, Isabelle Colvin and Gonzaga Kennedy.

As it was their 'approved custom' not to work with lay committees, Mary McKillop arranged for all responsibilities to be assumed by the Sisters. By 1891, all links between the Home and the St Vincent de Paul Society had been severed.

In 1897, the *Advocate* reported on rebuilding taking place at St Joseph's:

> At present the sisters have no fewer than 120 little waifs and strays at the Home, and it may be mentioned that the new building will not increase to any great extent the accommodation of the orphans. When the structure now in course of erection shall have been completed, the helpless little ones will be comfortably housed, and the sisters, who hitherto have had to put up with very great inconvenience in order to give all possible space to their little charges, will be placed in possession of proper quarters. Spacious dormitories, recreation hall, cells, refectories, kitchen, bath-rooms, and outhouses will compose the handsome two-storey brick building, which will, when completed, form a landmark of the country between Canterbury and Surrey Hills railway stations.

Barnard and Twigg write that, under the Sisters of St Joseph, the Home's purpose gradually shifted 'from rescue to refuge'. Children were being adopted out less frequently, and more often, coming to the Home during times of crisis as 'voluntary admissions' and eventually returning to their families.

An article from 1911 stated that the Home had 100 boys and 23 girls, ranging in age from 3 to 14 years (*Weekly Times,* 9 December 1911).

In 1925, it became known as St Joseph's Home for Boys.

In 1997, records of the Sisters of St Joseph were transferred to MacKillop Family Services. These included records of the various orphanages, homes and other residences run by the Sisters of St Joseph and its predecessors. While custodianship of the records about people in 'care' became the responsibility of MacKillop Family Services at this point, it was formally agreed that the intellectual property in these records would not change hands.

Gallery

St Joseph's Home, Surrey Hills, building

More info

Chronology

- St Joseph's Home for Destitute Children, The Society of St Vincent de Paul (1888 - 1890)
  - **St Joseph's Home for Destitute Children, Sisters of St Joseph (1890 – 1925)**
    - St Joseph's Home for Boys (1925 - c. 1967)
      - St Joseph's Home for Children, Sisters of St Joseph (1967 - 1991)
        - St Joseph's Home for Children, Christian Brothers (1991 - 1997)

Related Entries

Run by
- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart (1866 - current)](#)
  Date: 1890 - 1925

Resources

- [*Christmas Appeals: special need for help*](#), The Argus, 14 December 1916
- [*Heritage Display*](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013
- Jaggs, Catherine, *The Melbourne Child-Saving Movement, 1888-1910*, 1985
- Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, *A piece of the story : national directory of records of Catholic organisations caring for children separated from families*, November 1999

Records

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

Records

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

You can view this page online by visiting https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-josephs-home-for-destitute-children-2/