

Bethany Babies' Home

1928 – 1977

Other Names:

- Bethany Home for Babies
- Geelong Female Refuge
- Bethany (Child and Family Support) Inc
- Bethany Family Support Inc
- Bethany Community Support Inc

Details

Bethany Babies' Home was originally the Geelong Female Refuge when it was established in 1868. From 1928, the Refuge became known as Bethany Babies' Home. It accommodated pregnant women, babies and toddlers; it operated a maternity hospital and also adopted babies out. In 1977, it ceased to operating as a Home and adoption agency and became Bethany Community Support.

From 1977, all records relating to individuals, placements and adoptions at Bethany Babies' Home were transferred to the Victorian government.

In 1928, the Geelong Refuge began to operate primarily as a babies' home. It was at this point that it became known as Bethany Babies' Home. As well as caring for babies and toddlers, Bethany operated as a maternity hospital and accommodated pregnant women. It also operated as a mothercraft training school. Bethany also became an adoption agency with the passing of the *Adoption Act 1928*.

In March 1928, a news article stated that "Some time ago the committee of the Geelong Female Refuge decided to enlarge the sphere of the activities of that institution by taking upon themselves the responsibility for caring for neglected and foundling babies. Considerable alterations to the buildings have been carried out, and additional staff has been engaged, and at present there are ten babies in the Home" (*Geelong Advertiser*, 31 March 1928).

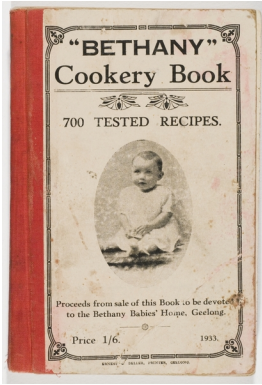
Bethany expanded in the 1930s and was able to accommodate 40 babies. According to the *Finding Records* website, after World War II, Bethany became known as a babies' hospital treating premature and frail babies awaiting return to their parents.

By the late 1950s, Bethany was providing residential care for unmarried mothers, and residential care for children up to the age of four – comprising wards of state, Infant Life Protection placements and private placements. Its capacity at this time was for 28 babies. The children usually remained at Bethany until four years of age (*Finding Records*).

Bethany Babies' Home ceased to operate in 1977 and became Bethany Community Support, a child and family welfare agency. From that time, all records relating to individuals, placements and adoptions from Bethany Babies' Home were transferred to the Victorian government.

Bethany Babies' Home was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices Inquiry* (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

Gallery



Bethany Cookery Book, front cover

Description: This is a copy of an image of the front cover of the "Bethany" Cookery Book from 1933. Proceeds from the sale of the book went to the Bethany Babies' Home, Geelong.



Bethany Babies' Home

Description: This is a copy of an image of the buildings at Bethany Babies' Home in Geelong.



Bethany Babies' Home car

Description: This is a copy of an image of nurses and babies from Bethany Babies' Home. It shows a car with signage that was used during "basket day" fundraising when the Home would seek donations.

More info

Chronology

- Geelong Female Refuge (1868 - 1928)
 - **Bethany Babies' Home (1928 – 1977)**
 - Bethany Community Support (1977 - 2023)
 - Meli (2023 - current)

Related Entries

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)

Bethany Babies Home is mentioned in submission 178 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

Related Concepts

- [Medical experiments \(1803 - 1970s\)](#)
CSL conducted trials at Bethany Babies' Home
Date: 1959 - 1961

Resources

- Murray, Suellen, John Murphy, Elizabeth Branigan, Jenny Malone, *After the orphanage: life beyond the children's home*, 2009
- Swain, Shurlee, *A refuge at Kildare: the history of the Geelong Female Refuge and Bethany Babies' Home*, 1985
- Hughes, Gary, [Polio vaccine tested at orphanages](#), The Age, 25 October 2004
- [Bethany Home for Babies](#), Camperdown Chronicle, 7 April 1934
- Care Leavers Australia Network, [Geelong and District Orphanages](#), No date

Records

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

Records

- [Bethany Community Support Records \(1896 - 2007?\)](#)
 - [Records of Victorian Adoptions \(c. 1908 - current\)](#)
 - ['Closed' Agency and General Correspondence Files \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
 - [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/bethany-babies-home/>