

Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home

1900 – c. 1955

Details

The Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home opened in Brunswick in 1900. It housed pregnant mothers, babies and arranged some adoptions. From 1947 a Toddlers' Home called Hartnett House operated on the same site. In 1955, the Maternity Home and Toddlers' Home were amalgamated into one unit. It was renamed Hartnett House in 1958.

The Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home was founded in 1900 by Sister E. Hartnett. Until 1903, it was situated in rented premises in Lygon street, East Brunswick. It then moved to Albion Street, Brunswick, to a building formerly used by the Salvation Army as a rescue home (the Brunswick Girls' Home).

The Home in Albion Street functioned as a 'pre-maternity home' for pregnant mothers and was registered to care for babies. Sister Hartnett arranged the adoption of some of the children in the Home's care and supported other mothers to maintain their parenting role.

Due to the poor condition of the original buildings, a new maternity home was built on the Albion Street site in 1913. In 1935, rooms such as a nursery, kitchen and reading room were added.

In 1942 the Department noted that the Home accommodated 22 infants and some mothers, but only one State ward. At the next Departmental inspection (1949) the Home's staff were described as 'a floating population of training missionaries, kindergarten teachers and unmarried mothers who help with the work', (although there was always a mothercraft nurse on the staff). In 1949 there were eight State wards and 34 Infant Life Protection Infants in residence. By 1950 the Home staff consisted primarily of mission sisters, most of whom were mothercraft nurses, still assisted by the mothers of the children.

In 1947 a new 'Toddler's Home' was built adjoining the pre-maternity home and in 1950 a nursery was added. The separate components of the home were amalgamated into one unit in 1955 and the home was named Hartnett House in 1958.

In the late 1950s the dormitories were changed to cubicles to afford more privacy for expecting mothers.

Melbourne City Mission Maternity 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. It was also cited in the report of the Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria.

Gallery



Hartnett House

Description: This is an image of Hartnett House, Albion Street, Brunswick - the site of a former maternity and children's home. In 2011, the building houses a childcare centre and other Melbourne Citymission programs. More images of this building are available on www.flickr.com

More info

Chronology

- **Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home (1900 – c. 1955)**
 - Hartnett House (c. 1955 - 1990s)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Melbourne City Mission \(1854 - 1970\)](#)
Date: 1900 - 1955

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)
Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home was mentioned in submission 130 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria \(28 May 2019 - August 2021\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Brunswick Girls' Home \(1892 - 1902\)](#)
The Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home was situated on the former site of the Salvation Army's Brunswick Girls' Home.
- [Melbourne City Mission Toddlers' Home \(c. 1935 - c. 1955\)](#)

Resources

- University of Melbourne Archives, [Records of Melbourne City Mission](#), 12 July 2005
- Dagher, Banda, *Hartnett House Brunswick: its founder, its work, its history*, 2009
- Leeson, E., [Melbourne City Mission 1855-1949](#), 1949
- [Hartnett House \(1900-83\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance:* See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home
- Jolliffe, Jill, [My mother, myself](#), The Age, 31 May 2014
- Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee, [Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria](#), August 2021

Records

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

Records

- [Records of Victorian Adoptions \(c. 1908 - current\)](#)
 - [Melbourne City Mission \[Records\] \(1856 - 1995\)](#)
 - [Melbourne City Mission Records \(c. 1900 - current\)](#)
 - [Hartnett House and Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home Records \(1900 - 1983\)](#)
 - [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/melbourne-city-mission-maternity-home/>