

# Hartnett House

c. 1955 – 1990s

## Details

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Hartnett House was established in around 1955 when Melbourne City Mission amalgamated its Maternity Home and its Toddlers' Home on Albion Street, Brunswick. The new institution was named Hartnett House in 1958. In 1973 Hartnett House stopped operating as a maternity home and ceased its adoption operations but continued as a children's home. In 1982 Hartnett House ceased offering long-term residential care in the main house in Brunswick, which was used primarily as a family centre. It instead opened several family group homes and temporary residential care units, which operated into the 1990s. In 2019 Hartnett House is a child-care and early years education centre.

In 1955, Melbourne City Mission amalgamated its Maternity Home and its Toddlers' Home located in Albion Street, Brunswick. The new institution was named Hartnett House in 1958 (after Sister Hartnett, who founded the Maternity Home in 1900).

The Department undertook regular inspections of Hartnett House from 1950 to the late 1960s. There were various assessments of the Home and although most were positive, concerns were expressed about the crowded state of the site. By the late 1960s the Home consisted of the original house to which many other buildings had been added. This made for a tightly packed complex on a small area providing a wide range of different programs.

In 1971/72 Hartnett House was providing the following services:

- a 24 bed maternity home for single girls
- a counselling and casework service, with a focus on single mothers
- an adoption agency (completing an average of 90 adoptions per year)
- a 32 bed babies home
- a 25 bed children's home, with children cared for in small groups.

The Federal Government introduced the Supporting Parents Benefit in 1973 which enabled many young women to choose to keep their babies. In 1972/73 the Community Welfare Foundation (as the Mission was then known) noted a decline in the numbers of single mothers using the maternity home (a weekly average of only 9) and a decline in the number of finalised adoptions (down by 53 from 1971/72).

In 1974 the Department provided additional funding to Hartnett House due to the recent closures of the Methodist Babies' Home, The Haven, Alexandra Toddlers' Home and Overton Residential Nursery. These closures had resulted in insufficient outlets for pre-schoolers from Allambie where the numbers of such children had built up to serious proportions. However, the Community Welfare Foundation was considering whether it should continue running a congregate care children's home given current policy issues about the future place of such homes in Victoria.

In 1973 Hartnett House ceased its maternity home and adoption operations but continued as a children's home.

In 1975, Hartnett House established a Family Centre for Disadvantaged Families to focus on the needs of a group of selected local families. In the late 1970s, Hartnett House had become a multipurpose organisation focussing on the residential care of children, a registered day kindergarten, the family care centre and a registered day nursery. It also provided family support, and had organised key services into a 'child development and enrichment centre'. At this time the children's home was catering almost exclusively for wards of the State and it was reclassified as a Category 1 Children's Home. However, by late 1977 concern was being expressed by the Department that the Home's intake policy had changed to focus on the needs of the families attending the family centre, many of whom had children who needed some form of residential care but were not wards. Further, the Home would not take children over eight years old into its residential care program.

Sister Rita Burkitt, Matron, wrote in an article from September 1977 that Hartnett House continued to have facilities for 16 children. 'These children may still be wards of state or local children who are needing short term care because of family problems, or to provide a period of relief for an overtired or unwell mother' (*Hops, Steps and Jumps*, September 1977).

In 1982, Hartnett House was allocated 'conversion funding' to allow it to stay in long-term care. The funding required the closure of its long-term residential unit and the establishment of two family group homes in the north western suburbs. The Albion Street temporary care unit was transferred to a house in Brunswick in 1984.

During the mid-to-late 1980s Hartnett House continued to respond to the needs of the predominately migrant population in the Brunswick/Coburg area and by the mid 1990s, mainly due to changes in funding by the Government, the longer-term residential program and the Child and Family Development Unit were phased out. In their place the Mission established additional temporary care units and a long-term youth accommodation unit.

In 2009, the property which was formerly Hartnett House in Albion Street, Brunswick, was one of the bases for Melbourne City Mission's work in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Services provided out of the facility included a children's long day care centre, an Early Childhood Intervention Program, Child Care Links, Parent Support and other child, family and youth oriented programs.

## Gallery

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**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](http://www.flickr.com)

## More info

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### Chronology

- Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home (1900 - c. 1955)
- Melbourne City Mission Toddlers' Home (c. 1935 - c. 1955)
  - **Hartnett House (c. 1955 – 1990s)**

### Related Entries

## Run by

- [Melbourne City Mission \(1854 - 1970\)](#)  
Date: 1955 - 1970
- [Community Welfare Foundation \(1970 - 1979\)](#)  
Melbourne City Mission, which established Hartnett House, was known as Community Welfare Foundation between 1970 and 1979.  
Date: 1970 - 1979
- [Melbourne City Mission \(1979 - c. 2000\)](#)  
Date: 1979 - 1982

## Resources

- [Hartnett House, 117-123 Albion St, Brunswick, VIC, Australia](#), Australian Heritage Database, Place ID 18519, 2000
- Dagher, Banda, *Hartnett House Brunswick: its founder, its work, its history*, 2009
- *Apology heals pain*, Moreland Leader, 28 November 2009
- [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 Hartnett House
- Jolliffe, Jill, [My mother, myself](#), The Age, 31 May 2014

## Other Resources

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**Title:** Application to reside at Hartnett House

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 1965? - 1982?

[Details](#)

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**Title:** Sketch of Hartnett House

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 1960? - 1980?

[Details](#)

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## 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 \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
  - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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