

# St Joseph's Orphanage, Cowper

1913 – 1972

**Other Names:**

- Cowper
- Cowper Orphanage

## Details

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St Joseph's Orphanage Cowper, outside Grafton, was opened on 18 January 1914 by the Sisters of Mercy. The original clients were 'poor and destitute' children from families who were suffering during the economic downturn and parent loss during World War I. In 1972 the agency relocated to a site in North Street, Grafton and became known as St Joseph's Cowper Children's Homes.

When St Joseph's Orphanage, Cowper, opened in 1913 there were four children in residence, however at it's busiest the orphanaged housed 120 children. In total St Joseph's housed 2125 children from 1914 until 1972.

Initially St Joseph's received children from the age of three, and from 1945 began taking in children from as young as 6 months old.

The orphanage was financed by a dairy farm on farmland purchased by the Sisters of Mercy and later by the building of an egg production plant. Fruit and vegetables were grown in the gardens and orchards on the property. The children at the orphanage performed much of the work on the farm, as well as working in the laundry.

Older children at the orphanage attended local high schools in Cowper and Grafton, whilst some of the boys were sent to school in Westmead, near Sydney.

From 1930 the Sisters received child endowment payments, representing the first public money supporting the service. Mr Pollock, a Grafton solicitor, applied for the endowment and encouraged the Church and civil community to help St Joseph's with its running expenses.

By the time the orphanage moved to new premises in 1972 numbers at St Joseph's had fallen to 40.

## Gallery

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**St Joseph's Orphanage (Cowper)**

**Description:** This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

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## St Joseph's Orphanage, Cowper

**Description:** This is an image of St Joseph's Orphanage, Cowper, as published on the website of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia & Papua New Guinea. The photo shows a large, white rendered two storey building with small central balconies, situated behind a wire fence and gate with stone pillars. In the background more buildings of a similar style and size can be seen. This image is undated, the date included is an estimate.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- **St Joseph's Orphanage, Cowper (1913 – 1972)**
  - St Joseph's Cowper Children's Homes (1972 - 1994)
  - St Joseph's Cowper Incorporated (1993 - 1 October 2017)

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, Grafton Congregation \(1884 - 2011\)](#)

### Resources

- [The Cry of the Children: Mr P McGarry Introduces a Deputation: The Chief Secretary's Sympathetic Words](#), Freeman's Journal, 25 November 1915
- Apps, Lesley, [A Home Close to Our Hearts Celebrates 100 Years](#), The Daily Examiner, 2013
- 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

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

### Records

- [St Joseph's Cowper Records \(1912 - 2017\)](#)
  - [Correspondence files, multiple number series \(policy matters\) \(1922 - 1968\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-josephs-orphanage-cowper-3/>