

Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara

c. 1928 – 1977

Other Names:

- Waitara Foundling Home
- Waitara Orphanage
- Waitara
- Waitara Home

Details

Our Lady of Mercy Home was established in 1928 and was formerly known as Waitara Foundling Home and usually just as Waitara. The Home cared for children from birth to the age of 15, and from 1970, children aged 7-12. It also housed unmarried mothers. Our Lady of Mercy Home Waitara was replaced by the Mercy Family Life Centre in 1977.

The change in name from Waitara Foundling Home to the Our Lady of Mercy Home in 1928 reflected that the children it housed were not necessarily orphans.

From 1940 onwards, the Sisters began to take into care unmarried mothers who were awaiting the birth of a child. There was a home at Waitara for 40 young pregnant women, who received medical help and social assistance. During this period, the Home also had accommodation for twenty babies awaiting adoption and it was closely linked with the Mater Misericordiae Hospital.

Babies for adoption lived at Waitara for about a month, although some with disabilities or social disadvantages stayed longer. Care was also available for children up to seven years of age whose families had been disrupted temporarily by illness or separation.

In 1962 there were about 70 children in residence at Waitara. The Sisters of Mercy responded to new understandings of child care by adding a preschool, dividing the home into four units and building a free-standing cottage home in 1966, with a married couple as house parents. This housed eight children.

In 1963 the McAuley Mothercraft Training School, for mothercraft nurses, was developed on the site. Young lay women worked alongside the Sisters, caring for babies and young children in the Home.

Our Lady of Mercy Home was officially closed in 1977 and demolished so the land could be sold. The Mercy Family Life Centre opened in new buildings on another part of the site.

Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara, was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption. One woman who was at Waitara in the mid 1960s wrote in her submission that at Waitara, “my physical needs were certainly looked after, but emotionally and psychologically – nothing ... We had duties at the home and we looked after the young children there from around 6.00am to 6.00pm, six days per week”. She describes not being permitted to leave the grounds of the institution except on day visits with family members. “There was little conversation, except for some chatter among the girls at times. There was a strict adherence to lights out and other requirements and no excuses for not completing one’s duties – except if ill and on the attending doctor’s advice” (submission 373).

Gallery



Waitara dining room (mother's quarters)

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the dining room in the mother's quarters at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Young mother entering Home [Waitara]

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the back of a woman standing at the entrance gates of Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Waitara nursery

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows babies in cots in the nurse's room of Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Waitara nursery babies

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows babies in cots in Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Mother's quarters, Waitara

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows a bedroom at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



TV room, mother's quarters, Waitara

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the lounge room at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Lounge-dining, Waitara

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the lounge/dining room at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Renovated mother's quarters, Waitara

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows a bedroom at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Mothercraft Hospital (Waitara)

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows a bedroom at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Waitara Home - with children

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows young children outside Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Waitara Kindergarten - Sisters M Patrick Carter & Cora Carey

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows young children sitting at tables with activities, with two nuns assisting, inside Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



1954 [Waitara]

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows young children sitting at a large table for a party, with adults supervising, inside Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Fun on the swing [Waitara]

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows children sitting on a large swing outside with a clown pushing them.



Front of Home [Waitara and Our Lady of Mercy]

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the front of the building where Waitara Foundling Home and later, Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara operated.



Waitara Home [Our Lady of Mercy]

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the outside of Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Back View of Boys Home [Waitara]

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the outside of Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Administration Block and Nurses' Dining room originally [Waitara]

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the outside of the Administration Block and the Nurses' Dining Room at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Isolation Block [Waitara]

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the outside of the Isolation Block at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Waitara Kindergarten building

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the outside of the Kindergarten at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



McAuley Mothercraft Nursing Home, before 1978

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the outside of the McAuley Mothercraft Nursing Home at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Waitara Mercy Block and Nursery

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the outside of the Waitara Mercy Block and Nursery at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Waitara Old Chapel

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the inside of the Waitara Old Chapel at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.



Main Building - Ground floor Admin and children's recreation area

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation archives collection. This image shows the outside of the main building at Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara.

More info

Chronology

- Waitara Foundling Home (1898 - 1927)
 - **Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara (c. 1928 – 1977)**
 - Mercy Family Life Centre, Waitara (1977 - 1994)
 - Mercy Family Centre, Waitara (1994 - 2001)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation \(1865 - current\)](#)
Date: 1928 - 1977

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)
Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara, was mentioned in submission no 373 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption

Resources

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee, [Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 29 February 2012
- 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

- [Records of institutions run by the Sisters of Mercy \(North Sydney\) \(1903? - 1990?\)](#)
 - [Sisters of Mercy \(North Sydney\) Historical Records \(1898? - 2001?\)](#)
 - [Obstetric Medical Records, Mater Misericordiae Hospital \(1952 - 1982\)](#)
 - [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/our-lady-of-mercy-home-waitara/>