

# St Joseph's Providence

1880 – 1901

**Other Names:**

- The House of Providence
- The Home of Providence
- The Providence

## Details

---

St Joseph's Providence, or The Providence, operated at Dawes Point from 1880 then moved to The Rocks in 1881. Run by Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, The Providence took in boys and girls, and homeless women, as well as providing meals for destitute men. The Providence closed in 1901.

The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart operated The Providence at Dawes Point, near The Rocks, a notoriously poor slum area of Sydney. The Providence began in a six-roomed cottage in Gloucester Street then, a few months later, moved to a larger building in Kent Street.

In 1881 the Sisters of St Joseph acquired a three-storey stone building called 'Cheshunt', at 3 Cumberland Street. This house became The Providence, the Provincialate House for New South Wales, and, for a time, the base for the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph.

The Providence took in children, both boys and girls, and homeless women, as well as providing meals for destitute men. According to Kathleen Burford, in 1881 a *Daily Telegraph* letter by 'The Vagabond' wrote:

*An institution has been founded which has for one of its chief objects the rescuing of semi-outcast children from the evil influences of neglected or vicious guardians ... the objects of the Sisterhood are the visitation of the sick, instruction of the young, providing a home for old women and neglected and destitute children, and for young girls who may be temporarily in want of such.*

'The Vagabond' went on to describe some of the children in The Providence as 'the gutter-children type so common in the low neighbourhoods of Sydney.'

The Sisters of St Joseph also ran St Brigid's Girls School and St John's School in Kent Street, and supported their work by begging support on the streets of Sydney.

In 1887 the boys from The Providence were moved to a new residence at Kincumber South on the New South Wales central coast. Later the women were cared for by the Little Sisters of the Poor at Randwick in Sydney's eastern suburbs.

By 1900 The Providence housed ten women and 68 children, as well as the nuns. In August 1900 the New South Wales Government resumed the land on which The Providence stood as part of The Rocks Resumption Area. It paid compensation to the Sisters of St Joseph, who withdrew from Cumberland Street on 19 March 1901. They used this to place a deposit on a property on the Pacific Highway (then known as Lane Cove Road) at Gore Hill, in Sydney's north. This home, 'Gladstone House', became known as St Joseph's Girls' Home.

# Gallery



The presbytery at Kincumber where the sisters and 22 boys from the Providence, Dawes Point, took up residence in 1887

**Description:** This is a copy of an image reproduced in K.E. Burford's *Unfurrowed Fields*.

## More info

### Chronology

- **St Joseph's Providence (1880 – 1901)**
  - St Joseph's Girls' Home (1900 - 1979)

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(1866 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1985 - 1997

#### Related Organisations

- [St Joseph's Orphanage, Kincumber \(1887 - 1979\)](#)  
In 1887, 22 boys from The Providence were transferred to Kincumber.

### Resources

- Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, [History](#), 2009
- 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

- [Admission Forms \(dates uncertain\), St Joseph's Girls' Home \(1880? - 1979?\)](#)
- [Admission Registers, St Joseph's Girls' Home \(1880 - 1979\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-josephs-providence/>