

Bethesda Maternity Hospital

1957 – 1973

Other Names:

- Bethesda
- Bethesda Hospital

Details

Bethesda Maternity Hospital was a Salvation Army maternity home, rescue home and hospital located at Victoria Road and Lester Street, Marrickville. The Bethesda Hospital was a new building, erected on the same grounds as the Hopeleigh Maternity Hospital (which had also been referred to as 'Bethesda' since the 1920s). This Bethesda Hospital in Marrickville was not related to Bethesda Home for Waiting Mothers at Camperdown.

The Hopeleigh Maternity Hospital had been commonly referred to as Bethesda since it was extensively renovated in 1926, but the official name change appears to have occurred in March 1957, when a purpose-built maternity hospital was erected next to Hopeleigh.

The new building was named Bethesda Maternity Hospital and became the main building for the site. The Hopeleigh Hospital building was converted to nurse accommodation and a laundry. The site as a whole was known as Bethesda Maternity Hospital.

Bethesda Maternity Hospital served the same purposes as Hopeleigh: housing homeless women and girls, unmarried pregnant women without support, and some infants.

When Bethesda Maternity Hospital closed in 1973 the site was renamed Stead House and converted to a hostel for unmarried mothers, low income people and students. In 2007 the Salvation Army closed Stead House and sold the site to the developer. The Hopeleigh building and the Bethesda Maternity Hospital building were bought by developers and converted to apartments in 2011-2012.

Bethesda Maternity Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices Inquiry* (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption. One woman who was at Bethesda in the late 1950s made a submission to the inquiry. She stated that pregnant young women were generally sent to Bethesda six weeks before their expected delivery. This woman remembered having to work in the kitchen, on light duties. Residents were only allowed out once a week, on Saturdays from 2 until 4pm. She wrote: "We were always being told by the staff that it would best for our babies if we gave them up for adoption as we couldn't afford to keep them and they would have far better lives with a mother and a father. If we REALLY loved them we would give them up. We would forget about our babies and would marry and have other children and be happy". This woman signed the adoption papers for her son ("I had no one to help me and I didn't know what else to do"), and returned from the hospital to Bethesda with her baby where she fed and cared for him 3 weeks, before he was taken (submission 114).

More info

Chronology

- Hopeleigh Maternity Home (c. 1910 - 1956)
 - **Bethesda Maternity Hospital (1957 – 1973)**
 - Stead House (1973 - c. 2007)

Related Entries

Run by

- [The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory \(1921 - 2018\)](#)

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)

Bethesda Maternity Hospital is mentioned in submission 114 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

Related Organisations

- [Canowindra Girls' Home \(1942 - 1977\)](#)

Two children from Bethesda Maternity Hospital were taken to Canowindra Girls' Home in 1942.

Resources

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee, [Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 29 February 2012. *Relevance:* Submissions 265, 114, 170 refer to Bethesda Maternity Hospital

Records

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

Records

- [Salvation Army Australia, Records of Homes in the former Eastern Territory \(c. 1891 - 1990s\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/bethesda-maternity-hospital/>