

Scarba Welfare House for Women and Children

1917 – 1920

Other Names: • Welfare House

Details

The Scarba Welfare House for Women and Children at Bondi was opened in 1917 by the Benevolent Society of New South Wales as a home for women and babies. In 1920, the Board of the Benevolent Society decided to devote Scarba entirely to the care of young children and the name was changed to Scarba Welfare House for Children.

The NSW state government permitted the Benevolent Society to acquire the property at a nominal rent, for a five-year tenancy (*Sydney Morning Herald* 27 September 1917). An article from 1918 states that “the welfare house is planned on the system of keeping the mother and her infants together” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 May 1918). “Destitute mothers” whose babies were born at the Royal Hospital for Women’ were sent to Scarba, as were “a number of babies from the [Renwick Hospital](#)” (*The Sun*, 12 May 1918). The children at Scarba were aged up to 6 or 7 (*Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1919).

A newspaper article published when Scarba opened describes the institution, and provides some insights into how the Benevolent Society and broader public saw Scarba House in the post World War I period:

“Scarba” is the name of the house, which overlooks Bondi Beach, and commands extensive views of harbour and ocean. In its extensive grounds, children are already playing. Within its large, airy, sun-let rooms, seventeen women and thirty-five children are being cared for by the Society under the capable and efficient matronship of Nurse Oldham.

Adult inmates do the domestic work of the home, and attend to their own children under the supervision of the matron and a trained nurse.

No destitute mother is refused admittance. Her plight is a passport. No questions are asked, and she is allowed to remain at “Scarba” until things have righted themselves, or she is well enough to apply for employment outside ...

At a time like this, when we mourn the wastage of life through the war, the child is more than ever the nation’s asset. Every means used, such as the establishment of a Welfare Home as the “Scarba” type, for the restoration of the health of the mother, and the preservation of the life of the child, should receive the undivided support of the whole community (Sydney Stock and Station Journal, 12 October 1917).

In 1920, Scarba House stopped providing care to mothers as well as children. The 2006 history of Scarba published by the Benevolent Society states that “it was decided that this type of care did not represent the area of greatest need, particularly as several other shelters for homeless women had since begun operating” (Squires &

Slater, 2006, p.17). At that time, the name of the institution changed to Scarba Welfare House for Children.

Gallery



Official opening

Description: Official Opening by Mrs Fuller wife of Colonial Secretary, Scarba House, 26 September 1917.

More info

Chronology

- **Scarba Welfare House for Women and Children (1917 – 1920)**
 - Scarba Welfare House for Children (1920 - 1965)
 - Scarba House for Children (1965 - 1986)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Benevolent Society of New South Wales \(1813 - current\)](#)
Date: 1917 - 1920

Related Organisations

- [Renwick Hospital for Infants, Thomas Street \(1911 - 1920\)](#)
Women and children from Renwick Hospital for Infants were transferred to Scarba in 1917.
- [Post Adoption Resource Centre \(1991 - current\)](#)
The staff of the Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC) is willing to discuss aspects of the history of Scarba Welfare House for Women and Children with former clients and their relatives. PARC also handles complaints. People do not need to have been adopted to use this service.

Resources

- Bluett, Ros, [Charity and Justice: The early days of the Benevolent Society in Sydney](#), 24 March 2013
- Benevolent Society, *Benevolent Society: 200 year celebration: Last 200*, 2013

Records

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

Records

- [Benevolent Society of New South Wales Collection, 1813-1996 \(1813 - 1996\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/scarba-welfare-house-for-women-and-children/>