

# Carramar

1961 – 1984

**Other Names:**

- Carramar Maternity Home
- Carramar Hostel

## Details

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Carramar, also called Carramar Maternity Home and Carramar Hostel, was an Anglican home for unmarried mothers that opened at Turramurra in 1961. It was run by the [Home Mission Society](#) and at its peak held up to 27 women. Mothers who kept their babies were sent to a post-natal cottage at Berowra. Its staff also arranged adoptions and the [Carramar Adoption Agency](#) was set up as part of Carramar. Carramar and the Berowra post-natal cottage closed in 1984, and two new, smaller [Carramar Homes](#) were established in their place.

In 1966 the ABC Four Corners television programme visited Carramar as part of a story on adoption, and footage from the Home was featured in a 2012 Four Corners story about forced adoptions.

One of the Matrons at Carramar was Shirley Jones. She organised adoptions of the babies of unmarried mothers. Jones was interviewed in 1970 for an episode of the tv program Four Corners about unmarried mothers.

*FOUR CORNERS REPORTER (1970): Carramar's Matron Jones explained that the girl can see her baby at least once, but not hold it or feed it. Is she told much about the new parents?*

*SHIRLEY JONES (1970): Yes, I do like to let the girl know – if she particularly wants to know; most of them do – the type of work the adopting father would do, and the type of suburb. Nothing that would identify the actual suburb.*

*FOUR CORNERS REPORTER (1970): So, the two parties can never meet?*

*SHIRLEY JONES (1970): No, no ("Given or taken?" – Four Corners).*

While most babies born to mothers who had stayed at Carramar were put up for adoption, some mothers were able to keep their babies. The Home Mission Society provided a separate cottage at Berowra that gave post-natal care and support for mothers who were keeping their babies. An article published in *The Australian Church Record* in 1975 reported that about 15% of girls who went through Carramar kept their babies, and that social workers visited regularly to discuss with the young women the "pros and cons" of keeping their babies ('Alternative to Abortion? Carramar Hostel sets out another way', 16 October 1975). Another article, published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1976, celebrated Carramar as a place where girls could make up their minds about keeping or adopting their babies "free from the pressures that build up in their own families" ('No Pressuring into Adoption', 11 July 1976). However, girls who stayed at Carramar often had a very different perspective about the level of choice they had in keeping their babies, and the pressures they faced in making their decisions.

Carramar 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's submission to the Forced Adoptions inquiry stated that young women in Carramar in the mid 1960s were not advised of any help that might be available if they kept their babies. "We were told constantly we would be wrong to keep our babies. We were told our babies would be called 'bastards' by the neighbours and the public if we dared to keep them ... we were brainwashed against keeping our babies by a cold uncaring Matron and staff" (submission no 112). Another woman who was in Carramar in the mid 1970s described similar treatment in her submission: "... we were subjected to intense propaganda, aimed at having us relinquish our babies. The most common line being, if we really loved our babies, we would give them away, to a proper two parent family" (submission no 248).

This woman stated that the women at Carramar who planned to keep their babies were treated differently:

*It only ever seemed to be one or two at any given time ... out of about 20 residents. The staff made it quite obvious that they weren't considered to be doing the right thing. If you were keeping your baby you were not allowed to talk to the other girls about your decision or your plans. It also guaranteed you a single room ... no doubt so you wouldn't contaminate your room mate's thinking on the matter of adoption (submission no 248).*

Another woman, Jan, wrote in her submission to the Forced Adoptions inquiry (submission no 93) about how she felt diminished and demoralised by her treatment at Carramar, which she believed was intended to make the girls more compliant.

*...I was given a bed in "the dungeon" with six teenagers. I was unable to come to grips with the noise, the mess, the altercations, the damp musty smell, the fact that it was underground with one small dormer window at ground level (outside), but at a height of 10 feet inside. I had never lived in a cellar before... I believe my new circumstances were designed to throw me back to an earlier stage of personality development – I simply regressed... Diminished living standards, isolation, loss of family and friendships all contribute to a diminished sense of self. The subsequent 'psychological diminution' became part of their incarceration model – the desired outcome the authorities needed to make sure the young women 'went quietly'.*

Girls at Carramar described a sense of shame imposed on them, and how they were distanced from the rest of society. In her submission to the Forced Adoptions Inquiry (submission no 402), Angela wrote:

*They had a special time for us to visit the prenatal clinic at Hornsby Hospital, so we did not come into contact with real mothers. If we went to the shops for personal items we were only allowed to go in two's, so as not to upset the home owners in the area who had complained about us "walking the streets in our state", we were a large blot on their pleasant society and the church did not want any trouble. Shop keepers commented that we were from the local "baby factory"... Mixing with other residents was not frowned upon, but they did not want us to form friendships as we would never see each other again, and if we did we would not be able to tell anyone how we knew each other, and this would cause a lot of embarrassment for all concerned.*

The daily routine for girls at Carramar involved a mix of chores, lectures about childbirth and about the benefits of adoption, exercises, medical appointments, social worker visits, vocational guidance including lessons on typing and shorthand, handcraft and art, chapel services, and social visits. Angela (submission no 402) described some aspects of life at Carramar:

*They had a routine, everyone was given chores for the week, your first week was to cook the evening meal for everyone. The local Minister came every Wednesday night for dinner, so it was a roast dinner and it had to be perfect. It was Wednesday. I was quickly shown what had to be done and left with another new girl, and we cooked for 30 people, dinner and dessert. Then washed and cleaned up. My introduction to home life for the next few months.*

*In the days there you had specific exercises to do, so when you went back to a normal life, it wouldn't look like you had been through pregnancy. We did these twice a day, no excuses.*

*Jobs were washing everyone's linen, breakfast, lunch, taking out the garbage, everything needed to run a large hostel with 30 residents.*

*The days went in a blur, and the lectures continual. Shows and talks on childbirth were given, to prepare us. Television was timed and supervised, reading was preferred.*

Carramar closed in 1984. A February 1984 article in the Home Mission Society newsletter *Pulse* explained the reasons for closing the Home, and the decision to move the Home's operations to group homes near Parramatta. The article describes how the Home worked and mentions the post-natal cottage at Berowra for women who were keeping their babies. It also gives a sense of how society, even in the 1980s, judged unmarried mothers:

*After much consideration over many years by the Care Force management committee, it has been decided to sell the "Carramar" Hostel for single pregnant girls at Turramurra. The work will be relocated in smaller houses in the Parramatta area, which is now the centre of Sydney.*

*Reasons for the decision included the costs of maintaining the very large building on Boomerang Street, Turramurra, and its unsuitability for a small number of girls. Also, many of the girls felt that Turramurra was too expensive for them to shop in, too far from the centre of things and too different from where they came from. They felt conspicuous in the area.*

*Carramar at Turramurra has given 23 years of most valuable service. In its early years, it was often full, with a substantial waiting list. At times, up to 27 girls were accommodated. In recent years the numbers fluctuated greatly, but averaged about nine girls.*

*It is planned to replace "Carramar" with two smaller houses; one for younger girls with live-in staff and the other for girls over 20 who will look after themselves with assistance from staff. All staff will be trained in social work and will implement programmes designed to assist the girls, emotionally and spiritually.*

*The post-natal cottage at Berowra has also been closed, but this important work for girls who are keeping their babies will be recommenced near the other hostels when they begin to operate.*

*One suitable house has already been located for a new "Carramar" not far from Parramatta, but some opposition from neighbours is being experienced and patience, tact and prayer are required.*

*Our aim is to provide an accepting, homey, comfortable and caring environment where God's love is shown in a community context with which the majority of girls would be familiar.*

After Carramar closed the building was demolished and the site subdivided into lots for two houses. The Anglican Home Mission Society then established two new Carramar Homes at Girraween (near Parramatta), and at Turramurra.

# Gallery

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## Carramar

**Description:** Carramar maternity home in Turramurra, from ABC Four Corners 1965-1966. In 1966 the ABC Four Corners television programme visited Carramar, as part of a story on adoption and footage from the Home was featured in a 2012 Four Corners story about forced adoptions.

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## The former Carramar Hostel, Turramurra

**Description:** This is a scan that was made by the staff of Anglicare Out of Home Care Services of an image that appeared in the 13 February 1984 issue of the Care Force newsletter *Pulse*, showing Carramar.

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# More info

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## Chronology

- **Carramar (1961 – 1984)**
  - Carramar Homes (1984 - 1999)

## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Home Mission Society of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney \(1857 - 1997\)](#)

### Related Events

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

Carramar was mentioned in submission 38, 93, 109 and 112 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

### Related Organisations

- [Church of England Adoption Agency \(1965 - 1978\)](#)
- [Carramar Adoption Agency \(1960 - 1965\)](#)
- [Anglican Adoption Agency \(1978 - 1997\)](#)

### Related Concepts

- [Adoption in New South Wales \(c. 1923 - current\)](#)

## Resources

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee, [Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 29 February 2012
- Alan Gill, *City of God grows in heart of Sydney*, The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 May 1976
- Alan Gill, *Off to a good start: Giving the young a chance*, The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 March 1978

# Records

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

## Records

- [Records of the Anglicare Adoption Services \(1961 - current\)](#)
  - [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/carramar-2/>