

Alexandra Home for Women

1916 – 1950

Other Names: • Alexandra Home

Details

The Alexandra Home for Women was the new name given in 1916 to the House of Mercy in Highgate, Perth. The Alexandra Home was run by a private committee of management and continued primarily as a maternity home for unmarried mothers, with some married women also admitted. By 1950, it was known as The Alexandra Home for Mothers and Babies (Inc) and Mothercraft Training School, remaining in the Highgate premises.

The Alexandra Home for Women was a maternity home that had commenced in 1891 as the House of Mercy, changing its name in 1916. It was commonly known as the Alexandra Home.

In its early years the Alexandra Home accommodated not only unmarried women who were sent by family or self-referred, but also married women who paid for their confinements, and young women who were referred through child welfare, health or, occasionally, Aboriginal welfare authorities. The policy of the Home was to admit unmarried women for their first confinement only.

From 1936, babies were born at the King Edward Memorial Hospital, and mothers and babies came to the Alexandra Home afterwards. Writing its history in *The Open Door* (1980), Jean Lang reported (p.46) that 36 babies were adopted from the Alexandra Home in 1949: 'with careful checking as to suitability they were placed into good, comfortable homes'. Not all babies were adopted, according to Lang: 'Although there was a long waiting list for adoptions, the policy of the Home was that mothers should keep their babies if possible'.

Between September and December 1917 there 6 women were admitted to the Home. In 1922, there were 23 admissions, with 14 babies born. A new nursery was opened in 1924 to provide extra space. By 1945, 88 women and 58 babies were admitted.

The single women who were admitted to the Home worked in the laundry, which was run on a commercial basis as a source of income for the Home until 1934.

In December 1949, the Alexandra Home received its formal Registration of Mothercraft Training. A new wing, named after the Home's patron Lady Mitchell, was built to accommodate trainees. This was Western Australia's first Mothercraft Training Scheme.

By 1950, the Home became known as The Alexandra Home for Mothers and Babies (Inc) and Mothercraft Training School. It remained in the Lincoln Street premises in Highgate.

Gallery



The Alexandra Home for Women in Lincoln-street, North Perth, founded over 37 years ago for the care and protection of young mothers.
(The Interregnum—"Women's Institute")

Home for Women

Description: This item from *The West Australian* is published on the National Library of Australia's website, *Trove*. It shows the Alexandra Home for Women in 1928.

More info

Chronology

- House of Mercy (1891 - 1916)
 - **Alexandra Home for Women (1916 – 1950)**
 - The Alexandra Home for Mothers and Babies (Inc) and Mothercraft Training School (1950 - 1956)
 - Ngala Mothercraft Home and Training Centre Inc (1956 - 1989)

Related Entries

Related Events

- [Inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices, Western Australian government \(2023 - 2024\)](#)
The WA inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices found that the Alexandra Home for Women played a significant role in past forced adoptions.

Related Organisations

- [King Edward Memorial Hospital \(1916 - current\)](#)
From 1936 babies whose mothers were in the Alexandra Home were born at the King Edward Memorial Hospital, and mothers and babies went to the Alexandra Home afterwards.
Date: 1936 - 1950
- [Public Charities and State Children Department, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1908 - 1 January 1917\)](#)
The Public Charities and State Children Department placed young women at the Alexandra Home for Women.
Date: 1916 - 1917
- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)
The Child Welfare Department placed young women at the Alexandra Home for Women and arranged some adoptions from the Home.
Date: 1927 - 1950
- [State Children Department, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 22 December 1927\)](#)
The State Children Department placed young women at the Alexandra Home for Women.
Date: 1917 - 1927

Resources

- [Interview with Helen Jean Duncan, by Chris Jeffery](#), 1977
- [Happy and Carefree Natures Caught By the Cameraman In These Studies of Young Western Australians](#), Sunday Times, 5 February 1939
- Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia, [Submission No 55 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), July 2003
- Maison, Barbara, [Submission No 97 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 14 July 2003
- [Maternity Home Regulations](#), Government Gazette of Western Australia, 20 October 1944
- [Applications for Enforcement](#), The Western Australian Industrial Gazette, 24 February 1925

Records

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

Records

- [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
 - [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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