

Hillcrest Maternity Home

1922 – 1974

- Other Names:**
- Salvation Army Maternity Hospital
 - Hillcrest Maternity Hospital
 - Hillcrest Midwifery Hospital and Toddlers Home
 - Maternity Home, North Fremantle
 - Salvation Army Maternity Home, North Fremantle
 - Hillcrest Maternity Hospital and Hostel for Unmarried Mothers

Details

Hillcrest Maternity Home in North Fremantle was opened by the Salvation Army in 1922. It continued the previous maternity home, which had been known as the 'Open Door' and 'Hopetoun'. Young women who were wards of the state were admitted, and also private maternity patients. Many babies were adopted from Hillcrest. In 1974, maternity services ceased and the Home was used for aged care.

Hillcrest was a maternity home in North Fremantle that was run by the Salvation Army. The hospital first opened in 1903 as 'The Open Door' maternity home at premises leased from Mr William A. Saw in Swan Street, North Fremantle. Newspaper articles at the time show that the name was chosen because the Salvation Army wanted to open the door to 'unmarried mothers' who might be shunned by society.

In 1910 the hospital moved to Harvest Road, on a site previously occupied by the Salvation Army's 'Prison Gate' service. The property next door, 'Hill Crest', was donated to the Maternity Home by Mrs Francis Pearse in late 1920 or early 1921. When the maternity services moved into Hillcrest, the previous property was used, for a time, as a Children's Home until 1924, when it became an aged-care facility.

Hillcrest moved to the corner of Kings Park Road and Ventnor Avenue, West Perth, during World War II and returned to the Harvest Road site afterwards.

A history of Hillcrest written in 1995, held by the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA, uses hospital records from 1952-1957 to state that 2,113 mothers and 367 unmarried mothers were at the hospital. The publication stated that these 367 single mothers, who were treated as a separate category to the "mothers" at Hillcrest, were "cared for in their time of distress, and helped to return to normal rightful living" (*Hillcrest Senior Citizens' Residence History*, 1995).

Hillcrest functioned as a general maternity hospital serving the southern suburbs, but its principal purpose was the admission of 'deserted wives, unmarried mothers, regardless of age, creed or colour'.

A fundraising pamphlet from the 1960s described Hillcrest's hostel for 'unmarried mothers', showing the high rate of adoptions:

During the last year the Unmarried Mothers section admitted 170 women and girls, 134 babies were born at the hospital and 93 adoptions were carried through. Serving the community in Western Australia, published 1966-1969

The year referred to is unknown, but would have been between 1966 and 1969. The document reported that 462 babies in total were born at Hillcrest in that year; so more than one third of all births at that period were from single mothers, with around 70 percent of those babies adopted. At the time, this was seen as a positive outcome.

By 1974, maternity services at Hillcrest had ceased.

Hillcrest re-opened in 1978 as an aged-care residence and continued in that role until 2008 when the facility closed.

Hillcrest Maternity Home 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 Hillcrest in the mid 1960s wrote in her submission that she “entered the unmarried mothers’ home attached to the hospital” in her last 6 weeks of pregnancy.

The vivid memories I have of that time include being constantly reminded verbally that ‘if you love your baby you will give it up for adoption as you are cannot raise a child properly’ ... The message constantly reinforced seemed to be that I could not possibly care for my child but two strangers could. There was no suggestion of how I might be assisted to provide for my child (submission 62).

Gallery



Hillcrest exterior view, front

Description: 'Hillcrest exterior view, front' is a digital copy of an undated photograph held in the *Hillcrest photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. It shows the original 'Hill Crest' building frontage.



Hillcrest exterior view, side (I)

Description: 'Hillcrest exterior view, side (I)' is a digital copy of an undated, mounted photocopy held in the *Hillcrest photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. It shows the covered verandahs at the side and rear of the main building.



Hillcrest exterior view, side (II)

Description: 'Hillcrest exterior view, side (II)' is a digital copy of an undated photograph held in the *Hillcrest photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. It shows the covered verandahs at the side and rear of the main building.



Hillcrest in North Fremantle

Description: 'Hillcrest in North Fremantle' is a digital copy of an undated photograph held in the *Hillcrest photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA, showing its position high on the hill.



Hillcrest Hospital 1958, old and new wings

Description: 'Hillcrest Hospital 1958, old and new wings' is a digital copy of a photograph held in the *Hillcrest photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. The caption reads, 'Hillcrest Hosp. 1958'. It shows the new wing of the hospital, which had been built in 1957, to the right of the original building.



Hillcrest, North Fremantle, 1921

Description: 'Hillcrest, North Fremantle, 1921' is a digital copy of a photocopied page from the book, *Property Souvenir, Australia; a record of progress, 1909-1921* (p.42). The excerpt is held in the *Hillcrest photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. The caption reads in part, 'Mrs. F.C. Pearse transferred "Hillcrest" in fulfilment of the desires of her late husband' and dates the image as 1921. Another version of the image is held in the same file and comes from *The War Cry* dated (by hand) 14 May 1921, with the caption: 'Hillcrest as viewed from Helen Street. The Coachman's House and Motor Garage are seen on the right'.



SA Hospital North Fremantle

Description: 'SA Hospital North Fremantle' is a digital copy of an undated photograph held in the *Hillcrest photos* file at the Salvation Army Heritage Museum WA. It shows the Salvation Army's maternity hospital, Hillcrest.

More info

Chronology

- Salvation Army Home for Neglected Girls, Perth (1894 - 1898)
 - Cornelie Home (1898 - 1903)
 - The Open Door (1903 - 1922)
- Hillcrest Maternity Home (1922 – 1974)

Related Entries

Run by

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

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)
Hillcrest Maternity Home was mentioned in submissions 62, 200, and 384 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [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 Hillcrest Maternity Home played a significant role in past forced adoptions.

Resources

- Western Australia. Department for Community Development, [ROADS. An index of locations and access to adoption records.](#), 2005
- Kirkham, John C, *Southern Soup-Soap-Salvation, a compendium of Salvation Army Social Services in the Australian Southern Territory*, 2003
- The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territorial Headquarters (Vic), [Submission No. 46 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care: Appendix A: Children's Homes - A list of openings, closings and function](#), July 2003
- Foster, Darren J, [Submission No 347 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 3 April 2004
- [Salvation Army's Jubilee](#), Western Mail, 15 February 1945
- Grant, Beryl, *Ngala*, Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia, 2009. *Relevance*: p.636
- [Submission No 200 to the Senate Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), Submissions received by the Committee, 2012
- *Welcomed to West Australia*, The War Cry, 25 September 1926
- [Maternity Home Regulations](#), Government Gazette of Western Australia, 20 October 1944

Other Resources



Title: Hopetoun Maternity Hospital, Harvest Road, North Fremantle [later, 'Hillcrest']
Type: Image
Date: 2003
[Details](#)

Title: Cornelia Home, Lincoln Street
Type: Image
Date: 2003
[Details](#)

Records

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

Records

- [Historical information, memorabilia and photographs of the Salvation Army](#)
- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
- [Children's Homes Files, Western Australian Salvation Army Homes \(1897 - 2012\)](#)
- [Tuart Place Historical Photos Collection](#)
- [Salvation Army Australia, Records of Homes in the former Southern Territory \(c. 1889 - c. 1988\)](#)
- [Hillcrest Records \(1912 - 1974\)](#)
- [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
- [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/hillcrest-maternity-home/>