

# St Margaret's Hostel

1918 – 1971

**Other Names:** • St Margaret's Home for Pregnant Girls

## Details

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St Margaret's Hostel for 'unmarried mothers and their babies' was run by the Sisters of Mercy from 1918 as an extension of St Vincent's Foundling Home in Subiaco. It is probable that babies from St Margaret's were adopted, fostered or lived at St Vincent's Foundling Home until they were old enough to be moved to St Vincent's Girls' Orphanage or Castledare. St Margaret's Hostel (also known as St Margaret's Home for Pregnant Girls) closed in 1971.

In evidence to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the State Children Act Amendment Bill in October 1918, the Catholic Archbishop of Perth described St Margaret's Hostel. Newly added at a cost of £12,000, they hoped to accommodate mothers and their children for 'nine months, with the object of safeguarding infant life, because we believe that the breast feeding is the one remedy.' Women might pay to stay at St Margaret's or 'if necessary' they would 'take the mother and her child for nothing'. This was funded through 'entertainments' and donations. These women were 'expected to do the washing, and keep the place clean.' The Archbishop reported there were 7 women admitted at that time, but there was room for 20.

St Margaret's Hostel was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Inquiry (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

The 2024 report of the Western Australian government's Inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices contained a finding that "Women at institutions operated by the Sisters of Mercy including St Margaret's Hostel, the Catherine McAuley Centre, and St Anne's Maternity Home were made to perform unpaid labour, which included caring for children who were not their own (p.258).

## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, Perth Congregation \(1846 - 2011\)](#)

#### Related Events

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

St Margaret's Hostel was mentioned in submission 279 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 institutions operated by the Sisters

of Mercy (now Institute of Sisters of Mercy Australia and Papua New Guinea) engaged in pressure and coercion practices which caused unmarried mothers to agree to the adoption of their children.

### Related Organisations

- [St Vincent's Foundling Home \(1914 - 1971\)](#)  
St Margaret's Hostel was built as an extension of St Vincent's Foundling Home.
- [Metropolitan Charities Appeal Association \[Western Australia\] \(3 January 1918 - July 1918?\)](#)  
The Metropolitan Charities helped fund the building of St Margaret's Hostel.
- [St Gerard's Hospital \(1944 - c. 1972\)](#)  
Many of the young women whose babies were born at St Gerard's had come from St Margaret's Hostel.  
Date: 1944 - 1971
- [Home of the Good Shepherd, Leederville \(1902 - 1979\)](#)  
Pregnant women from the Home of the Good Shepherd, Leederville were sent to St Margaret's Hostel to have their babies.

## Resources

- McLay, Anne, [Women Out of Their Sphere: A History of the Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia](#), 1992
- Heritage Council of Western Australia, [Catherine McAuley Centre](#), inHerit: our heritage places, 8 February 2015
- [Maternity Home Regulations](#), Government Gazette of Western Australia, 20 October 1944

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