

St Anne's Maternity Home

c. 1958 – 1982

Other Names:

- St Anne's Maternity Hospital
- St Anne's Hospital

Details

St Anne's Maternity Home was run by the Sisters of Mercy from around 1958 in the Perth suburb of Mount Lawley. During this time St Anne's was referred to as both a Hospital and a Home, with the terms being used interchangeably. Many babies were adopted from St Anne's in this period. In 1982 the Home was officially renamed St Anne's Mercy Hospital.

One former patient described St Anne's in a submission to the Western Australian government Inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices:

I lived in a shared room with [another resident]. We made baby blankets and nighties for the nursery. There was a lounge area where we would sit of an evening and lovely gardens to walk around. I don't remember being given any counselling. I also don't remember having any visitors although my sister says she remembers coming to see me (submission 52, quoted in Broken Bonds 2024, p.77).

Another woman's experience staying at St Anne's was much more negative:

We were treated like criminals. We were not allowed to leave our rooms and be seen by any visitors at the hospital, during visiting hours. If we disobeyed their strict rules, we would be told to leave. We were not allowed more than one visitor a week, and that was only one person. We were given meals and that was about it. I do not remember much else about this time before the birth of my child (submission 322).

St Anne's Maternity Home was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption. The hospital offered an organisational apology in Perth in March 2010 (Senate, 2012, p.199). A woman who was at the hospital in 1967 stated that at St Anne's "I had been conditioned and constantly told that the baby wasn't mine" (submission 52, quoted in *Broken Bonds* 2024, p.79).

The 2024 report of the WA government's forced adoptive policies and practices inquiry 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). It also found that St Anne's arranged adoptions in the 20th century.

One submission to the WA inquiry described how a staff member at St Anne's treated her as a single woman:

The day came when I was admitted to St. Anne's to be induced. I really had no idea what was going on. I just did as I was told. A seemingly kind nun was escorting me to a ward. She had her arm around my shoulder and said, "You are such a tiny little thing. Is your husband very big?" "I don't have a husband," I replied. She immediately removed her arm and her manner towards me changed completely (submission 7, quoted on p.259).

More info

Chronology

- St Anne's Nursing Home (1937 - c. 1958)
 - **St Anne's Maternity Home (c. 1958 – 1982)**
 - St Anne's Mercy Hospital (1982 - 1997)
 - Mercy Hospital (1997 - 2014)
 - St John of God Mount Lawley Hospital (2014 - current)

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 Anne's Maternity Home was mentioned in the submissions 13; 150; 234; 279; and 322 to the Senate inquiry into forced adoptions
- [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.

Resources

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee, [Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 29 February 2012
- Dobbyn, Paul, [New Apology Call](#), Catholic Leader, 11 March 2012
- McLay, Anne, [Women Out of Their Sphere: A History of the Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia](#), 1992
- Western Australia. Department for Community Development, [ROADS. An index of locations and access to adoption records.](#), 2005
- Hendriksen, Judith, [Submission No 13 to the Senate Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 2012
- Murphy, Marilyn, [Submission No 150 to the Senate Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 2012
- Edwards, Catherine, [Submission No 234 to the Senate Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 2012
- [Maternity Home Regulations](#), Government Gazette of Western Australia, 20 October 1944

Records

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

Records

- [St Anne's Hospital Records \(1937 - 1982\)](#)
 - [Richard S. Haynes & Co Adoption Files \[Mr Bryant's client files\] \(1946 - 1980\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-annes-maternity-home/>