

Larundel

1953 – 1999

Other Names:

- Larundel Mental Hospital
- Larundel Psychiatric Hospital
- Larundel Asylum
- Larundel Receiving House

Details

Larundel Mental Hospital was officially established by the Victorian Mental Hygiene Branch in 1953. It was located on the same site as the [Mont Park Mental Hospital](#), and had been constructed to ease overcrowding there and at other Victorian hospitals like the Kew Mental Hospital. Larundel was primarily a hospital for short and long-term adult mental health patients, however it is known to have admitted some young people and children, who lived on the same wards as adults patients.

Larundel first opened in 1949 as an extension of Mont Park. The first 30 patients were admitted from Mont Park in that year, with more transferred from Beechworth Asylum in 1951 following a fire there. Patients continued to be admitted as new wards opened, and by the time Larundel was officially opened as a stand-alone Hospital in 1953 there were already almost 400 patients in residence. When construction of Larundel was completed in the late 1950s there was capacity for around 800 patients.

The admission of children and teenagers to Larundel is not mentioned in any of its official histories, however several former patients have described their placements there as teenagers. One former patient, 'Morgana', who was admitted to Larundel at 14, described her time there, and her later visit to the ruins of Larundel, in a comment on a blogpost about urban exploration. She writes:

It was a very strange experience. Many things that had happened became a haze, drugs, denial and time all played on how I remember things, until I went there today and everything was as I remembered it.

I have never experienced anything quite like walking through a place a seeing yourself in various rooms. Remembering the isolation units, your bedroom, the games room, finally finding the elevator that my family always told me never existed. That elevator features heavily for me as it was the journey to the ECT rooms.... ('Morgana', 31 March 2012, comment on Larundel Revisit blog post)

Larundel was seen as a leader in mental health treatment and training in Victoria, and was considered to be one of the most progressive mental health facilities in the country (Jefferies & Leggatt, 'Out of the Madhouse', 2020). This progressive approach to mental health treatment included the introduction of music, art, and group therapy alongside occupational therapy programs. Patients could participate in musical groups, arts and crafts activities, sports, social nights and dances, and gardening. There was an on-site cafe and kiosk for them to purchase food and drink from, they could go on excursions to concerts, cinemas, the zoo, picnics, swimming-pools, shopping centres, and on holidays at a house in Portsea that was owned by the hospital.

Despite these activities, there was an ongoing sense of boredom for many of the patients at Larundel. Sandy Jeffs, who describes herself as an inmate of Larundel in her book *Out of the Madhouse* (Jeffs & Leggatt, 2020), states how her time at Larundel was “exceedingly dull and boring”, and there was little to do other than watch TV or smoke – a very common habit among the patients. This lack of activity, according to Jeffs, resulted in “too much time to become immersed in your own world, to become fixated on your own existential angst. Hospital life was to be endured until you were discharged.”

Larundel’s “progressive” methods also saw the introduction of mixed-gender wards in the 1960s. It was believed that the presence of female patients would have a calming influence on male patients, however in reality it caused significant issues for the safety of female patients. Former patients and staff at Larundel have reported incidences of sexual abuse perpetrated against patients by both other patients and staff members as being so common that many of the female patients were put on birth control while at Larundel.

From the 1970s numbers of patients at Larundel began to decline due to changing methods of treatment of people with mental illness, as well as changing attitudes towards large institutions. The drop in population resulted in wards that previously held 45 patients being reduced to 25 patients, providing patients with more privacy and space to themselves.

As numbers at Mont Park, Larundel, Plenty Mental Hospital, and Kingsbury [Training Centre](#) continued to decline through the 1970s and 1980s the Victorian Health Commission made the decision to amalgamate these facilities back into one organisation. This amalgamation occurred in 1991, with the formation of the North Eastern Metropolitan Psychiatric Services. Patient numbers at the site continued to drop, as patients were transferred to community-based in-patient facilities where appropriate. Larundel was closed in 1999, and the remaining patients were transferred to the Austin Hospital. The site was sold, and was re-developed into housing and a shopping centre.

Gallery



Larundel, Blocks A and B, front

Description: This is a photograph of the main hospital block, also known as ward blocks A and B, at Larundel. It shows a large red brick two-storey building in mock tudor style. The building is covered in graffiti, and all of the windows have been boarded up. It is surrounded by security fencing.



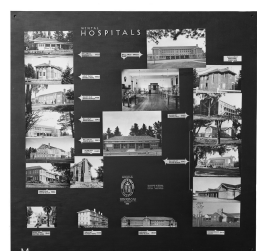
Larundel Psychiatric Hospital

Description: This is a photograph of ward and hospital blocks at Larundel. It shows several large two-storey brick buildings in mock-tudor style, with grasslands in the foreground. This photo was taken several years before Larundel opened as a hospital.



Larundel Psychiatric Hospital

Description: This is a photograph of the main hospital block at Larundel. It shows a large two-storey brick building in mock-tudor style. This photo was taken several years before Larundel opened as a hospital.



Mental Hospitals (around Victoria designed by Percy Everett)

Description: This is a poster created by the Victorian Department of Public Works to show buildings at Mental Hospitals around Victoria that had been designed and built by the department. It includes images of ward blocks, administration offices, and staff residences at Ballarat Mental Hospital, Sunbury Mental Hospital, Mont Park, Janefield, Larundel, and Brierley Hospital Warrnambool.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Health and Community Services, State Government of Victoria \(1992 - 1995\)](#)
- [Department of Health, State Government of Victoria \(1985 - 1992\)](#)
- [Health Commission of Victoria \(1978 - 1985\)](#)
- [Mental Health Authority, State of Victoria \(1962 - 1978\)](#)
- [Mental Hygiene Branch \(1944 - 1959\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Mont Park \(1912 - c.1997\)](#)

Larundel was built as an extension to Mont Park, and was located on the northern edge of the Mont Park site.

Records

Records

- [Records of Larundel, Public Record Office Victoria \(1951 - 1991\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/larundel/>