

St Joseph's Receiving Home

1902 – 1985

Details

St Joseph's Receiving Home, Carlton, was established by Margaret Goldspink in 1902. In 1905 the Receiving Home moved to Grattan Street, Carlton, when it came under the management of the Sisters of St Joseph. It offered shelter to many thousands of pregnant women and also provided short term residential care to children. The Receiving Home closed in 1985 when it was merged with St Joseph's Babies Home to form the new St Joseph's Babies' and Family Service in Glenroy.

St Joseph's Receiving Home, on Barkly Street, Carlton, was established by Margaret Goldspink in 1902. The Home offered shelter to many thousands of pregnant women and also provided short term residential care to children. The Receiving Home was open to women of any denomination (in 1911, 20% of mothers at the home were non-Catholics).

Mrs Margaret Goldspink (nee Fitzsimons) was a prominent Catholic layperson working with women and children in the late nineteenth century in Melbourne. Goldspink was the secretary of the Ladies Association of Charity, founded in 1887 by Catholic women, when they learned that women were excluded from membership of the St Vincent de Paul Society. She was an important figure in the establishment of St Joseph's Receiving Home in Carlton in 1902. Before the Home opened, Mrs Goldspink, according to Archbishop Carr, had been more or less single-handedly assisting pregnant women for years.

St Joseph's Receiving Home's first location was in Barkly Street, Carlton, from 1902 to 1905. This property was situated in close proximity to Mrs Goldspink's own home, and the Women's Hospital.

As an 'approved carer' under Victorian legislation, Goldspink also accommodated children deemed to be 'neglected' at the Barkly Street home.

The Archbishop organised a management committee to assist Mrs Goldspink in the running of the Home in May 1902.

In 1905 the Receiving Home moved to Grattan Street, Carlton, when it came under the management of the Sisters of St Joseph. This property, at 90 Grattan Street, was even closer to the Women's Hospital.

Barnard and Twigg write of the expectation that mothers could seek refuge at the Receiving Home for the last months of pregnancy, have the baby at the Hospital, return temporarily to the Receiving Home before moving on to St Joseph's Foundling Hospital in Broadmeadows.

However, many of the mothers and babies did not take up this option. In 1906, Barnard and Twigg demonstrate, the most popular (36%) path for women was to return home (or to a domestic 'situation') with their baby. As they point out however, the difficulties then faced by single mothers trying to support a child may well have resulted in the child going into some form of 'care'.

In 1906, 20% of women at the Receiving Home placed their baby in the care of a private nurse. (After the passage of the Infant Life Protection Act 1907, placements of this nature had to be made through the Department

for Neglected Children.)

10% of the mothers went from the Receiving Home to the Foundling Hospital at Broadmeadows, along with their babies. None of the mothers from 1906 sent their child alone to the Foundling Hospital.

From their analysis of these 1906 records, Barnard and Twigg conclude that many women at the Receiving Home did not wish to be separated from their babies.

They point out that in the early years of operation at the Receiving Home, the Sisters kept detailed records of their residents, including the women's background and circumstances. Later, the recordkeeping changed as the Sisters 'became conscious of a need to provide anonymity'.

Extensions to the property were made in 1913, and Archbishop Carr laid the foundation stone in May 1914.

In 1973, the Sisters of St Joseph opened the 'Terrace House' project in Carlton. This project reflected the changing social environment. While St Joseph's Receiving Home still sheltered some pregnant women away from their family and community, others did not necessarily wish to conceal their pregnancy. The women at Terrace House were able to keep their jobs if they wished, and maintain contact with family, friends and boyfriends. The Terrace House was located nearby the Receiving Home in Carlton and could accommodate up to 5 women at a time. The project continued for 18 months, and 18 women used the service at Terrace House. According to Barnard and Twigg, the project ceased when casual employment became scarce in late 1974 and the number of residents dwindled as a consequence.

The Receiving Home closed in 1985 and the Sisters established a new service in Glenroy, known as St Joseph's Babies' Home.

In 1997, records of the Sisters of St Joseph were transferred to MacKillop Family Services. These included records of the various orphanages, homes and other residences run by the Sisters of St Joseph. While custodianship of the records about people in 'care' became the responsibility of MacKillop Family Services at this point, it was formally agreed that the intellectual property in these records would not change hands.

St Joseph's Receiving 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.

Gallery



St Joseph's Receiving Home, Grattan Street, Carlton

More info

Chronology

- **St Joseph's Receiving Home (1902 – 1985)**
 - St Joseph's Babies' and Family Service (1985 - 1997)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(1866 - current\)](#)
St Joseph's Receiving Home came under the management of the Sisters of St Joseph in 1905.
Date: 1905 - 1985

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)
St Joseph's Receiving 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.

Related Organisations

- [St Joseph's Foundling Hospital \(1901 - 1975\)](#)
Some mothers spent the last months of their pregnancy at St Joseph's Receiving Home, then went with their babies to St Joseph's Foundling Hospital.
Date: 1902 - ?
- [St Joseph's Nursery \(1959 - 1976?\)](#)
St Joseph's Nursery was opened while St Joseph's Receiving Home was undergoing renovations in 1959.
- [St Joseph's Babies' Home \(1975 - 1985\)](#)
In 1985 the St Joseph's Receiving Home in Carlton merged with the St Joseph's Babies Home in Glenroy to become the St Joseph's Babies' and Family Service, Glenroy.

Related Legislation

- [Infant Life Protection Act 1907, Victoria \(1907 - 1915\)](#)
Some women at the Receiving Home would place their baby in the care of a private nurse. These arrangements were overseen by the Department for Neglected Children following the passage of the Infant Life Protection Act 1907.

Resources

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee, [Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 29 February 2012
- Murray, Suellen, John Murphy, Elizabeth Branigan, Jenny Malone, *After the orphanage: life beyond the children's home*, 2009
- [Heritage Display](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013
- Hamilton, Madeleine, [Shocking scenes from a teen pregnancy](#), Eureka Street, 15 December 2011
- Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, [A piece of the story : national directory of records of Catholic organisations caring for children separated from families](#), November 1999

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [MacKillop Family Services Records, Victorian institutions \(1857 - current\)](#)
- ['Closed' Agency and General Correspondence Files \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
- [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)

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