

# St Anthony's Home Croydon

1925 – 1980

**Other Names:**

- St Anthony's House
- St Anthony's Home for Unmarried Mothers
- St Anthony's Home for Infants
- St Anthony's Foundling Home
- St Anthony's and St Joseph's Centre of Care
- St Anthony's Croydon

## Details

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In 1925, St Anthony's Home, which was run by the Society of St Vincent De Paul, moved from Petersham to Croydon. It was a home for unmarried pregnant women and cared for them and their babies for up to 12 months after the birth. Mothers then chose whether to keep their child or adopt the child to the Home. The Sisters of St Joseph took over the management of the Home in 1952 and developed a range of programmes including adoption services, Mothercraft nursing, foster care and cottage homes. It stopped providing maternity services in the 1970s and in 1980, transitioned into providing foster care in a cottage environment.

St Anthony's moved from Petersham to Croydon, into Humberstone Mansion, which had been used by Wychbury Grammar School and was then known as Wychbury. The house was offered to the Society of St Vincent de Paul by a local real estate agent in 1922.

Wychbury was converted to a school and new wings, including a fibro cottage for 25 'girls' (mothers) were added by 1929. The gates of the former Devonshire Street Cemetery were donated to the Home by the Mayor of Redfern, Alderman Gilmore. The site was consecrated and opened by Archbishop Kelly in May 1925.

St Anthony's retained the goal of the original home, which was to ensure that Catholic children were raised in Catholic families. The Home was commended by the Child Welfare Department for its low rate of infant mortality and dedicated nursing.

As the Society of St Vincent De Paul was financially overcommitted, the Petersham property was sold. A new building, the Archbishop Kelly Wing, was erected in 1936 and the Chapel was added in 1941. The Pre-Natal Cottage was adjacent to the Chapel. The home began providing pre-natal care to expectant 'girl mothers' in 1941, sending them out to give birth in Catholic hospitals. However, their number grew in the war years, so a 10-bed maternity hospital, with an operating theatre, was added in 1944. This was known as St Anne's. A children's playground was added during World War II.

In 1946 the Home celebrated its Silver Jubilee, producing a publication that outlined its history and pointed out that St Anthony's was not like other institutions, for it believed the family unit was essential to child development and it was best to place children in a family – their own or a foster family – as quickly as possible. In 1946 the Committee reported the home had housed 208 babies and children and 89 mothers, 50 of whom had given birth in the hospital. In all, 123 children were discharged; 63 to their mother, 50 to 'approved foster parents' and 10 to orphanages. The Committee said;

*There is consolation and joy in the fact that [a total of] one hundred and thirteen infants were absorbed into the family unit to receive all the blessings and help that only such an atmosphere can impart and wherein their future as good Catholics and good citizens can be reasonably assured every possible channel should be explored to encourage adoptions into the only perfect unit of society – the good Catholic family.*

St Anthony's was operated by the St Vincent de Paul Society until 1952, when it was taken over by the Sisters of St Joseph. Unfortunately there do not appear to be any records surviving for the years before 1952. After 1952, expectant mothers had their babies at St Margaret's Hospital, also under the care of the Sisters of St Joseph, and children aged 3-6 years were accommodated at nearby St Joseph's Croydon. A Mothercraft training home was added in the mid-1950s.

St Anthony's Home was an important adoption agency and arranged the placement of babies in Catholic homes, according to the *Child Welfare Act* and the *Adoption Act*. In 1972 it placed 300 babies for adoption but from the 1970s, as unmarried mothers gained better social services, adoptions reduced in number. The demand for the Home's services for unmarried mothers also fell away and, by 1980, were closed.

During this period St Anthony's Home began to widen the services it provided to children and families, providing long day care, foster care and early intervention. In 1974 the Australian Government's Family Law Bill stopped children under the age of 12 months being placed in institutions, so St Anthony's moved into providing foster care, working with Centacare to do so. The nurseries were converted to day care services.

According to research done by the staff of the Northern Territory Department of Health, it was a place where children from the Northern Territory were sent.

At the end of 1979, St Anthony's amalgamated with St Joseph's Home for Children, Croydon, and the remaining children were moved into St Joseph's Cottages.

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

## Gallery

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**St Anthony's Children's Home, Croydon**

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## More info

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### Chronology

- St Anthony's Petersham (1922 - 1925)
  - **St Anthony's Home Croydon (1925 – 1980)**
    - St Joseph's Cottages (1980 - 2003)

### Related Entries

**Run by**

- [St Vincent de Paul Society \(1854 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1925 - 1952
- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(1866 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1921 - 1943

### Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)  
St Anthony's Home Croydon was mentioned in submissions 78, 112, and 415 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

### Related Legislation

- [Child Welfare Act 1923, New South Wales \(1923 - 1939\)](#)  
St Anthony's Home placed babies with Catholic families for adoption under the *Child Welfare Act 1923*.

### Related Organisations

- [St Margaret's Home for Unwed Mothers \(1894 - 1982\)](#)  
When women were ready to leave St Margaret's Hospital they could be admitted to St Anthony's Home with their babies and stay for 12 months
- [Montrose Maternity Hospital \(c. 1920 - c. 1935\)](#)  
Department of Youth and Community Services [II] staff referred children from Montrose Child Protection Unit to St Gerard's Home, which was part of St Anthony's Croydon
- [St Joseph's Home for Children, Croydon \(1925 - 1981\)](#)  
From 1952 St Anthony's Home and St Joseph's Home for Children were both operated by the Sisters of St Joseph. St Anthony's Home absorbed St Joseph's Home for Children in 1979.  
Date: 1926 - 1979
- [St Anne's \[Hospital\] \(1944 - 1951\)](#)  
St Anne's was part of St Anthony's Home Croydon
- [St Anne's Nursery \(1952 - 1963\)](#)  
St Anne's was part of St Anthony's Home Croydon
- [St Gerard's \[Hospital\] \(1964 - 1980\)](#)  
St Gerard's was part of St Anthony's Home Croydon
- [Centacare Catholic Community Services Sydney \(1967 - 2011\)](#)  
Centacare staff worked closely with the Sisters of St Joseph at St Anthony's Home Croydon
- [Department of Youth and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1976 - 1988\)](#)  
Department of Youth and Community Services [II] staff referred children from Montrose Child Protection Unit to St Gerard's Home, which was part of St Anthony's Croydon
- [St Gerard's \[Home\] \(1980 - 1985\)](#)  
St Gerard's was on the site of St Anthony's Home Croydon
- [Catholic Children's Homes Enquiry Service \(1994 - current\)](#)  
Catholic Children's Homes Enquiry Service holds copies of records relating to St Anthony's Home Croydon.

### Related Concepts

- [Adoption in New South Wales \(c. 1923 - current\)](#)

## Resources

- 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

- [Personal Record Cards, St Anthony's, Croydon \(1950s - 1970s\)](#)
  - [Adoption Records, c. 1920s-80s, St Anthony's, Croydon \(1920s - 1980s\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/st-anthonys-home-croydon/>