

Benevolent Asylum, Sydney

1821 – 1901

Other Names:

- Devonshire Street Asylum
- Benevolent Asylum

Details

The Benevolent Asylum, run by the Benevolent Society of New South Wales, was opened in 1821 by Governor Macquarie. It issued poor relief and took in the poor, destitute, disabled and aged but its main focus was pregnant women and children. The Benevolent Asylum closed in 1901 as the land was resumed by the government for Central Station. It was replaced by the Royal Hospital for Women at Paddington (1901) and the Thomas Street Asylum (1904).

The Asylum was located on the corner of Pitt and Devonshire Streets, Sydney on a site now occupied by Central Railway Station.

In 1881 the *State Children's Relief Act* created the State Children's Relief Board and gave it the power to remove children who were in the care of the Benevolent Asylum and board them out (place them into foster homes). From this point, the Benevolent Asylum became less a children's home and more a depot for children who were moving into state care. The Benevolent Asylum continued to support pregnant women and their infants.

When the New South Wales Government began constructing Central Station it resumed the Devonshire Street site, where the Benevolent Asylum stood. The Government paid compensation to the Benevolent Society, and with this money the Society purchased several properties. It built the Royal Hospital for Women in Paddington in 1901. In 1904 it erected a new asylum on the corner of Thomas Street and Quay Street, Sydney, known as Thomas Street Asylum.

The Benevolent Asylum records from 1857-1900 have been indexed and the index is available online. Please see the list of published resources to access this website.

Gallery



Benevolent Society Asylum, 450 Pitt St, Surry Hills

Description: This is a digital copy of a black and white print of a glass plate negative. This is from an album produced to document demolition works in the City of Sydney.



Benevolent Asylum

Description: This is a copy of an image from the Benevolent Society of NSW's Collection.



157. Benevolent Asylum SH 566

Description: This is a digital copy of a photoprint in the State Library of NSW's collection, part of the album 'Photographs of Public and Other Buildings, &c .../photographed by Charles Pickering'. This photograph has the title: '157. Benevolent Asylum SH 566'.

More info

Chronology

- **Benevolent Asylum, Sydney (1821 – 1901)**
 - Royal Hospital for Women (1901 - current)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Benevolent Society of New South Wales \(1813 - current\)](#)
Date: 1821 - ?

Related Legislation

- [State Children Relief Act 1881, New South Wales \(1881 - 1901\)](#)
The *State Children's Relief Act* gave the State Children's Relief Board the power to take children from the Benevolent Asylum and board them out.
Date: 1881 -

Related Organisations

- [Carters' Barracks, Boys Dormitory \(1820 - c. 1848\)](#)
Carters' Barracks, Boys Dormitory provided fresh produce to the Benevolent Asylum from the market garden they worked on.
- [Liverpool Asylum \(1851 - 1862\)](#)
- [Inspector of Public Charities \(1866 - 1888\)](#)
- [State Children's Relief Board \(1881 - 1923\)](#)
The State Children's Relief Board removed children from the Benevolent Asylum and placed them in the boarding out system.
- [State Children's Relief Department \(1881 - 1923\)](#)
The State Children's Relief Department officers removed children from the Benevolent Asylum and placed them in the boarding out system.
- [Newtown Maternity and Rescue Home \(1892 - 1898\)](#)
Pregnant women at the Newtown Maternity and Rescue Home were sent to the Benevolent Asylum to give birth, before returning to the Newtown home.
- [Thomas Street Asylum \(1904 - 1911\)](#)
The Thomas Street Asylum was also built by the Benevolent Society.

Resources

- Ramsland, John, *Children of the back lanes: destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales*, 1986
- Garnsey, Heather and Killion, Martyn, [Sydney Benevolent Asylum: Index to Admissions and Discharges 1857-1900](#), 2007
- Bluett, Ros, [Charity and Justice: The early days of the Benevolent Society in Sydney](#), 24 March 2013
- Department of Justice, [History](#), Children's Court of New South Wales, 2012

- O'Brien, Anne, *Poverty's Prison: the poor in New South Wales 1880-1918*, 1988
- Benevolent Society, *Benevolent Society: 200 year celebration: Last 200*, 2013

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Benevolent Society of New South Wales Collection, 1813-1996 \(1813 - 1996\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/benevolent-asylum-2/>