

St Margaret's Hospital

1894 – 1998

Other Names:

- St Margaret's Maternity Home
- St Margaret's Hospital for Women

Details

St Margaret's Hospital was established in Strawberry Hills [Surry Hills] in 1894 as a lying-in home, by a religious community led by Gertrude Abbott. It moved to Darlinghurst and from 1937 was run by the Sisters of St Joseph and became a maternity hospital. St Margaret's was an adoption agency and an obstetric teaching hospital for the University of Sydney. St Margaret's Public Hospital operated as part of the hospital from 1946-1993 and St Margaret's Children's Hospital operated from 1967-1979. St Margaret's closed in 1998.

St Margaret's Hospital was started in 1894 by a group of women living in an informal Catholic religious community in 'Lorraine Terrace', 561 Elizabeth Street, Strawberry Hills (Surry Hills), on the corner of Cleveland Street. The leader of this community was Gertrude Abbott, who had been a Josephite nun in Adelaide (formerly Mary Jane O'Brien, then Sister Ignatius of Jesus). Gertrude Abbott remained in charge of the hospital until 1932.

Abbott's community provided charity to the poor and their first patient was found in a park, sick, destitute, pregnant and intoxicated. Cardinal Moran sanctioned this work on 19 March 1894 and Abbott and her companions were able to establish a refuge for unmarried pregnant women, and to provide obstetric care and hospital attention to poor married mothers and those with illnesses. Magdalen Foley, one of women of the community and a former Queensland Josephite, started the Midwifery Training School in 1894.

Babies were housed in a foundling centre in Bligh Street Newtown, until the Sisters of Mercy established the Waitara Home for Foundlings. By 1898 the hospital had expanded to occupy four terraces and was running an Outdoor Department to treat the sick poor from the local area, in their own homes. A District Nursing Branch and dispensary was established in Cleveland Street, nearby. By 1906 the institution was known as St Margaret's Hospital for Women, and 'Mother' Abbott was matron.

In 1910 the community leased a former school (the Jesuit St Aloysius College and Sacred Heart) at 435 Bourke Street, Darlinghurst. Later purchased, this site became the permanent home of the Hospital. Gertrude Abbott died in 1934, but she had wanted the hospital to remain under Catholic control. Archbishop Kelly asked the Sisters of St. Joseph to take over St. Margaret's, which they did in 1937. This was the first time an Australian religious order had staffed and managed a hospital. The Sisters asked Sisters Livinus and Anne Byrne of St Joseph's Babies Home in Broadmeadows, Victoria, to take over the administration and nursing of the hospital.

After World War II the site was continually extended and rebuilt and specialist services and training courses added, including obstetric and gynaecology training of doctors. St. Margaret's Private Hospital was opened in 1946 to assist in the funding of the public facilities. The large hospital block on the corner of Albion Street was opened in 1951. In 1964 the hospital became an obstetrics teaching hospital for the University of Sydney, which it remained until 1988.

St. Margaret's Children's Hospital was built in 1967, following fundraising by Sister Anne Byrne, who had become matron of the entire hospital. It operated from 1967 to 1982 for the specialist care of infants and children,

particularly the intensive care needs of neonates. St. Margaret's Public Hospital closed in June 1993, followed by the closure of the Private Hospital in June 1998. The Children's Hospital is now the Gertrude Abbott Nursing Home and the rest of the site has been converted into apartments.

When St Margaret's Public Hospital closed in 1993 its records were moved to the Royal Hospital for Women in Paddington and are now under the control of Prince of Wales Hospital.

Some of the records of St Margaret's Public Hospital are lodged in the Manuscripts Collection of the Mitchell Library. Written permission is required from the Sisters of St Joseph before access can be arranged.

St Margaret's Hospital 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



New St Margaret's Hospital Block, opened 1951

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Darlinghurst - St. Margaret's Women's Hospital (New South Wales)

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More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(1866 - current\)](#)

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)

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Related Organisations

- [St Margaret's Home for Unwed Mothers \(1894 - 1982\)](#)

St Margaret's Home for Unwed Mothers was the lying-in section of St Margaret's Hospital, for unmarried mothers.

Resources

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee, [*Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices*](#), 29 February 2012

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [St. Margaret's Hospital \(Darlinghurst, N.S.W.\) Records 1894-1998 \(1894 - 1998\)](#)
 - [Birth registers, St Margaret's Hospital, Darlinghurst \(Public Section\) \(1948 - 1993\)](#)
 - [Medical records, St Margaret's Hospital, Darlinghurst \(Public Section\) \(1960 - June 1993\)](#)
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