

Cicada Home

1911 – 1930s

Details

Cicada, in Croydon, was opened by the State Children's Relief Board in Queen Street in 1911. It housed mothers (mostly young women and pregnant state wards) and their babies, as well as babies who were without their mothers. In 1919 it moved to another house in the same suburb. In 1919, 416 women and 456 babies passed through the home. Cicada closed around 1930.

Cicada also served as a lying-in home and maternity home, and a hospital for babies. It was one of a number of homes for single mothers set up by the State Children's Relief Board under its president, Dr Charles Mackellar, using the *Infant Protection Act 1904*.

Mackellar was passionate about reducing infant mortality in Sydney and had chaired important inquiries into the city's low birth rate, high rate of infant deaths and the risk of 'baby-farming', or unlicensed fostering of tiny babies. Mackellar knew the babies of single mothers were vulnerable, as single mothers usually had to work, so placed their young babies with unlicensed foster mothers. Because proper formulas did not exist, and milk supplies were unreliable and unsafe, any baby that was not being breastfed by its mother was at risk of gastroenteritis and other illnesses.

Mackellar set up homes like Cicada to keep mothers and their babies together, and ensure the infants were breastfed and bonded with their mothers.

In 1919, 416 women and 456 children, who lived in the home for an average of three months. A total of 15 babies in the home died, from whooping cough, pneumonia, gastro-enteritis and premature birth. Most of the babies who died were without their mothers, which the Board said demonstrated the vulnerability of infants who could not be fed and cared for by their own mothers and the value of programmes like Cicada.

Gallery



"Cicada" - Home for Mothers and Babies, Croydon

Description: This is a digital copy of a picture that appeared in the State Children Relief Board Report for the year ended 5 April, 1912.



Home for Mothers and Babies, Queen's-Street Croydon

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More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [State Children's Relief Board \(1881 - 1923\)](#)
- [Child Welfare Department, State Government of New South Wales \(1923 - 1970\)](#)

Date: 1923 - 1930

Related Legislation

- [Infant Protection Act 1904, New South Wales \(1904 - 1923\)](#)

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Departmental Records relating to State Wards, New South Wales \(1918 - current\)](#)

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