

Thirlmere Babies' Home

1907 – 1913

Other Names:

- Babies Hospital, Thirlmere
- Home for Invalid Infants, Thirlmere
- Thirlmere Home for Invalid Infants

Details

Thirlmere Babies Home was established by the State Children's Relief Department in 1907. The home aimed to keep nursing mothers and babies together and to provide care for babies without their mothers or who were sickly and could not be fostered. Once children recovered they were either boarded out, discharged with their mothers, or sent to Mittagong Cottage Homes. Thirlmere Babies' Home closed in 1913 and was replaced by Shaftesbury Home for Mothers and Babies, at Double Bay.

Thirlmere Babies' Home was one of a number of homes established by the State Children's Relief Board under the Infant Protection Act 1904. It was intended to keep unmarried mothers together with their babies until the child was weaned, as the State Children's Relief Board was concerned about the very high rate of death amongst 'illegitimate' babies who were placed in babies' homes because their mothers had to support themselves.

The idea behind Thirlmere Babies' Home was to support mothers to breastfeed for an extended period. Once the baby was weaned the mother could try to find employment that allowed her to keep the child or the baby could be placed in the boarding out system. Thirlmere also nursed babies who were without their mothers.

State Records NSW's *Archives Investigator* states:

The country home, initially referred to as the Home for Invalid Infants, Thirlmere, but later as Thirlmere Home for Babies, is described in the 1912 annual report of the State Children's Relief Board as dealing with especially sick and ailing children who, at the time of admission, were close to death as a result of neglect, wilful exposure, improper feeding, or other causes. Mothers were encouraged to remain in the home with their children so long as they were willing to nurse their infants and look after them. The object of the Board in founding the home was to give infants who were considered to have little prospect of survival in the city a better chance of life in healthy conditions in the country. Further to this end the estate at Thirlmere included a small dairy farm attached to the property to provide a constant supply of fresh milk.

Many babies admitted to the home were illegitimate, or born into conditions of poverty and distress. Some of the mothers had attempted to terminate their pregnancies and had thus caused harm to their unborn children, or the babies suffered from congenital defects or inherited diseases. After birth the children may have been improperly fed and treated due to lack of knowledge on the part of the mothers, or they had been deliberately mistreated or neglected. A significant number of children died soon after admission as a result of the severity of the cases admitted, but the home was still considered successful, due to the better prospects of those infants who survived the first few weeks.

Gallery



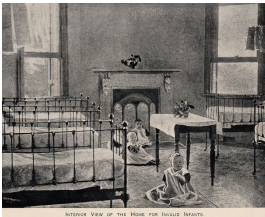
Home for Invalid Infants at Thirlmere

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the State Children Relief Board Report for year ending 5 April, 1907. The image shows the exterior of Thirlmere Babies' Home.



Another view of the Home for Invalid Infants at Thirlmere

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Interior view of the Home for Invalid Infants

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the State Children Relief Board Report for year ending 5 April, 1907. The image shows a nursery in Thirlmere Babies' Home with babies sitting on the floor.



Another view of the interior of the Home for Invalid Infants

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the State Children Relief Board Report for year ending 5 April, 1907. The image shows the interior of Thirlmere Babies' Home with babies and nurses sitting on the floor.

More info

Chronology

- **Thirlmere Babies' Home (1907 – 1913)**
 - Shaftesbury Home for Babies and Mothers (c. 1913 - 1915)

Related Entries

Run by

- [State Children's Relief Board \(1881 - 1923\)](#)

Related Legislation

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

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