

Sydney Norland Nurseries

1908 – 1945

Other Names:

- Norland Nurseries, Waverley
- Norland
- Norland Nursing Home
- Norland Nursing College
- Norland Institute

Details

Sydney Norland Nurseries was a private children's home that was opened in 1909 as part of the Norland Institute or Norland Nursing College. It operated in various sites in Sydney, including Waverley-Woollahra, Rose Bay and Ashfield-Summer Hill, from 1909 until the 1940s. In 1910 Norland Nurseries was licensed as an infants' home by the State Children's Relief Department and held up to 20 children up to the age of 7, although older children are known to have been sent there. As well as providing permanent care, Norland was a 'children's hotel' for families who needed temporary care. Norland Nurseries operated until at least 1945.

The Sydney Norland Institute, or Norland College, was a nanny and nursing training school inspired by the London Norland Institute. In April 1908 the Sydney Norland Institute opened at 161 Queen Street, on the corner of Nelson Streets, Woollahra (also referred to as Waverley). *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that speakers at the opening included paediatrician Dr Grace Boelke, founder Mrs Greig-Smith, wife of a prominent doctor, Dr Harold (EH) Binney and Miss Rawson.

The Institute ... is the first of its kind in Australia. Its objects are to provide a centre where educated women may obtain a training, which will enable them to be self-supporting and render them more fit to discharge the duties of womanhood ... Dr EH Binney stated that the institute would be of great advantage to parents who were compelled to be parted from their children. It would fulfil the functions of a children's hotel.

The President of the State Children's Relief Board, Dr Charles Mackellar also spoke, but was highly critical. Mackellar was a passionate advocate for infant life protection and considered babies had the best chance if they were breastfed by their own mothers. At the Norland opening he expressed his concern that mothers 'of the leisured classes' would allow trained nurses to care for and bottlefeed their children, which was dangerous when cows' milk supplies were not safe or appropriate for baby feeding.

The delegation of children to nurses was akin to "cuckooism," which was not a practice unknown. As a result of his experience he could say that the whisky bottle to the adult was not half so pernicious as the feeding bottle administered by the nurse.

In reply, Dr Grace Boelke said that any mother who was going to neglect her child would not want a Norland nurse. The responsibility of a mother to her child was one of the strong points of the institution.

Young women paid forty pounds to enter the institute for 12 months' training, which was practical in nature and required nurse trainees to care for the children who had been placed in 'the children's hotel'.

The next year, in April 1909, the Sydney Norland Nurseries was opened in Lower Forth Street, near Nelson Street Woollahra, by the Countess of Dudley, who was the patron. According to a 1911 pamphlet *The Sydney Norland Nurseries*, the foundress was Mrs Greig-Smith:

The Nurseries have been devised to test the ability of the Sydney Norland Nurses after they have finished their Institutional, Kindergarten and Hospital courses of training ...

The Nurseries are intended for children requiring special care, for children sent during the hot summer months from the hot inland parts, for children whose parents are ill, for the children of widows or widowers, or for parents who require a temporary, safe, and happy home for their little one while they travel.

The pamphlet stated that fees ranged from one to two guineas per week, depending on the delicacy of the child, and relatives were allowed to visit from 2pm until 5pm daily. The pamphlet emphasised health, stating that children were weighed weekly, taken out into the fresh air from 6.15 in the morning until bed time, and taken to zoos, the Botanic Gardens and other places of amusement. They were given Froebelian Kindergarten training for two hours a day, at an extra charge of one pound and one shilling per term.

Under laws introduced by Dr Mackellar, any place that cared for more than two babies had to be registered and regularly inspected. Sydney Norland Nurseries did not apply for registration under the *Infant Protection Act* until 1910. It was successful in gaining registration and State Children's Relief Board Annual Reports record it was licenced to care for up to twenty children under the *Infant Protection Act 1904*.

A sister organisation, the Sydney Home for Babies, was not so fortunate. It was also run by Mrs Greig-Smith, with assistance from Dr Boelke and Dr Binney, amongst others, and used Norland nurses. In October 1911 a scandal broke out about infant deaths at the institution. In November 1911 Dr Mackellar and his officers informed the Minister that 17 of the first 100 babies admitted to the Home had died. The State Children's Relief Board implied that improper hygiene and feeding and poor nursing by the girls in training at the Home were the cause. These were exactly the conditions of care for infants that Mackellar had campaigned against for decades, and had foreshadowed at the launch of the Norland Institute in 1908.

It also emerged that Sydney Norland Nurseries had tried to avoid registration as a nursing home by claiming it was a kindergarten boarding school. *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 8 November 1911 quoted Dr Mackellar:

"The fact," said the president of the board, in a report on the 3rd instant, "that infants are admitted to these institutions during the first few weeks of life makes it imperative that they should be licensed under the Infants' Protection Act. The circumstances that children in the Norland Nurseries who are over three years of age are taught by kindergarten methods there does not entitle that Institution to be regarded as a boarding school. There is no reason why registration should be withheld from either establishment, provided that an efficient trained nurse has control as matron. But the training of a so-called Norland nurse, as described in the prospectus of that Institution, cannot be accepted as efficient for the purpose."

Although the Sydney Home for Babies was immediately shut down, Norland Nurseries retained its licence, presumably with improvements in nursing care. In 1921, Sydney Norland Nurseries was granted 5 shillings per week for every orphan in its care by the NSW Government. This allowance was extended to a range of private institutions that cared for children.

In 2013 a relative of children who had been in Norland Nurseries from 1916 until 1921 contacted the Find & Connect web resource and provided the following information:

The children entered Norlands when it was at Nelson Street Woollahra I think the year may have been 1916 or 1917. My Aunt said it was quite well run then, she recalls a laundress being scolded for a crease in a tablecloth.

Norlands was sold in 1920 and was bought by Gladys Davis [Davies?] and was relocated to New South Head Road Rose Bay. There was a decline in standards. The trainees wore patched uniforms and [my aunt], as senior girl had a room to herself with a balcony. This must have meant a lot as she had shared rooms with her siblings and they lived dormitory style at Norlands as the children were broken up into age groups, After and before school [my aunt] was looking after the two year old children. She left Norlands when she was 16 in 1921. [My aunt] said they did not receive any milk or fruit at Norlands. I assume [my uncle, who was also in the home] must have been sent somewhere else when he turned 12.

In December 1926 Norland Nursing College moved to 68 Charlotte Street in the Ashfield/Summer Hill area and *The Sydney Morning Herald* column 'Near and Far' reported that it was raising funds for a cot it maintained at Renwick Hospital for Infants. In 1937 the training offered by the Norland Nursing College was featured in *The Australasian*, although in the first paragraph the name is misspelt:

Among the educational institutions of Sydney, the Northland [sic] Nursing College is unique in that its purpose is the training of students for a career in the interesting work of child welfare. The college is really a mansion, with a homely atmosphere, and is set in beautiful grounds at Ashfield, a suburb of Sydney. The students are taught to study and develop the minds of many little mites who have made Norland their adopted home.

The Norland Nurseries attached to the college accommodate many important little people, whose parents, through circumstances such as illness, or the necessity to travel abroad, are unable to keep them with them. The children commence their education at an early age in the Norland Kindergarten, and they have every attention from the nurses to whom they are the special training for the day. The nurses gain practical knowledge in this manner of the development of the immature mind.

'Norland Nursing Home' was visited by photographer Sam Hood in November 1937 and for Christmas parties in December 1938 and 1939 and the images are held by the State Library of New South Wales. The Home's services as a training college and 'children's hotel' were promoted in country newspapers like *The Farmer and Settler* until at least 1945.

In 2014, 68 Charlotte Street Ashfield, the site of Norland Nursing College, was a 'private hotel' or guest house.

Gallery



Norland Nursing Home Christmas Tree

Description: This is a digital copy of a photonegative.



Norland Nursing Home, Ashfield

Description: This is an image of Norland Nursing College (Norland Nursing Home), Ashfield, taken by Sam Hood in December 1939 and held by the State Library of New South Wales. Please note the State Library of New South Wales' Hood Collection includes more digitised photographs of Norland Nursing College.



Happy nurses and their bright and healthy charges at Norland Nursing College, Ashfield.

Happy nurses and their bright and healthy charges at Norland Nursing College, Ashfield

Description: This is a copy of an image published in *The Farmer and Settler* on Friday 8 December 1944. The image shows nurses and children in the garden at the Norland Nursing College, Ashfield and was included in the article *Norland offers good career for girls*.



68 Charlotte Street, Ashfield

Description: This photo of 68 Charlotte Street, Ashfield was originally taken from the real estate listing by LJ Hooker on realestate.com.au



A Norland Nurse with a Norland Nursery Child.

A Norland Nurse with a Norland Nursery Child

Description: This is a digital scan of an image from *The Sydney Norland Nurseries*.

More info

Related Entries

Related Legislation

- [Infant Protection Act 1904, New South Wales \(1904 - 1923\)](#)
Sydney Norland Nurseries was licenced under the Infant Protection Act.

Related Organisations

- [State Children's Relief Board \(1881 - 1923\)](#)
Sydney Norland Nurseries was licensed by the State Children's Relief Board.
- [Sydney Home for Babies \(1910 - 1911\)](#)
Some of the people involved in launching the Sydney Norland Nurseries were involved in developing the Sydney Home for Babies.
- [Renwick Hospital for Infants, Summer Hill \(1921 - 1965\)](#)
Norland Nursing College funded a cot at Renwick Hospital for Infants
Date: 1931 -

Resources

- Sydney Norland Institute, *The Sydney Norland Institute Lower Forth Street, Woollahra : a training College for the training of educated women in nursery nursing*, 1911
 - [Norland College](#), *The Labor Daily*, 14 December 1926
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/sydney-norland-nurseries/>