

St Joseph's Refuge

1868 – c. 2001

Other Names:

- The Catholic Refuge
- The Fullarton Refuge
- St Joseph's Centre, Fullarton

Details

St Joseph's Refuge was established in Adelaide by the Catholic Church in 1868. Run by the Sisters of St Joseph, it provided refuge for unmarried mothers and children to the age of three years. Older children went to St Joseph's Orphanage, Largs Bay. The refuge moved to Mitcham, Norwood and then Fullarton in 1901. In 2001 the refuge changed its name to Louise Place.

St Joseph's Refuge was the second institution established by the Catholic Church in South Australia, after the St Vincent de Paul Orphanage. Its foundation was inspired by reports from the Sisters of St Joseph about the number of Catholic women they had encountered during their pastoral visits to the Adelaide Gaol. Many of the incarcerated women had no support and a significant number were unmarried mothers. The Sisters aimed to provide a refuge for these young women and their children.

A number of women who urgently needed help were accommodated in temporary homes until the plan was further developed. In October 1867 Archdeacon Patrick Russell called a meeting of leading members of the Adelaide Catholic community to discuss the situation. As a result of this gathering the Church rented premises on Franklin Street, Adelaide and a Catholic Female Refuge was opened in May 1868.

Run by the Sisters of St Joseph, the Refuge initially took in 24 women, 11 of whom the sisters had removed from the Gaol. Women resident in the institution helped to support it financially by doing laundry work. The Refuge cared for women of all denominations free of charge for as long as they required shelter.

From Franklin Street, the Refuge moved to a larger rented house at Mitcham with enough rooms to accommodate 20 women. In 1872 it moved again to even larger premises near the St Ignatius Church in Queen Street, Norwood.

Due to the success of the laundry work the Refuge saved a small sum of money. This combined with a charitable bequest allowed the church to purchase an 11-acre property, formerly a Jam Factory, at Fullarton. New buildings were erected including a lying-in home, a children's cottage and a modern laundry. Income from the laundry provided funding for the running of the Refuge for many years.

The new building at Fullarton was officially opened on 22 September 1901. By 1911 it was home to 86 women, 36 children and 18 Sisters. At the turn of the century the Refuge's emphasis changed from sheltering former prisoners from the Adelaide Gaol to caring for unmarried mothers and their children.

The identity of each woman admitted to the Refuge was carefully protected. On arriving each was given a name other than her true Christian name and during her stay she was only known by that pseudonym. Her real identity was recorded in a locked register which still survives. While embracing the Catholic faith was not a pre-requisite of residence, all women were expected to work. Mothers were allowed to remain until their children reached three

years of age. At that time, if women wished to remain at the Refuge, their children were transferred to St Joseph's Orphanage at Largs Bay. By the early 1930s it was reported that some 6000 children and adults had passed through the Refuge since its establishment.

In 1963 control of the Refuge was transferred from the Sisters of St Joseph to the Daughters of Charity. In the 1970s the Refuge not only catered for unmarried mothers, but also for other women requiring residential care, including deserted wives and their children and girls in need of protective care.

In 1992 the running of St Joseph's was taken over by the St Vincent's Trust Endowment Society.

In 2001 St Joseph's Refuge changed its name to Louise Place.

Gallery



Fullarton Refuge Infirmary

Description: This image was included in the Finding Your Own Way guide, section 2 and shows the infirmary at St Joseph's Refuge, Fullarton. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.



St Joseph's Refuge, Fullarton



St Joseph's Refuge, Norwood



St Joseph's Refuge, 82 Wattle Street, Fullarton

Description: This image shows the front of the building formerly known as St Joseph's Refuge.



St Joseph's Refuge, 82 Wattle Street, Fullarton, Adelaide

Description: This image shows the back of the building formerly known as St Joseph's Refuge.

More info

Chronology

- St Joseph's Refuge (1868 – c. 2001)

- Louise Place (c. 2001 - current)

Related Entries

Run by

- [St Vincent's Trust Endowment Society](#)
Date: 1992 - 2001
- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(1866 - current\)](#)
- [Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul \(1926 - current\)](#)
Date: 1963 - 1992

Related Organisations

- [St Vincent de Paul Orphanage \(1866 - 1975\)](#)
St Vincent De Paul Orphanage was situated at former premises of the St Joseph's Refuge, Mitcham
- [St Joseph's Sanatorium, Largs Bay \(1903 - 1907?\)](#)
Children over the age of three years who had been staying with mothers accommodated at St Joseph's Refuge at Fullarton were placed in the St Joseph's Sanatorium at Largs Bay.
- [St Joseph's Orphanage Largs Bay \(1907 - 1960s\)](#)
Children over the age of three years who had been staying with mothers accommodated at St Joseph's Refuge at Fullarton were placed in the St Joseph's Orphanage at Largs Bay.
Date: 1903? - 1969?

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

Resources

- Franklin, James, *Convent slave laundries? Magdalen asylums in Australia*, Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society, 2013
- Foale, Marie Therese, *Think of the Ravens: The Sisters of St Joseph in Social Welfare*, 2001

Records

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

Records

- [Records held by the Sisters of St Joseph Archives, Adelaide \(1866? - current\)](#)
- [Records of St Joseph's Refuge, Fullarton \(1873 - 1970s\)](#)
- [Lying-in Home Register, May 1907-May 1912, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(16 May 1907 - 30 May 1912\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This foolscap, landscape, hardcover volume has been purpose printed. Lists mother's name, name of doctor or midwife attending, dates etc. Also lists where child is sent and with whom.
- [Former Residents' Folders \(1900s - current\)](#)
The Former residents' folders, held by the Professional Standards Office, may contain information relating to St Joseph's Refuge.
- [Admission Register, November 1873-August 1956, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(18 Nov 1873 - 14 Aug 1956\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This register is a large landscape hardcover volume with metal clasp. It has an index on tabbed letter pages giving surname, number and page number. Entries are handwritten under printed columns.
- [Admission Register, August 1956-June 1968, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(16 Aug 1956 - 22 Jul 1968\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This register is a large landscape hardcover register. It has an index on tabbed letter pages giving surname, number and page number. Entries are handwritten under printed columns.

- [Admittance and Departures, August 1968-June 1971, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(Aug 1968 - Jun 1971\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This small soft cover memo book records admissions for each month on a separate page.
- [Lying-in Home Register, June 1912-November 1960, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(June 1912 - November 1960\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This large thick foolscap, hardcover volume has been purpose printed. Lists mother's name, name of doctor or midwife attending, dates etc. Also lists where child is sent and with whom.
- [State Children's Department Lying-in Home Register, August 1901-May 1907, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(12 Aug 1901 - 10 May 1907\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This foolscap, landscape, hardcover volume has been purpose printed. Lists mother's name, name of doctor or midwife attending, dates etc. Also lists where child is sent and with whom.
- [Lying-in Home Register, April 1914-May 1923, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(April 1914 - May 1923\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This smaller hardback landscape volume has been purpose printed. Information is hand printed in columns with details of the patient on the left hand side and information about birth on the right.
- [St Joseph's Girls' Refuge, Fullarton Admission cards, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(1942 - 1956\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. These two bundles of large printed file cards record information of the front and back of each card. The front contains information on the mother, and the back contains information about the baby.
- [St Joseph's Girls' Refuge, Fullarton, Permanent Residents \[Admission Cards\], St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(1940s - 1970s\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This small set of file cards records is labelled 'Permanent residents, long term'. They have information on the front and back of each card. The front contains information on the mother, and the back contains information about the baby. Other documents are often attached.
- [Admission Cards, August 1968-May 1971, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(Aug 1968 - May 1971\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. These cards are filed alphabetically in a wooden box. Information on the patient is recorded on the front of the cards and the back has been set aside for remarks.
- [Miscellaneous correspondence, reports and other documents, St Joseph's Refuge Fullarton \(1897 - 1970\)](#)
Held by Professional Standards Office Records Service of the Catholic Church. This series is made up of miscellaneous records in manilla folders and includes historical summaries, news clippings, correspondence and reports on a variety of subjects.

You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/st-josephs-refuge/>