

# Lady Lawley Cottage by the Sea

1903 – 2020

**Other Names:** • John Nicholson Convalescent Home

## Details

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Lady Lawley Cottage by the Sea was established in Cottesloe in 1903. It has provided respite and convalescent care for sick and recovering children, and care for children with disabilities. These children were placed in the Cottage by both their families and by welfare authorities. The Cottage was run by an independent management committee until 1945 when the Australian Red Cross Society took over management. After a period of offering non-residential services Lady Lawley Cottage was closed in 2020.

Kevin Casey writes in his history of Lady Lawley Cottage by the Sea, that the Home was named after the wife of the Governor of Western Australia (1901-1902) and opened on 18 March 1903 (Casey, pp.3-6). It was run by an independent management committee and sought and received donations and support from the public and parents or guardians 'were expected to contribute seven shillings per week' (Casey, p.6).

A letter of appreciation of the *The Daily News* Orphans' Christmas Cheer Fund in 1915 gives an insight into life at the Lady Lawley Cottage. The letter shows that donations enabled the children to occasionally have extras that were not part of their daily experience:

*It was with very great pleasure I received £3 15s. Towards the Christmas cheer for our little patients..we thought by having a Christmas tree it would give pleasure to all...the Christmas tree, being erected in the centre of the ward, looked very attractive laden with toys of every description. Later on there were picnics to Mosman's Bay and Peppermint Grove, where boats were hired, and they went out crabbing, also went to Cottesloe, where they had a good time in the swinging boats, etc. Thanking all those...giving these little sufferers and the more healthy ones this happy Christmas. Letter, 31 January 1916 published in The Daily News 2 December 1916, p.10*

The Red Cross first used Lady Lawley Cottage in March 1944. Children had been evacuated from the Cottage and it was taken over by the Army, and subsequently the Red Cross. From March 1944, the Red Cross called it the John Nicholson Convalescent Home, and accommodated women personnel from the Armed Forces. Lady Lawley's management committee formally handed over the Cottage to the control of the Red Cross in December 1944, on the understanding that 'as soon as possible after the war, the Home be re-opened for convalescent and crippled children' (de Ruyter, 1970, p.28).

Government reports (*Signposts* 2004, pp.284-285) show child welfare authorities placed children at the Lady Lawley Cottage as needed. Children who were in out of home care often went to Lady Lawley Cottage to convalesce after treatment in the children's hospital that was originally the Perth Children's Hospital and later became known as Princess Margaret Hospital.

Casey (pp.33-34, 36, 40) writes that Lady Lawley Cottage was evacuated in March 1942 and the children were either sent home or to the Perth Children's Hospital (later known as Princess Margaret Hospital). The property

was leased to the defence forces and it was run by the Australian Red Cross Society as a convalescent home for servicewomen. In 1945, the management committee of Lady Lawley Cottage, which had remained in existence during the war years, handed control over to the Australian Red Cross Society. Children were re-admitted from January 1946.

Child welfare authorities continued to use Lady Lawley Cottage for the short-term accommodation of children who were in the 'care' of the department.

In 2014, Lady Lawley Cottage continued but did not provide permanent residential placements.

In 2020, the Red Cross announced that Lady Lawley would close by the end of the year:

*Late last year, Red Cross made a decision to focus our work in a smaller number of key areas where we can have the greatest impact. As Red Cross is not a specialist disability support provider, we are not able to have the greatest impact in this area.*

*We were preparing to close Lady Lawley by 2023 but recent challenges, most significantly the impact of COVID-19, have brought the closure forward the end of 2020.*

*From the end of May, Red Cross will begin supporting all our Lady Lawley Cottage clients and families to transition to new providers. Lady Lawley Cottage will close at the end of 2020 (Australian Red Cross, 'Lady Lawley Cottage' website, June 2020).*

## Gallery



### Lady Lawley Cottage

**Description:** This is an image of Lady Lawley Cottage By the Sea. It shows the cottage and surrounding buildings, with a donkey standing in the yard.



### Nurses feeding babies [Lady Lawley Cottage]

**Description:** This is a slideshow of three photographs of nurses with babies and young children at the Lady Lawley Cottage by the Sea in 1967. It is from the State Library of Western Australia's collection of online images that were made available by the Historical Records Rescue Consortium Project supported by Lotterywest.

## More info

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Australian Red Cross \(1914 - current\)](#)

Date: 1945 - 2020

#### Related Organisations

- [Princess Margaret Hospital for Children \(1909 - 10 June 2018\)](#)

Children who were in out of home care often went to Lady Lawley Cottage to convalesce after treatment in the children's hospital that was originally the Perth Children's Hospital and later became known as Princess

Margaret Hospital. In 1942, children were evacuated from Lady Lawley Cottage to the hospital.  
Date: 1909 -

## Resources

- Perpitch, Nicolas, [\*Red Cross decision to shut Lady Lawley Cottage leaves families struggling to find respite care\*](#), 12 August 2020
- Western Australia. Child Welfare Department, [\*Annual Report of the Child Welfare Department\*](#), 1928 - 1972
- James, Ruth Marchant and Cownie, Stewart, *Heritage of pines : a history of the town of Cottesloe Western Australia*, 1977
- Australian Red Cross, [\*Lady Lawley Cottage\*](#), 2020

## Records

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

### Records held by other organisations

- [Lady Lawley Cottage by the Sea, Records \(1940s - 2000s\)](#)
- [Records of Red Cross Children's Homes \(1918? - 1990s\)](#)
- [Files - General \(1899 - 1987\)](#)
- [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
- [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
- [Correspondence files, class 1 \(general, passports\) \(1892 - 1970\)](#)

Correspondence files, class 1 (general, passports) contains a file titled Overseas Children Scheme - Records of children and custodians (Western Australia) which contains information about two children who spent time at Lady Lawley Cottage

- [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/lady-lawley-cottage-by-the-sea/>