

# St Catherine's Orphanage

1912 – 1960

## Details

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St Catherine's Orphanage was the new name given in 1912 to what was formerly Our Lady's Orphanage. It accommodated girls aged between 3 and 14. In 1928, the Orphanage relocated from Newtown to Highton. In 1960, it became the St Catherine's Children's Home.

Barnard and Twigg suggest that the Sisters of Mercy changed the orphanage's name from Our Lady to St Catherine's to distinguish it from the Sacred Heart Boarding School and the day primary school, which were located on the same site.

An appeal for a new building was launched in 1926, and in 1928 St Catherine's Orphanage relocated from Newtown to Highton.

In November 1955, St Catherine's Girls' Orphanage was declared an approved children's home under the Children's Welfare Act 1954.

In her book, *Along the way*, Maureen Flanagan remembers her life as a resident of St Catherine's:

*My world was full of bells. There were church bells, bells for meals, bells for rising in the morning, bells for going to bed. There were Rosaries, morning and evening hymns and prayers. There were priests saying Mass, altars, the smell of flowers and polish on pews. We wore berets during the week at Mass and on Sundays we dressed in our Sunday best, with frilly hats (Flanagan, 2002, p.15).*

Flanagan also describes how once a month, there was a visitors' day at St Catherine's. "Some of the parents would turn up, but that was very rare ... The nuns used to dress up in pretty little frocks and put special bedspreads out on visitors' day. People walked through the door, stared at us and whispered to each other. When someone wanted to adopt us we were picked out like cattle in the sale yard. This was how we were chosen in those days (p.24)".

In 1957, Sister Isidore Ryder took charge at St Catherine's. A year later, it started to receive boys (usually the younger brothers of girls already at the Orphanage). Subsequently, St Catherine's changed its name to St Catherine's Children's Home in 1960.

## Gallery



## St Catherine's Geelong

St. Catherine's Girls' Orphanage Appeal



## St Catherine's Girls' Orphanage Appeal



## St Catherine's Party Night



## The Roman Catholic Convent and Female Orphanage

**Description:** This is a photograph of the main building of Our Lady's Orphanage, later known as St Catherine's Orphanage, at Aphrasia Street, Newtown, Geelong. It shows a medium sized two-storey bluestone building with the main driveway leading up to it, and with a long single-storey range extending off to one side.

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# More info

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## Chronology

- Our Lady's Orphanage (c. 1862 - 1912)
  - **St Catherine's Orphanage (1912 – 1960)**
    - St Catherine's Children's Home (1960 - 1975)
    - Mercy Family Care Centre (c. 1975 - 1997)
    - MacKillop Family Services (1997 - current)

## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation \(1857 - 2011\)](#)  
Date: 1912 - 1960

### Related Organisations

- [McAuley House \(1942 - 1965\)](#)

## Resources

- Donnelly, Joan, [Submission no 264 to the Senate Inquiry Into Institutional Care](#), 18 October 2003
- Prior, Tom, *A knockabout priest: the story of Father John Brosnan*, 1985
- Flanagan, Maureen, *Along the way*, 2002
- Turnbull, Margaret, [Submission no 111 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005

- *State wards call for help over abuse*, The Age, 16 April 1997
- [Heritage Display](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013
- Care Leavers Australia Network, [Geelong and District Orphanages](#), No date
- [St Catherine's Orphanage](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance*: See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to St Catherine's Orphanage
- [Leonie Sheedy interviewed by Daniel Connell in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 30 July 2010
- Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, *A piece of the story : national directory of records of Catholic organisations caring for children separated from families*, November 1999

## Records

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

### Records

- [MacKillop Family Services Records, Victorian institutions \(1857 - current\)](#)
  - ['Closed' Agency and General Correspondence Files \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
  - [St Catherine's School - Newtown - Examination Register, Inspector's Reports \(1913 - 1971\)](#)
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