

# St Anthony's Children's Home

c. 1921 – 1943

**Other Names:** • St Anthony's Home for Little Children

## Details

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St Anthony's Children's Home in Kew was established by the Sisters of St Joseph in around 1921. It provided care for mostly boys from kindergarten age to early primary school age, and helped to ease overcrowding at St Joseph's Foundling Hospital in Broadmeadows. Its name changed in 1943 to St Anthony's Home.

St Anthony's Children's Home in Kew was established by the Sisters of St Joseph in around 1921, to assist with overcrowding at St Joseph's Foundling Hospital in Broadmeadows.

The home provided care for boys from kindergarten age to early primary school age. At certain times, girls were also admitted. At the age of eight, children who had not been adopted or returned to their families were sent on to one of the Catholic orphanages. In the late 1920s, St Anthony's also accommodated pregnant women from St Joseph's Foundling Hospital.

Barnard and Twigg write that the site chosen by Archbishop Mannix in Kew was not ideal. Mannix perhaps hoped that St Anthony's location in Kew, which was also the site of Melbourne's key Catholic schools, would attract more public support for the institution.

In his book, *At a cost*, Roy McFadyen writes about his routine at St Anthony's:

*... the routine after dressing for the day was to be marched along a stone path to a large wing of the building called the 'eat-house'. Inside were wooden trestles with hard wooden forms. Meals – and I will never forget the unsavoury smell of them – were served in chipped, white-enamelled plates. Breakfast was always porridge, known as 'burgoo'. There were little black specks in the burgoo and we boys simply thought such specks were normal. Also normal was the presence of rats and mice ... We had vegetables but I am inclined to think that our spuds, swedes and pumpkins were rejects from farms or markets.*

*Saturday night was bath night. We were told that bathing was not only body-cleansing but mind-cleansing: this was what God required of us as part of the orphanage's regime. In the bath-house were about eight baths, with cast-iron legs, placed in line about three feet apart. We lined up in a queue, those in the front the lucky ones as they bathed in relatively clean water while the rest took their turn in suds that became increasingly foul and grey ... After the bath we had to duck our heads in a phenyl solution which seemed to be the equivalent of Holy Water in its power to rid us of head lice (McFadyen, 2005, p.2).*

By 1942 St Anthony's was caring for 140 children, 57 of whom were Wards of the State. Its name changed in 1943 to St Anthony's Home. The Sisters subsequently closed St Anthony's Home in 1976 and relocated to the suburb of Footscray.

In 1997, records of the Sisters of St Joseph were transferred to MacKillop Family Services. These included records of the various orphanages, homes and other residences run by the Sisters of St Joseph.

While custodianship of the records about people in 'care' became the responsibility of MacKillop Family Services at this point, it was formally agreed that the intellectual property in these records would not change hands.

## Gallery

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**St Anthony's Home, Kew, building**

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**St Anthony's Home, Kew, buildings [rear]**

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**St Anthony's Home, Kew, bedroom**

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**St Anthony's Home, Kew, children in cars**

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**136398 [children sitting in shelter during air raid precaution practice]**

**Description:** This is a copy of an image from the collection of the Australian War Memorial. [From catalogue description:] Melbourne, VIC. 1942-06-10. Pupils of the St Anthony's Babies Home, Kew, sit quietly in their sand bag and concrete shelter during an air raid precaution practice.

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**St Anthony's Home, Kew [title altered from original]**

**Description:** This is a digital copy of an image that appears in K.E. Burford's *Unfurrowed Fields*. It was initially published here with the title "The original 'Roslyn House' given to the sisters by Mr and Mrs Stuart Patterson in 1925 for an orphanage, St Joseph's Liverpool Road Croydon", however it has since been identified as a picture of St Anthony's Home in Kew, Victoria, not of St Joseph's Home for Children, Croydon, New South Wales.

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## More info

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# Chronology

- **St Anthony's Children's Home (c. 1921 – 1943)**
  - St Anthony's Home (1943 - 1976)
    - St Anthony's Family Service (1976 - 1997)
      - MacKillop Family Services (1997 - current)

## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(1866 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1921 - 1943

### Related Organisations

- [St Joseph's Foundling Hospital \(1901 - 1975\)](#)  
St Anthony's Children's Home was opened in 1921 to help relieve crowding at St Joseph's Foundling Hospital in Broadmeadows.  
Date: 1921 -

## Resources

- Walker, Alan Charlie, [Transcript of Alan Charlie Walker's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations](#), 18 February 2013
- [Heritage Display](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013
- [St Anthony's Home \(1921-97\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance*: See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to St Anthony's Children's Home
- No date
- No date

## 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 \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
  - [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-anthonys-childrens-home/>