

# Our Lady's Orphanage

c. 1862 – 1912

## Details

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Our Lady's Orphanage was established by the Sisters of Mercy, Geelong Congregation at Newtown, Geelong in 1862. The orphanage opened with 22 girls, but quickly expanded with over 120 girls living at the orphanage by the 1890s. In 1907, the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation took over the running of the institution. Our Lady's Orphanage changed its name to St Catherine's Orphanage in 1912.

From 1859 to 1862, the Sisters of Mercy had provided care to girls at St Augustine's Orphanage at Newtown, Geelong. Our Lady's Orphanage was the first Catholic girls' orphanage in Geelong.

Our Lady's Orphanage was established on the site of the Convent of Mercy, Geelong, alongside a boarding school, and a primary school. In 1863 building work commenced for a large bluestone orphanage building. In 1865, the St Joseph's Industrial School opened on the same site, but as a distinct institution.

The building work was slow and gradual and continued for 26 years. In 1891, *The Advocate* reported that the grounds of the Convent of Mercy totaled 22 acres, and that by the late 1880s some of the girls from the orphanage were living in a building formerly used by the St Joseph's Industrial School, as numbers there had reduced.

The orphanage was supported by private benefactors and a government grant, but by the 1890s the Sisters of Mercy had to arrange other fundraising activities, including an annual bazaar, concert, and calls in the newspaper for donations.

In 1897, the *Geelong Advertiser* reported the girls were provided with "a good secular and religious education, and trained upon sound lines for the battle of life".

In 1907, the Sisters of Mercy, Geelong Congregation merged with the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation. It is unlikely that this change impacted the day to day running of the orphanage. By 1909, 150 girls lived at the orphanage.

The home changed its name to St Catherine's Orphanage in 1912. Barnard and Twigg suggest that the Sisters saw a need to distinguish the orphanage – which shared a site with Sacred Heart Boarding School and a day primary school – as a cause in its own right in terms of fundraising and bequests.

## Gallery

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### 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: 1862 - 1912
- [Sisters of Mercy, Geelong Congregation \(1859 - 1907\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [St Joseph's Industrial School \(1865 - c. 1895\)](#)  
St Joseph's Industrial School operated within the same grounds as Our Lady's Orphanage.
- [St Augustine's Boys' Orphanage \(c. 1855 - 1939\)](#)  
The Sisters of Mercy cared for girls at St Augustine's until Our Lady's Orphanage was established in 1862.  
Date: 1859 - 1862

## Resources

- [Heritage Display](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013
- Care Leavers Australia Network, [Geelong and District Orphanages](#), No date
- Delaney, Helen Mary, [Great Talent for Management: Mother Xavier Maguire c1819-1879](#), 2017

## Records

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

### Records

- [MacKillop Family Services Records, Victorian institutions \(1857 - current\)](#)

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/our-ladys-orphanage/>