

# St Joseph's Home

c. 1911 – 1980

**Other Names:**

- Nazareth Boys' Home
- Nazareth Boys' Orphanage
- Nazareth Boys' House

## Details

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St Joseph's Home, Sebastopol, was established in around 1911. It accommodated boys aged between 6 and 16, and some girls until the age of 6 when they were transferred to Nazareth House, Ballarat. Residential childcare ceased at St Joseph's in 1980.

The site of St Joseph's Home was on Grant Street, Sebastopol (in the Ballarat district). It was formerly known as Leckie Mansion, and Blythewood Grange.

The foundation stone for the St Joseph's Home was laid in 1911. Dr Higgins, Catholic Bishop of Ballarat, opened the home in February 1913.

St Joseph's Home was for boys and girls up to six years of age. When girls turned six, they were transferred to Nazareth House in Ballarat. Boys could remain at St Joseph's until they were 16.

From 1961 to 1975, the institution was known as Nazareth Boys' House. It reverted back to the name St Joseph's Home in 1975.

In the words of Gabrielle Short:

*St Joseph's baby's home was run by the Poor Sisters of Nazareth also known as the Cruel Sisters of Nazareth. St Joseph's baby's home was on the same grounds as the Nazareth Boys home in Grant St Sebastopol a suburb of Ballarat. Nazareth Girls home was in Mill St Ballarat across from Lake Wendoree. The age group for St Joseph's baby's home was from infant to 5yrs of age, then they boys would be sent over to the Nazareth Boys Home and the girls would be sent to Nazareth Girls Home in Ballarat these 3 homes were all run by the same nuns.*

In Grace Ryan's childhood reminiscences, she notes that many girls at Nazareth House in Ballarat had brothers who lived at St Joseph's.

*In January we always had a picnic in the Ballarat Gardens. We girls would go by steamer across Lake Wendoree, and the boys from St. Joseph's used to come in a big charabanc. We'd all run around mad finding our brothers!*

In April 1956, St Joseph's Home, Sebastapol, was declared an approved children's home under the Children's Welfare Act 1954.

James Jenkinson writes:

*By the mid 1970s concerns were being expressed about the relative isolation of the Home, its congregate care style of operation and the fact that most of the children accommodated were from Melbourne rather than the surrounding region. Rising costs were also an issue and referrals to the Home were in decline. By 1978 the Home was only accommodating the minimum necessary (60 children) to remain financially viable.*

Closure of the Home was recommended by Departmental officers in 1978. The consultation and review process continued until the end of 1980, when the Department's recommendation was finally implemented. Residential childcare activity ceased at St Joseph's in December 1980.

In 2018 the site of the former Home is a resort and conference centre.

The convicted paedophile Father Gerard Francis Ridsdale was a 'visiting chaplain' at St Joseph's Home in the 1960s (he also had this role at Nazareth House, Ballarat). The organisation Broken Rites has reported that some of Ridsdale's victims were residents at the two institutions in Ballarat run by the Sisters of Nazareth.

Numerous survivors have given testimony about the abuse of children in St Joseph's Home and Nazareth House Ballarat, including to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care (2003-2004), the Victorian Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations (2012-2013) and the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2013-2017).

St Joseph's Home was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families.

## Gallery

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**St Joseph's Home, Grant Street, Sebastapol**



**St Joseph's Home, Sebastapol [former site]**

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## St Joseph's Orphanage Ballarat

**Description:** This is a video with aerial drone footage of the former site of St Joseph's Orphanage in Sebastapol (Ballarat).

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Sisters of Nazareth \(1888 - current\)](#)

#### Related Events

- [Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, Parliament of Australia \(2003 - 2005\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Nazareth House, Ballarat \(1888 - 1976\)](#)

Girls were housed at St Joseph's Home only until the age of six. At six, they were transferred to Nazareth House, Ballarat.

#### Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

## Resources

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, [Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families](#), 1997. *Relevance:* St Joseph's Home was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families
- Name withheld, [Submission no 130 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Cronin, Bryan, [Submission no 290 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Hill, Gordon, [Submission no 501 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Coleman, Alan, [Submission no 471 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- Couch, Kevin Francis, [Submission no 454 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2004
- Ewing, Tania, [Claims of sexual abuse by intellectually disabled](#), *The Age*, 23 May 1998
- [How the church harboured this criminal, Father Gerald Ridsdale, for thirty years](#), *Broken Rites*, No date
- Saric, Joseph, [Transcript of Joseph Saric's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations](#), 2013
- Hill, Gordon, [Transcript of Gordon Hill's presentation to the Family and Community Development Committee: Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations](#), 26 March 2013
- Marshall, Debi, [The girls, the paedophile and Cardinal Pell](#), SBS, 2016
- O'Neill, Cate, [Spotlight on Ballarat](#), Find & Connect web resource blog, 9 March 2016
- [Nazareth House \(1888-1976\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance:* See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to St Joseph's Home
- 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

- ['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-josephs-home/>