

Santa Casa

1918 – 1961

Other Names:

- Santa Casa Rest Home
- Santa Casa Holiday Home for Children

Details

Santa Casa was established in February 1918 by the Catholic Women's Social Guild and the Sisters of Mercy in Queenscliff. Santa Casa was opened as a seaside rest home for 'poor children in delicate health' and was run by the Sisters of Mercy in their Queenscliff convent. Children were given a two week stay at the Home to prevent illness and improve their health. Santa Casa closed in 1961 when the Sisters of Mercy decided to focus on their work in education.

Santa Casa was located in the Convent of Mercy, also known as Santa Casa, on the beach front in Queenscliff. It was opened as a holiday home for children in poor health whose parents had little money on 24 February 1918 by Archbishop Daniel Mannix.

The aim of the Home was to prevent children falling ill by giving them a holiday that their parents were unable afford. The holiday would remove them from the city and provide the children with seaside air, good food and care. Admission to the Home was by application but at no cost.

The Annual Reports of the Hospitals and Charities Commission confirms that Santa Casa did not receive government funding and was an unsubsidized institution. Instead regular fundraising drives were held for the maintenance fund of the Home. The Catholic Women's Social Guild established a committee which worked to fundraise and improve the amenities of the Home. The Guild established an annual bay trip to Santa Casa as the largest fundraising initiative of the year. The excursion involved a picnic and gave people the chance to see children in the Home. Benefit concerts, fetes and dances were also organised and along with donations, legacies and benefactors were used to fund the Home.

When Santa Casa first opened it took 12 children at a time with boys and girls going for alternative fortnights. By 1952, 500 children stayed at Santa Casa for a fortnight's holiday over the summer months.

The Home was not open for the same period of time each year. Funds, transportation and staffing issues resulted in it sometimes opening late or closing early. Generally Santa Casa was open from October to April.

Santa Casa closed in 1961 as the Sisters wished to concentrate on their work in education. In the Guild's final report and financial statement they say that approximately 23,500 children had been given a fortnight's holiday at Santa Casa. It was deregistered as a children's Home on 11 November 1965. It has since become a retreat run by the Sisters of Mercy.

Gallery



Santa Casa, Queenscliff, C.W.S.G. Holiday Home for sick children. Sisters and holidaymakers.

Description: This is a scanned copy of a photo printed in The Horizon's commemoration of the Catholic Women's Social Guild 50 year jubilee celebrations from October 1966. This image is undated, the date included is an estimate.

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