

# St Magdalen's Retreat

1887 – 1947

**Other Names:**

- Good Samaritan Convent
- Tempe Convent
- St Magdalen's
- St Magdalene's
- St Magdalen's Convent

## Details

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St Magdalen's Retreat at Tempe, near Arncliffe, provided accommodation for females over the age of 12 years by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. It was established in 1887 and was used by the New South Wales Government as a care institution, as well as accepting voluntary admissions from families who could not care for young women.

The foundation stone for St Magdalen's Retreat, Tempe was laid by Cardinal Moran in 1885, and the home was opened in November 1887. The site was the grounds of Tempe House, built in the 1830s by John Verge for Alexander Brodie Spark. The noted philanthropist Caroline Chisholm leased Tempe House for a girls' school in 1863 and it was bought by the Good Samaritans in 1884. The Sisters built new buildings, including a chapel.

The objects of the Retreat were to 'provide a home for unfortunate women and girls of all creeds and classes; to help them reform their lives; and after a period of probation to restore them to their friends or to provide them with clothes; and to find suitable situations for them'. Like most homes of its type, St Magdalen's Retreat ran a laundry, and this work was part of the redemption for the girls.

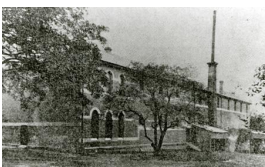
By the 1940s, the government social welfare policy no longer favoured institutional rehabilitation and from 1947 until 1970, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan cared mainly for girls committed by the courts. St Magdalen's Retreat became known as the Good Samaritan Training Centre.

According to historian Peter Quinn, this home was one of the few non-government institutions to receive funding from the state government to run juvenile justice institutions by the Child Welfare Department.

The Good Samaritans closed the site in 1982 and it was sold to developers. Tempe House and the St Magdalen Chapel remain standing and regular open days are held.

## Gallery

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**The laundry building at St Magdalen's Retreat, Arncliffe, 1899**

**Description:** When the Sisters of the Good Samaritan owned Tempe House (which they renamed St Magdalen's Retreat) they operated a laundry on the site.

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## St Magdalen's Retreat, circa 1965

**Description:** In 1885, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan purchased Tempe House and renamed it "St Magdalen's Retreat". It was sometimes referred to as the Good Samaritan Convent.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- **St Magdalen's Retreat (1887 – 1947)**
  - Good Samaritan Training Centre (1948 - 1982)

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Sisters of the Good Samaritan \(1857 - current\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [House of the Good Shepherd \(1848 - 1901\)](#)

From 1887, many inmates of the House of Good Shepherd were housed at St Magdalen's Retreat and when the House of Good Shepherd closed in 1901, its residents were transferred to Tempe.

### Resources

- [Survey of Social Agencies](#), Australian Women's Weekly, 15 July 1933
- [St Magdalene's Retreat, Tempe](#), Australian Town and Country Journal, 10 June 1899
- 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

- [Records held by the Good Samaritan Archives relating to Children's Homes \(1877 - current\)](#)
  - [Catholic Children's Homes Registers \(c. 1888 - c. 1990\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-magdalens-retreat/>