

# St Anthony's Petersham

1922 – 1925

**Other Names:**

- St Anthony's Home for Unmarried Mothers
- St Anthony's Home for Infants

## Details

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St Anthony's was opened in 1922 by the Society of St Vincent De Paul, first in St Peters, and then in Petersham. It was not intended to provide long term residential care. Several hundred adoptions and foster placements were arranged from Petersham. In 1925 the home became St Anthony's Home Croydon.

St Anthony's was developed to ensure that Catholic infants and children, especially those born to unmarried "girl-mothers" (Burford, 1989), were not lost to the Church by fostering or adoption into non-Catholic families.

In 1916 Brother Denis Haugh, President of the Central Council of Sydney's Society of St Vincent De Paul, was concerned that Catholic babies and infants were being lost to the Church and in 1921 formed the 'Stray Children's Committee' to find Catholic foster homes and placements. Rev Father J.M. Cusack of St. Francis', Albion Street, Surry Hills and Archbishop Kelly decided there was a pressing need to care for unmarried mothers who were turning to non-Catholic institutions for care, and surrendering their children to non-Catholic foster parents.

In March 1922 Mrs Patchett, a custodian for the Child Welfare Department, transferred the lease of her property at Albert Street, St Peters to the Society and the Home began operations. Four months later the Society purchased a two-storied property at Palace Street, Petersham and the Home was placed under the patronage of St Anthony of Padua. Mrs Patchett was named Matron. St Anthony's at Petersham was officially opened on Sunday, 19 November 1922.

Overcrowding was an issue from the start. The home had 13 rooms and a gardener's cottage, yet the policy of the home was never to turn a child or mother away (Burford, 1989, p.4). In the first two years it attended to 186 'Girl Mothers' and 402 infants and children, while 347 infants were boarded out (fostered) or adopted. A new site at Croydon was purchased and officially opened by the Archbishop in May 1925.

## Gallery



"A Brother of St Vincent de Paul Society arriving at St Anthony's, 13 Palace Street, Petersham with his precious neglected children, 1923"

**Description:** This is a copy of an image reproduced in K.E. Burford's *Unfurrowed Fields*.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- **St Anthony's Petersham (1922 – 1925)**
  - St Anthony's Home Croydon (1925 - 1980)
  - St Anthony's and St Joseph's Centre of Care (1980 - 2003)

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [St Vincent de Paul Society \(1854 - current\)](#)

Date: 1922 - 1925

### Resources

- 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

- [Adoption Records, c. 1920s-80s, St Anthony's, Croydon \(1920s - 1980s\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-anthonys-petersham/>