

Inasmuch Children's Home

1956 – 1986

Other Names: • Inasmuch

Details

Inasmuch Children's Home was established in 1956 at Falls Creek, near Nowra, by a retired Salvation Army Officer who had been a welfare worker. It was a Home for children who had been removed by the courts or were placed by their parents. Inasmuch was converted to an aged care facility in 1986.

Inasmuch was founded in 1956 but was officially opened on 15 November 1958 by Captain Smith of HMAS *Albatross* (Jervis Bay). The Home was established by former Salvation Army officer and welfare worker, Major Myrtle Townsend.

An article from the Nowra Leader in 1962 describes the early days of the Inasmuch Children's Home: "On a cold and wet Sunday morning nearly 5 years ago a retired Salvation Officer arrived at Falls Creek with 4 neglected children and a few belongings packed into a 1928 Chevrolet" (Shoalhaven Historical Society).

The Home was funded by community donations and Townsend's pension. The house at Falls Creek was donated by a Canberra woman called Mrs R Murray (nee Monaghan). The Home received support from the communities of Bomaderry and Sussex Inlet, who provided food and worked on working bees. The naval base HMAS *Albatross* which provided Christmas presents to the children and hosted them for a week's holiday at Christmas. According to the *Australian Women's Weekly*, children were billeted during holidays with neighbouring families.

A newspaper article (Shoalhaven Historical Society, no date) explains the name of the Home. Apparently Major Townsend said to a visitor that it came from the Bible, which says "In as much as ye have done it unto these my little ones ye have done it to me".

Children were placed at Inasmuch by the courts, or were placed by their parents. According to the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1958, many had suffered severe neglect and abuse before they were committed, and were the children of 'prostitutes, drug addicts and drunkards'. Examples given by the *Weekly* included a baby exposed on an ants' nest at Mascot, a girl who had been severely burned after toddling into a campfire, and a neglected child with polio.

An article published in 1972 quoted Major Townsend repeating this story of the child on the ant hill. As the journalist told the story: "At 60 she had retired from the Salvation Army, but then decided there was too much work to be done for an active woman to retire. She heard of a child who had been left on an ant heap to die. She found the child and brought him home. She found more children in need and brought them home. Soon the home was too small" ("Major Townsend, Christian", no date, no publication details, Shoalhaven Historical Society).

An article about Inasmuch from the Daily Mercury 21 August 1961 (p.19, Shoalhaven Historical Society) has another story told by Major Townsend about the Home's origins. It says that "The Townsend family was caring for children at Rockdale, but support was withdrawn and Major Townsend decided to take the children under her wing".

An article from 1972 says that “circumstances forced Major Townsend to be pensioned” from the Salvation Army in 1955. She then returned to her family house at Rockdale, but was “called upon to come out of temporary retirement to help homeless children” (Shoalhaven & Nowra News, 26 July 1972).

The 1961 article says that “Until the Inasmuch Children’s Home Committee was formed, she kept the children from Social Security payments and her Salvation Army pension”. An article from the News Leader, 21 January 1970 (Shoalhaven Historical Society) states that Townsend ran Inasmuch “on her pension, the child endowment and faith in both God and man. Nobody pays at Inasmuch. There are no wards of the state, no bills are sent out, no fees are charged”. It also said that “Children are sent to Inasmuch by Life Line, hospital almoners, social workers, ex-inmates and sometimes by the Salvation Army”.

A 1958 article in the Shoalhaven & Nowra News appealing for help described the children living at Inasmuch as “children who have been starved, neglected, unloved, of mixed colour and race, who have never known a decent home. Because their parents cannot be traced, Major Townsend is unable to adopt them out and rather than having them sent to State homes, she has taken upon herself the task of providing the love and family life which they have previously not known” (Shoalhaven Historical Society).

The quoted articles about Inasmuch were written to raise funds for the Home. These articles portray the families of the children at Inasmuch in an extremely negative way, and rely on the version of events given by Major Townsend. The photographs in the 1958 Women’s Weekly article depict a rosy picture of Inasmuch, that might not match the memories of former residents. However, it is obvious, even from those photographs, that the children who lived in the home did much of the work, planting vegetables and doing laundry.

Major Townsend died in 1972, aged 68, as a result of a motor vehicle accident. She had been driving to Bomaderry with her “adopted son”, David. Speaking at her funeral, retired Salvation Army officer Lt Col Robert Duck-Chong said, “Please, people of Nowra, keep it going – don’t let this thing go into discard” (Shoalhaven & Nowra News, 26 July 1972, Shoalhaven Historical Society). This article refers to but does not elaborate on Townsend’s “unorthodox methods” and states that “her unusual approach to many matters brought her into dispute with the authorities”.

Following an appeal launched by the Shoalhaven Shire Council, the work was continued by Miss Pam Mooney, a trained mothercraft nurse from Kiama. The children were moved from the property at Falls Creek to premises, given by another benefactor, at Sussex Inlet.

Inasmuch in Sussex Inlet was converted to an aged care facility in 1986. The house at Falls Creek was destroyed by fire in May 2002 (South Coast Register, 17 May 2002, p.1, Shoalhaven Historical Society).

National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

In 2021, the New South Wales government has agreed to be a funder of last resort for this institution. This means that although the institution is now defunct, it is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and the government has agreed to pay the institution’s share of costs of providing redress to a person (as long as the government is found to be equally responsible for the abuse a person experienced).

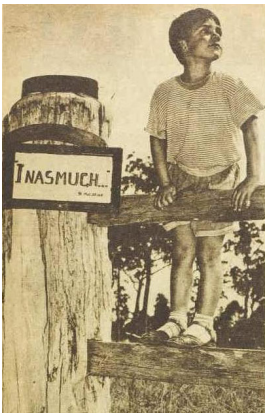
Gallery



Inasmuch's Major Townsend

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the Australian Women's Weekly on 24 December 1958. The caption read: 'The baby of the "Inasmuch"' family, gives the Major a hug [altered from original caption].'

Page 12
The baby of the "Inasmuch" family, gives the Major a hug [altered from original caption].



Inasmuch

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the article 'Angel of Mercy now has own family' in *The Australian Women's Weekly* on 24 December 1958.



Inasmuch ['Room to Play']

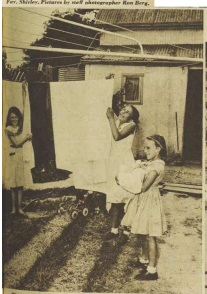
Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the article 'Angel of Mercy now has own family' in *The Australian Women's Weekly* on 24 December 1958. The original caption reads 'Room to play, fresh air, sunshine, good food, and plenty of love is Major Townsend's recipe for raising healthy and happy "citizens of tomorrow."'



THE INASMUCH FAMILY: From left, Betty (11), Susan (11), David (11), Michael (11), Patricia (7), and Anthony (5). In the background, the "Inasmuch" family home.

Inasmuch ['Washing Day']

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the article 'Angel of Mercy now has own family' in *The Australian Women's Weekly* on 24 December 1958.





Inasmuch ['Lizzie']

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the article 'Angel of Mercy now has own family' in *The Australian Women's Weekly* on 24 December 1958. The original caption reads "'Lizzie', the home's 1928 model car, holds all the children when the Major takes them for outings.'

More info

Resources

- Hurst, Enid, *Inasmuch: the history of a caring centre*, 1999
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/inasmuch-childrens-home/>