

# Royal Hospital for Women

1901 –

**Other Names:**

- Hospital for Women
- Royal Women's Hospital
- Royal Women's
- RHW

**URL:** <https://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/royal-hospital-for-women>

## Details

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The Royal Hospital for Women is a maternity hospital that was established at Paddington in 1901 by the Benevolent Society. It was designated the Royal Hospital for Women in 1904 and a new building opened in 1905. The Royal Hospital for Women organised many of the adoptions of babies in New South Wales. Since 1992 has been run by the New South Wales Government, and in 1997 it transferred to a new site on Barker Street in Randwick, next to the Prince of Wales and Sydney Children's Hospitals.

Following the resumption of its site in Pitt Street, Sydney, in 1901, the Benevolent Society of New South Wales acquired a property in Paddington called Flinton for its women's hospital. A temporary maternity hospital, or lying-in hospital, commenced operations in Flinton on 1 October 1901.

In 1903 the Board of the Benevolent Society and the Board of the Crown Street Women's Hospital initiated proceedings for the amalgamation of the two institutions. However, this plan was never carried through. The Benevolent Society had plans drawn up for the construction of a permanent Hospital for Women on their site at Paddington.

In 1904 the new hospital was granted the title 'Royal' and, on 3 May 1905, Lady Northcote, the wife of the Governor-General, officially opened the Royal Hospital for Women.

The Royal Hospital for Women became one of Australia's foremost specialist hospitals for women and babies and more than 300,000 babies have been born there. It was also heavily involved in adoptions during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and employed a number of social workers to identify adoptive mothers and arrange adoptions, some of which were forced. It was one of the most important agencies for adoptions in the state.

The viability of the Royal Hospital for Women came under question in the 1980s and 1990s when funding cuts and rationalisation of health services created a series of crises in the New South Wales health system. On 1 July 1992, management of the Royal Hospital for Women was transferred to the New South Wales State Government. In 1997, the hospital moved to its new location adjacent to the Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick. The Paddington site has been redeveloped and the buildings have been converted to apartments or demolished. A park commemorates the hospital.

Royal Hospital for Women was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption. The Benevolent Society apologised in 2011 for its past adoption practices that included forcing some women to give up their children for adoption.

# Records

The Royal Hospital for Women maintained patient records such as birth registers, confinement books, admission books and Labour Ward registers, including those from several other hospitals which have closed.

Since around 1997, these records have been held by the Prince of Wales Hospital's Medico-Legal Section.

Requests for information should be made to the Prince of Wales Hospital's Medico-Legal Section.

## Gallery



**Royal Hospital for Women, completed**

**Description:** This is a digital copy of a photograph held by the Benevolent Society. Original Hospital Building, Royal Hospital for Women.



**Part of the exterior of the Royal Hospital for Women from roadway, Paddington, 15 January, 1964**

**Description:** This is a digital copy of a black and white image from the John Mulligan Photograph Collection, ca. 1960-1976, that was created in 2002 by the National Library of Australia.

## More info

### Chronology

- Benevolent Asylum, Sydney (1821 - 1901)
  - **Royal Hospital for Women (1901 – )**

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Benevolent Society of New South Wales \(1813 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1901 - 1992
- [Health Department, State Government of New South Wales \(1982 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1992 -

#### Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)  
Royal Hospital for Women was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

## Resources

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee, [Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 29 February 2012
- Thompson, Geoff and Hitchens, Clay, [Given or Taken?](#), 27 February 2012

- Bluett, Ros, [\*Charity and Justice: The early days of the Benevolent Society in Sydney\*](#), 24 March 2013
- [\*Catholic Women's Association: Hospital Visitors' Activities\*](#), The Catholic Press, 10 September 1936
- Benevolent Society, *Benevolent Society: 200 year celebration: Last 200*, 2013
- [\*A tradition of caring\*](#), Australian Women's Weekly, 13 December 1978

# Records

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## Records

- [Benevolent Society of New South Wales Collection, 1813-1996 \(1813 - 1996\)](#)
  - [John Mulligan Photograph Collection, ca. 1960-1976 \(c. 1960 - c. 1976\)](#)
  - [Medical records, Royal Hospital for Women \(1905 - current\)](#)
  - [Birth registers, Royal Hospital for Women \(1903 - current\)](#)
  - [Admission books, Royal Hospital for Women \(1950 - current\)](#)
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