

# Mater Misericordiae Hospital

1906 – 1982

- Other Names:**
- The Mater
  - Mater Misericordiae Hospital for Women and Children
  - Mater Public Hospital
  - Mater General Hospital
  - Mater Private Hospital
  - Mater Maternity Hospital

## Details

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The Mater Misericordiae Hospital for Women and Children was a maternity hospital established at Crows Nest by the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation, in 1906. In 1910 the Mater moved to North Sydney. It cared for mothers who were unmarried, and destitute before and after the birth of their babies. Babies for adoption were also placed from the Mater. The maternity and public sections of Mater Misericordiae Hospital closed in 1982.

The Mater Misericordiae Hospital for Women and Children was a major maternity hospital on Sydney's North Shore. It was first located in a house on Willoughby Road, Crows Nest, in the former Royal North Shore District Hospital. It had 12 beds and 12 cots and treated up to 44 patients a year.

In 1910 the Sisters of Mercy purchased a house called 'Wenona' on Lane Cove Road (now the Pacific Highway) at North Sydney, near Crows Nest.

From this base, the Mater grew to become a complex of hospitals, with various sections: private, public, maternity and general. It was closely linked with the Sisters of Mercy's Waitara Foundling Home, and to the adoption of babies born to mothers from Waitara.

By 1911 this was a fully functional hospital. The Mater Public Hospital, also known as the Mater General Hospital, was added to the site in 1914. 'Wenona', which had been known as the 'Cottage Hospital', was then converted to the Mater Private Hospital. By 1920, 1700 patients were treated on the site each year.

In 1929 Mater Private Hospital was extended towards Sinclair Street. This hospital enabled the Sisters to fund the running of the Mater Public Hospital during the Depression.

From 1940 to 1942 the Sisters of Mercy built the Mater Maternity Hospital. Midwives were trained at St Margaret's Hospital in Darlinghurst. In its first full year of operation, 1942-1943, 1242 babies were delivered at the hospital, and 1318 mothers were treated. An Obstetrics Training School for midwives was also established on the site.

Unwed mothers were sent to the Mater, which worked with Our Lady of Mercy Home at Waitara to provide care to unmarried or destitute women before and after the birth of their babies. Babies for adoption were placed from the Mater.

The Mater became a public institution from 1946 and a major teaching hospital, linked to the University of Sydney, from 1968. However, by 1982 the buildings required renovation and the government, which was trying to

divert health funds to western Sydney, withdrew support. The Public Hospital was closed. After substantial upgrades, the Sisters of Mercy reopened the hospital in 1990, as a private hospital.

Responsibility for storing the medical records of the original Mater Hospital rests with the Royal North Shore Hospital, St Leonards.

A new 185 bed Mater Private Hospital, a maternity and general hospital, was established by the Sisters of Mercy on the same grounds in 1990.

Mater Misericordiae Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney Congregation \(1865 - current\)](#)

#### Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)

Mater Misericordiae Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

#### Related Organisations

- [Waitara Foundling Home \(1898 - 1927\)](#)

Mothers from Waitara Foundling Home were sent to birth at Mater Misericordiae Hospital.

## Resources

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

## Records

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For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

### Records

- [Sisters of Mercy \(North Sydney\) Historical Records \(1898? - 2001?\)](#)
- [Records of institutions run by the Sisters of Mercy \(North Sydney\) \(1903? - 1990?\)](#)
- [Obstetric Medical Records, Mater Misericordiae Hospital \(1952 - 1982\)](#)

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/mater-misericordiae-hospital/>