

# MERGED St Margaret's Home for Unwed Mothers

1894 – 1982

## Details

---

St Margaret's Home for Unwed Mothers, Surry Hills, was attached to St Margaret's Hospital from 1894. It was a home for unmarried mothers who were waiting to give birth, and for their babies. It was part of St Margaret's Hospital, and was run by the Sisters of St Joseph from 1937. It closed around 1982.

St Margaret's Home for Unwed Mothers was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices Report (2012)* as an institution that was involved in forced adoption. Kate Howarth, author of the memoir *Ten Hail Marys (2010)*, gave evidence to the Committee and made a submission with details of her experiences as a single mother in the 1960s.

*In 1965, I was an unmarried, pregnant, 15 year old girl and taken to St. Margaret's Home for unmarried mothers in Darlinghurst Sydney. At the time of admission I was presented with a document to give consent to adopt my child and told to sign it. I refused to sign. At no time before this document was presented was I advised of any alternative to adoption. Nor was I advised of the financial, and other material support, which I now know was available at that time, and which the laws of the day dictated was my entitlement to know, prior to any document for adoption being prepared.*

*For the next four months I was put to work in the hospital kitchen and laundry, for six and a half days a week, working an eight hour split shift. There was no payment for the work I did; it was said to cover my 'keep' while I was confined and awaiting the birth of my child. The accommodation provided by the hospital was overcrowded and squalid. The food supplied was inadequate for the needs of a pregnant girl and resulted in malnutrition that resulted in considerable hair loss and dental problems due to a lack of calcium in the diet.*

*The treatment I was subjected to while the hospital administrator (Sister [redacted]) attempted to get my consent for adoption was tantamount to torture and included threats, intimidation and sleep deprivation (Submission 235).*

## More info

---

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-margarets-home-for-unwed-mothers/>