

Sunshine Institute

1923 – 1951

Other Names: • Sunshine Home

Details

The Sunshine Institute was founded in 1923 on the Pacific Highway at Gore Hill by Lorna Hodgkinson. It was a school and residential institution for children and adults with intellectual and other forms of disability. In 1951, the Sunshine Institute became the Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home.

The Sunshine Home was established by Dr Lorna Hodgkinson, a teacher who had worked with disabled children at May Villa, near Parramatta, before gaining qualifications in psychology from Harvard University. She returned to New South Wales in 1922 to take up a post created for her by the Department of Public Instruction, 'Superintendent of the Education of Mental Defectives'. She was later dismissed, after publicly criticising the Department's management of so-called 'mentally defective' children in the 1923 Royal Commission on Lunacy Law and Administration.

Hodgkinson's work reflects the thinking and language of the time relating to 'mental hygiene'. According to her biographer, Alison Turtle, Hodgkinson believed 'feeble-minded' children should be segregated from the rest of the community and that 'higher-grade' children could be trained for later economic self-sufficiency in residential training schools. Her view was that the 'less able' should remain in a self-supporting cottage-colony system.

After her departure from the public service, in 1924 Lorna Hodgkinson rented a house on the Pacific Highway at Gore Hill and set up the Sunshine Institute, a private residential training school. In 1930 she bought a portion of the site, and spent the rest of her life building up the establishment to 60 pupils. She died in 1951 and her ashes were buried on the site. Before her death she had converted the institute to a not-for-profit organisation under a board of trustees, to whom she bequeathed the bulk of her estate. The institute was renamed the Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home.

Gallery



The matron and medical superintendent, extreme right, supervise some of the children in the grounds of the Sunshine Home, Gore Hill, North Sydney

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in *The Australian Women's Weekly*.



The Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home

Description: This is a copy of a photograph of the Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home which was published on Sunshine's website in 2013. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

More info

Chronology

- **Sunshine Institute (1923 – 1951)**
 - Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home (1951 - current)

Resources

- [Mental Defectives: Replies to letters](#), The Australian Women's Weekly, 16 December 1933
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