

# The Spastic Centre of New South Wales

1945 – 2011

## Details

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The Spastic Centre was a non-government organisation that supported children and adults with cerebral palsy, which was once known as 'spastic paralysis'. It ran the New South Wales Hostel for Country Children at Allambie Heights from 1953. It was established in 1945 by a group of parents led by Neil and Audrie McLeod, whose daughter Jennifer had cerebral palsy. They started a treatment centre in Mosman before moving to purpose-built premises at Allambie Heights. In 2011, according to the ABC, this organisation decided the word 'spastic' had too many negative connotations and changed its name to Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

The Spastic Centre was the first organisation of its type in the world. The McLeods assembled a group of parents to set up their first centre, at 6 Queen Street, Mosman, a house borrowed from Arthur Sullivan. The parents believed their children needed specialist support and treatment to achieve normal lives. They felt their children should not be housed in traditional disability institutions. Working with trained staff, they merged medical treatment and therapy with education.

The demand for the Centre was so great that it quickly became obvious that the Queen Street property would not be large enough. In 1946, the parents started work on a medical centre on land they had bought at Allambie Heights. A pilot hostel was started in Mosman in 1948, with 12 country children. The schoolroom was added to the Allambie buildings and officially opened in 1954. The Country Children's Hostel, McLeod House, was built by voluntary labour over three years and opened in 1957. A Centre Industries factory was added in 1961.

Through extremely clever fundraising, such as a relationship with the Miss Australia Quest/Awards that lasted from 1945 until 2001, and government support, The Spastic Centre has become a substantial organisation. It is a leader in Australian services for cerebral palsy. It has conducted a wide range of research into therapies, early intervention treatments, equipment and causes of cerebral palsy, as well as supporting children and adults.

## Gallery

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**State wards at Spastic Centre, Allambie Heights**



**McLeod House**

**Description:** This is a copy of an image from *Nothing Is Impossible*, it shows McLeod House.

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### Arthur Sullivan's house at 6 Queen Street, Mosman 'Burrawang'

**Description:** This is an image of 'Burrawang', a large house that was leased to the Spastic Centre free of charge by Arthur Sullivan in late 1944. This image was published in *Nothing Is Impossible: Adventures in cerebral palsy* by the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. The date for this image is unknown, the date range included here is an estimate.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Ran

- [Spastic Centre Country Children's Hostel \(1948 - c. 2007\)](#)

### Resources

- Miller, Barbara, [Times dictate name change for Spastic Centre](#), abc.net.au, 9 February 2011
  - Earl, Dave, [Caring for the Children. Forever: Parent-run organisations for children with disabilities in New South Wales, 1950-1968](#), 2007
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