

# Peat Island Hospital

1973 – 1989

## Details

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Peat Island Hospital was a government run institution established in 1973. It was previously known as Peat and Milson Islands Mental Hospital. In 1989 it became known as Peat Island Centre.

Women began living on Peat Island on respite in 1976, and permanently from 1978 onwards. Laila Ellmoos notes that in this era female residents were placed on contraceptives or had their tubes tied to prevent pregnancies.

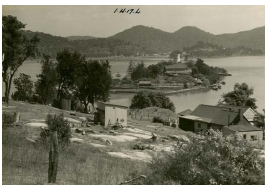
In the 1970s a number of homes on the mainland began to be converted for use as cottages, for patients who needed minimal supervision. Some houses were also rented in Gosford and surrounding centres. Later in the 1980s, the Health Department acquired houses in Kincumber, Green Point and Saratoga to re-house residents of Peat Island.

Legal and institutional reform followed. The Health Commission took over psychiatric services at the centre in 1973. In 1978, changes to the law recognised the distinction, for the first time, between mental illness and intellectual disability. A 1983 NSW Government report, the Richmond Report, recommended that community care take the place of institutional care, and called for the closure of Peat Island Hospital.

A community campaign to save Peat Island for its residents was organised, led by the families of residents, who emphasised that by this time it was more of a large group home than an institution. In the 1987 State Election, Opposition Leader Peter Collins made a promise to keep it open, but as he did not win the election, this did not happen.

## Gallery

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**[View of the Peat Island on the Hawkesbury River (NSW)]**

**Description:** This is a photograph of Peat Island. It shows the entirety of the island sitting within the Hawkesbury River, with institution buildings visible in the centre of the island, and boats moored at the dock. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- Rabbit Island Hospital for the Insane (1910 - 1917?)
  - Rabbit Island Mental Hospital (1917? - 1936)
    - Peat and Milson Islands Mental Hospital (1936 - 1973)

- **Peat Island Hospital (1973 – 1989)**
  - Peat Island Centre (1989 - 2010)

## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Department of Family and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1988 - 1991\)](#)  
Date: 1989 -
- [Health Commission, State Government of New South Wales \(1973 - 1982\)](#)
- [Health Department, State Government of New South Wales \(1982 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1982 - 1989

### Related Events

- [Inquiry into Health Services for the Psychiatrically Ill and Developmentally Disabled, New South Wales \(1983\)](#)  
Peat Island Hospital was affected by the recommendations of the Inquiry into Health Services for the Psychiatrically Ill and Developmentally Disabled.

## Resources

- State Records Authority of New South Wales, [Peat Island Centre](#), No date
- Sutton, Candace, [Haunting pictures from inside the secret island asylum that was Australia's 'One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest' where naked young patients were once kept caged and spent their whole lives banished from society](#), 29 October 2014

## Records

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

### Records

- [Rabbit, Peat and Milson Island Mental Hospital records, State Archives NSW \(1910 - 1980\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/peat-island-hospital/>