

# The Home for Incurables

1879 – 1981

## Details

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The Home for Incurables was opened in 1879 in Fullarton. Run by a board of management and funded by charitable donations and government subsidies the Home cared for patients, both adults and children, with diseases and injuries that were considered 'incurable'. In 1981 the Home was renamed the Julia Farr Centre.

Prior to the establishment of the Home for Incurables, patients of all ages who were discharged from the Adelaide Hospital as 'incurable', and did not have any means of support, frequently spent the remainder of their lives in the Destitute Asylum. In 1878 Mrs Julia Farr, who had been involved in the foundation of the Orphan Home (later renamed Farr House), suggested that a home should be established in South Australia to care for people suffering from incurable diseases. She was supported by Dr William Gosse and a committee of interested citizens formed to raise funds to found the Home. Dr Gosse became the first Chairman of the committee.

A large block of land at Fullarton was purchased for £1,700 and a further £300 was spent to refurbish an existing 8 room wooden house on the property. In October 1879 the first ten patients were moved from the Destitute Asylum into the Home.

As stated in Colin Kerr's history of the first 100 years of the Home for Incurables, in the early years of the Home:

*The only qualification for admission at this stage was that the patient suffered from some kind of incurable disease which was neither contagious nor infectious, and was mentally sound.*

This meant that age was not a restriction and it is clear that many children and young people became 'inmates' at the Home over the years.

Shortly after the opening of the Home, it became apparent that with growing patient numbers the original building would not be sufficient. In 1880 the foundation stone for a new building was laid, with provision for two additional wings. The new building, in Victorian Gothic style with a steeple, opened in February 1881. It provided accommodation for thirty patients and included rooms for the Matron and nurses as well as a Board room.

A newspaper article from June 1881 reveals one child was living at the Home at this time when it mentions "Poor little Freddy. He was only a young boy, hardly well into his teens". The same article speaks of a "strong-looking youth with a flushed face" suffering from consumption [tuberculosis]. Kerr's book states that for some years around the turn of the century patients with tuberculosis were resident at the Home despite the original rule against infectious diseases.

After the death of Dr Gosse in 1883 a new 'Gosse Memorial Wing' with forty additional beds was planned. The new wing was opened in 1884 allowing the Home to cater for up to 60 patients. Over the course of the next 100 years the Home continued to grow. Adjacent blocks of land were purchased by the Committee around the turn of the century increasing the size of the grounds and allowing for future growth.

A 1902 newspaper report described the institution as follows:

*The home is provided with every reasonable comfort, and fresh air and sunlight can be enjoyed even by those who are unable to leave their beds. Books and pictures may be seen in every room, while three sides of the premises are surrounded with flowers. Wide verandahs and lawns are available for patients who are able to leave their rooms, and facilities are afforded for those who are able to do light work to utilize a portion of each day in manufacturing saleable articles, such as bird cages, flower pot stands, and fancy work of all kinds. Large wards have been avoided in the design, and the majority of the patients sleep in rooms which contain from two to six beds. There are a number of smaller bedrooms, which are reserved for inmates who require isolation on account of the nature of their maladies. The inmates are not subjected to such strict discipline as that enforced in hospitals or destitute asylums, and the general arrangements are calculated to convey the idea of homely comfort and freedom.*

By 1928 142 patients were resident in the Home. This number increased to 400 in the 1960s. Further extensions in the early 1970s led to the demolishing of the old 'gothic' east wing in 1973. A new East Block opened in 1977 and by the end of 1978 there was accommodation for 826 patients making it, at that time, the largest institution of its kind in the Southern hemisphere.

The continued presence of young people amongst the patients of the Home is evidenced by the inclusion of a 'teenage ward' in the four storey West Block completed in 1967. A former Matron of the Home remembered a young girl who contracted arthritis in her early teens who stayed at the Home for twenty years, as well as a number of young people with muscular dystrophy.

In the Home's centenary year, 1978, it was stated that:

*Patients are accepted from the age of fifteen years. No schooling is provided at the Home, but a special ward caters for the needs of young people.*

In 1981, in honour of the Home's founder, the Home for Incurables was renamed The Julia Farr Centre.

## Gallery

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### Original house used as the Home for Incurables

**Description:** The library description states: The original house used as the Julia Farr Centre, Home for Incurables; a lithograph by J.V. Morgan.



### Fullarton

**Description:** Home for Incurables in the Adelaide suburb of Fullarton. This imposing building has several wrought iron trimmed verandahs and is surrounded by gumtrees and grassy parklands. This building was later known as The Julia Farr Centre. [On back of photograph] Home for Incurables, Adelaide (Fullarton) 1872-86 (Please note: although the photograph is listed as c.1872 on the State Library site the photo is of the 'Gothic' style Home at Fullarton built in 1880-81.

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### Home For Incurables at Fullarton

**Description:** The library description states: Nurses and their patients assembled outside the Home For Incurables at Fullarton, 21 October 1893

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### Fullarton

**Description:** The library description states: The Home of Incurables, Fullarton.

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### Part of the Home for Incurables at Fullarton

**Description:** The library description states: Part of the premises of the Home for Incurables at Fullarton, near Adelaide showing the verandah where patients are resting.

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### Aerial view of Home for Incurables, Fullarton

**Description:** The library description states: Aerial view of the complex of buildings and gardens at the Home for Incurables, Fullarton, June 1937.

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### Fullarton

**Description:** The library description states: Home for Incurables, Fisher St. car-park.

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### Fullarton

**Description:** The library description states: Home for Incurables, Fisher St.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- **The Home for Incurables (1879 – 1981)**
  - Julia Farr Centre (1981 - 1994)
    - Julia Farr Services (1994 - 2006)
      - Highgate Park (2006 - 2020)

### Resources

- [HOME FOR INCURABLES](#), The Register, 11 November 1916

# Records

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

## Records

- [Client files of Disability Services South Australia \(1879? - c. 2020\)](#)
  - [Highgate Park Heritage Collection \(1879 - 2020\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/the-home-for-incurables/>