

Adelaide Lunatic Asylum

1852 – 1902

Other Names: • Adelaide Hospital for the Insane

Details

The Adelaide Lunatic Asylum was opened by the government on North Terrace Adelaide in 1852. It replaced the temporary Colonial Lunatic Asylum at Parkside as an institution for the accommodation of people suffering from mental illness. People with intellectual disabilities, including children, were incarcerated at the Asylum. In 1898 some children from the Asylum were transferred to the new Minda Home for Weak-minded Children. The Adelaide Asylum continued to operate until 1902 when all patients were moved to the Parkside Lunatic Asylum.

The Adelaide Lunatic Asylum was opened by the Colonial Government in 1852 and replaced the temporary Colonial Lunatic Asylum at Parkside. Despite some public outcry the new Asylum was situated on North Terrace, in Adelaide, adjacent to the Royal Adelaide Hospital, overlooking what was to become the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. The operation and oversight of the Asylum was the responsibility of the Colonial Surgeon.

The Asylum was not only used to incarcerate people suffering from mental illness, but also people with intellectual disabilities and medical conditions like epilepsy. Children were amongst those incarcerated at the Asylum.

The first 13 patients were transferred from the Colonial Lunatic Asylum to the North Terrace Asylum in March of 1852.

Initially the new Asylum was used for both those considered to be insane and the destitute poor. The destitute people were housed on the first floor of the building and the Asylum patients were limited to the ground floor. This dual use of the building continued until August 1853 and meant that any overflow of mentally ill patients were sent to the Adelaide Gaol. Private patients were sometimes given precedence at the Asylum which again led to others being accommodated at the Gaol.

In 1856 new accommodation was made available for the Asylum at the old Adelaide Hospital building when the new Hospital opened. However, by 1859 the old Hospital building was being used to house destitute children.

By 1862 171 patients were being accommodated at the Asylum. In 1865 new quarters for the Resident Medical Officer were built making more rooms in the main building available for patients. In 1866 a new women's dormitory was also constructed.

In 1870 a new purpose built Asylum opened at Parkside in the same area where the original Colonial Lunatic Asylum had been located. Fifty male patients from the Adelaide Lunatic Asylum were moved to the new facility immediately. Despite this movement of patients overcrowding continued to be a problem at the Adelaide Asylum. In 1898 the Minda Home for Weak-minded Children was opened and some of the children from both the Asylums at North Terrace, Adelaide, and Parkside were transferred to the new government assisted facility.

The Adelaide Asylum continued to operate until 1902 when all patients were moved to the Parkside Lunatic Asylum. The building was taken over by the Royal Adelaide Hospital and became an infectious diseases ward. The building was demolished in 1938.

Gallery



Lunatic Asylum, Adelaide

Description: The library description states: Lunatic Asylum, looking north-east



Jubilee photo album: Lunatic Asylum

Description: The library description states: View of the Lunatic Asylum, Adelaide, viewed across the gardens



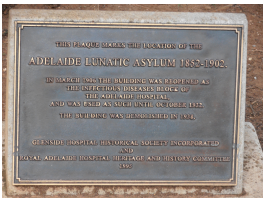
Lunatic Asylum

Description: The library description states: Old Lunatic Asylum, East of Botanic Gardens which was demolished in 1938.



Adelaide Lunatic Asylum site

Description: Site of the former Adelaide Lunatic Asylum in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens.



Adelaide Lunatic Asylum plaque

Description: This is a photograph of a plaque on the site of the former Adelaide Lunatic Asylum in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. The plaque reads "This plaque marks the location of the Adelaide Lunatic Asylum 1852-1902. In March 1906 the building was reopened as the infectious diseases block of the Adelaide Hospital, and was used as such until October 1932. The building was demolished in 1938. Glenside Hospital Historical Society Incorporated and Royal Adelaide Hospital Heritage and History Committee 1995."

More info

Chronology

- Colonial Lunatic Asylum (1846 - 1852)
 - **Adelaide Lunatic Asylum (1852 – 1902)**

Related Entries

Run by

- [Colonial Surgeon's Office, State Government of South Australia \(1836 - 1914\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Minda Home for Weak-Minded Children \(1898 - 1911\)](#)
Prior to Minda Home, children with intellectual disabilities were placed in the Adelaide and Parkside Lunatic Asylums
- [Royal Adelaide Hospital \(1939 - current\)](#)
The original Adelaide Hospital building became part of the Adelaide Lunatic Asylum in the late 1850s. In 1870 some buildings of the Asylum became part of the Royal Adelaide Hospital. The main Asylum building transferred to the Hospital in 1902.
- [Parkside Lunatic Asylum \(1870 - 1913\)](#)
Many male patients from the Adelaide Lunatic Asylum were moved to the new Parkside Lunatic Asylum in 1870 and in 1902, when the Adelaide Lunatic Asylum closed, all remaining patients moved to Parkside Lunatic Asylum

Records

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

Records

- [Correspondence files, annual single number series - Colonial Surgeon's Office and successor agencies \(1850 - 1979\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/adelaide-lunatic-asylum/>