

Northfield Mental Hospital

1929 – 1964

Details

The Northfield Mental Hospital was opened by the government in 1929 at Northfield. It was opened to relieve overcrowding at the Parkside Lunatic Asylum and also accommodated State children with intellectual disabilities. In 1964 the Northfield Mental Hospital was renamed Hillcrest Hospital.

The Northfield Mental Hospital was opened by the government in 1929 at Northfield. There had been calls for a second Asylum due to overcrowding at Parkside Lunatic Asylum, later called the Parkside Mental Hospital, as early as 1909.

During the planning and construction of the Hospital the institution was known as William's Farm. It was proclaimed as the Northfield Mental Hospital in April 1929 and opened for the admission of patients on 11 September that same year. The Hospital was opened with two blocks. One section with 25 beds was set aside for ex-soldiers with mental illness. The second section, for civilians, was able to accommodate up to 70 patients. Further additions were made during the 1930s and 1940s.

Initially the Hospital was being used predominantly for so called 'harmless' patients but ongoing problems of overcrowding at Parkside in the 1930s led to changes to the kinds of patients admitted to Northfield. The Hospital was then required to accept all kinds of cases of mental illness and also people with intellectual disabilities.

By 1945 the Northfield Mental Hospital, the Enfield Receiving House and the Parkside Mental Hospital were the only State-run facilities that accommodated children with intellectual disabilities.

In 1961 a report into State-run mental health services criticised the lumping together of the intellectually disabled with people suffering from mental illness, and the fact that young people continued to be housed with adult inmates. The report included disturbing statistics on the make-up of the population of the Parkside and Northfield Mental Hospitals and the Enfield Receiving House. Of a total population of 2500 patients, more than 600 were intellectually disabled and, of these, 142 were aged under 12.

From 1962 the patients at Parkside and Northfield Hospitals were classified as having either a 'mental illness' or a 'mental disability'. Two years later the Mental Health Amendment Act 1964 defined two types of 'mental deficiency'. These were 'intellectual retardation' and 'mental illness'.

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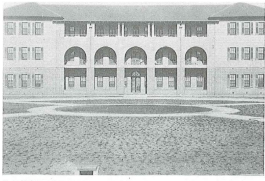
Gallery



Two nurses with a young girl at Northfield Mental Hospital, South Australia



A woman standing barefoot outside Northfield Mental Hospital, South Australia



Administration Block, 1935

Description: This image shows Hillcrest Hospital Administration Block.

More info

Chronology

- **Northfield Mental Hospital (1929 – 1964)**
 - Hillcrest Hospital (1964 - 1994)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Inspector General of Hospitals Office, State Government of South Australia \(1914 - 1940\)](#)
- [Hospitals Department, State Government of South Australia \(1940 - 1978\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Parkside Mental Hospital \(1913 - 1967\)](#)

Northfield Mental Hospital was opened to relieve overcrowding at Parkside Mental Hospital. By 1945 the Enfield Receiving House, the Northfield Mental Hospital and the Parkside Mental Hospital were the only State-run facilities that accommodated children with intellectual disabilities.
 - [Enfield Receiving House \(1922 - 1963\)](#)

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