

# House of Mercy

1891 – 1916

## Details

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The House of Mercy was established in Perth in 1891 as a 'non-denominational charity for single mothers'. It was run by a private management committee. Women were expected to work in the commercial laundry at the Home, which was funded by these activities and charitable donations. The name was changed to the Alexandra Home for Women in 1916.

The House of Mercy was established for the 'shelter and reformation of women and girls who have fallen from virtue', as described by *The Daily News* on 13 June 1891 (p.3).

It opened in rented premises in Lake Street, Perth in November 1891.

Women were 'trained' in domestic work and housekeeping, and worked in the commercial laundry to part-fund the operations of the Home. Charitable subscriptions were sought by the House of Mercy Association, the private management committee that ran the Home.

An excerpt from the 1893 report by the management committee was published in *The West Australian* (11 September 1894, p.7). The report gave an insight into what the committee hoped to achieve: to offer a helping hand and give 'girls' the opportunity to 'return to the paths of virtue'. The report also said that 16 young women had been admitted since the House of Mercy had opened. Of these, five were 'doing well in domestic service', two had 'gone home to their friends', one had married, four remained at the House of Mercy, three had left because 'they would not subscribe to the rules and wished to leave' and one young woman absconded. In the published excerpt, there was no mention of the fate of the babies born to these mothers. The report also acknowledged that the House of Mercy had been subject to 'apprehension and prejudice' from the community and the management committee hoped that the public would start to see that it was engaged in a respectable venture.

In 1894, the Home moved to 100 Aberdeen Street, West Perth, then to 104 Claisebrook Road, Perth, in 1898, and then in 1901 to Lincoln Street, Highgate.

In 1899, there were six women and three children resident in the Home.

The House of Mercy was the forerunner of the Alexandra Home (1916-1956).

## Gallery

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HOME FOR WOMEN.



The Alexandra Home for Women in Lincoln-street, North Perth founded over 37 years ago for the care and protection of young mothers. (See Interogram—"Women's Education".)

## Home for Women

**Description:** This item from *The West Australian* is published on the National Library of Australia's website, *Trove*. It shows the Alexandra Home for Women in 1928.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- **House of Mercy (1891 – 1916)**
  - Alexandra Home for Women (1916 - 1950)
    - The Alexandra Home for Mothers and Babies (Inc) and Mothercraft Training School (1950 - 1956)
    - Ngala Mothercraft Home and Training Centre Inc (1956 - 1989)

### Resources

- [Beryl Grant interviewed by Christine Choo in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 20 October 2011
- Lang, Jean, *The Open Door: a History of Loving Care for Families, House of Mercy-Alexandra Home-Ngala, 1890-1980*, 1980
- Battye, JS, [The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia \(1912\)](#), 1912. *Relevance:* p.507
- [A House of Mercy](#), *The Inquirer & Commercial News*, 24 September 1890

## Records

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

### Records

- [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
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