

# Earlsferry

1952 – 1989

**Other Names:**

- Nat Harper Homes
- Nathaniel Harper Homes

## Details

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Earlsferry was established as a Home for ten 'mentally handicapped girls' who were transferred from the Claremont Mental Hospital. Earlsferry, with Fairholme, made up the Nathaniel Harper Homes owned and run by the government of Western Australia. In 1988, ownership passed to the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons. In April 1989, when Earlsferry was damaged by a fire due to 'misadventure', residents were relocated and the property sold. Earlsferry continues as a private home.

Earlsferry was one of two Nathaniel Harper Homes owned and run by the government of Western Australia. It was opened by the Minister for Health, Dame Florence Cardell Oliver, on 27 September 1952.

Nathaniel Harper, whose child had Down Syndrome, donated money to the Mental Hospitals Department to stimulate what has been called a 'modest beginning of a new era in service provision' by the State for children with intellectual disabilities. Nathaniel Harper Homes were the 'first public sector residential facility' since the Claremont Mental Hospital began in 1903. Nathaniel Harper Homes were run by nursing staff, with visits from Claremont Mental Hospital psychologists. The Education Department set up a special school for children at the Nathaniel Harper Homes.

The Nathaniel Harper Homes were also involved in 'industrial rehabilitation', which was a type of 'sheltered workshop' employment. The young people and adults at Nathaniel Harper Homes took some of the overflow work from the industrial rehabilitation workshop at the Claremont Mental Hospital. They made glass pipettes and cleaned and re-assembled bottle-tops.

When the government purchased Earlsferry, a number of renovations were made. These included adding a laundry, removing the outhouses and building a cottage for the Matron in what had been the orchard. Security wire mesh fences were put up around the boundary, a large tree and rose beds were removed and the driveway was bitumised and kerbed.

By the 1980s, Fairholme and Earlsferry were better known as separate hostels rather than collectively as the Nathaniel Harper Homes.

## Gallery



## Earlsferry

**Description:** This is a digital copy of a photograph held by the Heritage Council of Western Australia. It shows Earlsferry from the rear, facing the Swan River. It is part of Earlsferry's 1999 heritage assessment. The photograph shows Earlsferry in its restored condition, not as it was when used as a hostel for people with intellectual disabilities. This photograph was taken by Sian Ferraz.

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## Earlsferry stairs

**Description:** This is a digital copy of a photograph held by the Heritage Council of Western Australia. It shows the staircase inside Earlsferry and is part of Earlsferry's 1999 heritage assessment. The photograph shows Earlsferry in its restored condition, not as it was when used as a hostel for people with intellectual disabilities. This photograph was taken by Sian Ferraz.

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# More info

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## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Mental Hospitals Department, State Government of Western Australia \(1934 - 1954\)](#)
- [Mental Health Services, State Government of Western Australia \(1954 - 1984\)](#)
- [Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons \(1986 - 1993\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [Claremont Mental Hospital \(1903 - 1972\)](#)  
Girls were transferred from the Claremont Mental Hospital
- [Fairholme \(1952 - 1984\)](#)  
Earlsferry and Fairholme were opposite each other on the Swan River at Bassendean and Guildford. Together, they were known as the Nathaniel Harper Homes, named after the man who donated &pound20,000 for residential facilities for children with intellectual disabilities.

## Resources

- [Editorial \[intellectual disability\]](#), The Daily News, 6 November 1950

# Records

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

## Records

- [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/earlsferry-2/>