

Bethany Guest Home for Children of Sick and Expectant Mothers

1946 – c. 1949

Other Names: • Bethany

Details

Bethany Guest Home for Children of Sick and Expectant Mothers was located in Strathfield. It was established by the Legion of Catholic Women (an organisation known in 2021 as the Catholic Women's League) in 1946. In 1948, the League applied to the Sisters of Mercy at Grafton to administer the Home for them. The Sisters ceased the operation of Bethany around 1949.

Bethany was in a 'gracious home' in Margaret Street, Strathfield, (known as Wellbeck) that had previously been owned by a well-known grazier (*Catholic Weekly* 7 April 1949).

The Legion of Catholic Women established the Home in 1946, for the benefit of mothers who had to leave their children because of illness or the arrival of another baby. The Legion saw Bethany as 'the answer to many a worried mother's prayer'.

The establishment of the Home was suggested by Dr Margaret Jones at the 1945 State Conference of Catholic Women. It was officially opened on 20 June 1946.

A newspaper article described the setup at the Home:

The dormitories are fitted with beds to accommodate each age group. One dormitory contains small cots for two year olds. The next has them a little larger, and so through to diminutive beds for the seven year olds. Each bed is provided with a roomy locker (Catholic Weekly 7 April 1949).

In March 1948, the Legion of Catholic Women made an appeal for volunteers 'to help keep an eye on the children during the day' (*Catholic Weekly* 25 March 1948).

In August 1948, it was announced that the Sisters of Mercy, Grafton congregation, had been placed in charge of Bethany (*Catholic Weekly* 5 August 1948). A 1949 article reported that 'the Legion has been relieved of a large amount of worry' now that the Sisters had taken over the administration of Bethany.

The same article stated that Bethany was limited to 40 children 'to assure for them the maximum of room and attention' and that the Home was inspected and authorised by the New South Wales Child Welfare Department.

Admissions to Bethany were handled by welfare officers at the Catholic Welfare Bureau in Elizabeth Street, Sydney. According to the *Catholic Weekly*:

Children are booked in for a period of from three to six weeks. Both boys and girls from two years of age are admitted. The age limit for boys is seven, but there is no age limit for girls. Children of school age attend the local convent, and are taken to and from school each day.

Naturally, the fees do not nearly defray the actual cost of running Bethany, and it is only through the assistance of the Legion that it is able to continue. Without its help, both financial and practical, Bethany would have collapsed ere this. In addition to raising money at social functions, the Legion has a special charity fund which is used for such places as Bethany.

It would seem that the Sisters of Mercy ceased operating Bethany in late 1949 or 1950. In December 2021, the ISMAPNG Archives and Heritage Centre advised that they have no records of residents of Bethany Home.

A publication by Esther Doyle states that the building, still the responsibility of the Legion of Catholic Women, became a student hostel called Maryknoll in the 1950s ('The Marian Complex').

In 2021, the Bethany house has been demolished and an aged care facility operates on the site, run by the Catholic Women's League (the name adopted by the Legion of Catholic Women in 1959). The facility, Marian Court Units, was built and opened in 1965 ('The Marian Complex'). The original building was demolished in the 1970s.

Gallery



A delightful picture of "Bethany", the Mackinnon Foundation of the Legion of Catholic Women for Children, situated at Strathfield

Description: This is a copy of an image of Bethany Guest Home for Children of Sick and Expectant Mothers, published in a newspaper article in the Catholic Weekly from 1949.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Sisters of Mercy, Grafton Congregation \(1884 - 2011\)](#)
Date: 1949 - 1949
- [Legion of Catholic Women \(1941 - 1959\)](#)

Resources

- ["Bethany" Home's New Matron](#), Catholic Weekly, 4 July 1946

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/bethany-guest-home-for-children-of-sick-and-expectant-mothers/>