

The Mercy Health Story



- **1831** **The Sisters of Mercy are founded by Catherine McAuley**

The Sisters of Mercy are founded in Dublin by Catherine McAuley to instruct and care for poor, homeless and sick women. Catherine leads the order for a decade until her death on 11 November 1841.
- **1846** **The Sisters of Mercy arrive in Australia**

Mother Ursula Frayne leads the Sisters of Mercy to Perth, Western Australia, where they immediately commence education work in the young colony.
- **1857 -1870** **Expansion to Victoria**

In 1857 the Sisters of Mercy expand into Victoria, creating the first Convent of Mercy in Fitzroy. In 1870 the Sisters construct the first wing of the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Fitzroy. With the opening of the Academy, the Sisters of Mercy become the first teaching order in Victoria.
- **1920** **The Sisters commence health services in Victoria**

In response to the devastating 1919 Spanish flu pandemic the Sisters of Mercy open St Benedict's Hospital in Malvern.
- **1934** **Mercy Private Hospital is opened**

With the opening of Mercy Private Hospital in East Melbourne, the Sisters expand their health services to private and maternity patients.

- **1971** **Mercy Maternity Hospital is opened**

Mercy Maternity Hospital is opened, transferring maternity patients from Mercy Private Hospital.
- **1982** **Mercy plants roots in Sunshine**

The Sisters continue their expansion in Victoria, establishing Mercy Hospice in Sunshine. The hospice provides specialist palliative care for patients in their home, eventually becoming today's Mercy Palliative Care.
- **1991** **Maternity services expand**

Mercy Maternity Hospital increases its services to women and is renamed Mercy Hospital for Women.
- **1994** **Mercy plants roots in Werribee**

In a major expansion, the Sisters establish a new public community hospital: Werribee Mercy Hospital. The new hospital provides care for the growing population in the south west region of Melbourne.
- **1996** **Mercy restructures**

The Boards of Mercy entities are consolidated into a single entity, Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc.
- **1997** **Mercy expands into mental health**

Services at Werribee Mercy Hospital expand to encompass mental health. The following year the State Government requests Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc. take over management of mental health services in Melbourne's south west. This includes the Saltwater Clinic in Footscray.

Aged care services are added to meet society's changing needs

Mercy assumes management of its first aged care homes: Rice Village in Geelong, and Bethlehem Home for the Aged in Bendigo.
- **1998** **Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc. assumes management of the O'Connell Family Centre**

As Mercy approaches a new millennium, management of the O'Connell Family Centre is transferred from [the Family Care Sisters](#) to Mercy Health & Aged Care.

- **1999** **Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc. expands further into aged care**

With the turn of the millennium, the Sisters of Mercy and the Board of Mercy Health & Aged Care perceive a clear need for aged care services, particularly residential aged care. During this time, Mercy Place Colac and Mercy Place Montrose are acquired.
- **2005** **Mercy Hospital for Women relocates to Heidelberg**

To cope with growing demand, Mercy Hospital for Women relocates to its current home in Heidelberg.
- **2006** **O’Connell Family Centre is gifted to Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc.**

After eight years of Mercy successfully managing the centre, the [Family Care Sisters](#) gift the O’Connell Family Centre to the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation, and Mercy Health & Aged Care.
- **2006 - 2007** **Health and aged care services continue to expand across Victoria and southern New South Wales**

The [Sisters of Mercy Goulburn Congregation](#) gift their health services in Albury and Young to the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne and Mercy Health & Aged Care.

In this period Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc. also acquires Mercy Place Shepparton, Mercy Place Fernhill and Mercy Place Wyndham.
- **2007** **Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc. expands into home and community care**

Mercy establishes a new service to assist older people, people living with a disability, and their family and carers to live active and independent lives.
- **2008** **Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc is renamed**

Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc is renamed ‘Mercy Health’ to show the full range of health, aged and community services the organisation now provides across Victoria, southern New South Wales and the ACT.
- **2008** **Mercy Health expands into health worker training and education**

Mercy Health establishes the Mercy Health Training Institute to train healthcare workers.
- **2009** **Mercy Health establishes the Mercy Health Foundation**

The Mercy Health Foundation is created to seek philanthropic support to advance research, teaching, training and to foster the constant improvement of care.

- **2009 – 2010** **New aged care services are added in the heart of Melbourne and Warrnambool**

During this period, Mercy Place East Melbourne and Mercy Place Parkville are established to provide care to older people in Melbourne's inner city. In south-west Victoria, Mercy Place Warrnambool is built on the grounds of the original convent of Mercy.

- **2011** **Maternity services reach a milestone**

2011 marks the 40th anniversary of Mercy Hospital for Women.

- **2014** **Mercy Health reconnects with its roots in Western Australia**

Returning to its 1846 Australian origins, Mercy Health expands into Western Australia, acquiring three aged care services from the CHC Group, and managing three others owned by [the Sisters of Mercy St Brigids](#). The former CHC homes are renamed Mercy Place Lathlain, Mercy Place Mandurah, and Mercy Place Mont Clare. The St Brigids homes operate as Mercyville Hostel, Villa Maria Hostel and Edgewater Mercy Hostel.

- **2015** **Mercy Health continues to expand its aged care services**

In 2015 Mercy Health continues to expand its residential aged care services, acquiring four new facilities on 1 June. From the [Good Shepherd Sisters](#), Mercy Health acquires two more Victorian aged care homes renamed Mercy Place Abbotsford and Mercy Place Boronia. From [Holy Spirit](#), Mercy Health acquires two new Queensland aged care homes, marking Mercy Health's first expansion into Queensland. Mercy Place Westcourt, Mercy Place Woree and Coral Sea Gardens Retirement Village are located in Cairns. In addition, Mercy Health opens the newly redeveloped Mercy Place Fernhill.

The Family Care Sisters

Maude O'Connell was a leader of Melbourne's post-suffrage trade union movement. In the late 1920s Maude founded the Family Care Sisters, a religious congregation to assist overburdened mothers. She named the Congregation: "The Company of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament." Initially, Maude O'Connell was very much against the idea of the work developing into a religious order. Maude stated that she did not believe in conscription. Although she rejected the idea of a religious order, she knew that if any work was to succeed it must be spiritually vigorous.

In 1947 land was purchased at 6 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury and a Mother & Child Care Centre built and opened.

In 1990 the Mother & Child Care Centre was incorporated and renamed O'Connell Family Centre (Grey Sisters) Inc.

In 1998 management of the O'Connell Family Centre was transferred to Mercy Health & Aged Care, and in 2006 the O'Connell Family Centre was generously gifted by the Family Care Sisters to Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation and Mercy Health & Aged Care Inc.

Link: <http://www.familycaresisters.com.au/>

Sisters of Mercy Goulburn Congregation

The Sisters of Mercy Goulburn foundation was made in 1859 under the leadership of Frances Anne Murphy (Mother Ignatius) who also led the foundation of Albury in 1868. These foundations were made from Westport in Ireland.

The Yass foundation was made in 1875 with Eliza Fielding (Mother Paul) appointed as Superior. Each of the three foundations was independent until they amalgamated in 1907 as the Sisters of Mercy Goulburn congregation.

The Sisters of Mercy Goulburn Congregation owned and operated a hospital and an aged care facility in both Albury and Young. In 2007 these services were generously gifted to the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation and Mercy Health & Aged Care.

Sisters of Mercy St Brigids, Western Australia

In 1846 Sister Ursula Frayne led a new Sisters of Mercy foundation to Perth, Western Australia. Sister Ursula had known Catherine McCauley well and had been at her death-bed, only five years earlier. Sister Ursula arrived in Perth with six sisters, and eleven years later she left Perth to make a foundation in Melbourne.

In 1888 the Sisters of Mercy Western Australia established a new school in a cottage in John Street, Perth. The foundation stone of a large school building was laid on the 1 February 1889, on the feast of St Brigid. The school quickly grew to over 100 pupils, and this rapid increase resulted in the construction of a Convent Chapel and more rooms to accommodate the growing numbers of Sisters needed to staff the school. The convent building was extended in stages, and was completed in 1896.

In 1974 the Sisters moved out of the area due to changing demographics. The school numbers had dwindled and the area was increasingly becoming a commercial and industrial district. The Convent was sold to the State Government.

Over two decades later, the Government offered to sell the Convent back to the Sisters. A community grant was used to restore the Convent to its original condition, and the Sisters returned to St Brigid's in 1998. Today St Brigid's Convent is used as the ISMAPNG administration offices and the state office of Mercy Health.

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters are an international group of Catholic women living and working in more than forty countries.

In May 1944, eighteen Holy Spirit Sisters arrived in Brisbane. These Sisters were survivors of Japanese prison camps and death ships in Papua New Guinea (PNG). They joined five

others who had come earlier, after trekking for months across the mountains and valleys of PNG. These Sisters represented a small group of survivors - fifty-four of their Sisters had died tragically during World War II in PNG.

Over the years, the Holy Spirit Sisters have been involved in many ministries. These have included ministries among Aboriginal people, with refugees and migrants, prisoners and trafficked women, and disadvantaged youth. Holy Spirit Sisters serve as pastoral assistants in parishes, hospitals and aged care, Catholic psychiatric pastoral care facilities, and inter-faith retreats.

Link: <http://holyspiritsisters.org.au/>

Good Shepherd Sisters

Good Shepherd has been present in Australia and New Zealand since 1863. Four young Irish women came to Australia from France, landing at Port Melbourne on 24 June 1863. They founded the Good Shepherd Convent at Abbotsford, Victoria. From there, foundations began in New Zealand, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, and Queensland.

Today the Good Shepherd Sisters and mission partners are involved in a variety of ministries that express the charism and spirituality of the order's foundress, St Mary Euphrasia.

Link: <https://www.goodshepherd.com.au/>