

Warley Bush Nursing Hospital

8 December 1923



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Phillip Island was without a resident medical practitioner until 1910, and up to that time, most illnesses were treated at home with traditional remedies passed down through generations. For serious cases or accidents, patients were transported by basic stretchers to Cowes pier and then ferried across to Hastings Hospital or even further afield to Melbourne.

Mr & Mrs W. E. Thompson, arguably the greatest benefactors to Phillip Island, purchased the beautiful home, Buena Vista which had belonged to Mr Walpole in 1923.

They donated it to the people of Phillip Island as a hospital, on the basis that the community fund the furnishing and equipping the premises.

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The Victorian Bush Nursing Association played a role in overseeing various small bush nursing cottages, which eventually transformed into small private hospitals. This model aimed to provide medical care to all who needed it at fixed fees.

Warley Hospital officially opened in 1923, with six patient beds and a modern operating theatre. The community played an integral role in sustaining the hospital, with local families donating goods and services. Fundraising events, such as hospital balls, garden parties, and car raffles, were widely supported by residents. Annual subscriptions from residents and private health insurance helped maintain the hospital's financial stability.

Over the years, the hospital committee oversaw the expansion of Warley, enabling the facility to accommodate more patients. This expansion included the construction of the new Warley Hospital building, which opened its doors in 1962, and

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the establishment of a nursing home in 1980. The original cottage was relocated to Genesta St. (image below) during this period and reverted to a private home.



The hospital's services extended from birth to end-of-life care, with an emergency department staffed by nurses 24/7. However, the model faced challenges as the population grew, leading to increased demand for services. The introduction of Medicare in 1984 and rising medical indemnity costs for doctors posed financial difficulties.

By 2001, the hospital discontinued its obstetric services, which had been a major source of funding and bed occupancy. Additionally, changes in patient categories and accreditation requirements further strained the hospital's finances.

Efforts to secure government funding for public hospital beds and expand aged care facilities were unsuccessful. Ultimately, in 2008, after accumulating a substantial debt, the hospital closed its doors.

However, the community's need for medical services has continued to grow. In 2023, construction began on the new multi-million dollar Phillip Island Community Hospital, expanding the existing Phillip Island Health Hub. This new facility will provide a wide range of medical services, including an Urgent Care Centre and day surgery facilities, meeting the demands of the growing community and once again establishing a community-based hospital on the island.

Image below of the first Warley Bush Nursing Hospital:



Image below of the rebuilt Warley Hospital, opened in 1962:

