

Prince Henry Hospital | A history developed by Dr Barbara Newman



According to the New South Wales Government Gazette of 1880, the population of Sydney was 221,000, Sir Henry Parkes was the Premier, and Sydney Hospital, as the first hospital in Australia was training nurses based on the Florence Nightingale model from London.

With an expanding population and the introduction of various communicable diseases to the colony carried by the many convicts and new settlers, it was necessary to establish a designated isolated place to develop a hospital/sanitarium to which these persons could be sent. A measles epidemic in 1867, together with a small pox outbreak in 1881 and leprosy forced Parkes and others to accommodate affected persons away from the immediate city area.

Little Bay, a reasonable distance from central Sydney by horse was chosen to firstly establish, "The Coast Hospital" which later became internationally known as the Prince Henry Hospital, a specialists teaching hospital for the University of New South Wales.

At Little Bay, a 500 land acreage was set aside and the embryotic commencement of the "Coast Hospital" later Prince Henry Hospital (PHH) was under way. From a few communicably diseased and rehabilitation patients, "The Coast" grew to accommodate several hundred patients, and by the early 1980s, more than 800 patients had occupancy at PHH, many with very complex surgical and medical conditions.

Research played a significant role in major medical ground breaking care and service delivery in paediatrics, renal, infectious diseases, cardiac care and urology, in particular.

In a report (Government Gazette, 1899) to the Government in 1899, Dr Ashburton Thompson, the Chief Medical Officer, asserted the cost to support one patient in a bed at "The Coast Hospital", per annum was £68.1 pounds. By 1900 the first female doctor at the Coast hospital, Dr Ada Caroline Affleck, a graduate from the Medical School at the University of Sydney, had arrived to work as "The Coast" had become a Clinical School for medical students. Close

relationships were forged between “The Coast” and the University of Sydney as a consequence of medical and nursing personnel servicing the various unique infectious disease areas.

The Great Hall at The University of Sydney for example became the examination centre where final year nurses went to sit their state exams.

In 1934, the Coast Hospital was renamed Prince Henry Hospital as a result of a visit to Sydney by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester, Prince Henry, third son of King George V and Queen Mary. The Duke later became an Australian Governor General.

As PHH grew in size, together with the population of Sydney so too did the demand for specialist infectious disease care for communicable diseases, polio, hepatitis, whooping cough, amoebic dysentery, to name a few.

Prince Henry Hospital had close relationships with Long Bay Gaol, with the prisoners growing various vegetables and making the bread for the patients and nursing staff. It also was the hospital for Long Bay Gaol prisoners. Ironically, it was the designated police hospital used by many of the NSW police members who at times of limited bed capacity and 99 per cent patient occupancy, found themselves sharing bathroom space with prisoners.

In 1966 the Prince Henry Hospital Trained Nurses Association was formed with the intent of raising money for the building of a Non-Denominational Nurses War Memorial Chapel. This is the only Chapel in Australia dedicated to the nurses who served in World Wars 1 and 11.

Dulcie Badham, a graduate from PHH and a returned nurse from World War 11, was the foundation President. The Chapel was completed and dedicated on 11 November 1967. The chapel is for weddings, baptisms and funerals and can be booked through Secretary, Carol Parker on mobile number 0447 614 137.

The Nursing and Medical Museum at PHH was developed on the closure of PHH as a working hospital. When all hospital activity ceased, it was transferred to Prince of Wales Hospital Randwick.

The Museum contains historical artifacts belonging to the bygone days of healthcare delivery at PHH and can be accessed by the public for payment entry fee of \$5.00 for adults and \$2 for school aged children.

Prince Henry Hospital Trained Nurses Association

Nursing and Medical Museum

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