

Mental health facilities —Patient records

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This *Archives in Brief* provides a brief overview of the major sources held by State Records that relate to patients of mental health facilities and how to obtain access to them.

Other records may be identified in *Archives Investigator*.

For records relating to inmates of infirm and destitute asylums, see *Archives in Brief* Nos. 86 and 87.

Mental health care terminology

Past terminology

You will notice terms such as 'asylum', 'lunatic', 'lunatic asylum' and 'mental hospital' are used in both the records and in our finding aids.

These are terms that were used when the records are created.

Mental health care

Mental health care involves assessing persons believed to be mentally ill and providing them with appropriate treatment in hospitals, community housing or while remaining members of the community.

Care for the infirm and destitute

The NSW Government has also managed the care of the poor and infirm, who were not mentally ill.

Asylums, hospitals and homes were built to house and care for them.

For records of people cared for in these institutions and how to

access to them please see *Archives in Brief* No. 86.

Brief History of the administration of mental health care

In 1811 the NSW government established what was known as a 'lunatic asylum' in Castle Hill for the care and treatment of the mentally ill.

The facility moved to Liverpool in 1825.

The first purpose built institution for the mentally ill was opened at Tarban Creek (Gladesville) in 1838.

After 1838 and until 1876 the government managed several mental health care establishments in an unregulated manner.

In 1876 an Inspector of Mental Hospitals was appointed to coordinate and regulate the conduct of the hospitals.

A Master In Lunacy was appointed in 1879 as an officer of the Supreme Court to determine whether persons were mentally ill and to make arrangements for the care of the mentally ill and their affairs.

From 1811 up to the latter part of the 20th century, institutional care in specialised hospitals was the primary means of service delivery.

From the 1970s onwards, this progressively gave way to a focus on community-based care, and greater use of psychiatric units in general hospitals.

Mental health facilities

State Records holds records of patients of the following State managed mental health facilities. They are listed below with their *Archives Investigator* agency number.

Note that many records of mental health facilities are incomplete.

Agency No.	Agency name
70 & 1858	Broughton Hall Psychiatric Clinic
1857	Broughton Hall Psychiatric Clinic (No.13 Auxiliary Military Hospital)
69 & 1836	Callan Park Mental Hospital
1859	Temporary Hospital for the Insane, Cooma
64	Reception House, Darlinghurst
65	Gladesville Mental Hospital (formerly Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum)
1915	Kenmore Mental Hospital
63	Lunatic Asylum, Liverpool
66	Newcastle Psychiatric Hospital
1906	Newcastle Psychiatric Hospital Reception House

Agency No.	Agency name
62	Parramatta Psychiatric Centre
1907	Rydalmere Psychiatric Centre, and
68	Bay View House Tempe

Using Archives *Investigator* to find lists of records held

Records of individual facilities

For further information about our holdings you can consult *Archives Investigator* using the Advanced Search option.

Select 'Agency' and enter the number of the facility (eg: 65 for Tarban Creek/Gladesville Hospital).

Another way of searching for records of mental health facilities is to select the Advanced Search option and search for the Function 'Health'.

The information provided includes a list of agencies exercising that function.

Records of the Inspector General of Mental Hospitals

As well as records of individual facilities, we also hold records of the Inspector General of Mental Hospitals.

These can be located in *Archives Investigator* using the Advanced Search option.

Select Agency and enter the agency number '60'.

Typical records of mental health facilities

Control records

Indexes

Indexes are arranged alphabetically by the name of the patient.

Records that have been indexed include registers of patients, admission books and medical case books.

Registers of patients and admission books

These volumes are arranged chronologically and generally give the following details: date of last previous admission (if any); number on register; number for the year; date of admission; name; sex; age; social condition; number of children; occupation; nativity; residence; religion; form of mental disorder; supposed causes of insanity; insane relations; previous attacks; duration of existing attack; age at first attack; date of discharge; if recovered, relieved, not improved or died; time in hospital; observations; bodily disorders; suicidal tendencies, etc.

Registers of discharges removals and deaths

These volumes are arranged chronologically by date of death, discharge or removal of patients.

Details given include: date of last admission; number in Register of patients; name in full; if recovered, relieved, not improved or died; assigned cause of death; age at death; and observations (eg. transferred to another hospital etc.).

Case papers / medical case books / admission files

Admission files

These papers give details of patient's name, occupation, place of abode, date of admission, age, marital status, native place, religious persuasion and a brief outline of case history up to the time of admission – previous admissions, insane relations, doctors' and relatives' observations on the patient's behaviour.

Some files also include correspondence, eg. letters from other institutions noting transfer and letters to the hospital from relatives

concerning belongings, visiting, etc.

Case papers

These files provide a record of a patient's treatment.

They contain such information as admission and discharge details; a medical summary; progress notes; behaviour and treatment records; test results, personal effects lists and correspondence.

Medical case books

Entries in these volumes are arranged chronologically by date of admission.

The patient's physical and mental condition before, and at the time of admission, is described and the final entry for each case notes whether the patient was discharged, transferred to another hospital or died.

Other details given include: age, weight, social condition, number of children, occupation, nativity, residence, religion, form of mental disorder, supposed cause, duration of attack, previous attacks, date of last admission (if any), treatment and summary of medical certificate.

Notes are then made at irregular intervals on a patient's behaviour and condition while he remains in the hospital.

Related records

Colonial Secretary's papers

There are no surviving registers of patients for Castle Hill Lunatic Asylum (1811-1825), however there are numerous references to patients being admitted to the asylum in the Index to Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1825, available on the State Records website.

There are references in the Colonial Secretary's correspondence to patients being admitted to mental health facilities during the 19th century, after 1825.

Documents include warrants of admission.

The Colonial Secretary's correspondence can be accessed using the indexes and registers and Joan Reese's Index to Convicts and Others.

For further information about the Colonial Secretary's correspondence see *Archives in Brief* Nos. 64, 65 and 104.

Records held elsewhere

A number of State managed mental health facilities have not transferred all their records to State Records.

These facilities include Bloomfield Hospital at Orange, Stockton Hospital at Newcastle and Kenmore Hospital near Goulburn.

To obtain access to records of patients of these facilities you must contact the facility.

Access to records

Records are closed to public access for 110 years

Records over 110 years of age are open to public access. You can access the records at our Western Sydney Reading Room.

Patient identifying health records less than 110 years of age are closed to public access.

NSW Health has made an access direction that closes all patient identifying health records including those of New South Wales State run mental health facilities.

For further information about access directions consult the Register of Access Directions, available on the State Records website.

For further information about your rights of access, see *Archives in Brief* No. 9: Your rights of access.

How to obtain access to closed records

To obtain access to records created less than 110 years ago

you will need to follow the steps below:

1. Obtain permission from the NSW Health Department

To obtain permission to access patient records held as State archives you will need to contact the NSW Health Department.

Information about how to apply for access and copies of the forms to complete are online at <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/psychaccess/>.

You can also contact the Department at:

NSW Health Department
Locked Mail Bag 961
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059
Attention: Manager, Corporate Records Services

Phone (02) 9391 9076

If your application is successful NSW Health Department will notify you in writing.

2. Contact us five working days before your visit

Because many of the records, such as indexes and registers, show a number of individuals on one page our reading room staff need to check the records on your behalf to confirm the records exist.

To avoid delays during your visit to the reading room you should contact us five working days in advance and provide the following information:

- name of patient
- name of facility
- dates of admission
- dates discharge/death

We will advise you if the records check is unsuccessful.

3. Visit the reading room

To access the records you will need to:

- visit the reading room where the records are held. The bulk of the records are held at the Western Sydney Records Centre.

- bring your letter of permission from NSW Health, and
- ensure the person who is named in the letter to access the records is the person visiting the reading room.

You will only be given access to the records of the individual named in the letter of permission. In most instances you will be able to obtain copies of this material.

Information about visiting the reading room

For more information about reading room rules and procedures, and reader's tickets, see *Archives in Brief* No. 13. For reading room opening hours and addresses, see *Archives in Brief* No. 8.

Reading room locations

Western Sydney Records Centre

143 O'Connell Street
Kingswood NSW 2747

Sydney Records Centre

2 Globe Street
The Rocks, Sydney NSW 2000