Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct is a National Heritage site recognised for its outstanding capacity to tell the stories of women and children in institutions over the course of modern Australian history.

These institutions were places where many suffered greatly under the authority of those who were meant to care and protect them. Many convict women transported to New South Wales were forced to leave their children behind. For those who ended up in the Female Factory, a further loss was visited upon them when children born to them in the colony, or who had accompanied them, were forcibly removed and placed in Orphan Schools.

Recognising the history of this precinct allows Australians to remember and serve witness to these women, their children and the children of later generations who experienced out-of-home care, known as the Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants and Stolen Generations.

**Connecting Past to Present**

Founded in 2006, Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Inc (Parragirls) was established to promote awareness about this institutional precinct.

First to nominate the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct for inclusion on the National Heritage List, PFFP Inc continues to activate this precinct as Australia’s first internationally recognised Site of Conscience through social history and contemporary art Memory Projects.

We welcome inquiries from anyone interested in the history, heritage, legacy and future of this institutional precinct.

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**PARRAMATTA FEMALE FACTORY PRECINCT HISTORIC CORE**

Situated on the traditional lands of the Burramatta Darug people the 16 acre historic core of the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct constitutes the adjacent sites of the Female Factory, Lunatic Asylum, Cumberland Hospital and the Roman Catholic Orphan School / Girls Industrial School / Parramatta Girls Home / Norma Parker Centre / Kamballa & Taldree.

**KEY**

1. Female Factory Main Barrack
2. FF Hospital/Dispensary/Storekeeper
3. FF Matrons Quarters
4. ASYLUM Criminal Class
5. FF Penitentiary
6. ASYLUM Kitchens
7. ASYLUM Shelter Shed
8. ASYLUM Criminal Insane Ward
9. ASYLUM Wards 2.3
10. ASYLUM Wards 4 West
11. ASYLUM Wards 4 North
12. ASYLUM Wards 2 Day Room
13. ASYLUM Wards 5 South
14. ASYLUM Ward 1
15. ASYLUM Ward 1 Dinning
16. ASYLUM Admissions
17. ASYLUM Admissions
18. ROCS/PGH Main
19. ROCS Kitchen
20. ROCS/PGH Gatekeeper
21. ROCS/PGH Toilet block
22. ROCS/PGH Kitchen Range
23. ROCS/PGH Laundry
24. ROCS/PGH School/Isolation cells
25. ROCS/PGH Hospital Bethel
26. PGH Isolation block
27. PGH Kemper House
28. PGH Service Block
29. PGH Instructional Range
Parramatta Female Factory 1821-1847

Australia’s first purpose built Female Factory was commissioned by Governor Lachlan Macquarie and designed by Francis Greenway. It was a complex of sandstone buildings enclosed within 15 ft high sandstone walls with the main 3 storey sleeping barrack at the centre flanked to the rear and front by workrooms, kitchens, staff residences and various ancillary buildings.

The Female Factory was a uniquely Australian response to house and employ unassigned convict women. It also served as a place of punishment, medical facility, refuge and depot. Designed to accommodate 300 women, at its peak in 1842 some 1,203 women and 263 children were in residence.

Situated on a 4 acre allotment bordering the upper reaches of the Parramatta River, by 1838 its footprint doubled to that of about 8 acres with the addition of a 3 storey 72 cell penitentiary range completed in 1839.

Today its remnant buildings can be seen in the grounds of Cumberland Hospital.

Parramatta Invalid & Lunatic Asylum

In 1847 the Female Factory was re–purposed as an Invalid and Lunatic Asylum – a legacy which continues today as Cumberland Hospital. With the acquisition of an adjoining 36 acres, earlier owned by Samuel Marsden, the Hospital went through an expansion period which saw new wards completed around and incorporating existing buildings and the demolition of the FF 3 storey main barrack, rear workrooms and the1839 penitentiary.

Among these is Ward 1. Completed in 1885, this handsome sandstone building features a large clock gifted to the colony by King George IV in 1822, which once graced the arch above the FF main barrack.

Roman Catholic Orphan School 1844-1886

Located next door to the Female Factory/Lunatic Asylum is Australia’s first purpose built orphanage for Catholic children, known after 1859 as the Roman Catholic Orphan School. Commissioned by Governor Bourke and designed by Henry Ginn, it was built from locally quarried sandstone using convict labour to accommodate up to 150 children. By the 1850s it was overcrowded and a building program saw the construction of a West range of buildings, a Chapel, laundry, and by 1880 wings added to the main.

This government owned orphanage was managed by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan (Good Shepherd) from 1859 until it closed in 1886.

The orphanage admitted boys and girls up to the age of 12 years; in many cases entire families, either because of the death or imprisonment of one or both parents; or as might relieve the distress of a large family; or who had been found living with vicious or immoral parents.

Children were given basic schooling and trained in domestic duties or farmwork and on reaching 12, if not reunited with their parents, were apprenticed out.

Parramatta Girls Home 1887 -1974

The Girls Industrial School (Parramatta Girls Home) was the principal child welfare institution for girls in NSW. Occupying the former premises of the Roman Catholic Orphan School since 1887, the Industrial School had previously operated on Cockatoo Island as the Biloela Girls Industrial School where it catered for children 18 months to 16 years of age.

Until 1911 boys up to 7 years of age were also kept at Parramatta and after 1975, boys 11 to 15 years were sent here when operating as Taldree Children’s Shelter. With the introduction of new children ‘Homes’ after 1910, Parramatta limited its intake to girls 10 to 18 years of age.

Conditions within this institution were draconian and punitive with an emphasis on training girls for domestic service. 19th century routines and discipline remained in place until its closure in the 1970s. Riots were frequent with inquiries recommending its closure never acted upon; rather more stringent measures were introduced culminating in the establishment of a maximum security annex at Hay in 1961 for girls considered in need of extra ‘training’.

Following protests by the Women’s Movement in 1973 –74 the institution ceased operating as the Parramatta Girls Home and was re–established as Kamballa (Girls) and Taldree (Boys) Children’s Shelter.

In 1980 the ‘old home’ main section, West Range and laundry was acquired by NSW Corrections and established as the Norma Parker Detention Centre for Females. The remaining southern portion continued as Kamballa – serving as administrative offices for the Department of Community Services until 2010.