

# Wanslea



*Built as an orphanage by the Independent Order of Oddfellows and first used in 1906, the imposing red brick building on Railway Terrace Cottlesloe has always been a place of caring and nurture.*



The National Trust of Australia (WA), with support from Lotterywest, BHP Billiton and the Brady Cancer Support Foundation, has redeveloped *Wanslea* as a sustainable Cancer Wellness Centre, while the single storey addition, built as a recreation and mess hall for returned servicemen following WWII, is used as a pre-school by the adjacent North Cottesloe Primary School.

### ORPHANAGE

Four acres on an elevated block close to the ocean were originally set aside for an orphanage for the Independent Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) in 1905 and the first children arrived in 1906. This was the first custom built orphanage in Australia. The eye-catching two storey 'blood and bandages' building was built and operated entirely by the IOOF. In 1919 the Soldiers' Memorial Wing was opened for orphans of soldiers killed in WWI.

*Children had to mow the lawns using ropes to pull a 3 foot wide industrial mower.*  
– IOOF Orphanage

The children had access to sporting facilities, a library, even a gramophone and four valve wireless set. They attended the adjacent North Cottesloe Primary School which, from as early as 1914, has slowly encroached on the original land grant.

### CONVALESCENT HOME

By 1930 the place had been underutilised for over a decade. Preliminary negotiations to sell were interrupted by WWII and the site was taken over by the Commonwealth Government for a soldiers' convalescent home run by the Red Cross.

*... morale ... would benefit from the knowledge that so excellent an institution was available behind the lines ...*  
– Lady Mitchell Convalescent Centre

Much of the equipment and furnishings of the Lady Mitchell Convalescent Home were donated and it was operated almost entirely by volunteers. A recreation hall, dining room and kitchen were built beside the main building.



### WANSLEA

When the Red Cross lease ran out Western Australian Premier John Tonkin bought the site for use as a home for the children of sick mothers, to be known as *Wanslea* and run by the WA division of WANS (Women's Australian National Service).

*... there were anxious fathers ... seeking a haven for their children until their mothers were able to leave hospital – Wanslea*

Florence Hummerston OBE founded the organisation and was its president for 32 years.

### THE CANCER WELLNESS CENTRE

Operations at *Wanslea* closed in 1984 and it stood vacant for a number of years before several community and child care organisations moved in, including Cancer Support WA which has provided cancer support services and wellness programs at *Wanslea* since that time.

*“We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.” – Proust Cancer Support*

When the National Trust of Western Australia took over the management of the site in 2008, *Wanslea* was in poor condition. Little maintenance had been done in the previous decade and ad hoc additions masked the original building.

**CANCER SUPPORT ASSOCIATION**  
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**CANCER IS A WORD...  
NOT A SENTENCE**

The versatile layout was ideal for the National Trust's plan to redevelop the site as a sustainable community facility. The Cancer Wellness Centre has come to fruition with the generous support of Lotterywest, BHP Billiton and the Brady Cancer Support Foundation. *Wanslea* now houses a range of facilities to support those with cancer and their carers including Breast Cancer Care WA, melanoma WA and the Brady Cancer Support Foundation, in addition to long term tenant Cancer Support WA. It is anticipated other support groups will join them as the Centre grows.

### WANSLEA PRE-PRIMARY

*Wanslea* Pre-Primary, part of the North Cottesloe Primary School, operates from the army buildings.



For information on the Wanslea Cancer Wellness Centre visit  
[www.cancerwellnesscentre.com.au](http://www.cancerwellnesscentre.com.au)



*Wanslea* is a Government of Western Australia heritage property under the care and control of the National Trust of Western Australia. It is entered on the Heritage Council of Western Australia's Register of Heritage Places. The site is significant for its continuous association with child welfare and caring organisations. *Wanslea* has an extensive history of service to the community. It now has an exciting future.

[www.nationaltrust.org.au/wa](http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wa)