

“ . . . here is an Asylum open . . . ”

Constructing a Culture of Government Care in Australia 1801 – 2014

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research, the greater part of which was completed subsequent to admission to candidature for the degree.

(Signed):.....

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Editorial Notes

This thesis has been written and formatted to meet the requirements of the History Discipline in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Newcastle. The Discipline requires candidates to use the 'Chicago' bibliographic conventions as outlined by Kate L Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 6th edition, 1996). The 'Chicago' style does not use *ibid.*, *op.cit.* and similar notations.

For non-bibliographical conventions such as capitalisation and hyphenation, the thesis has been guided by the Commonwealth of Australia's *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (Canberra: John Wiley & Sons, 6th edition, 2002).

Name of Professional Editor

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Synopsis

This thesis explores the history and heritage of the Newcastle Government Domain from its origins in the first European settlement at Newcastle in 1801 to its uncertain present as a largely vacated site of mental health care. The Domain is a significant holding of land at the centre of a growing urban area which has remained unalienated from the imperial, colonial and now state government because it has been seen as an asset to be applied to solving a series of contemporary challenges. Drawing upon public records, works of art and newspaper reports, the shifting uses of the Domain from centre of local administration, to military base, girls' reformatory and asylum are traced demonstrating how the site contributed to meeting the responsibility for caring for the residents of New South Wales which fell to its governments. It is argued that rather than careful planning, decisions about the use of the Domain were largely the result of outside pressures. This is followed through in detail with regard to the establishment on the site in 1871 of an Asylum for Idiots and Imbeciles. A close reading of the extant records of this institution reveal that for several years, it served mainly as a repository for long term residents of older asylums. Only in the 1890s did it become populated by the intellectually disabled. Although it was an "accidental asylum", the site was well suited to its purpose and has successfully hosted mental health services through to the present day. Its fraught transition from active health care campus to heritage site is traced to explore contemporary issues in heritage, in particular the rising interest in cultural landscapes, the role of interdisciplinary non-governmental organisations in heritage advocacy and the possibility of overtly recognising the positive benefits of heritage conservation for mental wellbeing at this and other sites. The Newcastle Asylum represented a new form of care in the colony of NSW and as such needs to form part of the cultural heritage of Newcastle because it contributed significantly to the social welfare of people in New South Wales.

Abbreviations

AA Company	Australian Agricultural Company
HRNSW	Historical Records of New South Wales
NGD	Newcastle Government Domain
NSW	New South Wales
SHR	State Heritage Register
RNE	Register of the National Estate
NHL	National Heritage List
CRWP	Coal River Working Party