



History of St John of God Ballarat - 1958 – Opening of the School of Nursing

The School of Nursing opened in 1958 and was not only the education centre for all nurses but their home as they were required to live on site throughout their training.



School of Nursing Class 1 of 1959

The creation of the nursing school

The St John of God Ballarat School of Nursing opened in D Wing in 1958 on the ground floor. Student nurses were originally housed in two cottages, Lourdes and Fatima, located within the hospital's grounds. As numbers increased, ten student nurses were given rooms in the convent. In 1960 the D Wing of the first floor of the hospital was taken over for students and in 1961 Fatima was demolished. At a cost of £90,000, the first two floors of Marian House were designed by O'Connor and Brophy as a School of Nursing, and built by Ballarat firm John Nolan & Co. In 1963 two floors were added. The second floor provided bedrooms. The third had seven bedrooms, a lecture room, two large classrooms, a simulated hospital ward, a practical science room, library, lounge room, secretary's office, four lecturers' offices, a small kitchen and bathrooms.

In total, accommodation was provided for 107 nurses. Student nurses lived by strict rules. It was compulsory to live at the nurses' home for the duration of the three-year course until the late 1970s when, as numbers increased, second and third year students were allowed to live in the community. Night time curfews were strict, unless a late pass had been obtained in advance. The only visitors allowed to students' rooms were their mothers or sisters. No alcohol was allowed, on threat of expulsion. Student nurse uniforms were also compulsory.

The original uniform was a yellow dress with white apron and magenta cape. A blue cape replaced the magenta, and for a short time the dresses were light brown, worn without an apron. Later a light blue dress was introduced, and the blue cape reintroduced.

Fran Britt's Experience

Fran Britt enrolled at the School of Nursing in 1969. On the first day students were allocated bedrooms.

"We began Preliminary Training School the next day and were allocated our uniforms. After the initial few weeks of school we began full-time work in the hospital. The shifts were either 'straight' or 'broken' shifts. A broken shift was 8 am to 1 pm and returning at 5 pm to 9 pm. During our three-year training all our lectures and tutorials were fitted in with our full-time practical work," Fran said.

Jamie Lovett - St John of God Ballarat Hospital