



UNIVERSITY  
OF TASMANIA

**IN SAFE HANDS:**

**A history of aged care in Tasmania**

by

**Elaine Peta Crisp**  
RN, BN(Hons)

School of Nursing and Midwifery  
School of History and Classics

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“Our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members.”

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Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973), *My Several Worlds* [1954]

*For Dad*

## Statement of Authorship

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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

Elaine Peta Crisp

August 2012

## Statement of Access

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Elaine Peta Crisp

August 2012

## Abstract

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Perhaps no part of the world can show relatively so many aged people.<sup>1</sup>

Aged care is one of the more controversial and problematic areas of healthcare in Australia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whilst most people today accept that residential care is an essential service for those who can no longer cope on their own in the community, few people want to end up in a nursing home, and few nurses aspire to work there. But was this always the case?

This diachronic study integrates archival research and oral history interviews to explore the history of aged care in one state of Australia, Tasmania. Tasmania began its white history as Van Diemen's Land, a penal settlement on a remote island intended to be the 'gaol for the entire British Empire'. The high number of convicts transported to the colony and the resulting large emancipist population, many of whom were both impoverished and without family to help them as they aged, meant that the colonial administration was forced to make official arrangements for their care from almost the first days of the state's existence. These arrangements bore some similarities to those in other Australian states and in the mother country, but the peculiarities of life on the edge of civilization brought their own unique solutions in that century, and the next.

This thesis follows the development of Tasmanian aged care from the early colonial charitable institutions, to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century period of 'making do', to the ennurserment of aged care in the middle of that century, and finally to developments in the 1980s that led to today's highly regulated and businesslike aged care sector. It illuminates the changes and continuities in conditions and practices within homes for the aged, and the shifting attitudes of Tasmanian society towards the elderly and those that cared for them. Official records paint an almost uniformly positive picture of aged care. In contrast, public opinion is almost equally negative. This study provides a more balanced story, in the hope that an understanding of the successes and failures of the past will provide some guidance for the future to assist our aging population in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Tasmania', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed, (Edinburgh, 1888)

## List of Abbreviations and Glossary

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|      |   |
|------|---|
| ACAT | Aged Care Assessment Team                         |
| AOT  | Archives Office of Tasmania                       |
| APHA | Aged Persons' Homes Act, 1954                     |
| DON  | Director of Nursing (equivalent to 'Matron')      |
| EN   | Enrolled Nurse                                    |
| GAT  | Geriatric Assessment Team                         |
| LGH  | Launceston General Hospital                       |
| NRB  | Nurses' Registration Board                        |
| RCI  | Resident Classification Instrument                |
| RN   | Registered Nurse                                  |
| TLC  | Tasmanian Legislative Council Papers 1858 to 1883 |
| TPP  | Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers 1884 to present    |

### **Abbreviated names of government institutions and dates in use**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| New Norfolk    | New Norfolk Invalid Hospital, New Norfolk, 1824–1848  |
| Impression Bay | Impression Bay Convict Station, Impression Bay, 1848–1857   |
| Port Arthur    | The Pauper House, Port Arthur, 1857–1859/1877   |
| Brickfields    | Brickfields Invalid Station, Hobart, 1859–1882  |
| Cascades       | Cascades Invalid Depot, Hobart, 1867–1879   |
| New Town       | New Town Charitable Institution, Hobart, 1874–1913<br>New Town Infirmary and Consumptive Home, 1913–1934<br>New Town Rest Home, 1934–1938 |
| St John's Park | St John's Park, 1938–1994<br>(in private hands from 1994 to date, as Rosary Gardens)  |
| IDL            | Invalid Depot, Launceston, 1868-1912  |
| HFI            | Home for Invalids, Launceston, 1913–1954  |
| Cosgrove Park  | Cosgrove Park Home for the Aged, Launceston, 1954–1993<br>(in private hands from 1993 to 2008)  |

The term 'aged care' refers to the care provided to aged people in long-term residential accommodation, by paid employees who are not their relatives. In this thesis, the capitalized word 'Home' refers to any formal establishment providing aged care, 'public' means government-run, whilst 'private' denotes a Home run by an organization or person outside the government, whether philanthropic or proprietary. Trained nurses are denoted by the accepted abbreviations 'RN' or 'EN', whilst untrained or semi-trained care staff are called 'aides'. The uncapitalized word 'nurse' is used when referring to all staff who provide personal care to residents, trained and untrained, both as a collective noun and also when it is not possible to differentiate between the two groups.

## List of Plates and Tables

---

### Chapter 1

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Plate 1: Tasmania: location of Homes mentioned in text ..... | 36 |
|--|----|

### Chapter 2

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Plate 1: Henry Melville, 'Invalid Hospital, New Norfolk', 1833 .....              | 41 |
| Plate 2: The Pauper House, Port Arthur.....                                       | 44 |
| Plate 3: Plan for Brickfields Invalid Station, c1859 .....                        | 47 |
| Plate 4: Painting of the Launceston Invalid Depot, Paterson Street, c1868 .....   | 49 |
| Plate 5: The Cascades Invalid Depot, c1900 .....                                  | 53 |
| Plate 6: The approach to St John's Park Church and Orphans Schools, 1872.....     | 56 |
| Plate 7: The inmates of the Launceston Invalid Depot with the Matron, c1905 ..... | 62 |
| Plate 8: The Launceston Home for Invalids, 1928 .....                             | 64 |
| Plate 9: The east façade of Cosgrove Park.....                                    | 71 |
| Plate 10: Derwent Court Nursing Home .....  | 74 |

### Chapter 3

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Plate 1: Brickfields Invalid Depot, 1865.....                              | 80  |
| Plate 2: Plan of Cascades Invalid Establishment, 1877 .....                | 82  |
| Plate 3: The Women's Division, New Town Charitable Institution, c1900..... | 83  |
| Plate 4: The Launceston Invalid Depot, 1895.....                           | 86  |
| Plate 5: Artist's impression of the planned changes to St John's Park..... | 91  |
| Plate 6: Cover of brochure for Cosgrove Park financial appeal .....        | 103 |
| Plate 7: The Men's Division, St John's Park, c1966 .....                   | 107 |
| Plate 8: Bethshalom Home for Aged Christians, as it appears in 2012 .....  | 109 |

### Chapter 4

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Plate 1: The men's hospital ward, New Town, c 1895.....                            | 120 |
| Plate 2: The women's hospital ward, New Town Charitable Institution, c1905.....    | 122 |
| Plate 3: Staff of Cosgrove Park, c1960 .....                                       | 131 |
| Plate 4: An example of a training card, St John's Park, 1957 .....                 | 133 |
| Plate 5: Students outside the St John's Park Geriatric Nurse Training School ..... | 141 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Plate 6: Page from the 1977 St John’s Park career brochure.....             | 143 |
| Plate 7: The Queen Victoria Hospital, location of Ward H.....               | 146 |
| Plate 8: Eskleigh Memorial Home, Perth, Tasmania.....                       | 149 |
| Plate 9: Sister Pat Macready, at the Queen Victoria Home, Hobart, 1965..... | 151 |
| Plate 10: Cover of career brochure, St John’s Park, 1977.....               | 154 |

## Chapter 5

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Plate 1: Excerpt from publicity brochure, St John’s Park, c1972.....                  | 160 |
| Plate 2: Residents in the physiotherapy room at Cosgrove Park, c1966.....             | 171 |
| Plate 3: Part of the printed ledger for St John’s Park, July 1967.....                | 173 |
| Plate 4: The promenade deck of Cosgrove Park, c1966.....                              | 176 |
| Plate 5: The dormitory accommodation at Carlton Beach Holiday Home, c1972.....        | 177 |
| Plate 6: Aerial view of Allambi, showing the open central courtyard.....              | 186 |
| Plate 7: Excerpt from <i>General Instructions</i> brochure, St John’s Park, 1949..... | 189 |
| Plate 8: Sunbathing at Carlton Beach, c1972.....                                      | 192 |

## Chapter 6

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Plate 1: Original floor plan of the Home for Invalids, Launceston, c1912..... | 197 |
| Plate 2: Outside a ‘garden ward’ at St John’s Park, c1972.....                | 198 |
| Plate 3: A room at Nazareth House, 1952.....                                  | 202 |
| Plate 4: Cosgrove Park floor plan, 1953.....                                  | 205 |
| Plate 5: ‘Tiger the wonder dog’ takes up residence at Cosgrove Park.....      | 209 |
| Plate 6: The Village Glee Club at the Home for Invalids, Christmas 1948.....  | 212 |
| Plate 7: Santa visits Cosgrove Park, c1966.....                               | 217 |
| Plate 8: A common room at St John’s Park, c1972.....                          | 229 |
| Plate 9: Liz Barron and a resident in a single room at Umina Park, c1995..... | 230 |

## Chapter 7

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Plate 1: Inspection report for the Home for Invalids, 1946.....              | 234 |
| Plate 2: The domiciliary nurses outside the Cosgrove Park chapel, c1969..... | 246 |
| Plate 3: Liz, domiciliary nurse, makes headlines in the local newspaper..... | 248 |
| Plate 4: The Launceston domiciliary service fleet, c1972.....                | 250 |
| Plate 5: Sunny Brae, as the Home appears today.....                          | 255 |

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# Table of Contents

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|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Statement of Authorship.....  | i         |
| Statement of Access.....  | ii        |
| Abstract.....   | iii       |
| List of abbreviations and glossary .....                                      | iv        |
| List of plates.....   | vi        |
| Acknowledgements.....   | viii      |
| Table of contents.....  | ix        |
| <b>Chapter 1: ‘In safe hands’: an introduction to the thesis.....</b>         | <b>1</b>  |
| Elaine’s story .....  | 1         |
| The literature.....   | 5         |
| Methodology and methods.....  | 20        |
| Documentary sources .....   | 21        |
| Oral history.....   | 22        |
| The participants.....   | 24        |
| Ethical concerns and confidentiality .....                                    | 25        |
| The interviews.....   | 26        |
| Analysis, interpretation and theory.....                                      | 27        |
| Affect control theory.....  | 27        |
| Reflexivity and the interviewer’s influence.....                              | 29        |
| Assessing the validity of historical research.....                            | 30        |
| Language and discourse .....  | 31        |
| A brief background to the total institution.....                              | 32        |
| The structure of the thesis .....   | 33        |
| <b>Chapter 2: Keeping control.....</b>  | <b>37</b> |
| The 19 <sup>th</sup> century: ‘institutions for the necessitous classes’..... | 39        |
| The imperial institutions: New Norfolk and Impression Bay .....               | 39        |
| The Pauper House, Port Arthur .....   | 43        |
| The Brickfields Invalid Station, Hobart .....                                 | 45        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| The Invalid Depot, Launceston .....                                   | 48         |
| The Cascades Invalid Depot, Hobart.....                               | 52         |
| The New Town Charitable Institution, Hobart.....                      | 55         |
| The Launceston Benevolent Asylum.....                                 | 59         |
| The 20 <sup>th</sup> century .....                                    | 60         |
| The Home for Invalids, Launceston .....                               | 62         |
| St John’s Park, Hobart.....   | 66         |
| ‘More like a gaol...’: the Public Inquiry into the HFI.....           | 67         |
| Cosgrove Park, Launceston .....                                       | 70         |
| Residents’ rights and the language of control.....                    | 73         |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>Chapter 3: ‘Good enough’ and ‘making do’ .....</b>                 | <b>77</b>  |
| ‘Quite adequate for the class for whom it is provided’ .....          | 79         |
| ‘Only the most feeble and helpless are left...’ .....                 | 87         |
| ‘To make the few remaining years ... comfortable and enjoyable’.....  | 90         |
| ‘One of the most advanced homes of its kind...’ .....                 | 101        |
| ‘Matron tries hard’: philanthropic and proprietary Homes.....         | 108        |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>Chapter 4: Home as Hospital: the ennurement of aged care .....</b> | <b>115</b> |
| Pauper nurses and tired old men .....                                 | 116        |
| ‘A great blessing’: the advent of the trained nurse .....             | 121        |
| Home becomes ‘hospital’: the influence of geriatric medicine .....    | 124        |
| ‘A hospital for chronic diseases plus old age’ .....                  | 129        |
| ‘A special branch of training’: the geriatric auxiliary nurse.....    | 132        |
| Hospital hierarchy and power struggles.....                           | 134        |
| ‘First class nursing’: the geriatric registered nurse.....            | 138        |
| ‘Chronic brain failure’: care for people with dementia .....          | 143        |
| ‘Private medical establishments’: the private Homes .....             | 148        |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>Chapter 5: ‘For their own good’ .....</b>                          | <b>155</b> |
| ‘No flexibility’: the daily routine.....                              | 157        |
| The day begins.....   | 158        |
| Cleanliness and hygiene .....   | 161        |
| Breakfast.....  | 164        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| ‘The bread of idleness is not good for any person’ .....               | 167        |
| ‘The busy person has no time to grow old’ .....                        | 169        |
| Lunchtime.....   | 172        |
| Fresh air and the ‘health-giving qualities of sunshine’ .....          | 174        |
| Teatime, suppertime, and bed time.....                                 | 178        |
| Incontinence care and the fight against bedsores.....                  | 179        |
| ‘For their own safety’: restraints and safety measures.....            | 182        |
| ‘A degree of bullying...’ .....  | 187        |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>Chapter 6: ‘Home as home’, and the surrogate family .....</b>       | <b>193</b> |
| Home as ‘home’ .....   | 195        |
| Privacy.....   | 200        |
| Sex and intimacy .....   | 204        |
| Belongings and belonging .....   | 206        |
| Pets .....   | 208        |
| Entertainment .....  | 210        |
| Christmas .....  | 215        |
| ‘Detached atoms’: the ‘family’ Home .....                              | 218        |
| ‘They were like grandmothers to us’: the surrogate family .....        | 221        |
| The real family .....  | 226        |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>Chapter 7: Home as business: control revisited.....</b>             | <b>231</b> |
| Controlling the Homes .....  | 232        |
| Patient care: nursing notes and care plans.....                        | 233        |
| Charts, trolleys and locked doors: drugs and the drug round.....       | 238        |
| Nurses’ aides to PCAs: the transformation of the untrained nurse ..... | 240        |
| Controlling the gates .....  | 244        |
| Care in the community: domiciliary services.....                       | 244        |
| The rise of the assessors .....  | 252        |
| In safe hands: residents’ rights and the safety net.....               | 256        |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>Chapter 8: In safe hands? .....</b>                                 | <b>261</b> |
| The Homes .....  | 262        |
| Why did the Homes begin and who went into them?.....                   | 262        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| What social function did the Homes fulfil?.....                            | 262        |
| Had conditions in the Homes been far worse in the past?.....               | 263        |
| Had there ever been a time when going into a Home was a good thing?.....   | 264        |
| Were the negative stories real, apocryphal, or simply exaggerated? .....   | 264        |
| The nurses .....   | 268        |
| Why were the nurses so negative? Is aged care nursing ‘real’ nursing?..... | 268        |
| Are RNs really necessary in aged care? .....                               | 272        |
| Aged care and the status of old people .....                               | 272        |
| The negative image of aged care: an explanation.....                       | 274        |
| <b>Postscript .....</b>  | <b>281</b> |
| <b>Appendix 1: .....</b>   | <b>287</b> |
| Participant information sheet.....   | 288        |
| Consent form .....   | 290        |
| Release and deposit agreement.....   | 291        |
| Informant profile .....  | 292        |
| <b>Appendix 2: Table of participants in oral history interviews.....</b>   | <b>293</b> |
| <b>Appendix 3: Tasmanian population statistics .....</b>                   | <b>294</b> |
| <b>Bibliography .....</b>  | <b>295</b> |
| Arrangement of bibliography .....  | 295        |
| Primary sources .....  | 295        |
| Secondary sources .....  | 301        |

Tasmania will begin to lift coronavirus restrictions at aged care homes from next Monday. Key points: Tasmania has recorded one coronavirus death in an aged care facility. The Premier says there will be a staged lifting of restrictions, starting with aged care. Tighter restrictions in the north-west have eased and police will be out to ensure rules are still obeyed. The plans to ease restrictions at aged care homes was announced before it was revealed late Monday night that the state had recorded no new cases for the fourth consecutive day. The state's total cases remain steady at 221. In early April, the State Government banned visits to aged care except for compassionate or end-of-life reasons.

Method: Data extracted included results of the most recent assessment of pain and its management, frequency and treatment of pain incidents in the previous 7 days, demographics, and medical and medication history. Univariate analysis was used to identify variables associated with increased frequency of pain episodes. Results: The final analysis included 477 residents. At least one episode of pain in the preceding 7 days was documented in 25.6% (n = 122) of residents' notes. Pain episodes were most commonly managed by analgesics (45.5%), massage (40.7%), and heatpacks (13.8%). A history of tasmania.

By Tim Lambert. About 35,000 years ago the Earth was in the grip of an ice age. The sea level was lower than it is today and Tasmania was joined to mainland Australia. Indigenous Tasmanians were able to cross on foot. However about 12,000 years ago the ice age ended and the sea level rose. Tasmania became an island. The first European to see Tasmania was Abel Tasman who arrived in 1642. Captain Cook reached Tasmania in 1777. Then in 1798, Matthew Flinders became the first person to circumnavigate Tasmania. The first European settlement in Tasmania was on the eastern bank of the River Derwent. (In 1804 the colony was moved to the western bank). In 1803 there may have been about 8,000 indigenous people in Tasmania.