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.”

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

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

Perhaps no part of the world can show relatively so many aged people.1

Aged care is one of the more controversial and problematic areas of healthcare in Australia in the 21st 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 20th century period of ‘making do’, to the ennurement 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 21st century.

List of Abbreviations and Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACAT</td>
<td>Aged Care Assessment Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOT</td>
<td>Archives Office of Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>APHA</td>
<td>Aged Persons’ Homes Act, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON</td>
<td>Director of Nursing (equivalent to ‘Matron’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td>Enrolled Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAT</td>
<td>Geriatric Assessment Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGH</td>
<td>Launceston General Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRB</td>
<td>Nurses’ Registration Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCI</td>
<td>Resident Classification Instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>Tasmanian Legislative Council Papers 1858 to 1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP</td>
<td>Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers 1884 to present</td>
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**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
- **St John’s Park**: New Town Infirmary and Consumptive Home, 1913–1934
- **New Town Rest Home**: New Town Rest Home, 1934–1938
- **St John’s Park**: St John’s Park, 1938–1994
  (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
  (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.
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My appreciation also to the staff of the Archives Office of Tasmania, with particular mention to David Bloomfield, whose patience and investigative powers helped me find what many said did not exist; to the kind staff of the Reference section in Launceston LINC who pushed trolley loads of volumes of Parliamentary Papers without complaint; and to Kay Carson at the Sir John Ramsey Memorial Library at the LGH, who gave me access to some missing pieces of the jigsaw.

And lastly but everlastingly, my love and thanks go to my husband, Alec Hedley, and my mother, Audrey Crisp, for never doubting that I would finish—eventually. Your patience and positivity in the face of my occasional existential crises and continual absence from real life have helped me through the years of research and writing. I promise to be there for you both in future as you have been here for me for so long.
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Sexuality in aged care environments is a fraught topic. Traditionally, aged care providers have determined moral standards and "acceptable" behaviours in their facilities. However, some politicians and professionals have argued that aged care residents have the same civil rights as all citizens. 

13 See John Braithwaite, Toni Makkai and Valerie Braithwaite, Regulating aged care: Ritualism and the new pyramid (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2007); Elaine Crisp, In safe hands: A history of aged care in Tasmania (D Phil Thesis, University of Tasmania, 2012). Tasmania’s Aged Care industry is growing rapidly and requires more trained, skilled and caring people. See More. Community See All. Location Tasmania South Job Description About the Care Home Bupa South Hobart is a modern care home located in a beautiful leafy setting and close to amenities such as cafes, a bakery, a chemist, a beautician as well as being easily accessible by public transport. It consists of three communities with a Location Tasmania South Job Description About the Care Home Bupa South Hobart is a modern care home located in a beautiful leafy setting and close to amenities such as cafes, a bakery, a chemist, a beautician as well as being easily accessible by public transport. It consists of three communities with...