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History of Our Lady's Home of Compassion

In 1907, following a huge fundraising effort, the impressive Our Lady's Home of Compassion was opened on the slopes of Island Bay, initially for the care of children and babies.

In 1899, Suzanne and three Sisters arrived unannounced in Wellington. They quickly set to work as social welfare pioneers. They established a centre of welcome for disadvantaged people in need of food and clothes, New Zealand's first home for permanently disabled people, and a crèche for the young children of working parents. They also set up a soup kitchen, which has endured to this day. All their services were free-of-charge and available to all, regardless of race, sex, age or creed. 'All creeds or none' became an appreciative catch-cry of Suzanne Aubert's many supporters.

Suzanne and the Sisters became a familiar sight around Wellington, pushing wicker-collecting prams, and collecting food and clothing for the needy, whatever their religious background.

Suzanne's vision and confidence grew, as she tackled her most ambitious project to date. In 1907, following a huge fundraising effort, the impressive Our Lady's Home of Compassion was opened on the slopes of Island Bay,

initially for the care of children and babies. Civic as well as church leaders turned out in force for the opening. The Sisters' nonsectarian approach, and their tireless, practical brand of Christianity, had won the respect of the Wellington community.

In January 1920 a frail but triumphant Suzanne returned home to Island Bay, where she organised nursing training for the Sisters and expanded the scope and services of the Island Bay hospital. She was determined to provide general hospital treatment and trained nursing free-of-charge to the poor during New Zealand's post-war Depression. She arranged for extensive alterations to the Home to provide a surgical section. In 1922, the Sisters began training for the general nursing the new hospital would require. Suzanne continued to be seen around Wellington, leaning on the arm of one of the Sisters and using her umbrella as a walking stick.

On 1 October 1926, aged 91, Suzanne Aubert died in the presence of her Sisters. New Zealand's newspapers spread the word and huge crowds gathered to pay their last respects.

Thousands of people came in steady stream to the Home of Compassion to honour her, and her funeral was one of the biggest ever given a woman in New Zealand.

Suzanne Aubert was buried in Karori cemetery. The Sisters, realising that the cause for her beatification might one day be introduced, enclosed her body in a lead coffin, which was then enclosed in a simple wooden one. Twenty-five years later her remains were transferred to the Home she founded in Island Bay.



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Our History

Suzanne Aubert's work is a story of faith, love, humanity and of course, compassion.

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Sister Aloysius Kerrigan

Margaret Kerrigan was born at Ashhurst, near Palmerston North, on 5 September, 1885. She entered as a Postulant on 13 October, 1907 and went to Island Bay when the Noviciate was transferred there in March, 1908. She began her Novitiate on the 17 September, 1908, and received the name of Sister Mary Aloysius. She was professed on 28 September, 1910.



Sister Vincent Butler

Rosaline Rita was born in Inglewood, Taranaki on 2 May, 1925. Her parents were William John and Helen Martha Butler (nee Dravitski). Rosaline's father owned a farm in Inglewood and it was from there she developed a great love of the outdoors, animals and bird life.



Sister Jude Murray

Marie Patricia Murray was born at Dannevirke on November 13, 1927. Her parents were John Francis and Catherine Murray (nee Brady).

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