

Visit one of the three remaining Australian Inland Mission hospitals (and the only one in WA).

Australian Inland Mission - For Christ and Continent



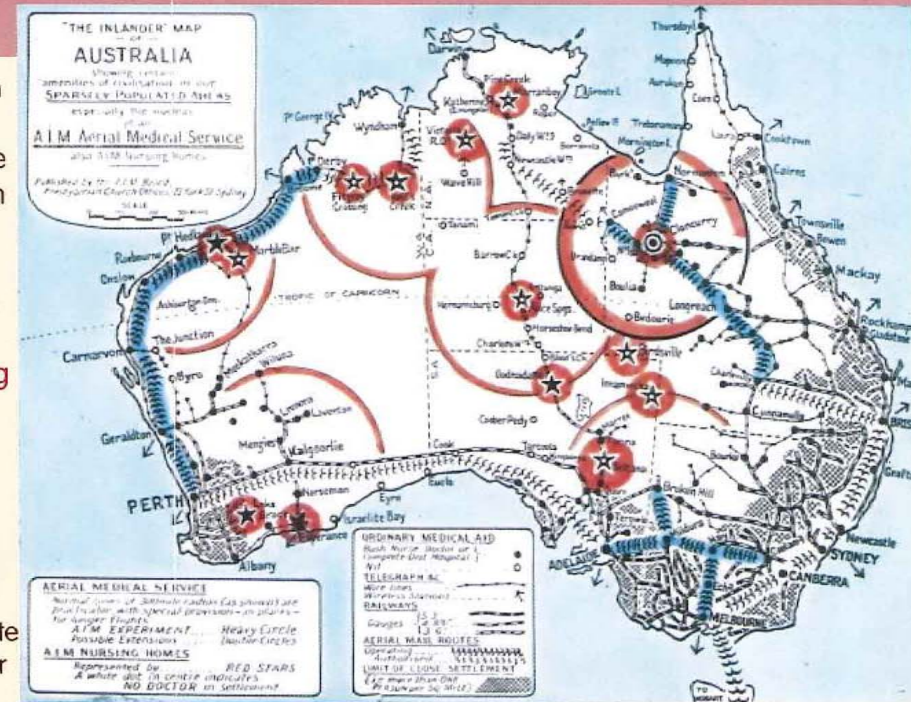
The AIM, known as 'the bush department' of the Presbyterian Church, was the vision of Reverend John Flynn OBE. Concerned by the vast distances, lack of medical facilities and the lonely bush

graves of the Australian outback, Reverend Flynn wanted to see that "hospital and nursing facilities are provided within a hundred miles of every spot in Australia where women and children reside".

From 1912, the AIM created 15 nursing homes in remote locations across the continent, staffing each with adventurous and resourceful nurses. Reverend Flynn visited Lake Grace and Newdegate in 1922/3 to determine if the area was suitable for a hospital. The State government agreed to subsidise the building and in February 1925, Flynn convinced the AIM Board in Sydney to build and staff a 'nursing home' at Lake Grace, on the condition that the Lake Grace district repay the loan and take control of the facility.

Lake Grace AIM Hospital opened in April 1926 with Olive Bennett and Helen Cousin as sisters-in-charge. The two-storey building was both workplace and home to the nurses who improvised when faced with isolation and the lack of equipment and staff.

By July 1934, after years of fundraising, the Lake Grace Hospital Board repaid the AIM loan and took ownership of the hospital. Reverend Flynn would remain a friend to isolated communities and realise his dream to 'cast a mantle of safety' over Australia with the revolutionary Royal Flying Doctor Service.



the only hospital for miles

Lake Grace Hospital served an area of almost 10 000 square miles (16 000 km²) - from Ravensthorpe in the east to Wagin in the west, Pingrup in the south and Pingaring to the north. The wards and verandahs were often crowded with beds (averaging 18 patients) and the local doctor had to use one corner of the verandah, enclosed with weatherboard and fly-wire, as an operating theatre. A separate ward, built in 1938, catered for maternity cases. By the 1940s, the hospital was continually overcrowded and the operating theatre and staff facilities inadequate. It ceased operation in 1952, replaced by the Lake Grace Memorial Hospital.



Walk through the old-style wards, duty room, kitchen and laundry to experience the atmosphere of an early twentieth century rural hospital.

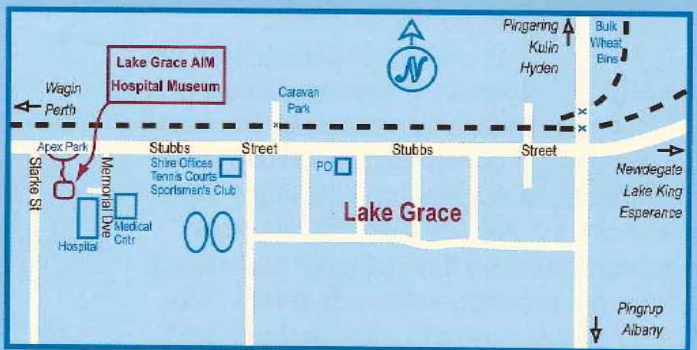


Our museum guides tell of the rich social history of a West Australian farming community and the experiences of the hospital's staff and patients.



restoration

From 1952 until the early 1970s, the former AIM hospital accommodated domestic staff and then schoolteachers. By 1983, the building was vacant and in disrepair, and the State government decided to demolish it. A public protest by former staff and the Lake Grace Lions Club halted demolition work at the eleventh hour. Guided by the assessment of a conservation architect, who found that the building was historically significant, Lake Grace Shire Council voted to save the building from demolition and restore it as a museum.



Lake Grace Australian Inland Mission Hospital Museum

where to find us

Parking is available off Stubbs Street, next to Apex Park. Follow the pathway of commemorative plaques from the park to the Museum. Use the complementary telephone to contact a museum guide who will take you on a free tour of the former hospital.



Almost 100 enthusiastic volunteers raised funds and spent countless hours replacing floorboards, guttering and fences, filling cracks, painting walls and restumping the verandahs. The Lake Grace Australian Inland Mission Hospital Museum opened in October 1992 and the building is now listed with local, State and national heritage registers.

