

# Yarrabah Mission

1892 – 1960

## Details

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Yarrabah Mission was founded by the Anglican Church. It was run by the Anglican Diocese of North Queensland, and received funding and staffing assistance from the Australian Board of Mission. Canon Ernest Richard Bulmer Gribble was in charge at Yarrabah from 1893 until 1910. In 1900, the Yarrabah Mission was declared an industrial school, and it received 'neglected children' from around Queensland from this date. The closing date of the Industrial School at Yarrabah is not known. There are also records from a 'Senior Girls' Home' at Yarrabah dating from 1908. The Queensland government assumed control of Yarrabah Mission in 1960.

According to Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council:

*In 1897 the Queensland Government implemented the 'Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of Sale of Opium Act to 'protect and control' our people ... In 1899 Ernest Gribble was ordained as an Anglican priest and appointed government superintendent of Yarrabah. This appointment gave Gribble complete authority over the lives of the Aboriginal people on the mission which he would do until the church 'requested' he leave in 1909. (He would return in 1957, where he died the same year.)*

A Queensland government resource states that 'It was common practice to house many, if not most children, in the dormitories at Yarrabah, from around the age of 10 ... The steady stream of children contributed towards Yarrabah being the largest of all missions in Queensland by 1903'.

The Mission was declared an Industrial School in 1900, making it an official destination for children charged with being 'neglected' under Queensland laws. The Industrial School at Yarrabah was licensed under the *State Children Act* 1911 on 2 April 1914.

Loos writes that Yarrabah was administered by the Sydney-based Executive Council of the Australian Board of Mission, and the Bishop of North Queensland was responsible only for 'overseeing its spiritual life'. In 1910, administration moved from Sydney to a committee in Brisbane. In 1937, the Diocese of North Queensland gained administrative control of Yarrabah (Loos, 1991, pp.77-78).

Finding and retaining suitable staff had long been a problem at Yarrabah and in 1952, the Church decided to employ Anglican Church Army officers as superintendents of the Mission. Yarrabah residents staged a strike in 1957 against the harsh discipline under the Church Army. The Superintendent Captain Wilcox expelled the strike's ringleaders, and around 200 people left the Mission by gaining exemption from the Queensland Act (Loos, p.78).

Loos writes that official government visitors in 1959 were shocked with the conditions at Yarrabah. On 1 July 1960 the Queensland State Government officially took over control of the mission from the Anglican Church.

## Records

According to the *Missing Pieces* publication (2001), no records in relation to the Industrial School at Yarrabah have been located.

## Gallery

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**View of Yarrabah Mission, 1924**



**Houses at Yarrabah ca.1912**

**Description:** This photograph shows three small houses supposedly at Yarrabah Mission. The houses are constructed primarily out of wood and palm leaves or grass fibres. This photograph was originally published in the Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the year 1912.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Anglican Diocese of Brisbane \(1859 - current\)](#)  
Date: 1859 - 1960
- [Anglican Diocese of North Queensland, Queensland \(1883 - current\)](#)

#### Related Legislation

- [State Children Act 1911, Queensland \(1911 - 1966\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Australian Board of Mission \(1850 - 1995\)](#)

## Resources

- Loos, Noel, *The Australian Board of Missions, The Anglican Church and the Aborigines, 1850-1900*, Journal of Religious History, December 1992
- Coaldrake, Frank W., [Acceptance: the next step forward](#), 1967
- Australian Broadcasting Commission, [Your Stories : Reflections in Yarrabah](#), 17 December 2008
- Denigan, Kathleen Mary, *Reflections in Yarrabah*, 2008

## Records

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For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

### Records

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Records \(1880s - current\)](#)
- [Gribble, E.R.B. \(Ernest Richard Bulmer\) 1868-1957, Collected Papers, 1892-1970 \(1892 - 1970\)](#)

- [Anglican Board of Mission \(Australia\) - further records \(1887 - 1996\)](#)
  - [Social History Cards - Yarrabah \(1884 - 1982\)](#)
  - [Correspondence Files - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs \(1916 - 1999\)](#)
  - [General Correspondence - Torres Strait Islands \(1922 - 1994\)](#)
  - [Miscellaneous Items and Correspondence - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander files \(1859 - 1997\)](#)
  - [Health & Home Affairs/Education Department Batch Files \[Correspondence\] - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander files \(1884 - 1970\)](#)
  - [Correspondence Files \[Offices of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals and Director of Native Affairs\] \(1901 - 1944\)](#)
  - [Photographs and Photograph Albums of Aboriginal settlements and missions \(1940 - 1960\)](#)
  - [Correspondence - Alphanumeric Prefix - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs \(1909 - 1992\)](#)
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