

# Carnarvon Mission

1945 – 1975?

## Details

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The Carnarvon Mission was established by the Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Inc. in 1945. It provided accommodation for Aboriginal families and access to education and training for Aboriginal children. There were 138 children in 1959. The Mission's name was changed to Ingada Village around 1975 and numbers of children fell from 84 in 1979 to 32 in 1983. By this time, there were four 'scatter cottages' in the Carnarvon township as well as at the Mission site. The Mission's name was changed to Ingada Village around 1975.

The Carnarvon Mission began as a missionary service by people associated with the Churches of Christ in Carnarvon. Land was purchased by the Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board (Inc.) (CCFAMB) to develop a mission facility.

A lot of children lived at the mission: 31 children in 1948; 98 children in 1954; 138 children in 1959. In his annual report for 1959 (p.16), the Commissioner of Native Welfare noted that the Carnarvon Mission was 'over-crowded and is unable to cope with children from the outer Gascoyne and Ashburton'.

In 1948 a school was developed on the site as Aboriginal children had been excluded from the local primary school. This was staffed by the Education Department. By 1956 some children were able to go to school in Carnarvon and by 1962 all children were attending school there, so the Mission school closed. Some background on these educational issues is provided in government reports.

In 1959, the younger children on the mission attended the primary school on the mission and older children went by bus to the Junior High School in Carnarvon. The Commissioner of Native Welfare wrote (1959, p.16) that the children interacted normally while at primary school, but could not interact with 'white' children when they went to High School, unlike other Aboriginal children at the school who had been interacting with white children since they were young. However, the primary school at the mission was established in 1948 in response to what Bateman, in his *Report on Survey of Native Affairs* (1948, pp.7, 24-25), described (p.24) as 'bitter antagonism' and 'intense opposition' by 'white residents' to children from the mission being educated 'side by side with white children'.

Young people who had finished high school sometimes stayed on at the mission, as the superintendent explained in the Commissioner of Native Welfare's annual report in 1958 (p.44): 'Opportunity is taken of the period between leaving school and going out to employment to enlarge the children's interest as well as education. Cooking and dress-making classes conducted by the staff are regular features. Some girls are learning to play the piano with varied success. Boys are taught gardening, fencing, poultry care and general farm work, though some are more interested than others. We are limited by lack of land from training in pastoral pursuits...Young people who have left school receive a nominal sum of 5s. Per week as pocket money and are encouraged to buy their own personal requirements.' The young men who underwent training in this way are known among former missionaries as 'working boys' or 'working young men'.

After the school was closed, the buildings were firstly used as a hostel for working boys, and then were modified to serve as a home for a missionary couple who were appointed to look after the old people who came in from the

Reserve.

The quickest way into Carnarvon town from the Mission and nearby plantations was over a rough road across the dry bed of the Gascoyne River. When the river came down, the trip into town was a longer route over the bridge. The Gascoyne River was also subject to flooding; such a frequent event that the rails were taken off the bridge to minimise repair work. Large floods, such as in 1960, surrounded Mission buildings in a sea of water.

At the back of the Mission was an area of bush which was called the Common. In 2013, Churches of Christ historian Deslee Moyle visited Carnarvon and was told by a former resident that the Common was a place where the children were able to continue to have contact with their culture, through finding and eating bush fruit and wildlife. The Common also provided the children with armloads of wildflowers in season.

The main purpose of the Carnarvon Mission was to provide out of home care for Aboriginal children, but it also had a role in Christian outreach to Aboriginal people living towns and stations in the Murchison and Gascoyne. The Mission also aimed to keep in contact with former residents and parents, and to have close relationships with community Elders.

In 1968, a Teens Hostel, run by the Mission, was established in the Carnarvon township.

The Mission's name was changed to 'Ingada Village' around 1975. During the 1970s Carnarvon Mission and, later, Ingada Village established four 'scatter cottages' in the township and replaced Mission buildings with cottage homes for children on the Ingada Village site.

## Gallery

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### Carnarvon Mission from the air

**Description:** Carnarvon Mission from the air is a digital copy of an image held by Global Mission Partners in the Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Photographs collection. As described by historian Deslee Moyle, the image dates from the 1960s. The dining room is on the left of the photograph, with the U-shaped 'Kindergarten' in front. The kindergarten was the babies' and young children's dormitory



### Carnarvon Mission children and sign

**Description:** Carnarvon Mission children and sign' is a digital copy of an image held by Global Mission Partners in the Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Photographs collection. As described by historian Deslee Moyle, the image dates from the early 1960s.



### Mission School

**Description:** 'Mission School' is a digital copy of an image from the Carnarvon Mission, held by Global Mission Partners in the Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Photographs collection. As described by historian Deslee Moyle, the image shows the original mission school, probably around 1948.

## More info

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### Chronology

- Carnarvon Mission (1945 – 1975?)

- [Ingada Village \(1975? - 1986\)](#)

## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board \(Inc\) \(1942 - 2009\)](#)

### Related Glossary Terms

- [Commissioner for Native Affairs \(WA\) \(1936 - 1954\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Affairs was the legal guardian of children at Carnarvon Mission.  
Date: 1945 - 1954
- [Commissioner of Native Welfare \(WA\) \(1954 - 1972\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the legal guardian of children at Carnarvon Mission until 1963 when he could regulate the 'care' of those Aboriginal children.  
Date: 1954 - 1972

### Related Organisations

- [Carnarvon Teens Hostel \(1968 - 1984?\)](#)  
The Carnarvon Teens Hostel accommodated young people from the Carnarvon Mission who were going to high school or working in the Carnarvon township.  
Date: 1968 - 1975?
- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)  
The Chief Executive Officer of the Department for Community Welfare was the guardian of any children at Carnarvon Mission who were deemed to be 'native wards' or 'wards of the State'.  
Date: 1972 -

## Resources

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, [Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families](#), 1997
- [Lance Fisher interviewed by Gwenda Davey in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 28 September 2000
- Western Australia. Department of Native Affairs, *Annual Report: Department of Native Affairs, 1937 - 1954. Relevance: Report on Survey of Native Affairs 1948: pp.7, 24-25; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs 1954: pp.31, 61*
- Sewell, Betty, *Carnarvon: Interaction of Two Cultures*, 1990
- Hammer, David G.M., *Central Subliminal Wants Among the Australian Aborigines: The Role of Christian Missions Towards Fulfillment*, February 1976
- Wangka Maya, Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre, *Carnarvon Mission Reunion*, 2008
- Churches of Christ Carnarvon, [Carnarvon Mission News](#), 1961 - 1975
- Churches of Christ Ingada Village, *Ingada news*, 1975 - 1981

## Records

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

### Records

- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
- [Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Photographs, Western Australia](#)
- [Tuart Place Historical Photos Collection](#)
- [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
- [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)

- [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
  - [Files - General \[Health Department\] \(1899 - 1987\)](#)
  - [Administration Files - Roebourne Office \[A.S.D. Sequence\] \(1951 - 1973\)](#)
  - [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/carnarvon-mission/>