

# Kurrawang Mission

1952 – 1984

- Other Names:**
- Kurrawang Native Mission
  - Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre
  - Kurrawang Native Mission, Kalgoorlie

## Details

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Kurrawang Mission, near Kalgoorlie, was established as a 'native reserve' in 1952 by the Gospel Brethren (later known as Christian Brethren). Until 1963, the head of the government departments responsible for Aboriginal welfare was the guardian of children at the Home. By 1968, there were 66 children, some who were wards of the State. Its role changed over time to become a hostel for school-age children and those travelling to Kalgoorlie for medical treatment. In the 1980s, it was known locally as the Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre and by 1984 was a self-managed Aboriginal community with a parent-directed school on the site.

Kurrawang Native Mission was established in November 1952 as a 'native reserve' which had three purposes: to care for Aboriginal people who had been in hospital and were awaiting transport back to home; to provide rations to local Aboriginal people from the Kalgoorlie area; to provide camping facilities for Aboriginal people passing through on their way to employment or in Kalgoorlie for ceremonial purposes.

The Department of Native Affairs registered Kurrawang as a 'native mission' to recognise the involvement and commitment of the Gospel Assemblies. Mr W. Sharpe, of the Gospel Hall, Kalgoorlie, was the first superintendent. In 1953, the department reported that Mr Sharpe had to be reminded not to encourage Aboriginal people to settle permanently at Kurrawang. In the early days, the governance of Kurrawang was uncertain as the Gospel Assemblies reformed. This uncertainty was reportedly a key factor in the Department of Native Affairs deciding not to build any facilities at Kurrawang when it was first established.

By 1955, the Department of Native Welfare (DNW) had provided funds for Kurrawang, which was then being run by the 'Gospel Brotherhood', with Mr Sharpe still the superintendent. There were 17 children at Kurrawang who slept in an 'unlined, corrugated iron dormitory' or on the verandah of the superintendant's house, according to the DNW's Annual Report in that year. Until 1963, all the children were under the guardianship of the Commissioner of Native Welfare and it seems that the Department's concerns about permanent settlement had been overcome.

By 1968, there were more than 110 people at Kurrawang, including 66 children some who were wards of the State. Seven children went to the kindergarten at Kurrawang and the others went to schools in Kalgoorlie. There were dormitories for boys and girls. One of the dormitories was called 'Golden Ridge'.

In 1972, the Department for Community Welfare (DCW) took over the child welfare responsibilities from the DNW. Children who were wards of the State were admitted to Kurrawang and the DCW funded programs and facilities. A cottage home was funded in 1974. This was probably Pukulari, which was located in Boulder, Kalgoorlie.

A photograph from 1973 or 1974 shows that Kurrawang was known as the Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre but it continued to be known as 'Kurrawang Mission' in government reports. The dormitories at Kurrawang were replaced with cottages during the 1970s.

By 1977, Kurrawang was operating two cottage homes in Kalgoorlie (Boulder).

In 1982 the DCW reported that children were placed with foster parents at the Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre.

In 1984, the Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Community Inc became responsible for the management of Kurrawang and its life as a mission officially ended. A Christian Aboriginal parent-directed School was established on the site.

In March 1995, a freehold title to the Kurrawang land was issued to the Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Community Inc.

## Gallery

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### Kurrawang Mission, ca. 1956

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a negative that is available as part of the group of 6 images called 'Kurrawang Mission [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows one of the mission buildings.

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### Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre Sign

**Description:** This is a digitised photo that is available as part of a collection of images on the webpage Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre. This webpage is no longer in operation. This URL was taken from the Wayback Machine and is dated 8 March 2016.

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### Kurrawang view

**Description:** This is a digitised photo that is available as part of a collection of images on the webpage Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre. It shows a view of Kurrawang Mission between 1973/1974. This webpage is no longer in operation. This URL was taken from the Wayback Machine and is dated 8 March 2016.

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### Kurrawang boys' dormitory

**Description:** This is a digitised photo that is available as part of a collection of images on the webpage Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre. The photo was taken in 1973-1974 and the caption reads, 'The old Boys Dorm then used as spare accommodation for visitors'. This webpage is no longer in operation. This URL was taken from the Wayback Machine and is dated 8 March 2016.

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### Kurrawang girls' dormitory

**Description:** This is a digitised photo that is available as part of a collection of images on the webpage Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre. The photo was taken in 1973-1974 and the caption reads, 'The old Girls Dorm then used as spare accommodation for visitors'. This webpage is no longer in operation. This URL was taken from the Wayback Machine and is dated 8 March 2016.

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## More info

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## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Christian Brethren in Kalgoorlie \(1947 - c. 1984\)](#)  
Date: 1952 - 1984

### Related Glossary Terms

- [Commissioner for Native Affairs \(WA\) \(1936 - 1954\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Affairs was the guardian of all 'native' children at Kurrawang Mission.
- [Commissioner of Native Welfare \(WA\) \(1954 - 1972\)](#)  
The Commissioner of Native Welfare was the guardian of all 'native' children at Kurrawang Mission until 1963. After 1963, the Department of Native Welfare could make regulations for the 'control, care and education of the children of natives'.  
Date: 1954 - 1972

### Related Organisations

- [Goldfields Group Home \(1980? - 1987?\)](#)
- [Pukulari Cottage \(1974 - 1984\)](#)  
Pukulari Cottage was part of Kurrawang Mission.
- [Department of Native Affairs, State of Western Australia \(1936 - 1954\)](#)  
The Department of Native Affairs provided financial assistance to establish Kurrawang Mission.
- [Kurrawang Cottage, Boulder \(1977 - 1988\)](#)  
Kurrawang Cottage, Boulder was part of Kurrawang Mission
- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)  
The Chief Executive Officer of the Department for Community Welfare was the guardian of children at Kurrawang Mission who were deemed to be 'native wards' or 'wards of the State'.

## Resources

- Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation, [Stolen Generations' Testimonies](#), 2009. *Relevance*: See testimony of Glen Ugle
- State Records Taskforce, Government of Western Australia, [Looking West: A Guide to Aboriginal Sources in Western Australia](#), 2004
- Western Australia. Department of Native Welfare, *Annual Report: Department of Native Welfare, 1955 - 1972*. *Relevance*: Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare 1955 p.26; 1959 p.8
- Jeffries, Max, [Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre](#), SPIRITLAND.net - Free Photos of Australia, Nature & People, Australian Cities, Aussie Outback & Beach, 2013
- West, Ern and Jeffries, Max, [Index - A History of the Christian Brethren in Western Australia, 1993](#), 2013. *Relevance*: Section 6 contains information about Kurrawang Mission and images of staff, children, activities and buildings at Kurrawang

## Records

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

### Records

- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
  - [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 - Kalgoorlie Office \(1964 - 1970\)](#)
  - [Administration Files - Eastern District Office \[E.D.G. Sequence\] \(1945 - 1975\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/kurrawang-mission/>