

Norseman Mission

1935 – 1985

Other Names: • Churches of Christ Native Mission Norseman

Details

Norseman Mission was a 'children's mission' established in 1935 by members of the Churches of Christ and then run from 1942 by the Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Inc. Its purpose was to provide accommodation, education and vocational training for children and young people aged 2-15 years. The number of children at the mission varied over time, with fewer than 30 children in some years (1948, 1965) and up to 70 in others (1958, 1970). Norseman Mission closed in 1985 and the pastoral lease was transferred to a local Aboriginal Community.

Norseman Mission began as a dormitory for children, set up in 1935 by two members of the Churches of Christ, Miss Eadie and Miss Bentley, on the Native Reserve 2.5 kilometres from the Norseman township. In 1942, they asked the newly-formed Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board (Inc) (CCFAMB) to take over the management of Norseman Mission. In 2013, CCFAMB was known as Global Mission Partners.

The CCFAMB appointed a superintendent in November 1942. In January 1943, the CCFAMB was formally requested by the government of Western Australia to operate a mission on Native Reserve No. 22179 at Norseman and in July 1945, the CCFAMB was granted a lease over 8,100 hectares of land including a pastoral lease, 16.5 kilometres from the Norseman township on the Coolgardie Road. This became the Norseman Mission's permanent home.

Government reports show that the number of children living at the Mission varied over the years. There were 27 children in 1948; 45 children in 1954; 70 children in 1958 and 1959; 23 children in 1965; 64 children in 1970; and 10 children in the year before the Mission closed, 1984.

Although family groups lived on the Reserve, the Mission focused on, and from 1943, accommodated children only. The youngest children stayed in 'Bethany', which was a 'kindergarten dormitory' set up for the little children at the Mission. Churches of Christ missionaries remember that children were encouraged to participate in activities in Norseman, such as local sports. By 1968, 50 children were going to school in Norseman. The Mission also aimed to provide vocational training for older children in pastoral and rural employment.

Children were permitted to go into the bush by themselves, according to missionaries. Groups of boys and girls would take turns on alternate Saturdays, spending a day in the bush. They were unsupervised, and provided they didn't cross the main road, they could wander as they wished. Children went to the bush in formal groups, too, such as on art excursions to Dundas Rocks.

Children from Norseman Mission were taken to the 'coast' for a three-week holiday during January, according to the annual report of the Commissioner for Native Affairs in 1953. By the 1960s, possibly earlier, children who could not return home to family during school holidays were taken to a Churches of Christ house in Mandurah for their summer vacation. The house was one block back from the main street in Mandurah.

From 1974, cottage homes were established at the Mission, replacing the communal living facilities. From 1976 to 1980 there was also a 'scatter cottage' in the Norseman township. From at least July 1978, this cottage had been located in Talbot Street. The Talbot Street house had been purchased by the Department for Community Welfare in 1978 but continued to be run as part of the mission, which was then known as the Norseman Children's Home, until 1980. After Talbot Street was no longer needed by the mission, it was used to accommodate departmental staff.

The mission continued to operate as the Norseman Children's Home until it closed in 1985. In 1987, the property that had been the site of the Norseman mission was transferred by the The Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Inc to the Iragal Aboriginal Community.

Gallery



Norseman Mission view

Description: Norseman Mission, view' 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 and was taken from the schoolhouse. In the foreground is superintendent's house; the red roofed dining room is to the left; and the building with the silver roof behind the dining room is the workshop, which held the lighting plant and other maintenance equipment. A number of the Homes for children are visible, and the tennis court is on the far right of the picture.



Bethany kindergarten dormitory, Norseman Mission

Description: 'Bethany kindergarten dormitory, Norseman Mission' 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 1950s and shows the 'kindergarten' dormitory for little children, which was known as 'Bethany'.



Mandurah holiday house for Norseman Mission children

Description: 'Mandurah holiday house for Norseman Mission children' 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 1968 and shows children from the Norseman Mission on the lawn of the holiday house in Mandurah (one block back from the main street) where they regularly went for holidays.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

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

Date: 1942 - 1985?

Related Glossary Terms

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

Related Organisations

- [Condingup Hostel \(1967? - 1976\)](#)
Condingup Hostel accommodated some boys after they left Norseman Mission to gain work skills in the Esperance area.
Date: 1974 - 1976
- [Fairhaven Hostel \(1965 - 1987\)](#)
Teenage girls from Norseman Mission were able to live at Fairhaven Hostel in Esperance while going to high school or work.
Date: 1965 - 1985
- [Department for Community Welfare, State of Western Australia \(1972 - 1985\)](#)
The Chief Executive Officer of the Department for Community Welfare was the guardian of children at Norseman Mission who were deemed to be 'native wards' or 'wards of the State'.
- [Chief Protector of Aborigines \(1898 - 1936\)](#)
The Chief Protector of Aborigines was the legal guardian of children at Norseman Mission.
Date: 1935 - 1936

Resources

- [Avon Moyle and Deslee Moyle interviewed by W.J.E. Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 17 October 2000
- Western Australia. Department for Community Welfare, [Annual Report: Department for Community Welfare, 1973 - 1984](#)
- Valadian, Margaret, *Report by Margaret Valadian*, 1968
- Churches of Christ Ingada Village, *Ingada news*, 1975 - 1981. *Relevance*: 'Ingada news' is a collection of newsletters held at the State Library of Western Australia. Two issues of the 'Norseman news' (July 1976, May 1981) are held in the collection

Records

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](#)
 - [Administration Files - Eastern District Office \[E.D.G. Sequence\] \(1945 - 1975\)](#)
 - [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
 - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
 - [Files - General \[Health Department\] \(1899 - 1987\)](#)
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