

Wiluna Mission

1955 – 1975

Details

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Wiluna Mission was established by the Western Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church as a 'native institution' in October 1955. It was the second mission established by that church in Western Australia, as a sister mission to Karalundi.

Wiluna accepted children up to eight years of age, some families and pensioners. Children slept in dormitories. After Grade 3, children were transferred to Karalundi to complete their primary schooling.

Until 1960, the adults lived in 'little humpies constructed of bark and pieces of iron' on the outskirts of the mission but these were gradually replaced with 'quonset huts from Geraldton', erected by a carpenter. No-one who could work was allowed to remain at Wiluna for more than a few days without working: 'Brother Vaughan insists that all natives who are able to work must be employed', said an article written for an Adventist audience in 1960, in praise of a philosophy which was work-oriented rather than 'psalm singing only'.

In 1961, there were 35 children in the dormitory. These children were looked after by two young Aboriginal women, Nellie and Eileen. Nellie was described in an Adventist newspaper as being 'bright, intelligent, and a truly born-again Christian...the sort of trophy that thrills the heart of the missionary' (*Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, 17 July 1961, p.3).

The dormitory was small, with children sleeping two to a bed until 1964, when double bunks were received at the mission. A plea about the small dormitory was published in the Adventist newspaper in October 1964 and by November, volunteers were erecting a new building.

Pastor Vaughan, the superintendent, reported in 1963 that young people could return to Wiluna after they had finished their schooling at Karalundi, provided they were prepared to work either at Wiluna or on neighbouring stations. When there was no seasonal work, they were allowed to stay at Wiluna. Returning to country meant that boys had to go through initiation – ceremonies that were 'of the devil', according to Pastor Vaughan who had not seen 'anyone take part in these heathenish practices without being retrograded' (*Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, 4 March 1963, p.9).

In 1968, Wiluna had 8 children in the kindergarten and 34 children up to Grade 3. There were also a number of pensioners at the mission and families often came to Wiluna for holidays. The mission staff arranged employment for older children at stations in the area.

By 1971, Wiluna provided primary school education for children in Grades 2 and 3.

Wiluna was described in 1971 by Pastor and Mrs Vaughan, who had established the missions. Their words give an insight into the approach taken by the Adventist missionaries towards Aboriginal people at the mission:

Old people have been cared for, young girls have been protected, young men have trained, and little children right down to new born babies have been brought up by foster mothers. Australasian Record and Advent World Survey 18 October 1971, p.1

On 12 May 1974 the Executive Committee of the church decided to close Wiluna and Karalundi missions. In an article in the church newsletter in July 1974, the church gave two reasons for the closure: their action in banning alcohol at the missions had caused populations to drop; and the Commonwealth government's policy of discouraging missions was at odds with the church's philosophy:

The policy is to encourage these people in their tribal customs (which we discourage), and not to take children from their homes for school purposes. We have always housed the children from an early age in dormitories, in order to run a controlled school system. In this area we have found that chasing kangaroos, emus or bungaras has much more attraction than school, and parents take no responsibility in having children attend school regularly, as most of them have never done so themselves. Australasian Record 15 July 1974, p.1

Wiluna closed in 1975 and the site was purchased by the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority in 1976. In 1983, it became the Nganganawili Village.

Gallery



Wiluna Mission Church

Description: 'Wiluna Mission Church' is a digital copy of an image published in the *Signs of the Times* on the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' website, *Online Document Archives*. The caption reads, 'The Adventist church at Wiluna was started by Pastor Smith and has just recently been completed'.



Dormitory, Wiluna

Description: 'Dormitory, Wiluna' is a digital copy of an image published in the *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey* on the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' website, *Online Document Archives*. The caption reads, 'The dormitory building at the beginning of the fourth day of its erection'.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Western Australian Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church \(1890 - current\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Karalundi Mission \(1954 - 1974\)](#)

Karalundi Mission and Wiluna Mission were 'sister missions' of the Seventh-Day Adventist church. After they had completed grade 3 at school, children were transferred from Wiluna to Karalundi.

Date: 1955 - 1974

- [Adventist Support \(2000 - current\)](#)

Safe Place Services is an organisation for people who wish to register a complaint or discuss their experiences in institutions run by the Western Australian Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Resources

- Wilson, Katrin and Michael V. Robinson., *Aboriginal Hostels in Perth : A Comparative Survey*, 1971
- Western Australia. Department for Community Welfare, [Annual Report: Department for Community Welfare](#), 1973 - 1984
- [Miracle at Karalundi](#), Signs of the Times, February 1965
- [Life Sketch of Pastor A.D. Vaughan](#), Australasian Record and Advent World Survey, 12 August 1974
- [Queen Honours West Australian Pastor](#), Australasian Record and Advent World Survey, 24 July 1967
- Douglas, Nerolie, [Wiluna Camp - 1969](#), Australasian Record and Advent World Survey, 17 November 1969
- Dowling, WG, [Camp Meeting for First Australians](#), Australasian Record and Advent World Survey, 19 November 1973
- [Miracle at Karalundi \[III\]](#), Signs of the Times [Australian], April 1965
- [A first among Australian Aborigines](#), The Youth's Instructor, 28 June 1966
- O'Hara, Myrtle, [Jesus Understood](#), Signs of the Times [Australian], July 1971
- [Karalundi Oasis of Opportunity](#), Signs of the Times [Australian], February 1969

Records

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

Records

- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
 - [Archives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists \(c. 1998 - current\)](#)
 - [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
 - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/wiluna-mission/>