

# Milingimbi Mission

1923 – 1974

## Details

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Milingimbi Mission was established in 1923 by the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia, later known as the Methodist Overseas Mission, on Milingimbi Island. The Mission operated a dormitory for boys until the mid 1930s. A school was run at the Mission from 1935. During World War II the Milingimbi Mission was bombed twice by the Japanese and most residents moved to Elcho Island or the mainland. The Methodist Overseas Mission ran Milingimbi until 1974.

Milingimbi Mission was established in 1923 by the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia, later known as the Methodist Overseas Mission, on Milingimbi Island, part of the Crocodile group of islands approximately 440 km east of Darwin. The site of the mission had been chosen by Reverend James Watson in 1916. According to government correspondence the Mission was initially established at Elcho Island in 1921 but was moved to Milingimbi in 1923 when an oil company began drilling on Elcho Island.

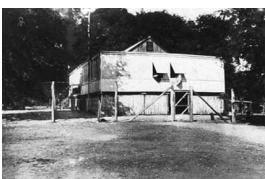
A school for Aboriginal children was started late in 1926 by a Missionary Sister but she left four months later and the school ceased to operate. Regular schooling was not reintroduced at the Mission until 1935. A 1927 review report listed the Mission buildings as including the Mission House, 2 Baduan helpers houses, 2 native helpers houses, a dormitory, a store, a medicine house, an implement house and a workshop. The establishment of a sawmill at the Mission in 1928 enabled the construction of more housing for staff and some residents. By 1934 it was reported that the Mission included a Boys' Dormitory with 10 boys and a 'half-caste house' with 2 residents and an unmarried Boys' House with 8 occupants. No mention of a girls' dormitory is made in this report. Some 20 youths are reported as being taught to read and write in evening classes at the superintendent's house. References to dormitories disappear from the review reports in the late 1930s.

During World War II the Milingimbi Mission was bombed twice by the Japanese. The raids destroyed the church and caused the death of an Aboriginal person. Most of the island's residents moved to Elcho Island and the mainland. The raids also prompted the RAAF to build an aerodrome and airstrip a few kilometres from the mission.

The Methodist Overseas Mission ran Milingimbi until 1974. The government transferred the administration of the Mission to Milingimbi Community Incorporated in the mid 1970s. In 2008 it became part of the East Arnhem Shire Council.

## Gallery

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**Album of anthropological photographs - Aboriginal Inquiry Central and North Australia - J.W. Bleakley - Milingimbi Mission, Crocodile Islands (Methodist) - Mission House - (Page 46)**

**Description:** This image shows the Mission house at Milingimbi Methodist Mission on the Crocodile Islands. It is not certain whether or not this building would have housed children in care on the Mission.

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### Milingimbi

**Description:** Original caption: Child standing with houses behind her.

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### Milingimbi Mission

**Description:** The description states: Milingimbi Mission from the beach.

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### Milingimbi Mission

**Description:** The description states: View of the mission from the landward side.

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### Mission staff

**Description:** The description reads: Staff opening Christmas boxes at Milingimbi. Date circa 1934.

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### Milingimbi

**Description:** The description reads: Aerial view, Methodist Mission, Milingimbi. Houses are under trees on beach.

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### Milingimbi Mission house

## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia \(1916 - 1930s\)](#)  
The Milingimbi Mission was run by the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia until the mid 1930s when the organisation changed its name to the Methodist Overseas Mission.  
Date: 1923 - 1930s
- [Methodist Overseas Mission \(c. 1930 - 1980\)](#)  
The Methodist Overseas Mission ran Milingimbi Mission from the mid 1930s until 1974.  
Date: 1930s - 1974

#### Related Organisations

- [Elcho Island Mission \(1921 - 1923\)](#)

When Elcho Island Mission closed in 1923 the missionaries moved to Milingimbi Island and began the Milingimbi Mission.

## Other Resources

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**Title:** Milingimbi Mission Review Reports, etc. Northern Territory [176 pp] (1927 - 1952)

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 1927 - 1952

[Details](#)

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## Records

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

### Records

- [Records of the Uniting Church in Australia, Northern Synod \(1940 - 1986\)](#)
  - [Records of the Methodist Church of Australasia, Department of Overseas Missions \(1830 - 1980\)](#)
  - [Copies of review inspection reports - Hermannsberg \[Hermannsburg\], Oenpelli, Yirrkala, Elcho Island, Groote Eylandt, Finke River, Roper River, Milingimbi and Port Keats \(1959 - 1959\)](#)
  - [Milingimbi Mission Review Reports, etc. Northern Territory \[176 pp\] \(1927 - 1952\)](#)
  - [List of Northern Territory evacuees, World War II \(1942 - 1942\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/milingimbi-mission-3/>