

Yirrkala Mission

1935 – 1974?

Details

The Methodist Overseas Mission established the Yirrkala Mission in north east Arnhem Land in 1935. Aboriginal people from 13 different clans in the surrounding area came to the Mission. A Mission school operated at Yirrkala from 1936. Child endowment was paid to the Mission for every Aboriginal child at the Mission. It appears no dormitories operated at Yirrkala. In the mid-1970s the church handed control of the mission to the Yirrkala Dhanbul Community Association and Yirrkala ceased to operate as a Mission.

The Methodist Overseas Mission established the Yirrkala Mission in north east Arnhem Land on the east coast of the Gove Peninsula in 1935. At that time the Methodist Overseas Mission was running two other Missions at Goulburn Island and Milingimbi and receiving government subsidies for all three.

Aboriginal people from 13 different clans in the surrounding area came to Yirrkala. The Mission began to run school classes for children in 1936. Lessons were held in the open under a tree, and later beneath the Mission House. It appears no dormitories operated at Yirrkala.

During World War II a Royal Australian Airforce (RAAF) airbase operated near to the Mission. All 'white women' were evacuated in 1942. Many of the residents of the Mission worked at the airbase, as boat pilots for the RAAF and the Royal Australia Navy or assisted the War effort in other ways. It appears that the school did not operate during WWII. In 1951 a new school building was constructed and the following year 47 children were regularly attending. The teacher at the time, Miss Proctor, was not a trained teacher but had been working at the Methodist Mission on Goulburn Island for three years.

Child endowment was paid to the Mission for every Aboriginal child at the Mission whether they attended the school or not.

In the mid-1970s the church handed control of the mission to the Yirrkala Dhanbul Community Association and Yirrkala ceased to operate as a Mission.

Gallery



The Methodist Mission bungalow at Yirrkala

Description: This is an image of the Methodist Mission bungalow in Yirrkala, north eastern Arnhem Land. The purpose of the bungalow and whether or not it would have housed the children in the care of the Mission is not known. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.



Buildings at Yirrkala

Description: The description reads: Dispensary and kitchen at Yirrkala.



Yirrkala

Description: The description reads: Sister Ellen Kettle (on steps), with Aboriginal community, at the dispensary, Yirrkala.



Yirrkala Mission

Description: This image shows an aerial view of Yirrkala mission.

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- [Methodist Overseas Mission \(c. 1930 - 1980\)](#)

Other Resources



Title: Caledon Bay (Yirrkala). Establishment of Mission Station (1934 - 1964)

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Title: Methodist Overseas Mission, Yirrkala Mission. (1933 - 1952)

Type: Image

Date: 1933 - 1952

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Records

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, Grootte Eylandt, Finke River, Roper River, Milingimbi and Port Keats \(1959 - 1959\)](#)
 - [Caledon Bay \(Yirrkala\). Establishment of Mission Station \(1934 - 1964\)](#)
 - [Methodist Overseas Mission, Yirrkala Mission. \(1933 - 1952\)](#)
 - [List of Northern Territory evacuees, World War II \(1942 - 1942\)](#)
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