

Aurukun Mission

1904 – 1978

Other Names:

- Archer River Mission
- Aurukun Reserve

Details

The Aurukun Mission was an Indigenous community situated south of Weipa in far north Queensland. Run by the Presbyterian Church, it opened in 1904. Children on the Mission were housed in dormitories from around the age of 11. The dormitory system of care was abolished in 1968.

The Aurukun Mission was established on 4 August 1904 by the Presbyterian Church. Bill McKenzie was the Superintendent at Aurukun from 1925 to 1965.

Most of the children lived in dormitories which were some of the first buildings established at the Mission. Children lived with their parents until they were about eleven or twelve and then they moved into the dormitories. Orphans and children whose parents did not live on the Mission were also housed in the dormitories.

In general, the girls were housed in the dormitories until they married, which was around sixteen years of age. Unmarried girls often remained in the dormitories until they were nineteen or older. Boys remained in the dormitories until they left the Mission for work.

The church erected a new dormitory in 1926 with a grant received from the Queensland government. The overcrowded girls' dormitory was replaced in 1955. This new dormitory housed children and girls up to nineteen years of age. A senior boys' dormitory completed in 1963 accommodated boys between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

By 1966 the Mission Boards' policy on the care and control of children was for them to stay with their families where possible. This resulted in a decrease in the need for dormitory accommodation.

In 1968 the dormitory system ceased altogether and the children returned to their parents or family members. In April 1971 the boys' dormitory housed 3 boys for five weeks.

In 1978 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Queensland Reserves and Communities Self-Management) Act was passed. The Act empowered Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders living on reserves in Queensland to manage and control their own affairs.

Gallery



Aurukun Presbyterian mission, far north Queensland, 1962

Description: This image is part of the Aboriginal life in Far North Queensland: Photographs taken during fieldwork between 1956 and 1976 collection held by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).



Girls on parade for church, Aurukun

Description: This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Presbyterian Church of Queensland \(1849 - current\)](#)

Date: 1904 - 1978

Related Legislation

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders \(Queensland Reserves and Communities Self-Management\) Act 1978, Queensland \(1978 - current\)](#)

Resources

- Ganter, Regina, [German Missionaries in Queensland - Aurukun \(1904-1913\)](#), 2009

Records

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

Records

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Records \(1880s - current\)](#)
 - [Correspondence Files \[Offices of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals and Director of Native Affairs\] \(1901 - 1944\)](#)
 - [Correspondence - Alphanumeric Prefix - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs \(1909 - 1992\)](#)
 - [Peter John Sutton Papers, Aurukun Mission, Palm Island Mission and Hope Vale Mission \(1974 - 1980\)](#)
 - [School Inspectors' Reports \(1874 - 1991\)](#)
 - [General Correspondence - Torres Strait Islands \(1922 - 1994\)](#)
 - [Miscellaneous Items and Correspondence - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander files \(1859 - 1997\)](#)
 - [Health & Home Affairs/Education Department Batch Files \[Correspondence\] - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander files \(1884 - 1970\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/aurukun-mission/>