

Bloomfield River Mission

1957 – 1980

Details

The Bloomfield River Mission was situated on the Bloomfield River in the Daintree region, north of Cooktown. It was on the site of the old Bloomfield River Mission (1887-1902). Run by the Lutheran Church, it opened in 1957. On 16 February 1980, the Bloomfield River Mission was officially renamed Wujal Wujal.

Bloomfield River Mission, was re-established in 1957 as an outpost of the Lutheran Mission at Hopevale, at the request of the State government. (Previously, there had been a Mission on the same site from 1887 to 1902). In 1957 there were between 118 and 130 Aboriginal people living in the Bloomfield River area in three camps: the main camp was known as either Thompson's Creek or Top Camp with 70 residents; there was a camp on the south bank of the river with 30 people; and the camp on the north side of the river had 18 people living there.

There was another locality on the Mission which had a grouping of more substantial buildings which was referred to as 'Mission Headquarters'. In the 1960s this was where the Manager's house was located, along with the boys' and girls' dormitories.

In December 1957, Lutheran Missionaries Clarence and Olive Hartwig and their two daughters moved to Bloomfield. Initially appointed to the position of Welfare Officer, Clarence Hartwig was appointed as Superintendent of the Bloomfield River Mission Reserve from 31 May 1958.

In 1959 the Church planned to erect a hall which would also act as a church and a girls' dormitory. Although the girls' dormitory was officially opened in December 1962, there were girls in residence at least as early as August 1962.

The girls' hostel and training centre housed an average of 30 single girls and expectant mothers. The dormitory building included sleeping quarters, kitchen, dining room and bathroom. The girls were being trained in cooking, general housework and needlework. By June 1963 the new dormitory had eighteen inmates, in March 1965 there were twenty-four girls in residence, and in July 1968 there were 25 in the dormitory.

A new boys' dormitory was completed in 1965. It was located about three miles from the main settlement on the original Bloomfield River Mission site. In 1966 the Mission authorities reported that a cottage for school boys was being erected at the Mission House. It is unclear how old the boys being housed here were. One account suggests boys aged twelve to sixteen were to be housed here, while another report suggests that the boys were aged between nine and thirteen. There were beds for about fourteen boys.

After the Church was called to account about the newly introduced dormitory system, the Church authorities were willing to concede that separating the children from their families 'broke' family life. However, they argued that sending children to live in the dormitories on the Mission, for the purpose of schooling and training, was at least better than sending them away to boarding school. If they remained on the Mission, at least they would be able to see their parents more frequently. The policy on the Bloomfield River Mission was that parents were allowed to see their daughters on Friday and Sunday afternoons. The dormitories were locked at night.

A boys' dormitory was opened in 1965, but by January 1970 it was recorded as being 'not in use'.

It is not clear when the girls' dormitory was closed. It was still operating in December 1967 and in July 1968, but by January 1970 it appears that the girl's dormitory was no longer being used.

Gallery



Thompson Creek settlement next to the Bloomfield River near Wujal Wujal Mission, ca. 1958



View of the manager's house at Wujal Wujal Mission, on the Bloomfield River



Wujal Wujal Mission from the water tower, ca. 1970

Description: This description was supplied with the photograph and included in the library catalogue: Wujal Wujal, previously Bloomfield Mission, from the water tank. View of housing and facilities. Fresh water brought from the Wujal Wujal waterfall on the Bloomfield River.



Young girls in front of the girls' dormitory at Wujal Wujal Mission, Queensland, ca. 1975

Description: This description was supplied with the photograph and included in the library catalogue: Pastor Hartwig came to the mission and with the assistance of Mr Griesharber, built this dormitory and other buildings at the mission.

More info

Chronology

- **Bloomfield River Mission (1957 – 1980)**
 - Wujal Wujal Mission (1980 - 1987)

Related Entries

Run by

- [The Lutheran Church of Australia \(1838 - current\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Lutheran Archives \(1838? - current\)](#)
Lutheran Archives holds some records for Bloomfield River Mission.
- [Bloomfield River Mission \(1887 - 1902\)](#)

Records

Records

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Records \(1880s - current\)](#)
 - [Correspondence Files - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs \(1916 - 1999\)](#)
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