

Umeewarra Mission Children's Home

1937 – 1964

Details

Umeewarra Mission Children's Home opened near Port Augusta in 1937. It was run by the Christian Brethren as a Home and school for Aboriginal children.. In the 1950s-60s between 50 and 70 children lived at the Home. In 1964 the Mission came under government control and was renamed Davenport Reserve.

The Open Brethren Assemblies of South Australia established Umeewarra Mission north of Port Augusta in 1937. The mission covered an area of some 200 acres (80 hectares). The main focus of the mission was a Children's Home and school for Aboriginal Children. Children were placed in the Home for various reasons, due to separation from family or for medical treatment. Other children attended the mission school while still living with their parents on the reserve.

In 1946 the original site of the home was flooded so buildings were relocated onto higher ground nearby. In the early years girls and boys were accommodated in different sides of one main building. During 1955-56 the main building was extended with the addition of a dining room, kitchen and laundry. Electrical power was also installed for the first time. Later separate buildings were erected for boys, senior girls and infants. During the mid fifties approximately fifty children lived in the home. The number had increased to seventy by the mid 1960s. As well as general and religious education, boys were trained in woodwork and engineering while girls learned needlework, cooking and other home crafts. One of the housemothers/teachers also taught art. Some selected children attended Primary School in Port Augusta. Other senior girls were sent away to train at Singleton Training College in New South Wales.

In 1964 the government took control of the mission and the area was renamed Davenport Reserve. The school was taken over by the Education Department. The Home continued to operate unofficially for several years. It was run by the former superintendent and his wife and continued to accommodate small numbers of Aboriginal children until they retired in 1995.

Umeewarra Mission Children's Home was mentioned (as Umewarra Mission) in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families.

National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

In 2021, the South Australian government has agreed to be a funder of last resort for this institution. This means that although the institution is now defunct, it is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and the government has agreed to pay the institution's share of costs of providing redress to a person (as long as the government is found to be equally responsible for the abuse a person experienced).

Gallery



Umeewarra Mission House Now Derelict

Description: This is an image of two of the mission houses at Umeewarra Mission. It shows two tin-roof, tin-clad buildings with boarded up windows. The photo has been taken from behind a chain-link fence. This image was published by ABC News in an article reporting on the decision to postpone the demolition of the buildings following community outcry. The description published by ABC News accompanying this image reads "A reprieve has been given to the old Aboriginal mission building Umeewarra on the outskirts of Port Augusta, 2011".

More info

Chronology

- **Umeewarra Mission Children's Home (1937 – 1964)**
 - Umeewarra Mission Home, Davenport Reserve (1964 - 1995)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Christian Brethren/Open Brethren Assemblies of South Australia](#)
Date: 1937 - 1964

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

Resources

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, [Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families](#), 1997. *Relevance:* Umeewarra Mission was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families
- Say, Steph, [Protests Continue Against Umeewarra Mission Demolition](#), The Transcontinental Port Augusta, 14 October 2014
- [Alan McWilliams and Ivy McWilliams interviewed by Karen George in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2001\)](#), 23 June 2001 - 25 June 2001

Records

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

Records

- [Records of Umeewarra Mission, Children's Home \(1937? - 1995?\)](#)
 - [Records of the Aborigines Advancement League \(1938 - 2008\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/umeewarra-mission-childrens-home/>