

Roelands Native Mission Farm

1938 – 1975

Other Names:

- Roelands Mission
- Roelands Native Farm

Details

Roelands Native Mission Farm was established in 1938 and was run by a council of management with Protestant church associations. It began as a farm for Aboriginal families but by 1941 admitted only Aboriginal children. At first, children under 8 were placed at Roelands, but older children were later placed there. There were 85 boys and girls at Roelands by 1946. Roelands Native Mission Farm was closed in 1975 and a new facility, called Roelands Village, was opened on the same site by the Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Inc.

Roelands Native Mission Farm, near Bunbury, was opened by Mr Albany Bell in 1938 on his Seven Hills property that had previously been the site of the Chandler Boys' Farm. Mr Bell was a well-known sponsor of child welfare activities in Western Australia and was the first president of the Native Welfare Council of WA.

It was envisioned that Roelands would be a self-sustaining farm for Aboriginal families. It has been reported that the wages at Roelands were poor and that people did not stay long at Roelands.

In 1941, Roelands changed its focus to become a home for 'part-Aboriginal' children, classified as 'quadroons', under 8 years old. The first children came from the Moore River Native Settlement in October 1941. By 1944, there were 26 children at Roelands and a 'part-Aboriginal kindergarten teacher' was appointed in 1945.

According to the State Solicitor's Office *Guide to Institutions*, Roelands was taken over by the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) in 1946 but it is unclear whether any formal change in management occurred, or whether there was an informal cooperation between the Roelands Native Mission Farm Council and the UAM:

At a meeting with the Council of the Roelands Native Mission Farm it was agreed that the two Missions should work in closest association ; our aims and methods and missionaries are indeed part of one work. Thus, Mr. Bell presided at our Annual Meetings; supplies of fruit on a generous scale have come to our stations from the Farm through the years; and we want it known that the two bodies work in full harmony. There are 85 boys and girls now cared for at Roelands; their graduates are doing well in such fields as electrical work, dairying, and preparation for nursing. Ten young folk were baptized into Christian fellowship this year. Schooling and farm training help to prepare the children for useful adult life in the white community. Report by the United Aborigines Mission in the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Native Affairs 1951 pp.22-23

In 1952, there were 78 children and young people at Roelands, which had an onsite primary school up to Grade 6. Older children from Roelands attended Bunbury High School, and, from around 1960, Harvey High School (Vicenti, 2008).

Until 1963, all children and young people at Roelands were under the guardianship of the head of the departments responsible for Aboriginal welfare.

It was common practice for the Commissioner for Native Affairs to report on the achievements of young people who had been to Roelands and the other mission schools and training centres. In 1952, for example, he wrote in the *Annual Report* that a girl who had been trained at Roelands was employed as a domestic in Government House and one of the boys was share-farming on a property at Yallingup. At this time, the curriculum included farming and vehicle maintenance and driving for boys and domestic science for girls, who were reportedly encouraged to continue with their studies so that they could enter nursing or other female professions. Any young people needing medical treatment were taken to Bunbury.

The Annual Reports of the Child Welfare Department show that the numbers at Roelands remained fairly consistent during the 1960s, with around 70 to 80 children or young people classified as 'native wards' living there each year.

From 1 July 1973, the Roelands Native Mission Farm was known as Roelands Homes Incorporated. It was affiliated with a group known as the Missionary Fellowship, described by Wilson & Robinson as a 'loose organisation consisting of Baptist, U.A.M, Roelands Mission, Wongutha Training Farm, the Australian Aborigines Evangelical Mission Board and the Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Centre'. At this time, there were a number of 'satellite' cottages associated with Roelands, including Wollaston in Bunbury and the Valima Girls' Hostel in Perth. It is likely that young people were transferred from Roelands to these cottages to take up employment or education opportunities in larger centres.

In 1975, the Roelands property was offered to the Churches of Christ Federal Aborigines Mission Board Inc. who purchased the site and reopened it as Roelands Village.

In 2013, the site – known as 'Roelands Mission' was being renovated to re-open as a 'place of healing'.

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

In 2021, the Western 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



Roelands Native Mission Farm, sign

Description: This image is published on a Facebook community page called Roelands Mission - Western Australia. The page has many photographs from Roelands Native Mission Farm.



Roelands Native Mission Farm

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More info

Related Entries

Ran

- [Wollaston \(1973 - 1995?\)](#)
Date: 1973 - 1975

Related Organisations

- [Chandler Boys' Farm \(1932 - 1937\)](#)
Roelands Native Mission Farm was located on the land at Seven Hills that had previously been used for the Chandler Boys' Farm.
- [Vailima Hostel \(1971? - 1977\)](#)
Date: 1971 - 1975
- [Carrolup Native Settlement \(1939 - 1951\)](#)
Carrolup Native Settlement sometimes transferred children to Roelands Native Mission Farm.
Date: 1939 - 1951
- [Roelands Village \(1975 - 1984\)](#)
Roelands Village was on land previously occupied by the Roelands Native Mission Farm, but the two organisations were not connected.

Resources

- Vincenti, Heather & Dickman, Deborah, [Too Many Tears: document transcripts](#), 2008
- [Allan Kickett interviewed by Marnie Richardson in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 26 January 2001
- [Allan Rees interviewed by Colleen Hattersley in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 25 August 2000
- [Doris Pilkington interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 6 June 2001 - 26 June 2001
- [Harold White interviewed by Marnie Richardson in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 24 December 2000
- [Heather Vicenti interviewed by Marnie Richardson in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 6 September 2001 - 23 November 2001
- [Peg Eaton interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(1999\)](#), 24 October 1999
- [Phillip James Prosser interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 22 September 2000
- [Ryan Kelly interviewed by John Maynard in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 1 April 2001
- [Syd Jackson interviewed by Helen Belle Curzon-Siggers in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 26 July 2000 - 7 September 2000
- [Interview with Albany Bell, by A.R. Wright](#), 1957
- Information Services, Department for Community Development, [Signposts: A Guide for Children and Young People in Care in WA from 1920](#), 2004. *Relevance*: pp.446-448
- [Roelands Mission, Western Australia](#), Facebook Group, 2013

Records

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

Records

- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)

- [Tuart Place Historical Photos Collection](#)
 - [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
 - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Administration Files - South West District Office \[S.D. Sequence\] \(1949 - 1976\)](#)
 - [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
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