

Moola Bulla Station

1910 – 1955

Other Names: • Moola Bulla Aboriginal Pastoral Settlement

Details

Moola Bulla was established as a government-run station near Wyndham. It was established to be self-supporting, training Aboriginal families to farm the land with European methods. Children were removed from other locations and placed at Moola Bulla, or were sent from there to institutions in Perth. Moola Bulla closed in 1955.

Moola Bulla Station was established on the Halls Creek Road, near Wyndham, Western Australia, in 1910 as a government-run pastoral station. Staff at Moola Bulla were provided by the Presbyterian Board of Missions and were responsible for the welfare, “morally and educationally”, of the children, as well as their housing. Children at Moola Bulla were under the guardianship of the head of the departments responsible for Aboriginal welfare.

According to the *Bringing Them Home* report (p.92), the Chief Protector of Aborigines, AO Neville ‘wanted to take control of the missions’ in the northwest and ‘turn them into self-supporting cattle stations.’ The report goes on to describe why Moola Bulla was seen as a ‘model’ for this approach:

It had opened in 1910 as a ration depot and government-run cattle station. It was intended to be an alternative to the more expensive option of imprisoning large numbers of Aboriginal people for cattle spearing as well as ‘raising beef to feed them and ... training men for work on the stations’ (Long 1970 page 192).

The *Bringing Them Home* report notes that ‘Indigenous families did not willingly move to these settlements’ (pages 92-93) and includes some examples of testimony:

When I was about twelve or thirteen years old I was taken to Moola Bulla. That’s where I lost my Aboriginal ways. The Police came one day from Halls Creek when they were going on patrol to Lansdowne and found me, a half-caste child. The manager ... took me down to Fitzroy Crossing to wait for the mail truck from Derby to take me to Moola Bulla. When [the manager’s wife] told my people, mum and dad, that they were taking me to Fitzroy Crossing for a trip, they told her ‘you make sure you bring her back’. They did not know that I would never see them again. Quoted by Kimberley Land Council submission 345 on page 66.

The welfare just grabbed you where they found you. They’d take them in threes and fours, whatever. The Native Welfare blokes used to come to every station and see where our half caste kids were. They used to drive right down to Port Hedland. Our people would hide us, paint us with charcoal. I was taken to Moola Bulla. The Welfare bloke ... sent his son ... to pick up me and [...]. We were about 5-6 years old, and my mother was allowed to come with us in the manager’s car and then he took her away. Quoted by Kimberley

Bringing Them Home (pages 95-96) shows that the policy of assimilation also influenced the placement of children at Moola Bulla:

Some kids who were brought to Moola Bulla and who were too white would be sent to Sister Kate's in Perth and some of them who were too dark for Sister Kate's were sent to Moola Bulla. There was a half-caste boy who was at Moola Bulla, his mother was half-caste and his father white, and I suppose they couldn't bear to see him down the camp with all these Aboriginal people so they sent him to Sister Kate's. Confidential evidence 814, Western Australia.

On 21 January 1955, Moola Bulla was transferred from the Department of Aboriginal Welfare to the Lands Department, who then sold it to a private buyer, at which time the residents were transferred to other missions. Haebich (2000) states that most children were transferred to Beagle Bay, although children were also stated to have been sent to the United Aborigines Missions at Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek. A photograph in the collection of the State Library of Western Australia shows a large group of children who were transferred from Moola Bulla to Fitzroy Crossing, and the caption describes "truckloads" of children making the journey.

Gallery



Moola Bulla, a government cattle station near Halls Creek Western Australia
[picture] / [John Flynn?].

Description: This is a digitised copy of a photograph of buildings and grounds of Moola Bulla. The photograph has the inscription: "Moola Bulla 20 miles out from Halls Creek. Government cattle station run in the interests of the Abo[rigin]e[s] training and taught" written in pencil on reverse. "Printed by Harringtons" is also stamped on reverse. The photo is part of the Australian Inland Mission collection and is held by the National Library of Australia, the original has small tears at the right edge.



Moola Bulla Station homestead, 1917

Description: This is a photograph of the homestead at Moola Bulla Station, taken in 1917. It shows a single-storey tin-roofed cottage. Several people can be seen on the verandahs surrounding the house, and standing in front of it. This photograph is one of nine taken by John Joseph Holland at Moola Bulla Station in 1917 that are held by the State Library of Western Australia.



Arrival of Moola Bulla children at the Fitzroy Crossing Mission

Description: This photograph shows a large group of Aboriginal children posing for a photograph in front of some buildings with two white adults. The children are newly arrived at Fitzroy Crossing Mission from Moola Bulla station. This photo was taken by teacher W. H. Rourke, and published in his memoir *My Way*. The caption published alongside the photo by the State Library of Western Australia states:

"In 1955, the state government sold Moola Bulla Station to Queensland pastoralist Allan Goldman for £100,000. Goldman gave the 200 Aboriginal residents of the station 24 hours to leave, and Moola Bulla sent truckloads of them to United Aborigines Mission at Fitzroy Crossing. (Wikipedia 2021). Rourke describes the inadequate conditions the over 50 school aged children lived and went to school in at Fitzroy Crossing Mission which was not prepared for the exodus from Moola Bulla."



Front of the completed single girls quarters on Moola Bulla Station

Description: This is a photograph of the single girls living quarters at Moola Bulla Station. It shows a long semi-circular shaped tin hut situated behind a wire fence. A child (Robyn Johnson, the photographer's daughter) stands in the foreground, looking at the hut. This photo was published in Bob Johnson's memoir *Itchy feet : the life and travels of 'Happy Bob'*.



Moola Bulla Station, 1953

Description: This is a photograph of Moola Bulla Station and its surrounding area. It is a landscape photo, showing station buildings in the distance on low ground between two hills. This photo was published in Bob Johnson's memoir *Itchy feet : the life and travels of 'Happy Bob'*.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department of Native Affairs, State of Western Australia \(1936 - 1954\)](#)
- [Department of Aborigines and Fisheries, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1909 - 1 January 1920\)](#)
- [Fisheries Department, State of Western Australia \(1920 - 1964\)](#)
- [Aborigines Department, State of Western Australia \(1926 - 1936\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Beagle Bay Mission \(1895 - 1976\)](#)
When Moola Bulla Station closed, many of the children were transferred to Beagle Bay Mission.
Date: 1955 -
- [Halls Creek Mission \(1943? - 1960\)](#)
When Moola Bulla Station closed, some people were transferred to the Halls Creek Mission.
Date: 1955 -
- [Fitzroy Crossing Mission \(1952 - 1987\)](#)
When Moola Bulla closed, some people were transferred to the Fitzroy Crossing Mission that was run by the United Aborigines Mission.

Date: 1955 -

Resources

- Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation, [Stolen Generations' Testimonies](#), 2009. *Relevance*: See testimonies of Frank Byrne, Nita Marshall, Keith Kitchener, Johnny Ross, Jane Butters and Ernie Sarah
- [AU WA A65 - Fisheries Department \[2\]](#), State Records Office of Western Australia - Organisations & People, 2015
- [Govt. to close native station](#), Sunday Times, 13 June 1954
- [The Aborigines Report](#), Western Mail, 21 March 1935. *Relevance*: The Moseley Royal Commission (1935) made recommendations in relation to conditions and practices at Moola Bulla
- Aborigines Department, Western Australia, [Collection of typed copies of annual and other reports by and to the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia dated 1910 and 1911](#), 1910 - 1911
- Neate, Beth, [Now and Then: Moola Bulla Station](#), 2012
- William H. Rourke, *My Way: W. H. (Bill) Rourke's 50 years adventure in education*, 1980

Records

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

Records

- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
 - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Files - Department of Aborigines and Fisheries \(1909 - 1920\)](#)
 - [Files \(Moola Bulla Station\) \(1914 - 1926\)](#)
 - [Administration Files - Northern District Office \[N.D.G Sequence\] \(1950 - 1974\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/moola-bulla-station/>