

# New Norcia Mission

1848 – 1974

## Details

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New Norcia Mission is the collective name for St Mary's Mission (1848-1974) for boys and St Joseph's Native School and Orphanage (1861-1974) for girls. These institutions were run by Benedictine monks and nuns until they closed in 1974.

New Norcia Mission was the collective name for the St Mary's Mission (from 1848) and the St Joseph's Native School and Orphanage (from 1861) which were 'segregated' and run as separate institutions by the Benedictine monks and nuns at New Norcia, 120 kilometres north of Perth, Western Australia. Schooling was focused on practical skills and young people worked at the Mission after school age.

A child endowment officer visiting New Norcia in 1943 gave a description of the mission and its aims. He stated that the mission was designed to be a "permanent home or niche" for the children living there, and that following their training they would be "automatically absorbed into the economy". In his view this training was the "only method of effectively using the native", otherwise they "revert to their old habits" (NAA, A885 B202).

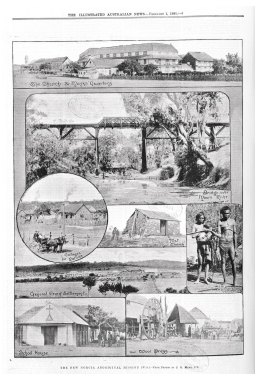
The New Norcia Mission was scheduled under the 'Industrial Schools Act 1874', giving the Abbot 'complete control' over the children on the mission.

In 1974, with a 'new appreciation of the importance of Aboriginal family and culture' the Mission was closed.

In 2001, former residents of New Norcia organised a reunion. An account of that reunion is given by Massam, and indicates the complexity of relationships between people who grew up in out of home care and the people and institutions that accommodated them:

*The reunion was about bonds between people, not structures. It brought together people who had publicly and vehemently criticised the Sisters and the institutions at New Norcia with others who had spent their savings to finance a return. Most often the women and men who gathered could speak in more than one voice, from more than one standpoint about their childhood. Women who had fought all their lives against the threat that their own children might end up in care brought grandchildren to town, proud and keen that the next generation might meet 'the ladies who looked after Nanna'. Again and again, the reunion was about relationships that had persisted through dreadful, and sometimes wonderful, experiences and held firm over many years. That There was Love in This Home: The Benedictine Missionary Sisters at New Norcia p.211*

## Gallery



## The New Norcia Aboriginal Mission (W.A.)

**Description:** This is a digital copy of a photograph held by the State Library of Victoria. It shows a collection of scenes from the New Norcia Mission which were published in 1895. Images include the church & monk's quarters, a bridge over the Moore River, cottages, the first church, a man and woman with a baby holding spears, a general view of New Norcia, the school house, and the wool press.



## View over New Norcia, 1923

**Description:** This is a photograph of the Benedictine Mission site at New Norcia. The photo was taken overlooking crops and gardens, with mission buildings including the church, convent, and monastery in the background. On the far left of the photo the St Joseph's Orphanage/St Joseph's College, which housed Aboriginal girls, is visible. St Mary's School, which housed Aboriginal boys, is visible on the far right of the photo. This photo is part of a collection of 29 photographs of New Norcia Mission taken by Ernest Lund Mitchell in the early 1920s.

# More info

## Related Entries

### Run by

- [Benedictines, New Norcia \(c. 1846 - current\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [St Mary's Mission, New Norcia \(1848 - 1974\)](#)  
St Mary's Mission and St Joseph's Native School and Orphanage (which housed girls) were both part of the New Norcia Mission.
- [St Joseph's Native School and Orphanage, New Norcia \(1861 - 1974\)](#)  
St Joseph's Native School and Orphanage (which housed Aboriginal girls) and St Mary's Mission (which housed Aboriginal boys) were known as the New Norcia Mission.

## Resources

- [The Aborigines Question. Evidence Taken by Dr. Roth](#), Western Mail, 25 February 1905
- Battye, JS, [The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia \(1912\)](#), 1912. *Relevance:* p.61
- Hodson, A. Bruce and Taylor, Ian, *New Norcia voices*, 2008
- [Some Views of New Norcia, Old and New](#), Western Mail, 29 December 1906
- [New Norcia Mission for Aborigines](#), Western Mail, 19 December 1908
- [New Norcia Mission](#), Western Mail, 16 May 1946
- [No heading \[New Norcia\]](#), Western Mail, 10 June 1905
- [The New Norcia Aboriginal Football Team](#), Sunday Times, 26 July 1925
- Rijavec, Frank, *The habits of New Norcia*, 2000
- [Charitable Institutions Bill Second Reading \[Hansard p13-14\]](#), Hansard Archive 1870 to 1995, 7 July 1874. *Relevance:* New Norcia was praised during the second reading of the Bill (p.13)
- Valadian, Margaret, *Report by Margaret Valadian*, 1968
- Piesse, Emily, ['We were little slaves': Child abuse survivors share stories ahead of royal commission findings](#), ABC News, 2017

# Records

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

## Records

- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
  - [New Norcia Archives \(1846 - current\)](#)
  - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
  - [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
  - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
  - [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
  - [Files - Department of Aborigines and Fisheries \(1909 - 1920\)](#)
  - [Files - General \[Health Department\] \(1899 - 1987\)](#)
  - [Files \(Aboriginal Matters\) - Department of the North West \[1\] \(1915 - 1949\)](#)
  - [Files - Chief Protector of Aborigines \(1898 - 1908\)](#)
  - [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
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