

Moore River Native Settlement

1918 – 1951

Other Names: • Moore River Aboriginal Settlement

Details

The Moore River Native Settlement was established by the government of Western Australia in 1918. Aboriginal children of all ages from all over the State were placed there. In 1951, the government transferred management to the Methodist Overseas Mission who opened Mogumber on the same site.

The Moore River Native Settlement was established by the Government of Western Australia in 1918. The 'Aborigines Act 1905' enabled children who were 'classified as Aboriginal' to be sent there, involuntarily, from all over the State.

The children and young people at Moore River were under the guardianship of the heads of the government departments responsible for Aboriginal welfare.

Over-crowding, disease and 'grossly inadequate health and sanitary facilities' persisted at Moore River throughout its existence. In 2018, research by the Aboriginal History WA unit showed that most of the 374 people who died at Moore River were children and many succumbed to treatable respiratory and infectious diseases.

Escapes were common, particularly among children trying to get back to family. In 1923, a corrugated iron punishment shed, known as 'the Boob' was built at Moore River.

In 1949, the school at Moore River closed and school-age children were transferred to other missions according to their religious denominations.

On 18 August 1951, the Moore River Native Settlement was closed and was handed over 'in toto' by the Department of Native Affairs to the Methodist Overseas Mission. It reopened as Mogumber, under the management of the Methodist Overseas Mission.

The death rate at Moore River reduced markedly after the government ceded control to the Mogumber Methodist Mission.

In 1974, the lands were transferred to the Aboriginal Lands Trust of WA.

Moore River Native Settlement was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families.

Gallery



Little girls, 1936

Description: This is a digitised copy of a negative and is part of the Aboriginal people of Western Australia series held at the State Library of Western Australia. The images shows girls at the Moore River Native Settlement, in 1936. The paper dresses were made by Sister Eileen Heath, possibly for a concert.



Children with carer, 193-?

Description: This is a digitised copy of a negative and is part of the Aboriginal people of Western Australia series held at the State Library of Western Australia. The images shows girls with a carer or teacher at the Moore River Native Settlement, in the 1930s.



Boys under a tree, 193-?

Description: This is a digitised copy of a negative and is part of the Aboriginal people of Western Australia series held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows a group of boys sitting under a tree at the Moore River Native Settlement, in the 1930s



'The Boob' - 24 July 1936

Description: This is a photograph of 'The Boob' at Moore River Native Settlement/Mogumber . 'The Boob' was the colloquial name for the gaol or lock-up, where residents, including children, were confined as punishment. The photo shows 10 people standing in front of a medium-sized window-less building made out of corrugated metal sheets and timber. There is one tree next to the building, but the structure is otherwise in full sun. This photo is on page 80 of album 8 of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation collection of photographs relating to the Moore River Native Settlement, which is held by the State Library of Western Australia.



Kindergarten Building - Moore River Native Settlement

Description: This is a photograph of the kindergarten building at Moore River Native Settlement in around 1939. It shows a wide single-storey building with two wings and a central verandah. This photo is on page 67 of album 1 of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation collection of photographs relating to the Moore River Native Settlement, which is held by the State Library of Western Australia.



Kindergarten Dormitory

Description: This is a photograph of the dormitory within the Moore River kindergarten. It shows a long room with over 20 cots lining the walls. There is a woman holding a young Aboriginal child standing at the far end of the room. This photo is on page 103 of album 8 of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation collection of photographs relating to the Moore River Native Settlement, which is held by the State Library of Western Australia.



Moore River Hospital

Description: This is a photograph of the hospital at Moore River. It shows three adult women, a young child, and a nursing sister standing on the verandah of a medium-sized stone building. This photo is on page 10 of album 8 of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation collection of photographs relating to the Moore River Native Settlement, which is held by the State Library of Western Australia.



The residents at the Moore River Settlement

Description: This is a group photograph of the residents and staff at Moore River Native Settlement. It shows over 100 adults and children posed in front of the dining hall at the Moore River. This photo is on page 91 of album 2 of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation collection of photographs relating to the Moore River Native Settlement, which is held by the State Library of Western Australia.



The School

Description: This is a photo of the schoolhouse and church at Moore River Native Settlement. It shows a timber building with a steep pitched roof and crucifixes at each end. There are 12 children visibly standing at the front of the building. This photo is on page 15 of album 1 of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation collection of photographs relating to the Moore River Native Settlement, which is held by the State Library of Western Australia.

More info

Chronology

- **Moore River Native Settlement (1918 – 1951)**
 - Mogumber (1951 - 1974)
 - Mogumber Training Centre (1974 - 1980)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department of Native Affairs, State of Western Australia \(1936 - 1954\)](#)
Date: 1936 - 1951
- [Department of Aborigines and Fisheries, State of Western Australia \(1 January 1909 - 1 January 1920\)](#)
Date: 1918 - 1920

Related Events

- [Stolen Wages Taskforce, Western Australia \(May 2007 - June 2008\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Wandering Mission \(1944 - 1979\)](#)
When the Moore River Native Settlement closed, some children were sent to Wandering Mission.
Date: 1951 -
- [State Library of Western Australia \(c. 1889 - current\)](#)
The State Library of Western Australia holds photographs and historical information about the Moore River Native Settlement.
- [Children's Cottage Home \(26 August 1933 - July 1935\)](#)
Children from the Moore River Native Settlement were sent to Sister Kate Clutterbuck's Children's Cottage Home.
Date: 1933 - 1934
- [Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home \(1934 - 1980\)](#)
Children were transferred to Sister Kate's Children's Cottage from Moore River Native Settlement.
Date: 1934 - 1951
- [Carrolup \(1915 - 1922\)](#)
When Carrolup closed in 1922, all residents were sent to the Moore River Native Settlement.
Date: 1922 -
- [Carrolup Native Settlement \(1939 - 1951\)](#)
Moore River Native Settlement sometimes transferred children to Carrolup Native Settlement
Date: 1939 - 1951
- [East Perth Girls' Home \(1931 - 1952\)](#)
Young women from the Moore River Settlement were among the first residents of the East Perth Half-Caste Girls' Home.
Date: 1931 -

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:* Moore River Native Settlement was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families. Moore River Native Settlement was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Indigenous children removed from their families
- Vincenti, Heather & Dickman, Deborah, [Too Many Tears: document transcripts](#), 2008
- Vincenti, Heather; Dickman, Deborah, *Too Many Tears: an autobiographical account of stolen generations*, 2008
- [Doris Pilkington interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 6 June 2001 - 26 June 2001
- [Eileen Heath interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 30 November 2000 - 8 December 2000
- [Harold White interviewed by Marnie Richardson in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2000\)](#), 24 December 2000
- [Heather Vincenti interviewed by Marnie Richardson in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 6 September 2001 - 23 November 2001
- [Ken Lindley interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(1999\)](#), 27 November 1999
- [Leonard Ogilvie interviewed by John Bannister in the Bringing them home oral history project \(2001\)](#), 31 May 2001
- [Interview with Isobel Bropho \[interviewed by R. Jamieson\]](#), 1989
- [Interview with Phyllis Mippy, by Annette Roberts](#), 7 June 1990
- [Interview with Wilgah O'Neill, by Annette Roberts](#), 1995
- [Interview with John Neville, by Anna Haebich](#), 1981
- Information Services, Department for Community Development, [Signposts: A Guide for Children and Young People in Care in WA from 1920](#), 2004. *Relevance:* Mogumber
- State Records Office of Western Australia, of Western Australia, [An Index to the Chief Protector of Aborigines Files, 1898 -1908](#), 1998
- Pilkington, Doris (Nugi Garimara), *Follow the Rabbit-proof Fence*, 1996

- [AU WA A65 - Fisheries Department \[2\]](#), State Records Office of Western Australia - Organisations & People, 2015
- [The Aborigines Report](#), Western Mail, 21 March 1935. *Relevance:* The Moseley Royal Commission (1935) made recommendations in relation to conditions and practices at the Moore River Native Settlement
- Whittington, Vera, *Sister Kate: a life dedicated to children in need of care*, 1999
- Noyce, Phillip, *Rabbit-proof fence*, 2002
- Maushart, Susan, *Sort of a place like home : remembering the Moore River Native Settlement*, 1993
- [Moore River Native Settlement Burial Register](#), 2018

Records

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

Records

- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs \[predecessors\], Records \(1886 - 2004\)](#)
 - [Records of Mogumber Methodist Mission, Methodist Church \(1918 - 1985\)](#)
 - [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
 - [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
 - [Files \(Aboriginal matters\) - Chief Secretary's Department \(1916 - 1927\)](#)
 - [Personal Cards \(1920 - 1948\)](#)
 - [Moore River Native Settlement Medical Officer Letters \(1927 - 1944\)](#)
 - [Files \(Aboriginal Matters\) - Department of the North West \[1\] \(1915 - 1949\)](#)
 - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation collection of photographs relating to the Moore River Native Settlement \(1933 - 1992\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/moore-river-native-settlement/>