

Rose River Mission

1952 – 1978

Other Names: • Numbulwar Mission

Details

Rose River Mission, also known as Numbulwar Mission, was established by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) on the East Coast of Arnhem Land in 1952. It was the fourth of five missions run in the Northern Territory by the CMS. A school for Aboriginal children was run at the Mission. In 1978 a Community Council took over administrative control of the settlement and it ceased to operate as a Mission.

Rose River Mission, also known as Numbulwar Mission, was established as a mission settlement by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1952 on the East Coast of Arnhem Land at the mouth of the Rose River between Caledon Bay and the Roper River Estuary. The site was almost directly opposite the Groote Eylandt Mission at Angurugu on Groote Eylandt and was the fourth of five Missions in the Northern Territory run by the CMS.

The first permanent structures were built at the Mission during late 1952. It took two years to construct an airstrip which opened in 1954. In 1955/56 houses for the superintendent and the nursing sister had been built and a hospital unit and school were under construction. When the school started to operate in 1956, 41 Aboriginal children including 25 boys and 16 girls, attended in its first year. By 1972 the number of children attending the school had increased to 130.

In the late 1950s a diving school operated at Rose River Mission. Young men from the Groote Eylandt Mission and Umbakumba joined students from Rose River to train in the use of diving equipment. Quarters for young single men were being constructed at this time.

According to a 1958/59 Government report the population of the Mission in June of 1959 was 224 and this included 102 children.

The Mission formed a community association in 1962 to take responsibility for managing the township. A town council was formed in 1973 and the town became an Aboriginal community-controlled settlement, although the CMS retained much of the administrative control. The council became the Numbulwar Numburindi Community Council in 1976, and two years later, in 1978, the CMS handed over all administrative control of Numbulwar and it ceased to operate as a Mission.

Gallery



Anne, Cecily and Colin

Description: This image shows staff and children on steps of the hospital in Rose River Mission, Numbulwar.



Constructing jetty

Description: The description states: Constructing jetty at Rose river Mission, Numbulwar.



Rose River entrance Mission Buildings, 1957

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Run by

- [Church Missionary Society of Australia \(1916 - current\)](#)

Resources

- Harris, John, *We wish we'd done more : Ninety years of CMS and Aboriginal Issues in North Australia*, 1998

Records

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- [Church Missionary Society of Australia, North Australia Committee \(1907 - 1989\)](#)
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