

# Hermannsburg Mission

1877 – 1982

**Other Names:**

- Finke River Mission Station
- Finke River Mission

## Details

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The Hermannsburg Mission was established on the banks of the Finke River by Lutheran missionaries from the Hermannsburg Missionary Society and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia in 1877. It was the last and longest-running Mission run by the Lutheran Church in Australia.

A School House was built at the Mission in 1896 and separate dormitories for boys and girls erected during the period 1894-1904. Children were rewarded for attending school via the distribution of rations. Missionaries learned the Arrente language and translated much of their spiritual and other educational materials, to ensure that their teachings were understood.

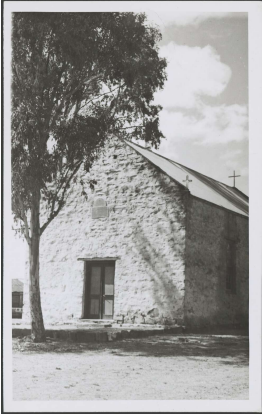
In the 1930s the Mission fully maintained approximately 100 children. By 1952 this had risen to 170 children.

After the establishment of government settlements at [Haasts Bluff](#), [Areyonga](#) and later, [Papunya](#), the term “Finke River Mission” was often used to refer to all these stations collectively, including Hermannsburg. In 2014, the Lutheran Church of Australia retrospectively used the term Finke River Mission to refer to all Lutheran Missionary activity in the Northern Territory from 1877 onwards. As well as Hermannsburg, the missions at Haast’s Bluff and Papunya were under the control of the Finke River Mission Board (source: correspondence with Lutheran Archives, August 2019).

Hermannsburg Mission operated under Lutheran control until 1982 when the land was finally returned to the local Arrente people. The Hermannsburg Historic Precinct was included on the National Heritage List on 13 April 2006. The database record for the Precinct provides a detailed history of the Mission.

The buildings that were the School House and boys’ dormitory were still standing in 2014. The girls’ dormitory was destroyed by fire in 1954.

## Gallery



**School house, Hermannsburg Mission, Finke River, Northern Territory, 1947**  
[picture]

**Description:** This image shows the school house at the Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission on the Finke River.



**Hermannsburg Mission**

**Description:** This image shows the Hermannsburg Mission former boys' dormitory and school house.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

**Run by**

- [The Lutheran Church of Australia \(1838 - current\)](#)

**Related Organisations**

- [Haasts Bluff Native Settlement \(1940s - 1959\)](#)  
Hermannsburg Mission and its outposts at Haast's Bluff, Areyonga and Papunya Native Settlements were often referred to as the Finke River Mission
- [Papunya Native Settlement \(1958 - 1978\)](#)  
Missionaries from the Hermannsburg Mission provided church and welfare services at Papunya Native Settlement. Hermannsburg Mission and its outposts at Haast's Bluff, Areyonga and Papunya Native Settlements were often referred to as the Finke River Mission.
- [Kormilda College \(1967 - 2017\)](#)  
Some of the first students to Kormilda College came from Hermannsburg.  
Date: 1968 -
- [Lutheran Mission Block, Alice Springs \(1963 - 1982\)](#)  
The Lutheran Mission Block was established by missionaries from the Hermannsburg Mission
- [Areyonga Native Settlement \(1920s - 1990\)](#)  
Hermannsburg Mission and its outposts at Haast's Bluff, Areyonga and Papunya Native Settlements were often referred to as the Finke River Mission

### Resources

- Love, J. R. B., [The Aborigines : their present condition as seen in northern South Australia, the Northern Territory, north-west Australia and western Queensland](#), 1915
- Judd, Barry and Katherine Ellinghaus, *Enlightened Aboriginal Futures*, 2024
- Lutheran Church of Australia, [Finke River Mission 135th Anniversary](#), Lutheran Church of Australia, 2010

## Records

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

## Records

- [Records held by the Lutheran Archives \(1838 - current\)](#)
  - [Family database for Aboriginal Lutherans of Central Australia \(1900s - 1980s\)](#)
  - [Copies of review inspection reports - Hermannsburg \[Hermannsburg\], Oenpelli, Yirrkala, Elcho Island, Groote Eylandt, Finke River, Roper River, Mililingimbi and Port Keats \(1959 - 1959\)](#)
  - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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