

# Elcho Island Mission

1942 – 1974?

**Other Names:** • Galiwinku

## Details

---

Elcho Island Mission was opened by the Methodist Overseas Mission in 1942 on Elcho Island when missionaries and residents of Milingimbi Mission moved to Elcho Island to take refuge from Japanese bombing during World War II. A school was operating at the Mission in the 1950s. It appears the Mission did not operate Mission dormitories. Self government was established at Elcho Island Mission in the mid 1970s and it ceased to operate as a Mission. The town located at the Mission site is known as Galiwin'ku.

The Elcho Island Mission was first established by the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia in 1921. The Island is 550 km north-east of Darwin and is a part of the Wessel Island Group. In 1923 the Naphtha Petroleum Company began drilling for oil on the island and the Mission was closed. A new Mission was then established at Milingimbi Island.

In 1942 the Elcho Island Mission was re-opened when many people from Milingimbi Mission transferred to Elcho Island to take refuge from Japanese bombing during World War II.

In 1950 a review report listed the numbers of people at the Elcho Island Mission:

*The population of the Elcho Island sphere of influence is about 400 including 180 children; of these the more or less regular visitors to the Mission are 85 men, 90 women, 160 children...the average number of children on the Mission for January-February who were receiving Child Endowment was about 80.*

At this time a school was run at the Mission by Mrs Shepherdson, the wife of the Superintendent, and Sister Langdon. Neither were trained teachers. By 1959, however, a trained teacher was working at the school and the population of the Mission was stated to include 236 adults and 209 children.

It appears that the Mission did not operate any Mission dormitories.

In the mid 1970s self government was established at Elcho Island Mission and it ceased to operate as a Mission. The town located at the Mission site is known as Galiwin'ku and in 2008 it became part of the East Arnhem Shire Council.

## Gallery



### Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples - Reserves, missions and homeland centres - Education - New school building on Elcho Island Settlement NT

**Description:** This image is of a new school building on Elcho Island Methodist Mission.



### Buildings on Elcho Island, Northern Territory, 1958?

**Description:** This image shows people standing in front of buildings at Elcho Island Mission. Part of the Australian Information Service collection.



### Aerial view of bay and Methodist Mission settlement, Elcho Island, Northern Territory, 1958?

**Description:** This image is part of the Australian Information Service collection.



### Women and children outside a house on Elcho Island, Northern Territory, 1958?

**Description:** This image is part of the Australian Information Service collection.

## More info

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Methodist Overseas Mission \(c. 1930 - 1980\)](#)

The Methodist Overseas Mission ran the Elcho Island Mission when it was re-established in 1942.  
Date: 1942s - 1974?

#### Related Organisations

- [Kormilda College \(1967 - 2017\)](#)

Some of the first students to enrol at Kormilda College came from the Elcho Island Mission.  
Date: 1968 -

- [Elcho Island Mission \(1921 - 1923\)](#)

The original Elcho Island Mission was closed in 1923 and then re-opened in 1942.

### Other Resources



**Title:** Goulburn & Elcho Island Mission Review Reports - Northern Territory (1923-1952)

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 1923 - 1952

[Details](#)

## Records

### Records held by other organisations

- [Records of the Uniting Church in Australia, Northern Synod \(1940 - 1986\)](#)
- [Records of the Methodist Church of Australasia, Department of Overseas Missions \(1830 - 1980\)](#)
- [Copies of review inspection reports - Hermannsberg \[Hermannsburg\], Oenpelli, Yirrkala, Elcho Island, Groote Eylandt, Finke River, Roper River, Milingimbi and Port Keats \(1959 - 1959\)](#)
- [Goulburn & Elcho Island Mission Review Reports - Northern Territory \(1923 - 1952\)](#)
- [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)

Item B527 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to Elcho Island Mission

---

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/elcho-island-mission/>