

Somerville Cottage Homes

1968 – 1980s

Other Names:

- Child Care Somerville Homes
- Somerville Homes
- Somerville Cottages

Details

Somerville Cottage Homes was established in 1968 and comprised six suburban cottages in the suburbs of Darwin. The cottages were run by Somerville Homes, an organization formed by the United Church in Northern Australia and the Methodist Overseas Mission. Each cottage accommodated up to eight children in a family group setting under the supervision of cottage parents. Some of the cottages continued to operate into the late 1970s to early 1980s.

The establishment of cottage homes in Darwin for children from the Croker Island Mission was discussed from as early as the mid 1960s. From 1967 the government provided assistance to the Methodist Overseas Mission for the building of a number of new cottage homes in the suburbs of Darwin. Somerville Homes Incorporated was established by the United Church in Northern Australia in conjunction with the Methodist Overseas Mission to run the cottages as family group homes, initially for children from Croker Island. The Homes and the organization were named after Margaret Somerville, who led the evacuation of children from Croker Island Mission to the mainland during World War II.

According to the 1967-68 Northern Territory Report six cottages were to be established. Children were transferred to Darwin when the Croker Island Mission closed in 1968. Each cottage was run as a family group home with cottage parents. The cottage parents reported to a superintendent who was responsible for the overall administration of the Homes and was a member of the Somerville Homes Board. The cottages were generally known by their street names, although an undated brochure, possibly from the late 1960s, shows that each was also named after cottages on Croker Island.

Minutes of the Somerville Homes Council, from 1968, show that members were hoping that the majority of children would 'go south' for the Christmas holidays. This may have been in response to the fact that the cottages were still being finalized. Available records suggest that the first cottage opened in early 1969 in Chapman Road, Rapid Creek. By July 1969 the Minutes note that 41 children were accommodated in three cottages. The other two cottages were located in Henry Street, Stuart Park and Trower Road, Rapid Creek.

By 1971, after the opening of Luxton Street Cottage in Stuart Park and Clarke Crescent Cottage in Rapid Creek, Somerville Cottage Homes was caring for a total of 38 children across five cottages. In 1972 a sixth cottage was opened in Fox Crescent, Rapid Creek. In 1971 each of the cottages was accommodating up to eight children between the ages of 4 and 16.

All of the cottages were under the control of Somerville Homes which had been established in the mid 1960s and became Somerville Homes Incorporated in 1971. The Board of Somerville Homes reported to the Uniting Church, Northern Synod. In 1980 the controlling body for the Cottage Homes was renamed Somerville Community Services reflecting the organisation's move into other community services including caring for children with disabilities.

A number of the six original cottage homes were damaged during Cyclone Tracey in 1974. As a result, two of the cottages were closed. Research suggests that the other cottages continued to operate into the later 1970s and early 1980s.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Somerville Homes \(1965 - 1981\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Croker Island Mission \(1940 - 1968\)](#)
Many children from the Croker Island Mission were transferred to the Somerville Cottage Homes in Darwin.
- [Fox Crescent Cottage \(1972 - 1974\)](#)
- [Trower Road Cottage, Somerville Homes Inc \(1969 - 1976\)](#)
- [Chapman Road Cottage \(1969 - 1976\)](#)
Chapman Road Cottage was one of six Somerville Cottage Homes
- [Henry Street Cottage, Somerville Homes Inc \(1969 - 1981\)](#)
Henry Street Cottage was one of six Somerville Cottage Homes
- [Luxton Street Cottage, Somerville Homes Inc \(1971 - 1981\)](#)
- [Clarke Crescent Cottage, Somerville Homes Inc \(1971 - 1981\)](#)
Clarke Crescent Cottage was one of six Somerville Cottage Homes
- [Chapman Road Remand Home \(1976? - 1979\)](#)
Chapman Road Remand Home took over one of the properties at Chapman Road, Rapid Creek, that formed Somerville Cottage Homes.
Date: 1976? - 1979

Resources

- [Margaret Somerville interviewed by Franks Heimans in the Bringing Them Home Oral History Project \(2001\)](#), 27 March 2001

Records

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

Records

- [Essington House, reports on juveniles \(1969 - 1974\)](#)
- [General Administration Files, Annual Single number series with "N" prefix, Department of Community Development](#)
- [Records relating to child care, Somerville Homes, Darwin \(1964 - 1979\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/somerville-cottage-homes/>