

Benevolent Institution for Aboriginal Children

1847 – 1860?

Other Names:

- St Mary's School for Aborigines
- Native Girls Institution
- Benevolent Institution
- Benevolent Institution for Children
- Saint Francis Xavier Benevolent Institution for Aboriginal Girls

Details

The Benevolent Institution for Aboriginal Children was opened in April 1847 by the Sisters of Mercy, Perth Congregation as a Home for Indigenous children or non-Indigenous children considered to be orphaned or destitute. It was a small institution and soon became only for girls. In 1849, a small cottage was built, and 12 girls were recorded as living there in December of that year. By 1854 the number of children in residence reduced to 10. In 1855, the institution was visited, and reports state that along with traditional school subjects, the girls were also given housewifery training. The Institution is believed to have closed around 1860 when the Sisters of Mercy determined there was less need for an institution for Indigenous girls within Perth due to the missions being established across Western Australia.

In 1847, Mother Ursula Frayne sent a letter to Queen Victoria asking for money to build a home for Aboriginal children as she said:

...to end their wandering and...their ignorance of [Christ]...we plead on behalf of Your Majesty's European and Native subjects of Western Australia. In their name we beg a site on which to raise the necessary building, a portion of land fit for cultivation, and some [monetary] assistance towards accomplishing the projects we have in view. (McLay 1992, p 62).

The Benevolent Institution was funded partly by the Sisters of Mercy and partly by voluntary contributions from local individuals. Frayne also sought funding for the Benevolent Institution in the form of a government grant in 1853.

Children's names were anglicised, with two given names provided, and a first name of Mary commonly used.

More info

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- [Sisters of Mercy, Perth Congregation \(1846 - 2011\)](#)

Records

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Records

- [Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea Perth Archives \(1847 - 1991\)](#)
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