

Koonibba Children's Home

1913 – 1963

Other Names: • Koonibba Lutheran Children's Home

Details

Koonibba Children's Home was established by the Lutheran Church near Ceduna in 1913 as part of the Kooniba Mission Station. The aim of the home was to enable the removal of Aboriginal children so that they could be raised in the Lutheran faith. The Home initially accommodated 28 children but later increased to up to 70. The Koonibba Children's Home closed in 1963 when the South Australian Government took control of the Mission.

In 1899 the Lutheran Church leased an area of 16,000 acres (6477 hectares) west of Ceduna from the South Australian Government with the aim of establishing a mission. In December 1901 the first missionary, Pastor C A Wiebusch, arrived in the area and Koonibba Mission Station began to operate.

In late 1913 the Mission turned its focus to children and Koonibba Children's Home was officially opened on 9 November 1913. The aim of the Home was to enable the removal of Aboriginal children in order that they be 'removed from the camp atmosphere, and brought up in a Christian atmosphere'.

The first matron of the Home was Matron Miss A von Einem. The fourteen room stone building on five acres (2 hectares) provided accommodation for the matron and staff of the Home, and two large bedrooms and several smaller rooms for children. As well as kitchen, bathroom, pantry and cellar, the home had a large dining room and assembly hall/kindergarten. The Home initially accommodated 28 children. Over the years numbers increased to as many as 70, necessitating numerous additions and improvements to the building.

A superintendent's report from 1931 described the work of the Children's Home:

The two girls about fifteen or sixteen years old, we had to bring in by persuasion that they were not given a chance to resist. We found them wandering about the bush and it was quite evident that it was our duty to bring them in and save their souls. They have made excellent progress both in school and at the domestic work they are asked to do in the Home.

The Koonibba Children's Home closed in July 1963 when the South Australian Government took over the control of the Mission. The Mission came under the control of the Koonibba Aboriginal Community Council in 1975.

Koonibba Lutheran Children's Home was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families.

Gallery



Aboriginal people Koonibba Mission Children's Home, South Australia

Description: This image shows the buildings of Koonibba Children's Home. This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.



Aboriginal people Koonibba Mission Children's Home, South Australia

Description: This image depicts a large group of children and some adults.



Aboriginal people Koonibba Mission Children's Home, South Australia

Description: The library description states: Koonibba Mission some time between 1914 and 1920. The matron of the children's home, Miss A. Von Einem, with her sewing class.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

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

Koonibba Children's Home was run by the Lutheran Church of Australia as part of the Koonibba Mission Station.

Date: 1913 - 1963

Related Events

- [Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry, South Australia \(2004 - 2008\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Koonibba Mission \(1901 - 1975\)](#)

The Koonibba Children's Home was located at the Koonibba Mission.

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

Resources

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, [Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families](#), 1997. *Relevance:* Koonibba Lutheran Children's Home was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Indigenous children removed from their families
- Commonwealth of Australia, *Records of National Cultural Significance: A guide to records of Indigenous Australians in the Lutheran Archives*, 1999
- Harms, Rev E and Hoff, Rev C, *Koonibba: a record of 50 years work among the Australian Aborigines by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, 1901-1951*, 1951
- *Koonibba, 25 years of Mission work among Australian Aborigines*, 1926
- Wilson, Neva, *Our identity is our history and our future: A brief history of the West Coast Aboriginal peoples, an extended research of the Tindale and Birdsell collections of genealogies of Indigenous peoples of the West Coast of South Australia, 1928, 1939 and 1952*, 2003

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Records of Koonibba Children's Home \(1900? - 2000?\)](#)
 - [Records of Aboriginal Missions in South Australia \(1850s - 1970s\)](#)
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