

# Gerard Mission

1946 – 1974

## Details

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Gerard Mission was established in 1945 near Loxton by the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) to replace the Swan Reach Mission. A school and a children's dormitory was established and 15 children from Swan Reach and Ooldea were initially accommodated. From the mid 1950s children attended the local Winkie School. The state government took control of the Mission in 1961, the Dormitory was closed and all children were sent to Colebrook Home, Eden Hills. In 1974 control of Gerard Mission was passed to the indigenous residents and run by the Gerard Council.

In April 1945 the United Aborigines Mission [UAM] purchased 5800 acres (2348 hectares) of land near Loxton with the intention of establishing a new Mission Station. The Mission was named Gerard Mission in honour of the South Australian President of the UAM. For some years the UAM had been seeking a new location to house children, particularly from their Swan Reach Mission. The secretary of the UAM had advised the Minister of Public Works in September 1942 that he believed 'the Dormitory system for the children in a different atmosphere is the only way to develop the moral and spiritual character of the child'. A children's dormitory was therefore an integral part of the new Gerard Mission.

The UAM received funding from the government to operate the dormitory at the Mission. It also relied on contributions from families living at the Mission and child endowment payments from the Commonwealth Government.

Pre-fabricated huts were obtained from a former Army camp and other fittings from the Woodcutters' Camp at Loveday. Gerard Mission School was opened in February 1946, after the school at Swan Reach had closed the previous December.

Fifteen children were initially accommodated in a temporary camp while the dormitory and other mission buildings were being constructed. All of these children came from Swan Reach except for five boys brought from Ooldea. Children in the dormitory attended school in buildings at the Mission owned by the Education Department. In 1948-49 a superintendent, his wife, a school teacher and a staff attendant looked after an average of 10 children at any one time.

In 1947 the superintendent of Gerard stated that of all the children living in the dormitory only one was living there voluntarily and he complained of the difficulty of keeping the children separated from their families living on the Mission.

The dormitory always housed a small number of children. In 1949 there were 11 children. By the mid 1950s there were 9 children living in the dormitory and they attended the local Winkie School. The dormitory at the Mission was often in poor repair.

In 1961 control of the Mission was handed over to the State Government and the dormitory was closed. The remaining children were moved to Colebrook Home in Adelaide. In 1974 the Gerard Mission came under the control of the Gerard Council run by Gerard's Indigenous residents.

Gerard Mission was one of the institutions that came under scrutiny for allegations of abuse during the Children in State Care Inquiry 2004-2008. The reported incidents were from the early 1950s.

## National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

In 2021, the South Australian government has agreed to be a funder of last resort for this institution. This means that although the institution is now defunct, it is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and the government has agreed to pay the institution's share of costs of providing redress to a person (as long as the government is found to be equally responsible for the abuse a person experienced).

## Gallery



**Gerard Mission**

## More info

### Chronology

- Swan Reach Mission (1926 - 1946)
  - **Gerard Mission (1946 – 1974)**

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Aborigines Department, South Australian Government \(1912 - 1962\)](#)  
Date: 1961 - 1962
- [United Aborigines Mission \(1929 - 2020\)](#)
- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs, South Australian Government \(1963 - 1970\)](#)  
Date: 1963 - 1970
- [Department of Social Welfare and Aboriginal Affairs, South Australian Government \(1970 - 1972\)](#)  
Date: 1970 - 1972
- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Federal Government \(1972 - 1990\)](#)  
Date: 1972 - 1974

#### Related Events

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

#### Related Organisations

- [Colebrook Home \(1927 - 1981\)](#)  
When Gerard Mission Children's Dormitory closed in 1961 the children were moved to Colebrook Home at Eden Hills
- [Ooldea Mission \(1933 - 1952\)](#)  
In the mid 1940s several young married couples and a small number of children were transferred from Ooldea Mission to Gerard Mission.  
Date: 1945 -

## Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

## Resources

- [Syd Graham interviewed by Karen George in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2000 - \), 4 September 2000](#)

## Records

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

## Records

- [Records of the Aborigines' Office and Successor Agencies \(1866? - 1971?\)](#)
  - [Records of Gerard Mission \(1940s - 1987\)](#)
  - [Records of Aboriginal Missions in South Australia \(1850s - 1970s\)](#)
  - [Child Endowment Records, United Aborigines Mission, South Australia \(1940s - 1950s\)](#)
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