

Oodnadatta Children's Home

1924 – 1974

Details

Oodnadatta Children's Home was established by the United Aborigines Mission at Oodnadatta in 1924 as a Home for Aboriginal Children. It closed in 1927 and the Matron and 12 children were sent to Quorn to start Colebrook Home. In 1947 the Oodnadatta Children's Home was reopened by the South Australian branch of the UAM. It operated with smaller numbers of children until its closure in 1974.

Oodnadatta was the first mission station established by the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) in South Australia. Missionary Miss Annie Lock started the children's home in 1924. Initially housed in an iron shed, the children were soon moved to a small cottage purchased by the South Australian Council of the UAM in 1926. The following year the 12 children resident in the home were moved to Quorn along with Matron Ruby Hyde who had been caring for the children since 1925 and the Home closed.

In 1947, the South Australian Council of the UAM legally separated from the Victorian-based Federal body and reopened the Oodnadatta Children's Home. Mr Noel and Mrs Iris Wiley ran the home initially caring for 12 children. During 1949-1950 more children were admitted and new superintendents, Mr and Mrs Turnbull, cared for 15 residents with the assistance of two Aboriginal helpers. Reverend L Reece and his wife took charge from 1951 and then from the mid-1950s, Ruth Bullpit (later Tuffin) was housemother. She cared for between 13 and 17 children, usually with the help of an assistant.

During the 1950s, the Home was a basic structure with two dormitories, a living area and bathing and cooking facilities. A new dormitory was added in 1955. Until 1956 Aboriginal children were prohibited from attending the Oodnadatta school so those living in the home were educated by missionaries at the Mission School.

In 1958 a large group of children from the Home were moved to Colebrook Home at Eden Hills which was also run by the UAM. Some of these were moved without permission from their parents.

Although the Department of Aboriginal Affairs had at times placed children at the Oodnadatta Children's Home, by 1966, this practice ceased. In 1967 the Director of Social Welfare advised that many improvements would be needed at the Home's before it would consider granting it a licence under the Social Welfare Act.

In 1970 the home was caring for just six children. That same year the Oodnadatta Hostel, run by Save the Children Fund and funded by the Commonwealth-government was built. The superintendent of the Oodnadatta Children's Home was employed to run the new Hostel. The UAM was unable to find a replacement and in 1974 the Oodnadatta Children's Home closed.

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



The Oodnadatta Children's Home (approx. 1959)

Description: This photograph shows staff and residents of the Oodnadatta Children's Home. The names of people in this image are listed as part of its description on Flickr.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [United Aborigines Mission \(1929 - 2020\)](#)

Related Events

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

Related Organisations

- [Colebrook Home \(1927 - 1981\)](#)
The first residents at Colebrook Home at Quorn came from the Oodnadatta Children's Home
- [Oodnadatta Hostel \(1971 - 1986\)](#)
The superintendent and most of the children from the Oodnadatta Children's Home moved to the Oodnadatta Hostel when it opened.

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

Resources

- Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation, [Stolen Generations' Testimonies](#), 2009. *Relevance:* See testimony of Ruth Mackenzie
- [Clara Coulthard interviewed by Sue Anderson in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2000\)](#), 12 December 2000
- [Syd Graham interviewed by Karen George in the Bringing them home oral history project \[sound recording\] \(2000 - \)](#), 4 September 2000
- Dallwitz, John and Fazio, Daniel, *White to Black: Oodnadatta School 1892-1992*, 1992
- Gibson, Jen and Shaw, Bruce, *Invasion and Succession: an Aboriginal history of the Oodnadatta region*, 1988
- Shaw, Bruce, *Our Heart is the Land: Aboriginal Reminiscences from the Western Lake Eyre Basin*, 1995
- O'Neill, Cate, [More photographs unearthed](#), Find & Connect web resource blog, 19 January 2016
- United Aborigines Mission, [The United Aborigines messenger](#), 1929 - 1987

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Records of the Aborigines' Office and Successor Agencies \(1866? - 1971?\)](#)

- [Records of Colebrook Home, United Aborigines Mission Archives \(1920s - 1980s\)](#)
Records of Colebrook Home may contain information about children sent from Oodnadatta Children's Home to Colebrook Home.
 - [Records of Gerard Mission \(1940s - 1987\)](#)
 - [United Aborigines Mission, records deposited with State Library of South Australia \(c. 1908 - c. 1976\)](#)
 - [Records of Oodnadatta Children's Home, State Library of South Australia \(1924 - 1964\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
Item B84 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to Oodnadatta Children's Home.
 - [Child Endowment Records, United Aborigines Mission, South Australia \(1940s - 1950s\)](#)
 - [Lantern slides taken by Ruby Hyde \(c. 1925 - c. 1930\)](#)
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