

Finniss Springs Mission

1939 – c. 1961

Details

The Finniss Springs Mission was established by the United Aborigines' Mission (UAM) north west of Marree, in 1939. It operated as a Mission, a Mission school and a government ration station. A dormitory for Aboriginal children whose parents worked away from the Mission was operating by 1944. Approximately 75 people resided at the Mission in the late 1940s. Droughts and water shortages led to the closure of the Finniss Springs Mission in the early 1960s.

The Finniss Springs Mission was established by the United Aborigines' Mission (UAM) at the Finniss Springs Station, 50 miles north-west of Marree, in 1939. It operated as a Mission and a government ration station. The area had been taken over by pastoralists from as early as 1858. Aboriginal people had congregated at the Finniss Springs Station from its beginnings and this continued into the 1920s and 1930s. In 1937 there were 45 Aboriginal people living at Finniss Springs. In that year the UAM approached the landowners for permission to establish a Mission. The Mission started in 1939 and schooling of local Aboriginal children began. Classes originally were conducted in a tent.

Within two years a church, a schoolroom and some one room houses for the local Aboriginal population had been built. The 1942 Protector's Report shows that the UAM at Finniss Springs desired to establish a dormitory for Aboriginal children whose parents were working away from the Mission. In 1943 the landowner transferred 13 3/4 square miles of land to the Mission at 'a peppercorn rental'. This allowed the Mission to construct a dormitory and a schoolroom. Reports show the dormitory was operating by 1944.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s the missionaries reported that the average number of people living at the Mission was 75.

In the 1950s droughts, fire and the transfer of missionaries began to affect the Mission. In 1960 severe water shortages led to the temporary abandonment of the Mission with the superintendent and most of the residents moving to Marree. Although a dam and tank were constructed to compensate for the water shortages the continuing drought meant the Mission had ceased to operate by 1962.

In 2012 native title for the Mission site was passed to the Ngurabanna people. The Arabana Aboriginal Corporation have management rights over Finniss Springs, which is on a 99 year lease.

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



[Finniss Springs Mission]

Description: This image was included in The Adelaide Chronicle on Thursday 14 December 1939, it relates to Finniss Springs Mission. The caption stated: 'Aboriginal Mission - One of the latest missions to educate aboriginal children is the United Aborigines' School, Finniss Springs Station. It is situated about 50 miles north-west of Marree. This picture shows a class being held in a tent.'

More info

Related Entries

Run by

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

Related Concepts

- [Stolen Generations](#)

Resources

- Shaw, Bruce, *Our Heart is the Land: Aboriginal Reminiscences from the Western Lake Eyre Basin*, 1995
- 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 Aboriginal Missions in South Australia \(1850s - 1970s\)](#)
- [Records of Colebrook Home, United Aborigines Mission Archives \(1920s - 1980s\)](#)
- [Child Endowment Records, United Aborigines Mission, South Australia \(1940s - 1950s\)](#)

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