

Lutheran Mission Block, Alice Springs

1963 – 1982

Other Names:

- Lutheran Children's Homes
- Finke River Mission Cottages

Details

The Lutheran Mission Block was established in Alice Springs in 1938 by the Lutheran Church. In the 1950s Aboriginal children were cared for by an Aboriginal woman in a residential house on the block. In 1963 two cottages were opened. Each accommodated up to 12 children under the supervision of house mothers. Children attending school in Alice Springs and children under the care of the Welfare Branch lived in the cottages. The cottages closed in 1982.

The Lutheran Mission Block was obtained in June 1938 by Pastor Albrecht from the Hermannsburg Mission. This block of six acres of land was located at 49 Gap Road in Alice Springs and became known locally as Mission Block. A small church was built on the site in December 1938. During the 1940s Pastor Albrecht visited fortnightly to provide church services and spiritual teaching. Trained Aboriginal lay ministers continued the work in between his visits. In 1942 the Acting Director of Native Affairs, Mr V J White noted that 50 adults and 19 children were living on the Mission Block.

During the 1950s an Aboriginal woman from Henbury Station, south of Alice Springs, cared for many children in a house behind the Mission Block Cash Store. In 1963 two Lutheran Cottages for children were built on the block. Each cottage had the capacity to accommodate up to 12 children under the care of a house mother, with children sleeping three to a room. Children were moved into the first cottage in October 1963. By mid 1964 both buildings were occupied, with 12 residents in one cottage and 11 in the other.

Most children came from families working on cattle stations south of Alice Springs which had been visited by Lutheran missionaries. They stayed at the Lutheran Cottages during school terms while attending local government primary schools, and returned home for the school holidays. Parents were expected to pay a boarding allowance for the children in the cottages. A small number of children were placed in the Cottages by the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration. While staying in the Cottages, children lived in family groups and helped with household chores and gardening.

The layout of the cottages was described in a Lutheran publication in April 1964 as follows:

The cottage homes are modern cement brick buildings of four bedrooms for the children, a large matron's bedroom, a study-sitting room, dining room, two bathrooms, and a laundry. All the rooms are painted in pastel shades and have curtains etc. to tone.

For most of their existence, the Cottages were staffed by housemothers. However, in the early 1970s a married couple was appointed as cottage parents. This was the only time the children also had a house father.

In 1967 a last service was held in the old church on the block. The Lutheran Cottages remained open until 1982. They closed that year as a result of a decline in employment for Aboriginal people in the central Australian cattle industry which meant that fewer families were living on stations.

In 2014 the Church on the former Lutheran Mission Block was operating as an archive and museum, displaying and collecting Mission Block history.

Gallery



Lutheran Cottage Homes Christmas party

Description: This photograph of a Christmas party at the 'Lutheran Home' in Alice Springs is dated 1957. As the Cottages were not opened until 1963, this date appears to be incorrect

More info

Related Entries

Run by

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

Related Organisations

- [Hermannsburg Mission \(1877 - 1982\)](#)

The Lutheran Mission Block was established by missionaries from the Hermannsburg Mission

Related Places

- [Finke River Mission \(1877 - c. 1982\)](#)

The Lutheran Mission Block, as an extension of the Hermannsburg Mission, was sometimes referred to as being part of the Finke River Mission

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Records held by the Alice Springs Lutheran Archives](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
Item B605 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to the Lutheran Mission Block.
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