

The Plymouth Brethren Mission

1910 – 1912

Details

The Plymouth Brethren Mission was established in Darwin in 1910 by missionary Alexander Barry. It aimed to provide care and spiritual training for Aboriginal children. In 1911 the mission applied for a lease of government land to further its work. This request was rejected and the mission closed in 1912.

The Plymouth Brethren Mission was opened in Darwin in 1910 by missionary Alexander Barry. It aimed to provide care and spiritual training for Aboriginal children. In November 1911, Barry wrote to the Administrator to apply for a lease on an area of government land. He explained that the mission was 'devoting its attention' to the children and 'in order to recruit and keep' them, it needed to establish a permanent base. Barry's intention was to develop an 'industrial mission' in or near Darwin where each child could be 'uplifted' to become 'a useful members of the community'.

The Chief Protector, Professor Baldwin Spencer was sent to inspect the work of the mission. He reported back that he did not support the granting of land or any further development:

The present state of the mission is unsatisfactory, the work is desultory and unorganised and the children receive little education. The head is not at all a suitable person for the position and though doubtless amiable and well intentioned has not the capacity of managing the natives over whom, as admitted by himself, he has little control.

In March 1912, as a result of this negative assessment, Barry advised the Administrator that he and his wife had decided to 'disband' the Mission. The Administrator took over control of the children and arranged for their resettlement.

A National Archives file relating to the Mission includes the names and details of 16 children who had been accommodated at the Mission and for whom the government made new arrangements. A number of children were adopted or taken in by relatives. Five of the boys were 'taken over by the Department'. The file notes that these boys were living 'at department offices' and regularly attending the local state school.

More info

Records

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Records held by other organisations

- [Northern Territory. Plymouth Brethren Mission \(1911 - 1912\)](#)
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