

CROKER ISLAND MISSION

TIMELINE

1915	Methodist Overseas Mission Board sends Foreign Mission Secretary to Northern Territory	Rev James Watson was send for a “three months’ reconnoitre” to gain ‘first hand information concerning the aborigines” and to report back on a suitable site for a mission in northern Australia. ¹
1916	Mission established at Goulburn Island	Rev Watson, who was appointed the first Superintendent of the mission arrived in June 1916 with building materials & supplies
1916 -	Mission stations established in other areas of Arnhem Land	Elcho Island 1923 (abandoned) transferred across to Milingimbi 1923 Yirrkala 1935 Elcho Island 1942/45
1941	Croker Island Mission (CKI) established	The Methodists agreed to establish a facility on Croker to house the children who might be allocated to them.” Croker Island was always intended by the church to be a ‘home’ rather than a mission. ² According to Maisie McKenzie in “ Mission to Arnhem Land”, the Government had granted the lease of the island and agreed to pay maintenance of 1shilling per child per day. ³
1942	Children, cottage mothers, other staff evacuated from CKI	The children and their carers were sent to Otford to the Methodist Crusader complex “their home for the next four years”. ⁴ Miss Margaret Somerville remained with the children ‘for the duration’.
1946	Children and cottage mothers return to CKI	The Federal Minister for the Interior (responsible for the Northern Territory and for Aboriginal matters) ruled that the children should go back to the island. ⁵
1946 - 1967	Continuing care	Children remain in the care of Methodist Overseas Missions Half-Caste Institution
1964	Somerville Homes	Use of the title “Somerville Homes” came into use in 1964 ‘in recognition of Miss Margaret Somerville’s service for the twenty-three years in which homes were on Croker Island.’ ⁶ This was in preparation/anticipation of the move from Croker Island to Darwin.
1965	Somerville Homes is an unincorporated association	The child care work will be administered by the Child Care Council of the North Australia Annual District Synod which will be responsible to the Synod for the implementation of Methodist Overseas Missions Board policy..... ⁷

¹ Emilsen, William W. *Fighting Spirit: a history of Christianity at Waruwu, Goulburn Island*, © 2016 MediaCom Education Inc. p.33

² Somerville, Margaret, *They crossed a continent: the story of a wartime exodus from Croker Island to Sydney*, 3rd edn, Shady Tree, Darwin, 2011, 98 pp.

³ McKenzie, Maisie, *Mission to Arnhem Land*, © 1976, Rigby Limited

⁴ Forrest, Peter & Sheila, *Crossing the Divide: The story of Somerville Community Services*, p. 20. Shady Tree, Darwin, 2015

⁵ Ibid. p.22

⁶ Minutes of Annual District Synod, Methodist Church of Australasia Department of Overseas Missions North Australia District 28th July 1964 p.29

⁷ Ibid. p. 30: paragraph D. Administration

1967 (December)	Child care work moves from Croker Island to Darwin	
1968	Croker Island changeover from children's institution to Aboriginal Mission	"completed with very satisfactory results for Croker Island" Minutes of Annual District Meeting indicate that the cottages vacated by the children and staff are being used for activities of the Mission Station: "an empty cottage is under conversion to a hospital"; ⁸
1970	Croker Island property	Report to Annual District Synod 1970 on property lists two cottages that have been repurposed – one being used for beef processing; one converted into two home units. ⁹
1970	Incorporation of Somerville Homes	"Rules for Somerville Homes Inc" – paragraph on Property in draft rules to emphasise "that all property is vested in the MOM Trust Association for the time being and that any change shall take place with the express approval of the MOM Trust Assoc.
1971	Formal incorporation	8 February 1971 – Proposed Incorporation considered by MOM Board who have passed it to their solicitors for consideration. ¹⁰ Formal incorporation took place on 22 July 1971. The Board of Somerville Homes Inc had "...direct powers to manage the affairs....subject always to the policies of the MOM Board and the Methodist Church Synod.
1972	Integration	Integration of Methodist Mission work with the United Church in North Australia from 1 January 1972
1981	Changes to Constitution of Somerville Homes Inc	Standing Committee of the Northern Synod considered changes to the constitution including name change to Somerville Community Services Inc.; and that "the real property of the Association be vested in the appropriate trusts of the Uniting Church in Australia." ¹¹

⁸ Minutes of the Annual Synod 1968, Methodist Church of Australasia Department of Overseas Missions North Australia District, Station Report from Croker Island, p. 25

⁹ Minutes of the Annual Synod 1970, Methodist Church of Australasia Department of Overseas Missions North Australia District, Property Reports – Croker Island

¹⁰ Minutes of Somerville Homes Council 8 February 1971

¹¹ Minutes of the Standing Committee 6th – 8th July 1981

THE UNITED CHURCH IN NORTH AUSTRALIA

The first ordained minister appointed to Darwin came from the Wesleyan Mission Society of South Australia.

The Wesleyan's continued to provide ministry to north Australia up until the establishment of the Methodist Church of Australasia in 1901. The Palmerston Circuit was transferred to the Queensland Conference.

1873	Wesleyan Methodist Minister appointed to settlement of Palmerston	Rev Archibald Bogle arrived in what is now Darwin having been appointed by the Wesleyan Mission Society of South Australia
1873 – 1900	Wesleyan Ministers continue to be appointed from the South Australian Conference	
1901 – 1923	Methodist Ministers appointed from the Queensland Conference	Methodist Church of Australasia – Queensland Conference
1924	Rev H.S. Jarvis	Appointed by Methodist Federal Board of Missions
1930 – 1942	MOM responsible for appointments to Darwin	The Darwin Circuit became part of the North Australia District of the Federal Methodist Overseas Mission Board ¹²
1939	Movement for co-operation	Boards of Australian Inland Mission of the Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Overseas Missions agree to the implementation of co-operative work. The Darwin Inter-Church Management Committee is inaugurated. ¹³
1939 - 1946	Co-operative work continues through the war years	Inter-Church Club is built (funded by the Presbyterians); Methodist and Presbyterian ministers work "in closest harmony as colleagues" ...regarding conduct & oversight of both Church and Club. ¹⁴
1946	Two ministers are appointed – one Methodist, one Presbyterian	Regular services established; Sunday School recommenced; regular church committees resumed. The Sydney based Inter-Church Management Committee, which had equal number of AIM & MOM representatives, approved the use of the title " <i>United Church in North Australia: Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian</i> ". This officially became the name of the new movement on 5 th August 1946. ¹⁵
1954 (late)	Darwin 'work' (under MOM) transferred to Methodist Inland Mission (MIM)	The MOM retained only those properties which were connected with the Mission administration for the northern Mission stations. ** Ministers appointed to Darwin (for local work) by the MIM Board. ¹⁶
1956	United Church properties	United Church Board passed a fourfold resolution regarding Darwin property Including that AIM and MIM conjointly be responsible for taking over land & property in Darwin; and that such property be vested in Trustees of the UCNA.

¹² Various sources cited in "A History of the Darwin Uniting Church Congregation", 2020, Rev Steve Orme

¹³ Grant, Rev Arch, "Palmerston to Darwin: 75 Years Service on the Frontier, 1990, Frontier Publishing Inc. p.100

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ Bence, Graham & Ford, Margaret "The United Church in North Australia" © 1989 unpublished (a limited number of copies produced by UCA Northern Synod in 1993)

¹⁶ Ibid p.35, p.51

1965	MOM Child Care Work and the United Church	All MOM Ministers associated with Child Care Work became members of the United Church ministerial team – appointed by MOM and accredited by the United Church Board ¹⁷
1968	Work begins on 'total integration' of work of MOM with the United Church	Both Boards are asked to consider 'certain resolutions'. A Select Committee is formed ¹⁸
1972	Integration	Integration of Methodist Mission work with the United Church in North Australia from 1 January 1972
1974**	MOM Property at cnr Knuckey & Mitchell Sts, Darwin CBD	99 year lease between MOM Trust Association and The Australasian Temperance and General Mutual Life Assurance Society Ltd. Income from lease for benefit of Aboriginal work. NRCC are recognized as the beneficial owners of this property and therefore the income from the lease.

¹⁷ Bence, Graham & Ford, Margaret "The United Church in North Australia" © 1989 unpublished (a limited number of copies produced by UCA Northern Synod in 1993) p. 60

¹⁸ Ibid p.92, 93