Bungalow and Beyond

Preschool in Aboriginal Communities: The First 10 years
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WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this presentation contains the names and images of people who have passed away.
Acknowledgments

The photos contained in this presentation are from various Northern Territory Library Collections and made available with their permission.
This presentation shows some of the early events and people which have shaped Early Childhood Education in the NT.
Thanks go to David Morgan for his sub-edits.
Context: schooling – there was none

An establishment to plan, administer, and operate native education in the Northern Territory was not provided until 1950, when the Commonwealth Office of Education as the agent of the Department of Territories commenced operations.

Harry Giese arrives

On 13 May 1954, Mr Harry Giese, among other things a former teacher, is appointed the Director of Welfare. He holds the position until 1973.

Harry Giese sees education as a key component of the overall program to implement the government policy of assimilation.

In October 1954 responsibility for the administration of all preschools is taken over by the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration.
Bungalow: The beginning - 1954

Bungalow, just outside the town of Alice Springs is one of the sites that children of the stolen generation are located.

A preschool group is set up in the framework of the school at Bungalow.

Bungalow, January 1955, Ellen Kettle Collection, Northern Territory Library: PH0703-0307
The program is a variation on mainstream

The children receive a variation on the mainstream program with emphasis given to ‘the teaching of acceptable social habits, oral English, and acceptance of and by the group. Special attention was paid to training in personal hygiene.’
A full day program

It is a full day programme and operates from 9:00 am to 3:30pm
Success is observed

This experiment has proved successful in that when the children pass on to the first school class they are already adjusted to the school situation and have some command of the English language.

The Development of Pre-School Education in the Northern Territory Harry Giese Collection, Arafura Archives CDU p5 (no date or author)
... and promoted ...

The results of the group at the Bungalow are becoming evident. Children of 8 years who have passed through the preschool are now doing work of a standard being done by children of 12-14 years who have not had this experience.


They are also purported to be ‘adjusted to the school situation and have some command of English’

Harry Giese Collection NTRS 1043 Pre School History 1942-1970 held in the Northern Territory Archives page 6 (no title)
One governance arrangement

Formal steps taken in 1954 to have education as part of the total welfare programme begin operation from 1 January 1956. One of the effects is that educational decision making is now located in the Northern Territory.
Positions are made available

Approval is given to appoint preschool teachers at the following settlements:

• Bungalow – Miss Nella McDonald
• Warrabri (Alekarenge) – Brenda Noble
• Yuendumu – Helen Anderson
• Papunya – Unknown

The teacher at Bungalow resigned before taking up her duties.
Preschools prove their value

The development of preschools at Warrabri, Yuendumu and Bungalow Settlements has demonstrated conclusively the value of the early approach to the teaching of English, basic hygiene, and health skills as well as in training in group experiences. With the education of mothers in child care, the preschool is also providing a valuable follow on from the infant welfare service.
1959 - positions are filled ... and not filled

In February 1959 the position at Yuendumu is filled.

In March 1959, the position at Alekarenge is also filled.

The preschool teacher appointed to Bungalow resigned before she commenced.

Yuendumu 1959, Joyce Gilbert Collection, Northern Territory Library: PH048-0451
Bungalow relocates to Amoonguna

In June 1960, the entire population of Bungalow is relocated to Amoonguna.

The teacher is partly trained and the preschool operates in temporary accommodation.
Amoonguna starts with an untrained teacher

At Amoonguna, a Nisson hut has been adapted for a preschool and a teaching assistant was appointed to take charge of the class until a preschool teacher could be recruited. The Assistant PreSchool Supervisor worked closely with this untrained assistant for a week after her appointment and gave her considerable guidance.

Annual report 1960/61 NTA Welfare Branch p9

Amoonguna 1959, Harry Giese Collection, Northern Territory Library: PH0351/0093
A qualified teacher is in place in 1964

June Noble is the trained kindergarten teacher. She explains

_The Nissan hut was a surprise! – after teaching in Melbourne, where I had graduated from the 3 year course at the Kindergarten Training College in 1954. However, it worked well, plenty of space, extremely well-equipped, and a very large playground. The winter winds whipped through the building, forcing me to wear slacks to work which was then still a big no-no for female teachers. This meant I was actually embarrassed when Administrator Dean paid us an official visit._

Amoonguna, Joyce Gilbert Collection, Northern Territory Library: PH0048/0110
Daily routines

1. On arrival it was into the shower and then dressed in the Education Department clothes issue, home clothes were washed by my assistants and dried on the preschool fence.

2. During the morning we walked over to the hospital where Nurse Joan Armstrong treated ailments and checked for new ones.

3. A delicious midday meal was delivered from the kitchen (a giant hut left over from wartime presence).

4. An afternoon sleep on floor mats.

June Noble Personal Communication 2016
Alekarenge: Warrabri in 1954

Alekarenge (Ali Curung) is the first complete settlement established by the Welfare Branch. It is seen as a model.

Initially it is called Warrabri and chosen as the place to resettle the Warramangu and Walpiri (Walbri) people who were living in and around the Tennant Creek area.
Dear Joyce,

Here I hope, is the last plan for the kindergarten. This is the third one which I have done, all for different sized Nissens but this is to be the size which the truck is bringing up from Alice.

I don't think I have left anything out and I can't find room to put any more in. The furniture is arranged to show a possible use of the available space and the equipment already on hand, shown by dotted lines. The outdoor equipment shed is purposely small, to allow for extra space in the bathroom area, but I think it will be adequate.

The plan is based on an enrolment of thirty or more children, for I find that there are quite a number more than were listed and there are thirty in the six months to eighteen months range. I am not quite sure of the number in the age group between these two as they seem to be the forgotten race until we acquire a "Mother Craft" nurse, but there seem to be fresh children popping up every day who look almost three.

Chris and I were going to check completely through the hospital files, but she has not been well and has gone off to-day to see the doctor in Tennant Creek. We all hope it is not Hepatitis. Anyway it seems sure that there will be more than twenty five for a long time to come and the children are responding so well even under these conditions, that I'm sure there will be no limits to what we will be able to do in an adequate building.
At Alekarenge, 30 children aged between the ages of three and five years attend preschool from 9:00 to 3:30.
Outdoor play
There are Assistants

Alekarenge: Margaret making dough 1961, Joyce Gilbert Collection, Northern Territory Library: PH0048-0410

Alekarenge: Ruby bathing Margaret 1961, Joyce Gilbert Collection, Northern Territory Library PH0048-0415
Preschool participation - Yuendumu

45 children attend preschool in two sessions

25 attend the morning session:
9am to 1:30pm

20 attend the afternoon session
1:30 to 3:30pm

Yuendumu: Breakfast time, 1958  Joyce Gilbert Collection, Northern Territory Library PH0048-0436
A struggle to get and keep qualified teachers

By 1960 preschool groups are operating at Yuendumu and Warrabri (Alekarenge).

The Yuendumu teacher resigned during the year, however the group continued to function with the Assistant Teacher.
Parents are encouraged

Where the physical circumstances permit and where it fits with the degree of progress of the natives themselves, the mothers are being brought into the programme and being encouraged to bath the children before bringing them to the group and will in time themselves be responsible for the laundering of the children’s school and camp clothes. At present, native assistants, who are working under the supervision of the teachers and assisting with the group, are proving satisfactory.
The purpose of Preschool is clear

The success of the preschool centres and the significance of this work in the total assimilation programme points the need for a greater emphasis on the provision of pre-schools and accommodation for pre-school teachers.


*Papunya 1967, Joyce Gilbert Collection, Northern Territory Library: PH0048-0363*
Numbers grow

By 1961 the Branch had requested and obtained six positions for qualified preschool teachers. ... There were relatively few preschool teachers in the states and fewer still prepared to work on the aboriginal settlements where there were, in fact, no buildings that had been specifically designed for preschools.

Flynn, K in Giese Collection 15-036-018/5 page 127: Arafura Archives CDU
Papunya 1961

Papunya 1961, Harry Giese Collection, Northern Territory Library: PH0351/0127

Papunya 1961, Harry Giese Collection, Northern Territory Library: PH0351/0129
Preschools and Preschoolers numbers grow

By 1964, there are 8 preschools with approximately 250 children
Five preschool centres operate on Government settlements with 127 children enrolled
There are three missions with preschools with and 122 enrolments

<table>
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<tr>
<th>GOVERNMENT</th>
<th>MISSION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
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<td>Papunya</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>Bagot</td>
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<td>Warrabri</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yuendumu</td>
<td>14</td>
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Watts Gallacher Report 1964

The Watts Gallacher Report provides the first policy direction in Aboriginal education. For preschool, it highlights issues about the appropriateness of existing buildings and the difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced teachers.

All recommendations are accepted by government.
Recommendation 93 relates to Preschool

(a) That Preschools be established as soon as possible on all settlements and missions

(b) That Action Research programmes be instituted in Aboriginal preschools with a view to the needs of Aboriginal preschool children

(c) That use be made for the present of available buildings for preschools but that every endeavour be made to erect suitable buildings which can be equipped and furbished to meet the needs of Aboriginal preschool education

(d) That, in view of the difficulties in recruiting trained preschool teachers, suitable trained teachers be appointed to these positions but that there be continuing efforts to recruit trained preschool teachers; and

(e) That the supervisor preschool education (Aboriginal Preschools) provide the necessary special training for the teachers and direct action research in preschools.
The report also fires a warning

... progress towards assimilation does not necessarily imply cultural unity. Modern societies can, and must, tolerate differences within their population; indeed cultural diversity is one of the major means of the enrichment of a society.
... and consequences

This justifies a consideration of the Aboriginal culture in planning the educational programme... if it [schooling] ignores the background from which the Aboriginal child draws spiritual and emotional nourishment, it becomes an empty, superficial thing, shut off from the main current of the child’s life and exerting little or no influence upon him. (Watts Gallacher Report 1964)