

Learning Sequence 6, Teacher Resource 1

Across the Colony 1860 - 1900

Sisters of Mercy Schools in Western Australia 1860 to 1900

By **1900** there were eight independently operating groups of Sisters of Mercy in W.A; in Victoria Square Perth, West Perth, Bunbury, Guildford/Midland, York and Toodyay. The Sisters of Mercy who began a foundation in Coolgardie were from Adelaide and a foundation established in Victoria Park was from Derry in Ireland. All of these groups focused on education. Much of the expansion of Mercy schools occurred during the late 1880s into the 1890s when the population of the Colony increased four-fold due to the gold rushes. The policies of both Bishops Griver and Gibney also supported the growth of Catholic schooling. (See: *Mercy Community LS4 TR2: Bishop Griver and Governor Weld*)

The following information provides a sequence of the main developments in Sisters of Mercy

1868 St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls was established by the Sisters of Mercy for girls from the Poor House. Destitute children, along with orphans, lived in the Holy Cross convent. By the end of 1868 the convent held 27 children and was over crowded. This motivated the fundraising to build the new Convent for the Sisters of Mercy in 1871. In 1901, the orphanage was moved to Subiaco and became the St Joseph's Girls' Orphanage.

1872 The Sisters of Mercy arrived in York on 30 April 1872 to establish a convent and St Patrick's School.

1872 St Vincent de Paul Society began a boy's school in Subiaco. In 1876 the Sisters of Mercy took over the school (until 1897).

1883 (May) - Sisters of Mercy arrived in Geraldton. There had been a Catholic School already operating in the town and the Sisters took over administration of the school in 1884.

1883 (June) St Joseph's School was opened in Bunbury by three Sisters of Mercy.

1884 (July) Sisters of Mercy opened a Select Young Ladies' School in Toodyay. (Newcastle)

1886 (November) - Matthew Gibney was appointed the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth. Gibney remained Bishop of Perth until May 1910.

1888 (July) A branch Sisters of Mercy convent was established in West Perth. This became an independent community in 1896.

1896 Government assistance to religious schools ended following the passing of the Assisted Schools Abolition Act.

1896 There were nineteen Roman Catholic schools caring for 2,557 students in Western Australia.

1898 (January) A group of five Sisters of Mercy from Adelaide opened St Anthony's Boarding and Day School in Coolgardie. The first students began at Our Lady's High School in Coolgardie in 1898. By 1902 a total of 209 students attended the school. The foundress, Sister Antonia (Catherine) McKay, was born in Argentina of Irish parents. She died in Coolgardie in 1924.

Other Catholic orders which established schools in Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie during the gold rushes included:

- the Sisters of St John of God began a hospital in Kalgoorlie in 1895,
- the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart began St Joseph's School in Kalgoorlie (1896),
- Three Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart established All Hallows School in Boulder in 1898. All Hallows catered for primary and secondary school students.

1899 Sacred Heart School Bunbury commenced.

1899 (January) Sisters of Mercy from Derry in Ireland establish a convent in Victoria Park. They opened St Joachim's School by the end of January.

1909 Eighty Roman Catholic schools enrolled 6,969 children in the State.

Learning Sequence 6, Teachers Resource 2

Across the Colony 1860 1900

Significant changes from 1860 to 1900

The sequence of events below provides evidence of some of the important changes in the colony of Western Australia after 1860. Many of these changes were brought about by the determination and hard work of the Sisters of Mercy and reflect their significant impact on the Colony.

1865 St Mary's Cathedral was opened.

1868 St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage for Girls was established by the Sisters of Mercy.

1869 Frederick Weld became Governor of the Colony. The first Roman Catholic Governor, Weld was supportive of the work of the Sisters of Mercy. He retired in January 1875.

1871 (October) The new Convent of Mercy was opened in Victoria Square. It is now called the Mercy Heritage Centre Perth.

1872 (July) The Sisters of Mercy arrived in York to establish a convent and St Patrick's School.

1873 (July) Martin Griver became catholic Bishop of Perth. He served as Bishop until he died in 1886.

1876 the Sisters of Mercy took over the St Vincent de Paul Society boys' school in Subiaco.

1882 Two Sisters of Mercy travelled to Ireland to recruit more Sisters to serve in Western Australia.

1883 The Sisters returned to Perth with three professed Sisters, one novice and eleven postulants.

1883 (May) –A new Sisters of Mercy Foundation began in Geraldton. There had been a Catholic School already operating in the town and the Sisters took over administration of the school in 1884.

1883 (June) St Joseph's School was opened in Bunbury by the Sisters of Mercy.

1884 A convent was established in Toodyay (Newcastle) by the Sisters of Mercy.

1886 (November) Matthew Gibney was appointed the new Catholic Bishop of Perth.

1888 A Sisters of Mercy convent was established in West Perth.

1895 Eight St John of God Sisters arrived in Perth and began visiting the sick in their homes and established a convent hospital. The first St John of God Hospital in Perth was opened in 1898.

1896 The St John of God Sisters established a hospital in Coolgardie.

1897 The St John of God Sisters established a hospital in Kalgoorlie.

1896 Seven foundations, except for West Perth, amalgamated under the leadership of the Sisters of Mercy Convent in Victoria Square.

1898 Supported by Bishop Gibney five Sisters of Mercy from Adelaide established a foundation and school in Coolgardie.

1899 The Victoria Park foundation opened by Sisters of Mercy from Derry in Ireland and began St Joachim's School.

Suggested Activities:

1. Use a blank map of Western Australia to plot the locations across the colony of the Sisters of Mercy schools. Clearly name the towns and write the dates when the school began in that town.
2. Select one of the events from the sequence provided above. Research the event (school, convent or hospital) and write three sentences about the event on a sheet of A4 paper. Clearly show the date on the paper and illustrate, or find images, of the event you have researched. These can be ordered in the correct sequence and pinned around the room.

Learning Sequence 6, Student Resource 1

Across the Colony 1860 - 1900

Population Growth 1859 to 1900

During the second half of the nineteenth century the size and diversity of the population of Western Australia changed dramatically. The Western Australian colonial census figures in Tables 1 and 2 below provide evidence of these changes. Use these figures to answer the questions which follow.

Table 1: European population in Western Australia 1859 -1901

Year	Population
1859	14,837
1870	25,135
1881	29,708
1891	49,782
1901	184,124

Source: Historical Encyclopaedia of Western Australia, 2009.

Table 2: Members of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in Western Australia from Census Data 1848 to 1901

Religion	1848	1859	1870	1881	1891	1901
Church of England (Anglican)	3,063 69%	9,942 67%	14,619 59%	16,263 55%	24,768 50%	75,654 42%
Roman Catholic	387 7.6%	3,354 22%	7,118 29%	8,413 28%	12,602 25%	41,803 23%

Source: http://hccda.ada.edu.au/pages/WA-1901-census_01-02_135

The % figure below the numbers for each census year refers to the percentage of members in all religious faiths.

1. Use evidence from Table 1 to describe the population changes in the Colony from 1859 to 1901.

2. According to Table 1, over which decade did the population of Western Australia increase most rapidly? Give reasons for this increase.

3. Use evidence from Table 2 to describe the increase in the membership of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches from 1848 to 1901.

4. If membership of these churches increased from 1848 to 1901 suggest reasons why the percentage of their membership declined in years after 1901.

5. Draw a bar graph to show the membership of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Australia from 1848 to 1901. (Years on the horizontal axis and population on the vertical axis. Possible scale 1 cm per 5000 people)

6. Use your graph to describe the two main periods of growth in membership of the Roman Catholic Church over those years.

7. Suggest reasons for the two main periods of growth in the number of Catholics living in the Colony.
