

—MEDIA RELEASE—

SDN Celebrates 120 Years of Supporting Children and Families at NSW Parliament House

Sydney, NSW – 12 August 2025 —

SDN Children's Services marked a historic milestone at NSW Parliament House on 7 August, 2025 celebrating 120 years since its founding meeting in 1905. The event brought together politicians, sector leaders, SDN members, Board representatives, and long-serving staff to honour the legacy and ongoing impact of one of Australia's oldest early childhood organisations.

The celebration took place in Australia's oldest parliament, a fitting venue for an organisation born from visionary women who, in 1905, met in Darlinghurst "for the purpose of organising a movement to establish a Creche." Their mission was clear: "to relieve the mothers of their overwhelming burden of care and anxiety, to give the little ones wholesome and loving care... and to enable them to keep the home and family together."

From that meeting, the Sydney Day Nursery and Nursery Schools Association was formed — now known as SDN Children's Services.

Kay Turner, CEO of SDN, welcomed guests including **Christine Legg**, CEO of KU Children's Services; **Nicole Jones**, CEO of Gowrie NSW; **Professor Marianne Fenech**; and Parliamentarians such as **The Hon. Sarah Mitchell**, Shadow Minister for Education and Early Learning, and **The Hon. Mark Speakman**, NSW Leader of the Opposition, among others.

Kate Washington, Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Inclusion, reflected on the social and political context of SDN's founding:

"Just three years after women gained the vote in NSW, and 57 years before First Nations people could vote, SDN's founding was nothing short of extraordinary — a testament to the determination of women who recognised the importance of the early years and the need to support working mothers."

She added:



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“It’s remarkable that an organisation founded in 1905 is still making a massive difference today — and that’s only happened because everyone who has taken the baton over the past 120 years has seized the opportunity to change children’s lives and create stronger communities.”

Helen Hamilton-James, SDN Board President, paid tribute to the organisation’s staff, members, and supporters:

“I would like to thank every staff member present and every one unable to be here, from the bottom of my heart – you embody the SDN Way – each and every one of you. I am proud to be part of this organisation, and I hope you are too.”

The event was not only a commemoration of SDN’s first meeting but a celebration of its rich legacy — from the pioneering women of 1905 to today’s dedicated teams. As SDN looks ahead to its next century, it remains committed to the vision that inspired its founders: giving every child the best possible start in life.

The original meeting in August 1905 led to the opening of SDN’s first Day Nursery in Woolloomooloo on 7 December that same year. In the lead-up to this December milestone, SDN will continue sharing stories of how its village is celebrating this exciting milestone.

About SDN

SDN Children’s Services (SDN) is a not-for-profit organisation that has been delivering quality services to children and their families since 1905. With more than 700 staff across 34 sites in Sydney, regional NSW and the ACT, we are one of Australia’s most respected children’s services organisations.

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