

Beginnings of ...

SDN Milperra

‘There is a shortage of child care in Milperra and we welcome the Government’s recognition of Milperra as an area in need...’

Ginie Udy, then SDN CEO, 2010

SDN Children’s Services begins in 1905

In 1905 a determined group of women from Sydney’s upper classes who understood ‘the difficulties that beset the paths of working mothers’ founded the Sydney Day Nursery Association (now SDN Children’s Services). The Association aimed to improve the welfare of children whose mothers were facing poverty and had to work to provide for their family. Infant mortality was high and the Kindergarten Union was only able to provide day care services for a few hours a day. With no other option, these young children were often left to fend for themselves among the streets of working class Sydney.

In response, the Association opened its first Day Nursery in a terrace house in Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo in 1905, the first long day care centre in NSW. For just three pence a day, babies and children were bathed, fed, clothed and cared for from 7.00am to 6.30pm.

Due to overwhelming demand, the Association opened Day Nurseries in five more locations in the inner city soon after. These were all areas of need in Sydney with large working populations.



Bankstown Soldiers’ Settlement: public school, c1918. Collections of State Library of New South Wales, GPO 1 - 38340

History of Milperra

The traditional owners of the land at Milperra are acknowledged as the Dharug (also spelled Daruk or Darug).¹

In 1799 the first land grant in this area was made to William Heath, then George Johnston Junior. By the end of World War I the Commonwealth government set aside part of the Johnston Junior land grant for the Soldiers’ Settlement Scheme to help resettle war-damaged returning servicemen. In 1917, land of ti-trees and suckling timber was chosen at Milperra, divided into eight vegetable and 48 poultry farms, and officially named ‘Bankstown Soldiers’ Settlement.’

The servicemen worked hard on the farms, and lived with their families in weatherboard huts. In 1918 Bankstown Soldiers’ Settlement was named ‘Milperra’ and a two-room school was

‘It was a pleasure to see the official opening of SDN Milperra, by the Federal Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, the Hon Peter Garrett, AM. This was a wonderful collaboration: between Federal vision and money; the land’s State owners; Milperra Public School; the local council; and SDN.’

SDN Annual Report 2012

created for the Settlement children (now Milperra Public School). The area boasted market gardens and poultry farms until 1960 when it was subdivided for housing.

By 1974 Milperra College of Advanced Education was established, in 1983 becoming Macarthur Institute of Higher Education, and in 1989 the University of Western Sydney (Bankstown).

Expanding SDN in Western Sydney

SDN has always sought to serve the communities of most urgent need in Sydney. In 2010, SDN was successful in its application for a \$1.6 million Federal Government grant as part of our goal to expand its service in areas where SDN



SDN Milperra children present their vivid painting to The Hon Peter Garrett AM, MP, then Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, at SDN Milperra official opening, 1 August 2012. Source: Anna Zhu

'It is an amazing experience to celebrate the opening of SDN Children's Services newest centre. So many people have been involved in the collaborative process of envisioning, building and opening SDN Milperra.'

Susan Salter, then SDN President, Community Times, Issue 98, Aug 2012

already had a presence. SDN was thrilled to strengthen its service in Western Sydney by opening a new Children's Education and Care Centre in the flourishing suburb of Milperra.

SDN Milperra officially opens on 1 August 2012

On 30 April 2012, SDN Milperra began operating in the grounds of Milperra Public School, SDN's first centre co-located with a school. On 1 August 2012 it opened officially, and excited guests included families and the local community, as well as Bankstown Mayor Khal Asfour, and a representative from Bankstown City Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee Aunty Margaret Goneis.

The Hon Peter Garrett AM, MP, then Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, proudly unveiled the centre's plaque, cut the bright orange SDN cake, and was delighted when the children presented him with their gorgeous painting.



Stars are born! The glittering stage of SDN Milperra Preschool One Room Theatre in 2015. Source: Anna Zhu

About this history and the SDN Archive

This history was put together from documents in the SDN Archive, the City of Sydney, the Dictionary of Sydney, and 'The History of Milperra' by Andrew Molloy.

The SDN Archive, established in 2002, is a unique resource in Australia's early childhood education sector. You can also see the SDN Archive on HistoryPin:

<https://www.historypin.org/en/person/32804/>

SDN Children's Services runs 24 children's education and care centres throughout NSW and the ACT, as well as providing a range of disability support services for children and families.



SDN Milperra children exercise healthy bodies with outdoor adventures and special friends in 2015. Source: Anna Zhu

Five years of fun!

In 2012 SDN hosted 100 eager visitors on Community Open Day, welcoming children to try different toys, read books, and make new local friends. The same year they enthusiastically participated in National Simultaneous Story Time, joining 170,000 children Australia-wide to read *The Very Cranky Bear* by Nick Bland, accompanied by their favourite teddy or animal toy.

This lovely literacy initiative was supported with integrated learning activities where children had opportunities to express themselves emotionally and artistically. They created bear faces to demonstrate emotions and played iPad interactive learning games.

In 2015, the children stepped into the spotlight, live on stage in their home-made Preschool One Room Theatre, dazzling audiences with their acting and ushering talent, via a cast of dragons, cats, witches and frogs.

During 2016 they explored 'belonging' by together creating a colourful Belonging Board. SDN Milperra continues to provide early childhood education and child care for 60 children from infancy to school age.

SDN Milperra today

Since its beginnings, SDN Milperra has undergone changes, reflecting a strong connection with our families within a vibrant and diverse community.

The changes in the sector to increase the quality of early childhood education and care have affirmed our own approach to professional skilled staff and services since our beginnings.

What hasn't changed is SDN's vision and commitment to addressing social inequalities, improving children's quality of life and enhancing the life chances for all children.



Curious SDN Milperra children creatively explore 'belonging' in 2016. Source: Anna Zhu

¹ Spelling sourced from the AIATSIS Language and People's Thesaurus