

Beginnings of ...

SDN Hurstville

‘We value collaborative relationships with families and we help children to connect with their local community..’

SDN Hurstville, *SDN website*

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 more locations in the inner city soon after. These were all areas of need in Sydney with large working populations.



The original corner shop on Dora Street, 1996. Source: SDN Archive

History of Hurstville

The traditional owners of the area are the Bediagal people¹. The river lands were and are very important for the Aboriginal owners, with evidence of campsites and artworks all along the Georges River.

The name for the suburb of Hurstville is thought to come from the combination of the word ‘hurst’ meaning a ‘wooded hill’, and ‘ville’ meaning ‘town’.

The suburb of Hurstville grew quickly after the Illawarra Railway line opened in 1884. Also in that year, the Hurstville Steam Brick Company was opened (Judds Brickworks) providing more employment. Hurstville’s Westfield shopping centre opened in 1978.

Since the 1990s, immigration has seen a wonderfully vibrant Chinese Australian community flourish.



SDN Hurstville during construction, 1996. The front section was kept but the rest was rebuilt. Source: SDN Archive

‘SDN also expressed interest in taking on the management of St George’s Child Care Centre [...]. This centre has to move from its current premises and thus the Association is seeking a suitable site for relocation’

1996 SDN Annual Report

St George child care centre needs a new home

SDN Hurstville started as an entirely different child care centre—the St George Child Care Centre located on the corner of Forest Road and The Avenue. In 1995, the centre had been informed by their Anglican Church management that it needed to find a new home and a new owner. The centre was important to the community, so everyone hoped it could stay open!

The St George centre asked SDN to take over as the new operators. The centre would become an SDN centre, expanded with more places for children.

SDN agreed it was a good idea to take over the centre and to find a new property within the Hurstville area.

In late 1996, SDN found a suitable property - a corner shop and residence at 155 Dora Street. The building received extensive alterations and extensions in anticipation of becoming SDN's new centre.

On 17 January 1997, SDN officially took over the operation of the St George Child Care Centre, and it was re-named SDN Hurstville Long Day Care. However, the staff and families continued to patiently wait for the Dora Street building to be ready for the big move.



Drawing on the invitation to the opening of SDN Hurstville in 1998. SDN Archive.

SDN Hurstville officially opens in 1998!

The centre moved into the new building in Dora Street on 13 October 1997. However, everything was so busy that the official opening event was held the following year, on 18 March 1998. SDN Hurstville was declared open by Senator Marise Payne in front of guests,



SDN Hurstville's official opening in 1998 with (l-r) Margi Barns (SDN Coordinator), Senator Marise Payne, and Effie Bland (SDN Board Member). Source: SDN Archive

such as SDN's Patron and the centre architect, and families. Everyone remarked on the impressive light and airy environment!

The SDN community

Community is important at SDN and SDN Hurstville is part of the SDN family.



SDN Hurstville's long term staff members, photographed in 2014.

Staff members Julie Watson, Micheline Azar, Lili Guo, Annie Ding, Tracey Brunton and Amanda Santos have all happily worked at SDN Hurstville for more than 10 years.

SDN Hurstville's Centre Director Amanda Santos also has a special family connection. Amanda fondly recalls attending the previous centre as a child, where her god-mother was a teacher. Amanda's brother attended the current centre as a child, and Educator Julie herself remembers a young Amanda visiting the centre to collect him!



Reading a story during Book Week at SDN Hurstville, August 2012. Books were read in different languages. Source: SDN's *Community Times*

Improving indoor and outdoor spaces

In 2015, the foyer was renovated with a new reception desk, tiled floors, a fresh coat of paint, new entrance door, storage areas, and frosted glass window frontage to block out the sun.

In 2016, the garden and play area was newly designed and landscaped to provide a safe and exciting outdoor space to develop curiosity, physical skills and social play.

'Many of our educators have worked at SDN Hurstville for over 10 years. We have a diverse team of qualified early childhood professionals that includes Mandarin, Cantonese, Malay and Arabic-speaking team members.'

SDN Hurstville—SDN website



Celebrating the Moon Festival, 2016. Source: SDN's *Community Times*

SDN Hurstville today

Since its beginnings, SDN Hurstville has undergone many changes, reflecting a strong connection with our families within a 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 our vision and commitment to addressing social inequalities, improving children's quality of life and enhancing the life chances for all children.



Connecting in the new outdoor green play spaces, 2018. Photo: Anna Zhu.

About this history and the SDN Archive

This history was put together from documents held in the SDN Archive, and information from the Dictionary of Sydney website.

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 23 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.

¹ Spelling sourced from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council