

# Beginnings of SDN Crookwell Preschool

sdn  
children's services

*"Our current team of educators at Crookwell...  
admire the commitment made by previous educators and director,  
and are excited for the future of the preschool."*

- SDN Crookwell, Centre Director Amanda Wooll, Crookwell Gazette 2021

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

## History of Crookwell

Today, the town of Crookwell in the Upper Lachlan Shire has a population of almost 3000. Its nearest major centre is Goulburn, 45 kilometres to the southeast. The traditional owners of the land are the Wiradjuri Nation. The Wiradjuri Nation is incredibly large and encompasses the lands of the

*"The preschool's continued progress and success is a tribute to the energy and foresight of those dedicated people on the committees over the years, and that of the Directors and their assistants."*

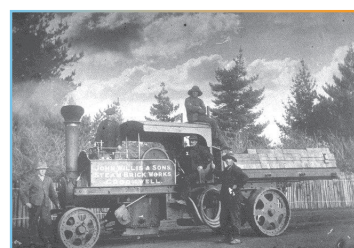
- June Dennis, preschool director  
1977 - 1983, Crookwell Gazette,  
September 27, 2012

modern towns of Dubbo and Orange, all the way down to Griffith and Albury on the Victorian border.

The area around Crookwell was first surveyed in 1820 but it was not named by the colonists until after Surveyor Armstrong wrote in a report in August 1860 that "It would be appropriate to call it Crookwell". Between the 1840s and 1860s squatters had begun to cultivate wheat and potatoes and in the 1860s the town began to be mapped out.

By the time the railway arrived in 1901, Crookwell was known as a farming town with significant interests in sheep and dairy cattle as well as potatoes. Its secondary industry included butter factories. Today, Crookwell has the service industry and infrastructure of 21st century Australia, but agriculture remains the town's core business. Along with more traditional farming pursuits, more recent ventures include olive farming and alpaca fibre.

Tourism in Crookwell has grown in recent years and today it is the third biggest industry. Crookwell has also developed into a popular destination for tree-changing retirees.



Above: Aveling & Porter steam truck of John Willis & Sons, Steam Brick Works (1920) - Crookwell, NSW. Courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

## The First Crookwell Preschool

During the 1960s the Crookwell community recognised the need for preschool facilities, but getting one up and running was no easy task. The local community rallied around to raise funds and repurposed some of the town's existing buildings for the original Crookwell Preschool, which opened on 16 June 1970.



Above: Bird's eye view of Preschool, original building old Roslyn schoolhouse - June 10, 1980

The preschool was the original school house from nearby Roslyn, which was transported to the location in 1979. An old classroom from Crookwell Public School was also reborn at the preschool to provide more space. An insight into the early days was provided by Gillian Montgomery, the first Director of the preschool, who disclosed that her wages were \$35 a week, the allocation for equipment was \$100, and families paid 90 cents per session for each child in attendance.

## SDN Crookwell

In 2002 SDN Children's Services took over the administration of the preschool and it became known as SDN Crookwell. In September 2012, SDN CEO Ginie Udy joined politicians, preschool founders and the community at large to celebrate 42 years of early childhood education at Crookwell. Ginie was quoted in the *Crookwell Gazette* on SDN's administration of the preschool: "We were able to continue

*the local responsiveness that a rural pre-school needs, together with the opportunities and strengths that a large organisation can provide...I think this is a winning combination."*

SDN Crookwell is rated an Exceeding centre, providing high quality preschool education for children aged 3-5 and is much loved within its community.

During celebrations for the 20th anniversary of SDN Crookwell, Centre Director Amanda Woolf

spoke of the pride her team feels in their ongoing work: "Our team at SDN Crookwell Preschool wishes to continue to achieve high standards for our Crookwell community. We want families to continue to feel confident in the care and education their children receive from us. We hope families feel included and develop warm relationships with each other and our educators. We wish for the children to feel joy and that they love attending our preschool."



Above: Snowed in SDN Crookwell, 30 August 2021



Above: 'Big schoolers' from Crookwell Public School visiting, May 2021

### Top Quality Early Childhood Education

*"SDN Crookwell Preschool is showing an ongoing commitment to ensuring children in Crookwell have access to top quality early childhood education."*

- Pru Goward MP for Goulburn in response to SDN Crookwell's Makespace proposal, *Crookwell Gazette*, 2 July 2018



Above: Children playing outdoors at SDN Crookwell, August 2013

### Increasing Learning Outcomes

*"I started part-time at Crookwell Preschool in 1995 and became full-time in 1998, and in that time there have been many quality improvements to increase the learning outcomes for children."*

- SDN Crookwell Director Anne Reeves, *Crookwell Gazette*, 2 July 2018

## About this history and the SDN Archive

This history was put together from documents held in the SDN Archive and the Dictionary of Sydney. The SDN Archive, established in 2002, is a unique resource in Australia's early childhood education sector. SDN Children's Services runs 26 children's education and care centres throughout NSW and the ACT, as well as offering disability services for children and young people, and delivering government funded programs supporting children and families and other sector organisations.

**sdn**  
children's services