

Beginnings of SDN Hurstville

sdn
children's services

"It has been great to work at the same centre for nearly twenty years, and to have had the opportunity to work my way up through various positions to become the Centre Director"

— Amanda Santos, SDN Hurstville Director

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 Hurstville

The traditional owners of the area are the Bidjegal 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



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

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.

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!

"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

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



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.



Above: 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, such as SDN's Patron and the centre architect, and families. Everyone

remarked on the impressive light and airy environment!



Above: 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

On top of being the Centre Director, I am also the Educational Leader, supporting other areas such as early literacy. I am also passionate supporting children and my team to have a love and sense of fun of language through songs and picture books. I do love a good sing-a-long!

— Amanda Santos, SDN Hurstville Director



Above: Reading a story during Book Week at SDN Hurstville, August 2012. Books were read in different languages. Source: SDN 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.



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

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.



Above: a child begins their artistic education, SDN Hurstville 2023

¹Spelling sourced from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council

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. 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.

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