

Pre-School and Kindergarten

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The Pre-School Stage

At the end of World War II, Taroona, in common with many other areas, began to develop quite rapidly. Young married couples, both Tasmanian and migrant, settled in the district and there was a subsequent baby boom.

It was not very long before the need for preschooling was recognised but the Education Department was unable to provide a kindergarten at that stage because of its many commitments throughout the State. Some young parents and a few community minded residents set up a committee to explore other possibilities. In February 1950 their efforts, together with the co-operation of the local Presbyterian Church, led to the establishment of Taroona's first pre-school at the Church Hall in Taroona Crescent with Miss Tanner as teacher. However, as this accommodation only partly satisfied the heavy demand, a second preschool was opened in early 1953. This was at the Ex-Servicemens' Hall in Jenkins Street and Mrs K. Goldsmith (later Cannock) was the teacher.

Although not ideal for pre-school use, the halls were adequate in most respects and both had sufficient ground to allow for outdoor activities. The Education Department provided the teachers and paid half the rent, while the parents were responsible for the remaining half, plus some maintenance costs and provision of equipment. To defray these costs a small levy was charged for each pupil and the Parents' and Friends' Association organised occasional stalls, coffee mornings and cabaret evenings.

Between them these two schools catered for sixty to seventy children, aged from three to five years. There were two sessions per day, with the younger children attending the shorter afternoon session and the four to five plus group in the mornings. The teachers were kind and caring, and the parents interested and helpful. A roster of mothers provided help for the teachers, while the fathers held occasional working bees for the provision or installation of equipment and for maintenance tasks. It was very much an era of self help.

The pre-school experiment worked well. There was a happy atmosphere at the two schools and enrolments remained high. However, by the mid 1950s some parents were



The Pre-School of 1952, taken outside the Presbyterian Church Hall in Taroona Crescent.

ROBYN GEEVES.

beginning to question the wisdom of two years' attendance at pre-school. It was felt that the older group of children aged four to five and a half might be better served by a traditional kindergarten, preferably attached to the local State Primary School at Coolamon Road. In 1956, following discussions with the Supervisor of Pre-schools, Miss Elspeth Vaughan, the Parents' and Friends' Association selected a deputation to meet with the Minister for Education and put the case for a kindergarten. Subsequently the request was granted and plans were drawn up.

The Kindergarten at Coolamon Road

The extensions made to the State Primary School consisted of a spacious classroom with adjoining cloakroom and storeroom. This kindergarten opened in the first term of 1957, with Mrs I. Watts as teacher, and an enrolment of thirty two children, aged four to five and a half. The Department provided basic furniture and the Pre-school Parents' and Friends' Association added refinements and equipment for various activities.

For some considerable time the State Primary School had been inadequate for its needs and plans were in the pipeline for a new

school on part of the land set aside earlier for the State High School. Later, when the first stage of this school was opened in June 1960, the primary grades moved from Coolamon Road leaving the premises for the sole use of the kindergarten pupils and their teacher, Mrs I. Duncan. Also about this time the original Tarooma Pre-schools were discontinued, so that henceforth the parents had to make their own arrangements for children aged three to four years at private schools or creches.

During its occupancy of the Coolamon road school the kindergarten consisted sometimes of one class, sometimes of two classes, and by the 1970's a Preparatory class was added for children aged five to six years. Additional staff were appointed to teach these extra classes. The complex was not under the jurisdiction of the State Primary School for these years.

Disaster struck on the first day of the May holidays in 1974 when fire destroyed the old school at Coolamon Road. The timbers must have been tinder dry and the firemen were unable to save the building. Once again Tarooma was without a kindergarten.

New Kindergarten and Preparatory

The kindergarten teacher at the time,



Group of pupils in the grounds of Jenkins Street Pre-School, 1955.

Mrs Goldsmith (back right) and two mothers. PHOTO IRENE WATTS.

Education

Mrs Freezer, tells a vivid tale of the shock of the fire and the frantic efforts through the holidays to have new accommodation ready for the second term. The Education Department excelled itself and rapidly provided three Terrapin huts which were erected adjacent to the State Primary School.

Lists were compiled of all the equipment likely to be required and these items, including a piano, were also supplied at speed. Mothers did their share by making curtains for the new rooms and general cleaning up. Ready or not, and with a welter of mud outside, the Kindergarten and Preparatory opened their doors on the first day of Term 2 - a great achievement.

While teachers and children worked happily in their temporary quarters for the next two and half years a new building was erected nearby. This was opened on the 6th December, 1976 by Neil Batt, then Minister for Education, in good time for the beginning of the next school year. This new kinder-

garten/preparatory block is now ten years old and is still in use. The kindergarten caters for approximately forty pupils in a two session arrangement with one teacher, a part-time aid and a roster of helping mothers. The preparatory class is separate and has its own teacher. Although situated a short distance from the main School buildings, the whole section is now an integral part of the State Primary School.

Since the new kindergarten opened many of the pupils attending it are themselves the children of former pre-schoolers of the forties and fifties. Time flies and history repeats itself.

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A combined group from both Pre-Schools perform finger games at an afternoon concert held in the Old Public Hall in 1956. Miss Tanner seated at piano.

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