



# History of the Griffith Preschool Kindergarten

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## Est. 16 August 1954

The Griffith Pre-School Kindergarten originated from the actions of Mr & Mrs Ron Dalla who considered that such an educational establishment should be developed. As a result of this on Tuesday 14th August 1951, Shire President Cr. Percy Hamilton convened a Public Meeting at the Council Chambers for the purpose of considering the establishment of a pre-school kindergarten in Griffith. A committee was formed and their task was to search out and gain approval of a suitable block of land on which a pre-school building could be constructed.

President	Mr F W Rangott
Vice President	Mrs F Speirs
Secretary	Mr P F Robinson
Treasurer	Mr R Cummings
Committee	Messrs Dalla and Newil and Mesdames Butler, McGuinness, Wilson, Dalla, Ward and Smith

On 11th May 1953 council asked the committee to consider Section 34 as a suitable site and when this met the committee's requirements council gave approval for the erection of a kindergarten building on this site on 26th May 1953. A building application was submitted on 30th June 1953 and work commenced shortly after. The land which is presently occupied by the pre-school was gazetted on 7th August 1959 to be reserved from sale and leased generally for the purposes of a day nursery with the Shire of Wade as trustees of the land being reserve no 81848.

Prior to obtaining the land the committee had a sum of 17,000 pounds with which to erect a building as a pre-school centre. This money had been raised by Rotary in 1951 for this exact purpose. Mr Ron Dalla had organised a raffle of a Ford motor car and obtained the vehicle through the agency of Sid Vagg who generously donated his profit from the vehicle. 2,500 tickets were printed and all were sold at 1 pound per ticket. Mr Dalla also wrote to the Ford Co at Geelong who kindly donated their freight as well as the Ford Co in Detroit who sent a donation as well. The raffle was extremely successful and the winning ticket was drawn at the annual rotary ball in 1951. The entire proceeds from this

raffle were eventually given to the pre-school committee and in 1954; Rotarians supervised by Mr Jack Myott erected the original pre-school building as a community service project.

During July – August 1954, the then committee planted the gum trees around the perimeter of the school.

On August 16th, 1954 the Kindergarten was open to children aged from 3 years 9 months to school age and operated 5 days a week and the weekly fee was 10 shillings per child. The original building consisted of one small classroom, an open veranda, combined kitchen, office and toilet. The first teacher was an English lady Mrs Weatherall who commenced on the opening day and was relieved by Mrs June Sell at the beginning of 1956. Mrs Weatherall was away having to undergo an emergency appendix operation and Mrs Sell was asked to fill in as many parents knew of her vast experience as governess to David, John and James Woodside, for the previous five years. When Mrs Weatherall was unable to return Mrs Sell was appointed full time teacher. At the time in 1956, 28 pupils were enrolled with 8 on the waiting list as the centre could only cater for the 28 that were enrolled. During a meeting called by the Wade Shire Council on 5th April, 1956 it was moved that the fees be increased to 15 shillings per child per week.

On 3rd October 1956 the first constitution was drawn up and a Management committee established. The shire appointed three trustee organisations to operate within the management committee and these were Rotary represented by Mr Ron Dalla, Griffith Ex-Servicemen's Club represented by Mr George McKenzie and the Griffith Branch of the CWA was represented by Mrs Broome.

All playground equipment and indoor equipment was donated by the Griffith Ex-Servicemen's club. A record player and its future maintenance, if any, was donated by Mr W Rangott and various trees and lawn was donated by the Premier Nursery.

A parents committee has been in existence since the pre-school opened in 1954 and this committee has always been elected on an annual basis with many parents contributing time and talent over the years and raising much needed monies to aid the centre. In the early days before government



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subsidies, the school ran entirely off the fees paid and the monies raised by the various parents committees. This could not have been easy and a tribute must be paid to all the parents committees over the years.

Since inception in 1956 the management committee has controlled wages, maintenance of the buildings, and employment of staff and in recent times the obtaining of government subsidy. The constitution was altered in 1978 to bring it in line with parent involvement in the management committee. An alteration had taken place in 1974 whereby the Ex-Servicemen's Club was replaced by the Soroptimist Club as a trustee. In that year also Mr Dalla resigned from the committee after 23 years involvement during which time he had seen his idea grow into a flourishing, much needed and very successful institution. Also in 1974 an advisor for pre-schools attached to the Department of Youth and Community Services was appointed and this was a Mrs Atty who used to travel from Sydney. In 1977 the advisor, Mrs Southwood as a Wagga based person, and finally in 1980 an advisor was based in Griffith, Miss Corallee Jones.

The new Management Committee of 1974 consisted of:

Mr Bruce Barber, representing Wade Shire

Mrs Nell Norton, representing Griffith CWA, who replaced Mrs Broome who retired after 18 years service

Mr Reg Trewin, from Rotary, replacing Mr Stan Polkinghorne

Mrs Estelle Trewin from the Soroptimist Club, who replaced the Ex-Servicemen's Club Representative.

The building was extended in 1962 with increased classroom size and a new toilet block and was further extended in 1968 with the addition of another classroom, the enclosing of the front veranda and a new double door entrances. The plans and specifications for both extensions were donated by architect Mr SJ O'Halloran and the construction of these extensions were provided on a no profit basis by Mr Peter Salvestrin. In 1968 the ex-servicemen's club donated an oil heating unit and its installation and Griffith Rotary donated a new refrigerator. The building was further extended in 1981 and brick veneered. The then management committee approved the installation of reverse cycle heating and cooling as part of the extension programme, plus aluminium sliding windows replaced the louvers on the front veranda.

The staff since inception underwent very few changes with the exception of additions as enrolments increased.

When the centre opened on 16th August 1954, Mrs Wetherell was the sole teacher. Due to her illness Mrs June Sell commenced at the beginning of 1956 and remained until her retirement in May 1979. For the first 18 months Mrs Sell ran the centre alone and in 1957 a part time assistant commenced duties. By 1960 enrolments had increased and a further part time assistant, Mrs Gray was appointed. She served for 11 years retiring in 1971. In 1962, by which time the centre catered for 65 children Mrs Grey was appointed full time assistant. By 1968 the centre had grown further and a part time assistant, Mrs Gregory was appointed to assist both Mrs Sell and Mrs Grey. When Mrs Grey retired in 1971 Mrs Gregory became fulltime assistant and Mrs Moroney was appointed to the part time position, until her retirement in 1975. By 1975 enrolments had increased to 82 children and a further part time assistant was required to which end Mrs Zilliotto was hired, and Mrs Whiteside replaced Mrs Moroney. Mrs Moroney retired in 1976 and Mrs Jan Gee was appointed and when Mrs Gregory retired in 1977 after 7 years of service Mrs Gee was appointed full time assistant. By 1977 78 children were enrolled and the only staff change was the appointment of Miss Colbourne (now Mrs Wynne) as part time assistant. In 1979 a total of 142 children passed through the centre and Mrs Sell's position was filled by Mrs Amada Pike. At that time it was necessary to employ 2 full time assistants and 1 part time assistant. A position for Miss Janelle McCleary (now Mrs Dougherty) was created in 1980 as enrolments had reached the maximum permissible of 100 children, and a large waiting list had been created.

At the time of writing, June 1982, the staff consisted of:

Director	Mrs Pike
2 Full Time Assistants	Mrs Gee and Mrs Wynne
2 Part Time Assistants	Mrs Zilliotto and Mrs Dougherty

The pre-school was running at a maximum enrolments and the committee of trustees was a mentioned earlier.