

# HISTORY OF PDA



PRESCHOOL DIRECTORS  
ASSOCIATION OF  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

## DATE ASSOCIATION COMMENCED

The inaugural annual general meeting of the Preschool Directors Association of South Australia was held at The Orphanage in Term 3, 1996.

## KEY PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION

PDA seeks to influence the ongoing provision of high-quality education and care programs for young children across South Australia. The majority of members are employed as preschool directors with the Department for Education and Child Development.

## LEVELS OF CARE AND EDUCATION

Early Childhood

## HISTORY

The impetus for the formation of the Preschool Directors Association stemmed from two preschool directors (Marilyn Clark and Pauline Robertson) who had joined the Junior Primary Principals' Association (JPPA) in 1995. They saw the impact that the consultancy role of the principal associations had on Departmental decisions and the level of professional support the associations gave their members. While there were a number of professional associations operating in the early childhood area at that time, preschool directors did not have a platform for participating in decision making about the administration and management of their centres.

With the encouragement of the principal associations and the particular support of JPPA, initial moves were made to investigate the viability of an association for preschool directors. Robyn Waller, then President of JPPA, was particularly helpful in providing advice.

An initial meeting for interested preschool directors was held at Dover Kindergarten in (about) May 1996. A core group of about 20 directors expressed interest and a steering committee was formed.

## **HISTORY**

It should be noted that this was not enthusiastically embraced by the hierarchy of the Children's Services Office. In fact quite the opposite. Bearing in mind that this took place in the year before the CSO was absorbed by the Department of Education and so was a time of nervousness and lack of clarity about future direction, this was seen as unnecessary at best and an act of disobedience at worst. There were also a small number of preschool directors and a few existing early childhood professional associations who viewed those who supported the formation of the association as renegades and were very wary of a possible disruption to the status quo.

However, with a little seeding funding from JPPA and considerable work by the steering committee, the legal requirements for setting up the association were fulfilled, and the inaugural annual general meeting was held at The Orphanage in Term 3, 1996.

### **The elections resulted in the following positions:**

- Marilyn Clark (President)
- Pauline Robinson (Vice President)
- Judi Wilson (Treasurer)
- Sue McFarlane (Secretary)

There was a committee of 16 elected from across the metro area.

We were soon included as members of the Coalition of Principal Associations and by the end of the year had started to meet regularly with the Minister, the CEO, and the Executive Director of Children's Services.

Membership grew rapidly and had reached 75 by the end of the first year. Committee meetings were held monthly and a termly newsletter (on distinctive bright orange paper) was distributed termly. There was great support from country areas, and we began regular visits to a number of rural directors meetings. Marilyn Clark was president until 2001 and was followed by Suzie Cottle, Victoria Willcox and Jen Mathwin Raymond. In 2006, a 10-year celebration dinner was held at the Old Lion Hotel. Marian Nayda was President from about 2007-2011. Marilyn Clark was president again from 2012 to 2016 and Anne Millhouse took over in 2017.

## HISTORY

Throughout 2020 to 2021 the PDA Committee worked with the then Minister for Education, the Hon. John Gardner to secure government funding to employ a full-time paid President position. During this transition phase PDA was funded by the Department for Education to employ incumbent president, Ann Millhouse, on a part time basis to lead the recruitment and selection process for a full-time president and to begin a process for altering the constitution to support the new president role. The role was advertised early in 2022 and a selection panel set up which included, Ann Millhouse, Marian Nayda, Jose Thompson, and Kathryn Jordan.

The panel recommended the appointment of Kate Ryan to the position of PDA President, and this was accepted by the board in June 2022. Kate began in the role on 28th July 2022.

Over the 2022-2024 period the PDA Committee undertook the task of ensuring the association was governed well and in a contemporary manner. The committee engaged in strategic planning, policy development, engaged a bookkeeping service, attended governance training, and created a new constitution to clarify governance and operational matters. The new constitution was approved by the Office for Consumer and Business Affairs in April 2024 and the committee became officially known as a board and the Vice President was assigned the role of Chair of all meetings of the Board.



**GET IN TOUCH WITH US!**

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