

# New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind

1869 – 1957

**Other Names:** • New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, the Dumb and the Blind

## Details

---

The Deaf and Dumb Institution, founded in 1860, was renamed the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind in 1868. It was a public institution for the education of deaf and blind children and had a residential facility for school-aged children. Initially based at Ormond House (Juniper Hall) in Paddington, the Institution moved to a new building in Darlington (Newtown), on the Princes Highway in 1872. At its peak the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind had 242 children enrolled in its school, many of whom were boarders. In 1957, Queen Elizabeth II conferred the title 'Royal' on the Institution, at which point it became the Royal New South Wales Institution for Deaf and Blind Children.

The New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind was the most important institution for educating children with deafness and blindness in New South Wales. It was begun by Thomas Pattison, a deaf and dumb Scottish migrant who had been educated in Edinburgh. He began the Deaf and Dumb Institution in rented accommodation in various sites in Sydney. By 1869 the organisation was renamed and based at Ormond House (Juniper Hall) and was recognised as a public institution, in receipt of government funding. It had also been given land at Darlington, near Newtown, for a new purpose-built institution.

Deafness and blindness were common in the 19th century in Sydney, and were particularly associated with outbreaks of rubella (German measles), which affected unborn babies during their mother's pregnancy, although the link would not be understood until the 1940s. When children became or were born deaf, it was hard for them to learn to speak, rendering them 'dumb'. The New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind worked on the principle that deafness and blindness did not impair a child's intelligence, and used the best international methods to help children and adults function in the wider community, gain employment and live meaningful lives.

The Institution received wide support in Sydney, including from Sir Arthur Renwick, who was a leader of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales and the Royal Women's Hospital. Renwick was a founder of state care for children in New South Wales, and the first president of the State Children's Relief Board.

The Institution worked closely with other government agencies. The State Children's Relief Board Annual Reports, researched by Naomi Parry (2007) record that state children with hearing and vision problems were sent to the Institution, and children who were living at the Institution but had nowhere to go during school holidays took vacations at the Mittagong Cottages. During the influenza pandemic of 1919 the Institution building was converted to a hospital and children were evacuated to Mittagong Cottage Homes.

The New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and the Blind was incorporated under an Act of Parliament in 1905. Rubella outbreaks in that year resulted in a surge in the school's population in 1909 and 1910. At this time Alice Betteridge, the first deaf-blind child to be educated in Australia, enrolled in the school. From 1911 the school began to teach deaf children to speak, and taught blind children Braille.

From 1942-1946, during World War II, the Institution building was requisitioned by the military, and children were sent home for lessons by correspondence, or to the Child Welfare Department. A building in Wahroonga was purchased at this time as a residential and day school. It was not compulsory for deaf and blind children to be educated until 1944. Wahroonga became an Education Department school from 1948 and in 1956 the Education Department assumed responsibility for education at Darlington.

In 1957 Queen Elizabeth II bestowed the prefix 'Royal' on the Institution, resulting in a name change.

## Gallery

---

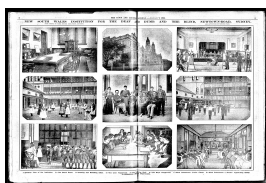


**Juniper Hall**



**Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Waratah**

**Description:** This is a copy of an image that appeared in a *Catholic Weekly* article in 1934 and included the caption: 'This picture is taken from the plan. The portions under construction are the side wings.'



**New South Wales Institution for the Deaf the Dumb and the Blind, Newtown-Road, Sydney**

**Description:** This is a copy of a photographic spread that appeared in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* on Saturday 7 January 1899. The photos are by Tasma Studios, King Street, Newtown. The images came with the following captions: 1.-Exterior View of the institution. 2.-The Board Room. 3.-Drawing and Modelling Class. 4.-The Girl's Playground. 5.-The Teaching Staff. 6.-The Boys' Playground. 7.-Blind Schoolroom (Junior Class). 8.-Blind Schoolroom ("Braille" Typewriting Class). 9.-Schoolroom (Manual Department).



**Deaf, Dumb & Blind Institute, before extensive renovation and addition, Sydney**



**Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute building, Darlington**

**Description:** This is a copy of an negative taken by Sam Hood, possibly for Axtell's Ltd painters, and is part of the Home and Away Collection of the State Library of New South Wales

## More info

---

## Chronology

- Deaf and Dumb Institution (1860 - 1869)
  - **New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind (1869 – 1957)**
    - Royal Institution for Deaf and Blind Children (1957 - 1973)
    - Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (1973 - 2021)
    - NextSense (2021 - current)

## Related Entries

### Related Organisations

- [State Children's Relief Board \(1881 - 1923\)](#)  
State wards were sent to the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind and the State Children's Relief Board cared for children from the Institution during vacations and other periods
- [Child Welfare Department, State Government of New South Wales \(1923 - 1970\)](#)  
The Child Welfare Department sent state wards to the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, and looked after children from the Institution during periods of evacuation
- [Department of Education, State Government of New South Wales \(1915 - 1989\)](#)  
Education at the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind was overseen by the Department of Education, and the Department was responsible for education at the Wahroonga facility.  
Date: 1948 - 1957
- [Mittagong Cottage Homes \(1885 - 1976\)](#)  
State wards from Mittagong Cottage Homes were sent to the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind and children from the institution went to Mittagong for vacations and other periods

## Resources

- [First School Exclusively For Blind Children](#), Morning Bulletin, 20 March 1946

## Records

---

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

### Records

- [Records of the Royal Institution for Deaf and Blind Children \(1862 - current\)](#)
  - [Register of Incapacitated Persons Maintained in Institutions in Other Colonies \(1873 - 1897\)](#)
- 

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/new-south-wales-institution-for-the-deaf-dumb-and-blind/>