

Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers College, Graduates Association

1922 – 2005

Other Names:

- Past Students' Association, Free Kindergarten Union
- Institute of Early Childhood Development

Details

The Kindergarten Training College was established in 1922. Previously, kindergarten teachers were trained by the Free Kindergarten Union, established in 1908. In 1964, the Kindergarten Teachers College became a separate entity from the Free Kindergarten Union. In 1973 it became the Institute of Early Childhood Development.

Graduates of the Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers College ran two holiday homes for children from 1926, as well as two residential kindergartens which provided temporary, emergency care for children from 1960. The holiday home at Forest Hill was established in 1926, and a second one in Ringwood East began in 1937 (first known as Ware, and later as Warrawong). The Forest Hill kindergarten began to provide emergency residential care in 1960. Later that decade, Warrawong began to offer emergency care for families in crisis.

A newspaper article from 1936 described the origins of the holiday home at Forest Hill. It stated that the director of a kindergarten in Melbourne's poorer inner suburbs, "distressed at the obvious effect of under nourishment on some of the children", decided to take 2 or 3 children on a short country holiday at her own expense. She was delighted with the results, seeing that the children had gained weight and their health had improved. This experiment aroused the interest of past students of the Free Kindergarten Union's training college, and they decided to raise funds to establish a holiday home where children from inner city kindergartens could go for short periods. By the end of 1926, the graduates were able to buy a 14 acre property on Canterbury Road in Forest Hill, and in 1927, the first 10 children from Brunswick Kindergarten were the first to come to the new holiday home (*The Argus*, 14 December 1936).

Quality early childhood education and free kindergartens were seen in the 1950s as part of the solution to juvenile delinquency, which was a prominent social concern at that time. At the annual meeting of the Collingwood Mission Free Kindergarten in 1951, a Senior Policewoman K. McKay said that "the decrease in delinquency was largely due to the work being done in kindergartens", and that there were fewer cases of neglected children, also partly due to the work being done in kindergartens (*The Sun News-Pictorial*, 30 August 1951).

In the 1960s the kindergarten holiday homes at Forest Hill and Ringwood East began to provide emergency residential care for children.

In the late 1980s, Community Services Victoria reviewed the service at Forest Hill due to declining numbers and a shift away from institutional to foster care. The Kindergarten argued that foster care was not an acceptable alternative to the work done for children at Forest Hill. They stated that it was beneficial for children at Forest Hill to know that other children in the Home were in similar situations, with their family needing emergency help. The professional staff at Forest Hill offered the children care and support, but did not try to fill the role of parents. The

Emergency Kindergarten could also receive children several times a year when there were recurring family crises, offering continuity of both setting and personnel (Forest Hill Review Committee, 1987).

Despite this advocacy, the residential kindergarten at Forest Hill closed, and the Graduates Association sold the property in 1991. The Warrawong kindergarten was closed in 2003. It had switched from residential to emergency day care in the late 1960s, also providing a traditional kindergarten service for local children.

The Forest Hill Early Childhood Foundation was formed with part of the funds raised by the sale of the large property at Forest Hill. In 2005, after receiving further funds following the sale of the Warrawong site, it became the [Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies](#). In 2024, the Foundation exists to administer grants that contribute to the education, care and welfare of young children in Victoria and Australia. The Foundation grants projects from two separate funds, one for Forest Hill and one for Warrawong.

More info

Related Entries

Ran

- [Forest Hill Residential Kindergarten \(1927 - 1988\)](#)
- [Warrawong Kindergarten for Emergency Care \(1937 - 2003\)](#)

Resources

- Morrell, Elle, [Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria](#), The Australian Women's Register, 2001

Records

Records

- [Records of the Institute of Early Childhood Development Graduates Association \(1937 - 2003\)](#)

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