




History of the Napier Kindergarten Assn

On the 12 July 1951, a public meeting was called by the then Mayor, Mr Spriggs at the request of a group of enthusiasts led by Mrs Johnson and Mrs Spackman who were President and Secretary of the Napier Plunket Society. There were 48 people present at the first meeting held in the Napier City Council Chambers, many of whom remained working for the Kindergarten movement for several years.

An interim Committee was formed that night with Miss Bain a former infant mistress as Chairperson and Mr Tom Johnson as secretary. Mr Johnson remained for the next 12 years.



With the newly opened Marewa Kindergarten and Ohuriri (Carlyle) Kindergartens being very popular (opening with waiting lists of approx 60 children for each), staffing became the "Achilles Heel" of the Kindergarten movement. In 1955 Mrs Malcolm wrote in the annual report that untrained staff would have to paid for by the Association (£98 per year) rather than the Government and she was "greatly exercised by this matter". It seemed that the number of girls able to be trained under the latest training scheme were not sufficient to meet the demands of the quickly growing Kindergarten movement. Mrs Malcolm was supporting a initiative that would see a new training centre established in Palmerston North. She was reluctant to open any new Kindergartens at a huge cost of £2000 unless they were able to be staffed with fully trained staff. Mrs Malcolm had made special effort to recruit students from Napier Girls High, Hukarere, Tara and Woodford by allowing girls to observe in the Kindergartens and encourage them into a career in teaching.

The Association became an Incorporated Society at the end of 1951 and Mrs McKeever was elected president, within 18 months two

Kindergartens were set up in temporary premises, these being Marewa and Ohuivi (Earlyle) Kindergartens. In 1955 Mrs McKeever retired and Mrs Malcolm became the new president. A donation of £500 came from the N.F.S Pharmacy to build

permanent premises for Marewa Kindergarten. With additional fundraising and the Napier City Council making available some land in Bedford Rd next to the Plunket section, Marewa

Kindergarten was opened March 1956 by the Mayor Mr Spriggs. The annual report states that the opening was very successful, well attended and well organised with representatives coming from many different associations. A record for future building however is that the windows are higher because of the risk of

“falling stack”.