

## The History of the VICTORIAN SCHOOL FOR DEAF CHILDREN

The Founder, Mr. F. J. Rose, was educated at the Old Kent Road School for the Deaf in London and had become deaf at the age of 6 years from Scarlet Fever. He came to Australia in 1852 and after a short stay at Emerald Hill (South Melbourne), he and his brother followed the Gold Rush to Sandhurst (Bendigo). He opened a carpentry business there and from all accounts, was very successful.

In 1859 two letters appeared in the Melbourne Argus appealing for help for the deaf children of the colony as there were no educational arrangements for these handicapped children. Mr. Rose replied to these letters from Sandhurst and formed a friendship with the writer of one of these letters, Mrs. Sarah Ann Lewis, whose daughter Lucy Ann Lewis eventually became the first pupil. Mr. Rose inserted several advertisements in the newspapers in 1859 and 1860 requesting help and seeking information regarding numbers of deaf children within the colony. No help was forthcoming and after a brief visit to England in 1860, he returned with his bride and they rented a small house in a terrace in Peel Street, Windsor. On November the 12<sup>th</sup> 1860, Mr. Rose opened his school and the following notice appeared in the window of No. 3 Watford Terrace, Peel Street, Windsor:

*School for the Deaf and Dumb*

*3 Watford Terrace, Peel Street, Prahran*

*This establishment is now open for the education of the Deaf and Dumb upon the system as pursued in England, conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Rose (recently returned from England for the purpose), who would give every care and attention that would tend toward the comfort and enlightenment of the pupils.*

*Four Resident Boarders can be taken on reasonable terms, with the advantages of a comfortable home.*

*Prahran, Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> 1860.*

The School numbers grew quickly and within four years, it had been necessary to move three times. Firstly, in 1861 to a cottage in Henry Street, Windsor, (which still stands on the corner of Upton Road). Secondly in 1862 to a house in Nelson Street, Windsor. Thirdly, in 1864 to Leal House, Commercial Road, Prahran. This provided accommodation for approximately 40 scholars but the Committee realised that it was time for a permanent home and a building to be designed especially for the purpose.

In 1865 the Government, made a grant of land on the corner of St. Kilda Road and High Street, Prahran, and this present building was opened in 1866. It was designed by the Founder, Mr. F. J. Rose and the major part of the building was completed within six months of the laying of the Foundation Stone in March, 1866.

The Centenary Celebrations would not be complete unless a tribute was paid to a man who provided tremendous help, not only to Mr. Rose, but to the laying of the necessary steps which lead to the successful completion of 100 years of deaf education and welfare. This man was the Rev. William Moss. He came to Australia in 1848 as a private tutor to a wealthy colonial family. He was a Congregational Minister of Religion and he opened the first Christian Chapel in the Prahran district. The name of Chapel Street was taken from this building. He was the Honorary Secretary of the Provisional Committee set up early in 1861 to form a Public Corporate Organisation to carry on the education and welfare of deaf children. He was the first Honorary Secretary of the Corporate body when it was established in August, 1862, and continued as such

until his death in 1891. He was partly responsible for the formation of the Adult Deaf Society and the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind and was Superintendent of the Blind from 1878 to 1891.

There are many other people whose names could be honoured for having given unselfishly of their time and talents during the early years when the work was being established:

The members of the Provisional Committee established in 1861 were the Revs. William Moss, D. McDonald, James Bickford, S. L. Chase, the Hon. George Rolfe, M.L.C., the Hon. A. Fraser, Messrs. Jennings and Morrison. The inaugural meeting was held in the Mechanics Institute, Collins Street, Melbourne on 28th August 1862, in the presence of His Excellency the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Barkly, who acted as Chairman. The Minister of St. Paul's Church Melbourne, Rev. S. L. Chase, opened the meeting with prayer. The Rev. Floss read the report of the Provisional Committee, paid tribute to the outstanding services which had been given by Mr Rose and told of the progress made by the Committee prior to the calling of the Public Meeting.

The Bishop of Melbourne, Dr Charles Perry, and a minister of the Methodist Church, Rev. James Bickford, moved the Resolution that the Report of the Provisional Committee be adopted. Dr Adam Cairns, of the Presbyterian Church, and Rev. N. H. Becher, Incumbent of St. James' Cathedral, moved that the Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institution be inaugurated as a Public Institution, and the following Constitution was adopted:

#### **"CONSTITUTION OF THE VICTORIAN DEAF AND DUMB INSTITUTION"**

1. The objects of the Institution shall be:
  - a) To provide a Home and Instruction for the Deaf
  - b) To assist in the maintenance of those Deaf whose parents or friends may be unable to pay the required fees
2. The affairs of the Institution shall be administered by a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and a Committee of twelve others, three of whom shall form a quorum
3. The Officers and Committee shall be elected annually at a general meeting of contributors to the funds of the Institution of £10.00 and upwards; and of annual subscribers of £1.00 and upwards. The meeting shall be held in the month of August
4. Instruction in the truths of the Gospel shall be provided under the direction of the Committee, but Mutes shall be admitted to the full benefits of the Institution irrespective of creed or nation."

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS:**

Throughout the years there have been some outstanding achievements recorded:

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| 1862 | The first Committee of Management was formed and dedicated itself to the care and education of children handicapped by deafness   |
| 1866 | The establishment of the present building in St. Kilda Road   |
| 1879 | The introduction of the Oral System of Education in Australia   |
| 1913 | In 1913 the Education Department assumed responsibility for Education, leaving the Committee the responsibility for maintaining the home and caring for the general welfare of the deaf child |
| 1927 | The building by the Education Department of the present schoolrooms.  |
| 1949 | The alteration of the Corporate Name from Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institution to the Victorian School for Deaf Children   |
| 1950 | The establishment in Elgar Road, Burwood, of the Princess Elizabeth Kindergarten for the Deaf, as the first residential and daily preschool centre for deaf children in Australia             |

- 1957 The W. D. Cook Pre-school Centre was opened, built by the Board of Management -  
The first preschool unit in Australia for hereditary deaf children
- 1958 The acceptance by the Education Department of the responsibility of staffing the  
Princess Elizabeth Kindergarten for the Deaf
- 1960 We celebrated the centenary of the commencement of deaf education in Victoria.
- 1962 The 100th Annual Meeting was held
- 1963 A new wing of 3 classrooms was added at the Kindergarten
- 1963&1964 The modernisation of dormitory areas was carried out
- 1971 The establishment of the "H. P. Green" Wing by the Education Department.