

Deaf and Dumb Institution

1860 – 1869

Details

The Deaf and Dumb Institution was founded in Sydney in 1860 by Thomas Pattison, a deaf migrant from Scotland, to provide education to deaf children. It started as a private school, with a residential facility, in Liverpool Street, near South Head Road. It then moved to Castlereagh Street and was officially declared a public institution on 1 October 1861. It moved to larger premises on Old South Head Road in 1868. The Institution was renamed the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind in 1869.

Thomas Pattison, who was himself deaf and had been unable to speak, had been the secretary and treasurer of the Edinburgh Deaf and Dumb Benevolent Society and worked there as an assistant teacher for 20 years. On his arrival in Sydney he realised there was a high population of deaf people in New South Wales, many of whom could not speak and received no education or support to function in the wider community.

The Deaf and Dumb Institution opened on Monday 22 October 1860, with a few children, and was operated directly by Mr Pattison. On 1 October 1861 it became a public institution. At that time it had seven deaf and dumb pupils. By 1863 it was located in Pitt Street and had 22 pupils, of whom 11 were boarders. An assistant teacher, Miss Lentz, helped Mr Pattison and there was a matron. The schooling was paid for by the child's family and friends, or by the institution.

According to *The Sydney Morning Herald*, children were taught the 'deaf and dumb alphabet' and to apply words to the various objects around them. Children were taught writing and arithmetic, and prayer. The *Herald* commented on the benefits of this education:

It has been observed that the pupils gradually assume a more cheerful and happy aspect, as the intellect expands and new ideas break in upon the hitherto darkened mind, and generally after a residence of about six months they begin to write, and communicate their new and wondering ideas on paper, and then their progress in the acquirement of knowledge is particularly observable; the original stupid look which characterises the untaught deaf and dumb vanishes, and thus the great remove, which so long separated them from their fellows, disappears, and they begin to enjoy the blessings of civilised life.

Gallery



Juniper Hall

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)

Records

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

Records

- [Records of the Royal Institution for Deaf and Blind Children \(1862 - current\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/deaf-and-dumb-institution/>