



PRETTY BEACH PRESCHOOL OPENING MEDIA RELEASE

PRETTY BEACH COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL TO OFFICIALLY OPEN - A TRIUMPH OF WHAT A COMMITTED COMMUNITY CAN ACHIEVE

After almost two decades of hard work and dedication by local families, the new not-for-profit Pretty Beach Community Preschool (formerly Walsingham Community Preschool) is to be officially opened in September.

This architecturally designed building has already been awarded runner-up at the Keep Australia Beautiful 'Do the Right Thing' Waste Minimisation Award for its ecofriendly design including the use of recycled materials.

Local architect Milosh Obradovic (Site Studio) spent numerous hours working with the Preschool Committee to come up with what can only be described as an amazing facility for local children.

The building is situated behind Pretty Beach Public School on the site of the former school master's residence and includes materials from the original cottage.

The design concept is based on the well known children's book 'Where The Wild Things Are' and includes floor-to-ceiling poles that have been wrapped with tree trunks to replicate forest trees.

The playground was designed by local landscape architect David Duncan (Aspect Studio) who, with help from Luke Bradstreet (Landscape Construction), has developed a creative external environment which includes a vegetable garden that the children help plant and maintain.

The project cost in excess of \$950,000, with \$300,000 coming from capital works funding from Community Services NSW and the balance from fundraising activities, community donations and other Local and State Government grants.

Without the endless hours of work from staff, volunteer management committees and community members, the transformation of the building from vision to reality would not have been possible.

The new Preschool has been in the pipeline since the inception of Walsingham in August 1989 when locals obtained a lease from the local Catholic church parish to operate from its church at Wagstaffe. This was to be a temporary measure until a new site was found.

Between 1997 and 2000 the Preschool was extremely close to relocating to Empire Bay Drive at Bensville when the site fell through at the last minute.

Gosford City Council then suggested land it owned in Maitland Bay Drive at Killcare Heights which was explored between 2001 and 2005 but after two failed applications to have the land rezoned, the site was abandoned. →

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Things were looking very grim for the Preschool with the thought of either folding or moving to the Woy Woy Peninsula when a site directly behind Pretty Beach Public School, where the old principal's quarters were located, was suggested.

The Preschool Committee began negotiations with the NSW Department of Education which, in 2007, finally gave a commitment to support the idea.

Plans were drawn up and Council approvals obtained and work finally started on the new Pretty Beach Community Preschool in early 2009.

So after years of hard work and dedication, the local community can now celebrate what really has been a Herculean achievement.

Preschool Director Kim Chippindale said, "When I reflect on the past 10 years and my involvement in the Preschool's relocation, I have to say that nothing about the process was 'easy'. This makes the fact that we are here today operating from such a fantastic facility so amazing and an absolute credit to the persistence and dedication of past volunteer management committees, previous directors, parents and the broader community".

"What an incredible achievement for the local community. There were many times, even up to the commencement of the building works, when we thought the project may not get off the ground. With affordable childcare being an increasing problem, the new Preschool Building is confirmation that affordable childcare can be provided within a high quality environment" said Committee President Angus Kell.

The new Pretty Beach Community Preschool is now expanding at a rapid rate, with families from around the district - as far as Ettalong, Umina and Patonga - all vying for a place for their preschool children.

The building will be officially opened on Sunday 19th September at 11am. With the celebrations to start at 10.30am.

There'll be entertainment for the children and a sausage sizzle and everyone is invited to come along to check out this amazing local achievement.

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