

SIDS AND KIDS HUNTER REGION OUR HISTORY

Sudden Infant Death Association Newcastle and District Incorporated

1977 – 1980

Following the death of their son, Gary and Jenny Hamilton identify the need for local support and information for bereaved parents. After initial involvement with the newly formed SIDA (Sudden Infant Death Association) NSW they decide that Sydney is geographically distant to meet the needs of local families. They liaise with local health professionals and begin to receive notifications when a SIDS death occurs and provide support to these families. Gradually more parents and health professionals become involved and the local association is underway. Clara Foster becomes the driving force for the association following the death of her son in 1979.

1981-82

There are moves to formalise the association, as it is necessary to generate funds. Parents have been meeting all costs, which are increasing, as SIDA becomes more active. A constitution is adopted in preparation to become registered as a charity. For uniformity it is decided that the Newcastle organisation will register as the Sudden Infant Death Association Newcastle and District (SIDA); this requires the permission of SIDA NSW. The Upper Hunter SIDRF (Sudden Infant Death Research Foundation) is a separate group at this stage, linked with SIDRF Victoria. Other groups are also operating throughout the state and country.

1983

At a State Workshop in Newcastle, time is allocated for discussion of links between all the organisations in New South Wales with SIDA NSW proposed as the parent body. For Newcastle this proposal is just a little late; the application for charity status has been forwarded, the first newsletter produced and there are financial members and a few dollars in the bank for the first time. SIDA NSW allow SIDA Newcastle to operate separately with a similar name, the rest of the groups join SIDA NSW, with the exception of Upper Hunter SIDRF, which at this point has scaled down its activities.

1985

The first National SIDS Working Party holds general discussions and subsequently agrees to commence a National Body that will co-ordinate various activities, and maintain a consistent and coherent approach Australia wide in the areas of education and research.

1987

The Upper Hunter group decides to join SIDA Newcastle after working together more closely. Meetings have progressed from parents' homes to community venues, but administration continues to be conducted from Clara's home.

1988

Australia experiences its first Red Nose Day.

Red Nose Day in England was organised by a high profile UK comedy group called Comic Relief. This group raised money for African relief projects, the aged, and homeless youth in the UK. Following a great deal of research by the SIDRF VIC fundraising coordinator, the name was registered and other states were invited to participate in the first Red Nose Day. Some were hesitant initially; as Clara noted Red Noses seemed so far removed from the tragedy of SID, however SIDA Newcastle decided to support it from its inception.

1990

The SIDA drop-in-centre at Smith St Charlestown is opened just in time for the 1990 Red Nose Day Campaign. Upon completion of the campaign the drop-in-centre only operates between 9am and 2pm Tuesday to Friday

In December, the National SIDS Council Ltd is incorporated as a Company limited by Guarantee. All nine member organisations (one for each state or territory plus SIDA Newcastle) maintain their own autonomy, working together as a Federation.

1991

Following the 1991 Red Nose Day campaign the drop-in-centre continues to be relatively busy, so a period of remaining open during office hours is trialed. The number of people calling in for support, education and information, phone calls and other national business warrants keeping the centre open during these hours on an ongoing basis.

1993

The lease on the Charlestown premises is renewed for another 2 years but the search begins for a larger venue.

1994

By mid-1994 a property is found that appears to have a great deal of potential and a purchase price that can be afforded. However it requires major renovations before it can become the inviting drop-in-centre visualised and the budget cannot expand to meet those costs.

SIDA Newcastle approaches the local building industry and other associated businesses for assistance. The response and generosity of many local businesses is overwhelming.

1995

The drop-in-centre is relocated to Hamilton South amidst renovations at the end of June. A complete transformation of the building occurs and the 'hall' purchased evolves into a drop-in-centre beyond expectations. Practically, businesses and individuals from the Hunter community have donated all the labour and materials. A permanent framed display at the drop-in-centre acknowledges the gratitude to these sponsors for their outstanding support.

1998

A presentation is made to Clara to acknowledge her years of work and dedication to the National SIDS Council of Australia and to SIDA Newcastle. At this presentation she shares the vision she had many years ago: "... a dream that Newcastle would have a "Bereavement Centre" where the various bereavement organisations would have a home, never realising that SIDA would one day have this wonderful Drop-In-Centre that would be utilised by other bereavement groups like SAMS, IFFA, Compassionate Friends, SOLLTS and NALAG. So I've seen dreams come true".

1999

A professional bereavement counsellor is employed by SIDA Newcastle on a part time basis as an adjunct to the support services provided by parent peer supporters.

SIDA Newcastle and district is renamed SIDShunter region to become uniform with the eight other member organisations across Australia who undergo a name change at this time. The National SIDS Council of Australia is renamed. **SIDS**Australia at this time. Simultaneously the expansion of services is officially promoted in conjunction with the 1999 Red Nose Campaign. Individual member organisations determine the level of services they will provide to families who experience the sudden and unexpected death of a child six years and under.

Sadly, Clara dies in August.

2000

During the 23 years of operation, strong links have been established and maintained with professionals in the Hunter region who have or are likely to be involved in any aspect of SIDS, or who work with families affected by the sudden death of an infant. The **SIDS**hunter region Drop-In-Centre is well patronised as the resource provider on SIDS issues by both professionals and members of the community.

2001

Following the merger of the former SANDS organisations in WA & NSW, SIDShunter region agrees to provide support to those families who have experienced the death of a baby from 20 weeks gestation onwards. All SIDS organisations change their names to better reflect the work of the organisation ~ SIDS and Kids Hunter Region.

2003

Following the request from a volunteer, the Team from Channel 7's Room for Improvement visit the Drop-in-Centre and transforms the large meeting room. Most of the materials and furniture was donated by wonderful corporate supporters in the Hunter Region. The redecorated room has led to a welcoming and comfortable environment for families to feel safe in.

2004

The centre continues to realise Clara's dream of becoming a multi purpose bereavement centre. More families are sadly utilizing the centre for bereavement support for support and counseling. The expanded age range tripling the number of referrals and clients.

A working party is established with Birralee Aboriginal Birthing Unit and the Awabakal Aboriginal Medical Service and SIDS and Kids to develop a culturally appropriate resource on SIDS and Kids and Safe Sleeping Programs

During a children's holiday workshop, a memorial garden is commenced by the siblings to remember their brothers or sisters who have died.

In November 2004, the first in-house peer support training occurred. Bereaved parents and grandparents underwent a three day workshop in bereavement support skills.