

History of the School

Darling Point Special School opened as an opportunity school in 1958 under the leadership of Miss Ruth Felsman. The school served students with learning difficulties and mild intellectual impairments, who struggled with learning and development in local mainstream schools. Following a revision of the Education General Provisions Act, in 1986, the school re-opened as the Darling Point Special School, by then under the leadership of Mr Lee Gilchrist. In readiness for the 1986 changes, the original timber facilities were demolished and replaced by brick classrooms and administration facilities. During the construction phase, students and staff worked at Wynnum Central State School in Florence Street, Wynnum. (That school subsequently closed as part of the State Schools of Tomorrow initiative in 2010).

As the inclusion debate flourished, and students could be accommodated in special education units, enrolments decreased until at the end of 1992, there were only 29 students enrolled for the following year.

The Department made the decision to progress to school closure and Mrs Charmaine Driver was appointed as acting Principal to oversee the school closure during 1993. During that year, an internal review showed the need for a substantial revitalisation of programs and updating of teaching practices and curriculum. Despite substantial activity by the Department and external consultations overseen by Prof John Elkins from the Shonnell Centre at University of Queensland, enrolments by the end of 1993 were students, a 44% increase year on year. Various other factors including staff training and development, with university lecturers, specifically Dr Wendi Beamish and Dr Denis Meadows, challenges over possible planned use of the school site and focussed work on school culture and morale, and community engagement, led to the decision in late November 1998, by the Department, to keep the school open in the medium to long term.

It was during 1993 when it seemed keeping the school open was becoming less likely, that the school song, "Keep a Dream in Your Pocket" was chosen and has been sung at least weekly since, the school holding permission from the Seekers and soloist Judith Durham. Notably, in late 1993, the Seekers in Brisbane for their national tour, invited staff and students to the Stanford Hotel for a wonderful celebration of song, conviviality and affirmation.

Since 1994, the school has continued to grow and develop and as a result, everyone working at Darling Point Special School is now fortunate to enjoy a strong team climate, high levels of professional expertise, mentoring, coaching and leadership, and outstanding progress towards new facilities.

Following a drawn-out master planning process, plans were approved for demolition of several buildings at the Manly campus. Students and staff experienced a split campus from late 2022, with about half located on land generously provided by Iona College, in North Road, Lindum, in demountable buildings, and the Rosies building that had previously been the Lindum state pre-school. Demolition of five buildings occurred on 13th January 2023, and new buildings and playgrounds should be ready for occupation during term 3 of 2025. Quite a journey! Those staff and students working in cramped conditions in what remain at Manly are to be congratulated for their forbearance and good humour and despite difficulties and sub-standard conditions, student learning, behaviour, and well-being has continued to develop at least as well as that in other better equipped schools.

Plans are underway for future demolition of remaining brick buildings at Manly, construction of three-storey facilities there, and eventual construction to replace the temporary facilities at Lindum with state of the art buildings on land recently purchased by Government for the school at Manly Road, Manly West, on the site up-until-now occupied by Silky Oaks Children's Services.

With quality facilities, excellent authentic curriculum provision, evidence-based teaching, strong leadership based on values, meaningful transparent communication and relationships and a supportive morale and culture, the future is bright for Darling Point Special School. Each one connected with the school serves to achieve great things.

Growing a great school to be even greater

Darling Point Special School has an embedded culture of us all believing in our students as learners and citizens, and each other as contributing professionals. The following list guides us all in the vital components that we each bring to our school and workplace every day.

1. Believe in the school
2. Set big goals
3. Power is in our people; train our team
4. Stay true to our values
5. Make strong, smart decisions
6. Communication is crucial
7. Be a conscious leader
8. Abandon analysis paralysis

We can all continue thinking about what we want to do, and how we can use our knowledge and skills to make the most impact, as we grow a great school to be even greater.