

# “Childcare was not a polite topic for conversation.”

Sonja Davies

Sonja dreamed that childcare would be recognised by government as equivalent to kindergarten and playcentres, deserving of the same public investment.

*“This coming year, I feel, will be a decisive one for this Association, and [we] must make it a year when we really become recognised as the third preschool group in this country.”* Sonja Davies, President’s Report.

## Childcare Centre Regulations (1960)

- In order to hold a Class A Licence, one centre staff member must have a nursing, playcentre, kindergarten or primary qualification
- ‘Suitable playthings’ must be provided
- Two toilets required for every 10 children
- Staff: children ratios; 1:10 for over twos, 1:5 for under twos.

Once the Association was established, President Sonja Davies and Vice-President Jessie Donald went on a tour of centres in the North Island. Their experiences were mixed to say the least.

*“After visiting about 10 of these duds, [centres, we]...asked ourselves whether we were doing the right thing... then we remembered the good centres we had seen and knew that our struggle must be to ensure that there were more of those.”* Sonja Davies.

## Association Milestones

- 1963 - First meeting of New Zealand Association of Child Care Centres took place on 14 October in Nelson.
  - 10 centres and 26 attendees in total
  - Agreed Objectives:
    - To promote a high standard of childcare
    - To promote and support legislation that is designed to benefit childcare centres
- 1969 - The Association began offering the Royal Society of Health Child Care Certificate



First national Waitangi Day celebration



The 60’s were governed by National

Decimal currency introduced

1960

1969

Baby-boom peaks

Regular television programmes begin in Auckland

Sonja Davies founded the New Zealand Association of Child Care Centres and became president from 1964-1975.



*“a believer of unity in action in nationwide problems”*

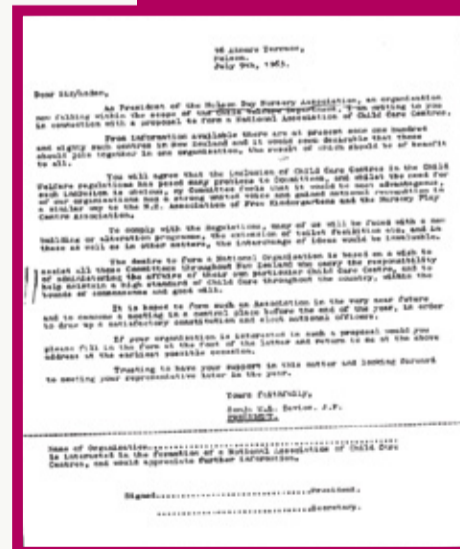
Sonja Davies becomes the second woman elected to Labour’s national executive

*“I often had to speak for the Association. The politicians went on like ostriches with their heads in the sand and didn’t notice childcare. They didn’t approve of it. I had to sell childcare. This was hard sometimes.”* Joyce Coss, Vice President.



26 November 1969 - Prime Minister Keith Holyoake holding his twin grandchildren

To establish the Association, Sonja wrote to around 180 childcare centres with 28 showing interest. (1963)



## Formal Training

Sonja noted there was a pressing need for a training scheme to not only assist those running childcare centres but to encourage young women to take up the work as a career.

The goal had been to adapt a new training qualification for the delivery by the Association that adhered to New Zealand standards. The Association began offering the Royal Society of Health Child Care Certificate in 1969 for \$20 to members and \$25 for non-members with an additional \$16.50 for the exam which was marked in London. Queen Elizabeth II personally signed and approved the regulations.



*“I am indeed sorry that I am unable to offer any assistance from Government sources.”* Minister of Social Welfare Hon. D. N. McKay. 1963

## Marge Williams

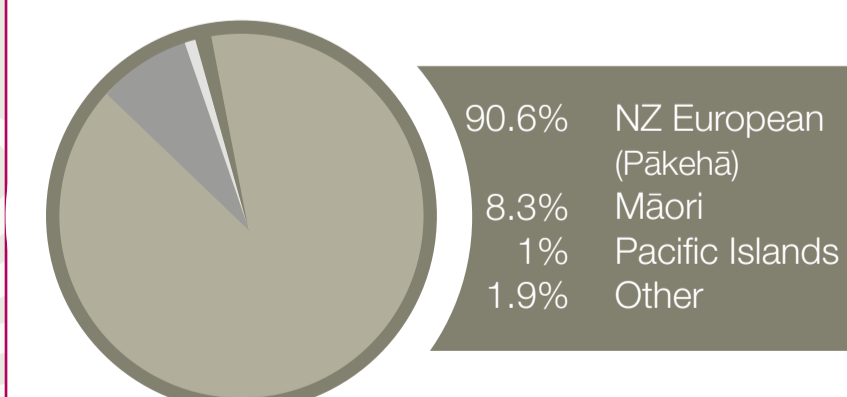
Recently widowed, in 1959, Marge converted the downstairs of her Taupō house, built equipment and toys and opened a childcare centre.

Every child has some talent — we just have to find it

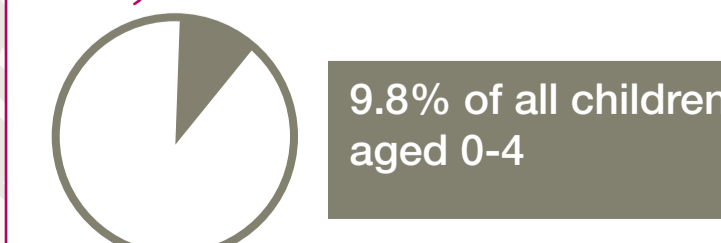


It was a struggle to secure additional funding from the Education Board as they feared setting a precedent. Marge, like a number of the early childcare activists, understated her role.

Population  
**2,676,919**



Children attending ECE  
**30,107**



Employment  
**\$38.05**

average weekly wage (both sexes)



Number of ECE services  
**243**      **299**

free kindergartens      recognised playcentres