



# SASY 2020 Annual Report



**SPECIALISED ASSISTANCE  
SCHOOL FOR YOUTH**

ENDORSED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, DAVID WILD AND GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON, ROB SNOWDON ON 6 MAY 2021.

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## Our Vision

To engage with vulnerable and disengaged students who have complex needs, to reignite their interest in education, through holistic learning practices that focus on wellbeing.

# Welcome



## Our Values

- Respect**  
For self and others.
- Trust**  
Be honest, sincere and seek the truth.
- Acceptance**  
Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others.
- Resilience**  
Care for self and others.
- Achievement**  
Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard and pursue excellence.
- Courage**  
Act in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensure consistency between words and deeds.



# Chairperson's Report

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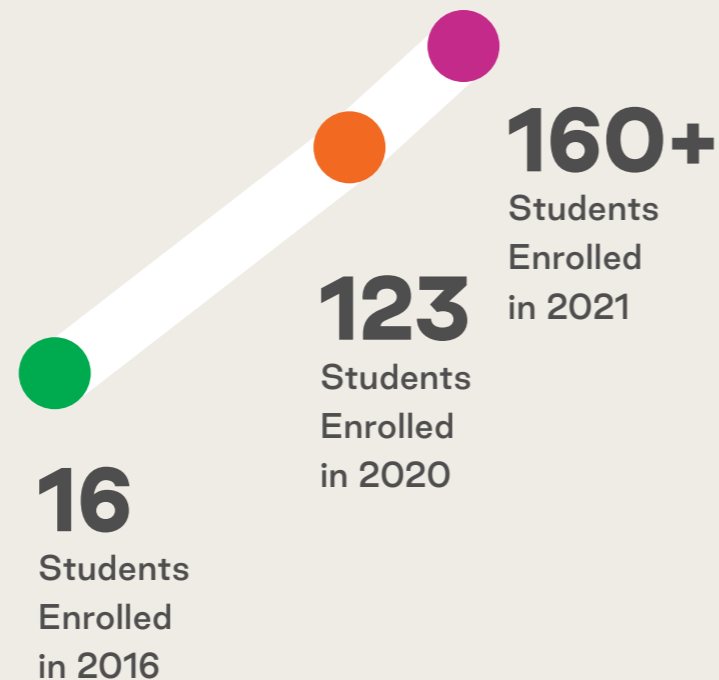
Year 12 Graduates  
in 2020

In late 2020 we changed our delivery model and increased our resources in people and facilities in response to increasing enrolment numbers for 2021.

**\$3.9M**

In Combined  
Government Grants /  
Funding in 2020

We have secured additional premises in Chesser Street, which we will renovate during 2021, thus increasing our enrolment capacity even further for 2022 and beyond.



On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to report that we consider 2020 to have been an incredibly successful and fulfilling year at SASY.



Rob Snowdon  
Chair, SASY

Whilst we recognise the challenges that COVID-19 placed on our students, parents, carers, stakeholders and our staff were unprecedented and extreme at times, we delivered some excellent outcomes for our students. We are blessed with a team of dedicated and highly skilled teachers, youth workers and operational staff who not only coped with the challenges of 2020 but thrived; producing great results and continuing to set SASY up for future success.

SASY exists for our students, to provide them with learning opportunities, under-pinned by a caring and safe environment to help them to reach their potential. We treat every student as an individual and develop personal plans for each of them to engage in learning opportunities, with a focus on their wellbeing.

We'd like to recognise the financial and industry support provided by our many stakeholders, particularly funding from the State and Federal Government's Departments of Education, and The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) for regular advice.

2020 would have been particularly difficult if not for our wonderful staff and the guidance provided by our dedicated and highly skilled Board, and I'd like to thank them all. SASY is growing and we are continually making improvements to ensure we will always provide the best possible outcomes for our students, for many years to come.

# Our Board

**SASY is moving forward in leaps and bounds, thanks to an engaged Board and opportunities provided to us through government funding and philanthropic supporters across Adelaide.**



**Rob Snowdon**  
Chair

Rob is an experienced leader, who has developed his leadership, management and governance skills and experience in a wide range of industries including electricity and telecommunications infrastructure, sports administration (AFL Port Adelaide & Sydney Swans), industrial property development, boat building, executive management, team leadership, people development and coaching, and corporate finance and accounting. In addition to being Chair of SASY, Rob is currently a Board Member at The Quadriplegic & Paraplegic Association of SA, Chairman of the Country Fire Service Foundation, Chairman of Astera Group and Principal of Rob Snowdon Advisory, which provides advice to organisations such as Enerven, Operation Flinders, Adelaide 36ers and to many sports people and sporting clubs.



**David Martin**  
Deputy Chair

David Martin, Managing Partner of Finlaysons, specialises in property and development law, aged care and retirement villages. His experience extends to both very large and small operators, and to both 'for profit' and 'not for profit' operators. David has played a key role in landmark projects across South Australia and nationally. He possesses wide industry knowledge, as well as an intimate understanding of the issues that landowners, regulatory authorities and developers face. David is currently the Deputy Chair of the Board of Southern Cross Care (SA&NT) Inc (SCC), the largest aged care provider in South Australia, and has been a valued member of that Board for some 10 years. He is also a member of the SCC Board's Services and Workforce Subcommittees.



**Lloyd Doddridge**  
Treasurer

Lloyd is a Strategic Finance leader at Enerven with a broad range of transformative commercial skills acquired with global brands such as Penfolds, Lindemans, Rheem, and General Motors. More recently he has worked in strategic financial roles in the Fin-tech and Mar-tech space with both start up and global scale organisations such as Dentsu Aegis. Consistently in his career Lloyd has worked with talented people, who have great ideas but need assistance translating them into the next level of financial and operational success. Colleagues typically view him as being measured, collaborative and ethical with high expectations of performance. His leadership style reflects strong values and respect for the individual.



**Helen Platell**  
Director

Helen came to the Adelaide Hills five years ago from Western Australia via Hawaii to take up the position of School Principal of a K-12 independent school. She has immensely enjoyed working with children over the last 30 years, first as a Teacher and then as an Administrator in Schools offering Waldorf Steiner education. Helen possesses a keen interest in empowering and engaging young people to grow into their potential. Prior to becoming an educator, she worked in real estate sales and development and then studied law as a mature age student with a special interest in family law. Helen seeks to help all children grow into their potential and looks forward to being a part of the SASY Board to support this worthwhile endeavour.



Hon. Minister John Gardner and Rob Snowdon, Chair of SASY.



**Maria La Pietra**  
Director

Thriving in a holistic and collaborative learning environment focused on transition and outcomes, Maria established Specialised Assistance School in Adelaide in 2016 to assist disengaged youth in realising their true potential. She is highly regarded and well networked in her field, as recognised through her relationships and memberships with Australian Vocational Education & Training Professionals Association, Australian Association for Flexible and Inclusive Education, Wellbeing Australia, Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Association, Blue Knot Foundation and the Youth Work Association. Maria is currently completing her PhD. She aims to bring improvement through practical, theoretical and collaborative knowledge, developing evidence-based strategies and recommendations for educators and others in learning environments supporting young people with trauma.



**Dr Joseph Magliaro AM**  
Director

Joseph has practiced in clinical and organisational psychology for twenty five years, with a specific interest in anxiety and mood disorders, in addition to individual coaching and team development, with a specific interest in psychological evaluation and recruitment. Clinical intervention and expertise is centred on a Cognitive and Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) framework. From 1992 he has provided psychological services to SA Ambulance Service. He is a member of the Australian Psychological Society, the College of Clinical and College of Organisational Psychology, with AHPRA endorsement in clinical & organisational psychology practice. Joseph is a Fellow of the College of Clinical Psychologists and the College of Organisational Psychologists. In 2006 he completed a PhD and in 2011 was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to community health.



**Sean Kelly**  
Director

The SASY Board welcomed Sean Kelly as a Director at the end of 2020. Sean has extensive experience at Board and Senior Executive levels in Commonwealth and State Governments and the Private Sector, predominantly in the energy industry. His expertise includes business and financial strategy, governance and risk, customer service, people and culture, business transformation and regulation. Sean considers access to education, whether that be trade, vocational or academic as fundamental to an individual's wellbeing and life opportunities. He looks forward to contributing to SASY's growth and success.

# Chief Executive Report



Disengagement from school can become a pattern in families, causing intergenerational disadvantage.

## 88%

Of SASY Graduates Since 2017 Have Engaged in Work Or Further Study Pathways

**Having only started my role as the newly appointed Chief Executive of SASY in August of 2020 I was immediately inspired by the innovation, passion and hard work of the SASY staff, while also deeply in awe of the student's achievements.**

**SASY is a unique school, catering to the needs of young people who need something different.**



**David Wild**  
Chief Executive

We know that disengagement from school contributes to increased hardship and often develops into an intergenerational pattern, this is why it's important that SASY provides a place to re-engage these students.

2020 had its challenges, namely it was a year to be remembered as the year COVID-19 impacted Australia and the world as a whole. The isolation COVID-19 thrust on the global community had specific wellbeing challenges, many of which were felt by SASY staff and students. Despite these challenges I am proud to report that SASY continued to offer education and wellbeing supports during the most trying of circumstances, with fantastic outcomes.

Late in 2020 SASY embarked on a process of change, which saw SASY make changes to the delivery model, take on new premises, and increase our staffing, as we prepared for increased enrolments into 2021. This gives us great excitement about the road ahead for SASY. I would like to acknowledge those who have helped SASY develop to be the school it is today. The founders, SASY Board, key stakeholders, past and present students, past and present staff, and the State and Federal Education Departments have all combined to create a space where vulnerable students are welcomed, can build safe relationships, and have an opportunity to ignite their interest in learning.

SASY is excited to continue offering a unique space for disengaged students. In fact, it is our students who inspire us. In my short time at SASY thus far I have been privileged to witness students displaying resilience in adversity, seeking support when they need it, challenging themselves, working together, and achieving great things. The SASY staff collectively will continue to state that we are excited about each individual student's future, because we believe in them.

# What We Do

## We Understand

For most children moving from pre-school through to the senior years is a normal rite of passage, however, for the students who arrive at SASY, school has been a negative experience along a road marked by mental health, trauma and disruption. The Australian education system provides an excellent option for most students; however, young people who have experienced trauma through neglect, abuse and family violence can encounter a real struggle to fit within the mainstream school system. Traumatic experiences can lead to disengagement in school and learning. Research shows that trauma can adversely affect how the brain develops and can impede a child's capacity to concentrate and learn, affecting the rest of their lives.

## Student Wellbeing

SASY students need opportunities in preparing to re-engage into learning and to feel safe and secure. Wellbeing and learning are integrated throughout all programs, which are personalised, individualised and differentiated to encourage, support and maximise student development in emotional regulation, self-awareness and readiness to learn.

## Our Approach









Hence, through research and practise, SASY has identified a different approach in re-engaging young people. Our holistic pedagogical approach is specifically designed to give students a voice. SASY has implemented a four-tier model of learning which encompasses multiple theories. Some of these include positive psychology, authentic happiness theory, wellbeing theories and restorative practices.

## A Specialised Team

At SASY, we acknowledge that academic and personal growth best occurs in a safe and supportive environment where physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioural issues are addressed as part of a holistic learning approach.

Staff are trained in trauma informed and restorative practices and encourage students to be active learners and to address issues, which negatively affect their learning. Individual intervention strategy plans assist staff response to de-escalate disruptive or harmful behaviours. Our youth are supported by SASY youth workers, an on-site psychologist and external providers to develop skills in self-regulation of emotional states and behaviours which have the potential to risk harm to self or others.

**SASY is founded on the principle that all young people are capable of making positive changes in their lives. We believe that all students at SASY have the right to:**

 <p>Have a voice.</p>	 <p>Learn in a non-threatening, supportive and accepting environment.</p>	 <p>Actively engage in their learning.</p>
 <p>Negotiate their learning activities in collaboration with their support partners.</p>	 <p>Have their needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests reflected in learning programs.</p>	 <p>Fair and equitable assessment practices.</p>
 <p>Negotiated, monitored and reviewed Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).</p>	 <p>Personalised transition support.</p>	 <p>Case management support.</p>
 <p>The opportunity to develop critical and creative thinking.</p>	 <p>Collaborative and proactive engagement opportunities with the local community and SASY partners.</p>	 <p>Develop a positive sense of self as independent and interdependent individuals.</p>

# 2020 Highlights

Offering distance learning while balancing the global pandemic requirements and remaining open as an essential site for at-risk youth.

20

New Enrolments

8

Year 12 Graduates

3

New Staff Hired



The refurbishment of a new purpose-built STEAM centre at 25 Chesser Street.

Implementation of our Project Based Learning initiative to deliver to students in 2021.

4

Students Achieved VET Certificates Contributing to SACE Stages 1 & 2

44

Students Completed SACE Subjects (PLP, RP, Essential English & Maths)

In 2020 SASY delivered a variety of programs to our students, all with a focus on re-engaging them in learning through wellbeing and areas that interest them as individuals. Two examples of programs are:

## Adventure Program

The adventure program is designed to use outdoor activities as an intervention tool with young people who have experienced adversities and are potentially exhibiting disruptive behaviours at school. Activities typically involve opportunities for participants to understand and solve problems, regulate their emotions, build healthy relationships with peers and staff, work in groups, learn skills and build competencies, and most importantly, have positive educational experiences.

Being fully present in the activities allows our students to leave the pressures of daily life behind and expand their perspective, challenging themselves with managed risks, increasing their body and mind awareness, building reflective practice and connecting with nature. All of these experiences and skills can then be utilised in the classroom by our students and equips them with tools they can use to overcome barriers to learning such as stress or anxiety. Activities in 2020 included beach walks, high ropes courses, kayaking, paddle boarding and Challenge Hill at Woodhouse.



## Labs 'n Life

SASY partnered with Labs 'n Life to engage students with significant barriers to positive involvement in school within a program that helps increase attendance and improves learning outcomes for our students. Each student works with the same dog, all Labrador Retrievers, over a school term to teach them obedience skills as part of their training to become assistance dogs for vulnerable youth. These dogs can go on to support students in schools as young as Years 1 and 2. A hugely popular program, these dogs are teaching our students as much as the students are teaching them! Not only are the students building positive associations with schooling and re-engaging with learning, but they are strengthening communication and interpersonal skills, forming positive relationships with peers and animals, learning to set goals and overcome challenges whilst contributing to their community.

# Our Students

Our 2020 cohort was comprised of a total of 123 students, with 8 SACE subjects being offered to our senior students.

## Student Needs

Our students typically come to us as disengaged with complex issues such as trauma, mental health challenges, homelessness, family breakdowns, substance abuse, financial instability, learning difficulties or other life experiences that act as barriers to successful engagement in traditional school settings.

When students enrol at SASY, they typically have gaps in their education and require a scaffolded learning plan to fill these areas. Sometimes these gaps can be 2-5 years of schooling and require significant investment by both the teaching staff and the student to build this foundation. Due to the high needs of our students and the significant planning required to ensure every student is individually catered for, SASY has limited intake to once per term. In extenuating circumstances we can enrol students outside of this timeline but this is ascertained on a case by case basis.

## Attendance

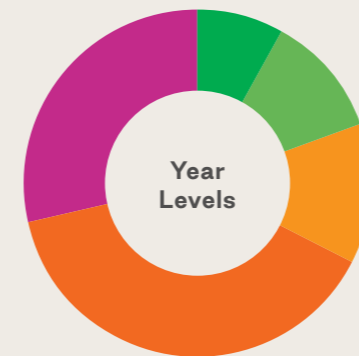
We know that our students have difficulties engaging at school due to their complex issues. Thus, we have implemented an attendance policy that supports our students in their individual circumstances and reflects that re-engagement is a slow and ongoing process. Our Teaching and Support staff monitor attendance daily and absenteeism is personally followed up by staff, with some students identified for additional support with internal case management. Our average student attendance rate was 52.4% in 2020, an improvement of 3.2% from 2019. We are cognisant of the impact of trauma and mental health issues on attendance and our staff are proactive in supporting and developing resilience and readiness for learning in our students.

## Curriculum

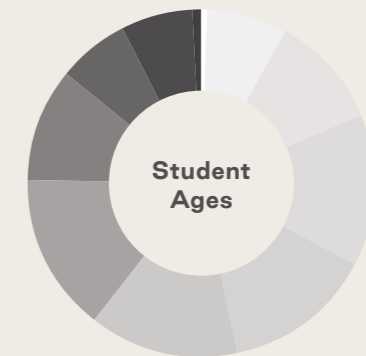
Students at SASY complete their ACARA accredited middle school curriculum subjects, before progressing to SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects such as Research Project, Personal Learning Project, Essential English and Essential Maths. Students are also given the opportunity to complete external vocational certificates that provide SACE credits, which not only helps their pathway to graduating school and entering tertiary education but equips them with real-life skills and experiences that are valuable to employment. In addition to VET opportunities, some students participate in work experience and School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT).



## Students Identify As



- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12



- 12 Years Old
- 13 Years Old
- 14 Years Old
- 15 Years Old
- 16 Years Old
- 17 Years Old
- 18 Years Old
- 19 Years Old
- 20 Years Old
- 21 Years Old
- 22 Years Old

## Student Characteristics



# Student Stories

## Life before SASY was a lot.

It was me just having to get through the day, every day. I just had to power through, it wasn't life. I didn't expect to make it to my 18th birthday. I figured I'd get into a situation I couldn't get out of, or I would end it myself.

I was brought to SASY (EET at the time) by my case worker and was told that I only had to attend two days a week, I'd be out of there in a year. Clearly that didn't go to plan. And why? Because staff cared more than I expected, and they were persistent pains in my arse. Changing from EET to SASY is when things got kicked into gear.

I started showing up more, doing more, was made accountable for myself. I've been here three extra years and am finally ready to graduate as a youth worker. I now expect to have a future. It makes me think that if I have been given time, time I didn't expect to have, then what could a better use of my life be now than to give back to others like I've been given to.

Most of the time I feel better than before. Anything is better than before. If it wasn't for SASY I wouldn't be where I am right now.

SASY Student, 2020

## I never thought I would have an opportunity to complete my SACE.

In 2018 I was kicked out of Thebarton Senior College. My sister was a student at SASY, and she helped me to arrange a meeting. When I first started Maria told me she was taking me under her wing, and she did.

The first little while at SASY wasn't easy, I was always looking for drama and there was always trouble that involved me. 6 months in and I was taught coping mechanisms and how to calm myself.

My drug use at the time was pretty heavy and it was SASY who showed me I could give them up for the better. It's been a long hard 4 years but I am now getting to where I want to be, and I honestly believe I wouldn't be the person I am today if it wasn't for the staff and students at SASY.

SASY Student, 2020

Hear the difference SASY is making in our students' lives, in their own words.



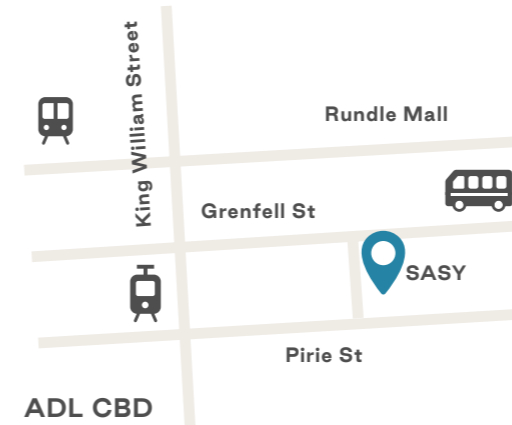
# Our Campus

**Our catchment isn't limited by zoning and our students come from all over Adelaide, with a slight bias in intake from lower socio-economic geographic areas such as outer northern and southern suburbs.**

**The absence of fees at SASY ensures that any young person can have equitable access to a secondary education and achieve their learning goals such as SACE completion or a pathway to employment without financial barriers.**



**The majority of our cohort access public transportation which means a central business location is critical to ensuring maximum accessibility for our students, both existing and prospective.**



## Campus Growth

At the beginning of 2020 we had 2 buildings, 27 Chesser Street and 30 Chesser Street. Fast forward 12 months and we also leased 25 Chesser Street.

Construction of the state-of-the-art STEAM building at 25 Chesser Street was completed in late 2020 and was made possible thanks to funding from the State Government. The STEAM building houses our IT Hub, Art Space and Science Space, all with leading-edge equipment including 3D printers, high-tech robotics equipment and videography equipment which will support SASY's transition to project-based learning.

SASY has also begun to plan and research the possibility of a fourth building for lease in 2021 to serve as a potential Wellbeing Centre for our students, providing specialised mental health and wellbeing support and housing one of the Hubs as their intake continues to grow. We are excited to see where the future takes us!



# Our Campus



# Our Team



SASY is a place where people come to belong. It's an amazing space in terms of finding connection and finding yourself.

DAISY, Teacher



SASY demonstrates how addressing wellbeing and educational barriers are integral to a student's capacity to engage in school. You can't have one without addressing the other and SASY is a great example of this. It is such a supportive, vibrant space and no two days are ever the same!

KELLY, Staff Member



A lot of the things that we do are preparing them for their own personal pathway outside of school. Its really good that we get to know the students on a personal level; what their goals are, what their interests are and their ambitions (because) we can tailor a lot of what we do around that.

TOM, Teacher

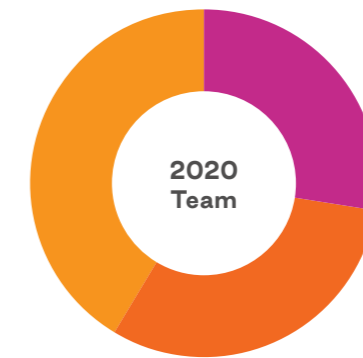
The team at SASY has continued to grow throughout the year.

## Team Development 2020 SASY Team

In 2020 we welcomed three new staff including two specialised administrative staff members and the appointment of a Chief Executive, who brought a new perspective and drive to the senior leadership team.

We focussed heavily on staff training and professional development and invested in training relevant to our cohort of students, such as trauma theory, managing behavioural emergencies and mental health.

Four Hubs have been designed for implementation in Term 1 2021; Connect, Ignite, Inspire and Empower. These teams were devised to better address student needs in a format that enabled smaller groups with increased teacher to student ratios and spaces that suited the learning of that particular cohort. This led to four Team Leaders and Senior Teachers being appointed for each Hub and students grouped into the Hubs, dependent on learning and wellbeing needs.



### Team Composition

<span style="color: #800080;">●</span> Administrative Staff (Including 2 Senior Managers)	28%
<span style="color: #FF8C00;">●</span> Teaching Staff	31%
<span style="color: #FF4500;">●</span> Youth Workers / Support Staff (Including 1 Senior Manager)	41%





# Our Partners & Supporters

## Partnerships

Throughout 2020 SASY has had ongoing partnerships with three key organisations:

- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
- Edward Street Psychology
- Connected Self

AISSA leads, supports, represents and advocates for the independent school sector in South Australia and provides SASY with advice and guidance in a variety of areas, assisting our senior management team in operational matters. Edward Street Psychology provide our students with onsite psychological services and an EAP for our staff, whilst Connected Self also provide additional youthwork support. These partnerships are integral to our school vision and we would like to extend our gratitude to these organisations for their contributions in 2020.

## Funding Support

Commonwealth and State Government recurrent funding are an invaluable resource to SASY and was our only stream of income during 2020. With this funding, we have been able to provide our students with a range of programs and additional assistance that support them to engage, learn and connect with their community.



**Australian Government**  
Department of Education, Skills and Employment



**Government of South Australia**  
Department for Education



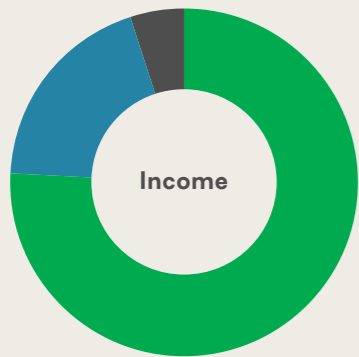
Association of  
Independent Schools  
of South Australia

# Financials



## Expenses Breakdown

Staff	58%
Infrastructure	21%
Wellbeing & Curriculum	12%
Other	9%



## Income Breakdown

Federal Government	76%
State Government	19%
Other	5%



# Our Journey

## A Brief History of SASY



### 2017

106 students enrolled.

16 staff employed.

First cohort of SACE graduates.



### 2019

145 students enrolled.

22 staff employed.

Refurbishment of our 1st building; 30 Chesser Street.

Lease and refurbishment of our 2nd building; 27 Chesser Street.

### Present

160 student places confirmed for 2021.

7 new staff hired for 2021.

START

FUTURE

### 2016

16 students enrolled.

16 staff employed.

SASY was established at 30 Chesser Street.

Received Special Assistance School registration.

Our building was officially opened by Hon. Martin Haese on 6 May 2016.

### 2018

134 students enrolled.

22 staff employed.

First SASY formal for students.



### 2020

123 students enrolled.

30 staff employed.

Appointment of Chief Executive

Lease and refurbishment of our 3rd building; 25 Chesser Street.

Lease and refurbishment planning for our 4th building; 29 Chesser Street.



# Our Future

## The Future Is Young People

Having 8 students graduate from the 2020 cohort gives us great excitement about the future. SASY is proud to have played a role in their success, but ultimately, we are proud of them and are cognisant of what they have endured to achieve this.



## Community Impact

The positive impact our graduates have had on the SASY community and that they continue to have on their own communities both now and into the future, gives us great joy and hope about their future and the generations of young people to come.

## Strategic Priorities

- **Financial Sustainability**  
Including attracting grants and working with donors.
- **Enhance People & Culture**  
Including further staff professional development and developing the school's first Reconciliation Action Plan.
- **Positive Student Outcomes**  
Including introducing an Outreach Service, Parent Nights, and an Alumni Program.
- **Effective Governance**  
Including continuing our safety first approach.
- **Growth**  
Including enrolment growth and additional services.

SASY is on the cusp of a range of exciting new opportunities. As a unique and innovative school, in the years to come, SASY will bring its education model to more young people who are not engaged with traditional schooling.







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**SPECIALISED ASSISTANCE SCHOOL FOR YOUTH**

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We acknowledge the Kaurna people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of the Adelaide region and we pay respect to elders past, present and emerging.

