

# 2019

## Aspect Hunter School Annual Report



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Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional custodians of the many lands and cultures of the places in which we live and work.



**Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)** is the country's largest service provider for people on the autism spectrum. Our specialised, evidence informed schools program is one of the largest in the world, with additional services that include information and advice, diagnostic assessments, behaviour support, parent and family support, and adult programs. We share evidence-informed autism practice and applied research nationwide.

Aspect schools provide specialised evidence-informed programs for children aged 4 to 17 on the autism spectrum, who require an autism specific program.

The primary focus of the schools is to equip students with the skills to become as independent as possible and enable them to transition into more inclusive settings. This is achieved through the application of the Aspect Comprehensive Approach. At the centre of the approach is the Autism Initiatives' (UK) Five Point Star to support autism-specific person-centred planning and respectful and positive relationships between the educator and student. It also focuses on the following elements: Individual Planning; Family & Community Engagement; Learning & Participation; Positive Behaviour Support; Structured Supports; Transition & Inclusion; Specialist Collaboration; and Health & Wellbeing.



# Our Purpose

*a different brilliant®*

understanding, engaging & celebrating the  
strengths, interests & aspirations  
of people on the autism spectrum

# Message from the principal

In 2019, *Aspect Hunter School* enrolled 168 students, 84% of which are boys, across the Hunter, Newcastle and Port Macquarie areas from Kindergarten to year 10. The school comprises an administrative base at Thornton along with primary and high school aged students and a range of satellite classes located at Tarro, Waratah West, Abermain, Cardiff and Port Macquarie. In 2020 Aspect Hunter School will commence a new primary satellite program in Muswellbrook. Approximately 20% of our students transition to a less specialised setting each year.

Aspect Hunter School has many achievements to celebrate across the 2019 school year. The school year commenced with a joint workshop with school staff and parents/carers to establish a focus on collaborative home school partnerships for the year ahead.

In 2019 the school enrolled its first high school students at the school's main school site at Thornton. New facilities which now house the middle and high school program were made possible through the generous support of local business man Hilton Grugeon along with support from the wider school community. The new facilities provide capacity to enrol an additional 60 students in the school. In

2019, the school also received registration to deliver a new distance education program in 2020. This will be the first program of its kind and will enrol students in years 3 to 6 in 2020 from across New South Wales.

Our school camps were also a highlight along with the first combined camp with Aspect Central Coast School for stage 5 students travelling to the Gold Coast for a work education experience. School camps will remain a feature of the school program each year as they provide rich and varied learning experiences and build confidence and independence.

Thank you to our students, staff and community for a fantastic school year and we look forward another productive and positive year in 2020.

*Lara Cheney*

Executive Principal



# Message from the P&F

In 2019 the school held a gala evening to celebrate the opening of the new facilities at Thornton and raise funds for the completion of the project. A great night was had by all.

The school welcomed many new families across the year who supported a number of whole school events including the school walk-a-thon and end of year celebration at the Hunter Valley Zoo.

We look forward to another positive year in 2020.

*Jade Welch*

P&F President



## Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing

Each student has an individual profile of characteristics that outlines strengths and interests, current levels of functioning and areas for development in the autism-specific areas of learning: social communication, social interaction, behaviours and sensory processing which are integrated into the NSW Board of Studies mainstream curriculum - the Key Learning Areas (KLAs). The school uses a multi-disciplinary team approach, working collaboratively with families to develop the best possible outcomes for the students. The school provides information and training workshops to families to help them support their child.

### Literacy and Numeracy Assessments

For NAPLAN results, please refer to My School website [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)

The school administers Literacy testing across the school each year to help inform practice and monitor progress. We assess, sight words, phonemes, graphemes, spelling, reading accuracy, reading comprehension, spelling, and verbal working memory. In 2019 the school implemented a whole school Multi Lit programme.

## Senior secondary outcomes

### Record of School Achievement

In 2019, three students were awarded the formal Record of School Achievement (RoSA).

### Higher School Certificate

Aspect Hunter School is registered up to Year 10 only. The reporting of the HSC results is not applicable.

# Teacher professional learning, accreditation and qualifications

The following professional learning activities were undertaken by staff throughout 2019:

Description of professional learning activity	No. of staff participating
Child Protection - responsibilities related to child protection based on state/territory legislation, federal legislation and Aspect policy and procedures	All
Aspect Professional Code of Conduct	All
Management of Actual or Potential Aggression (foundation and refresher courses)	All
CPR training - skills to provide Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	All
First Aid	5
Anaphylaxis	All
Supporting people on the autism spectrum using the 5 Point Star (adapted from Autism Initiatives UK) person-centred framework	All
New PDHPE Syllabus	48
Positive Partnerships workshop	All
Aspect Comprehensive Approach - Individualised Planning	All
Light up your classroom: Full STEM ahead	All
Language acquisition through motor planning	All
Enhancing classroom practice: teacher to teacher	48

## Teacher accreditation

Level of accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	5
Provisional	4
Proficient Teacher	39
Highly Accomplished Teacher(voluntary accreditation)	0
Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	0
Total number of teachers	48

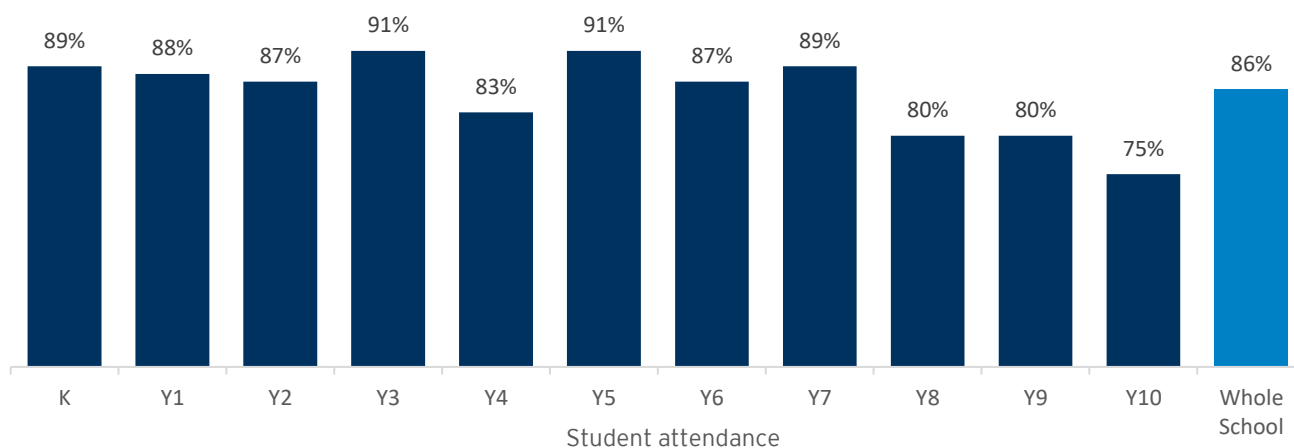
## Teacher qualifications

All teachers have teacher education qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines.

# Workforce composition

Composition of Aspect Central Coast School staff is documented on the My School website [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)

Three staff members are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background.



# Student attendance, retention rates and post-school destinations in secondary schools

## Student attendance rates

Kinder	89%	Year 6	89%
Year 1	88%	Year 7	89%
Year 2	87%	Year 8	80%
Year 3	91%	Year 9	80%
Year 4	89%	Year 10	75%
Year 5	91%	Whole School	86%

## Management of non-attendance

Aspect Education has developed a work instruction to ensure compliance of the Aspect schools with school attendance requirements for compulsory school-aged students as outlined by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) or the South Australia Education Board.

Unexplained absence will be followed up by the class teacher with the parent/guardian. Repeated unexplained absence or absence of concern may need to be reported to Family and Community Services.

Where unsatisfactory attendance is identified, a student attendance improvement plan is formulated in collaboration with the student and their parent/guardian. The plan is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

## Retention of Year 10 to Year 12

Four students completed Year 10 in 2017. Three students went on to Year 11 and one student went on to complete Year 12 in 2019. The student has enrolled in TAFE 2020.







# Enrolment policy

Aspect provides autism-specific educational services for eligible school-aged children on the autism spectrum, to prepare them for transition to environments that are not autism specific.

Aspect recognises that children on the autism spectrum have the right to access and equity of services regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity, religion or language.

An application is made for an Aspect school rather than a specific class. Our school's professional staff decide in consultation with the family which class is best suited to the educational needs of the student. Each school is responsible for managing its own application, intake and waiting lists process, which is managed by the school principal.

When vacancies arise in the school, the decision about how to fill them is made based on whether the type of vacancy available would be appropriate for the child. Factors taken into consideration include the type of vacancy available, the child's age, the length of time a child has been on the waiting list, the availability of alternative placements and the family situation.

## Entry criteria

Aspect schools are funded in part by the Commonwealth and state governments, which have specific criteria for placement. To be eligible for placement in one of Aspect's schools, prospective students must satisfy the following criteria:

Citizenship and visa status – a child must:

- be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia or holds an eligible visa (refer to guide to checking citizenship and visa status for enrolment).
- be aged between 4 and 17 years.

Diagnosis – a child must:

- in both NSW and South Australia, have a current diagnosis which is not more than twelve (12) months old as being on the autism spectrum from a specialist medical practitioner, child psychiatrist or clinical psychologist with the necessary training and experience to be able to undertake a diagnostic assessment;
- in South Australia, a second report from a psychologist or speech pathologist that confirms the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder that is not more than two (2) years old; and
- in both NSW and South Australia, have a current standardised cognitive or developmental assessment (e.g. IQ testing, Griffiths, WISC-IV, WPPSI-III, Stanford Binet V) which is not more than two (2) years old.

## Registration to school waitlist

Expression of interest in Aspect schools may be made in the following ways:

- direct enquiry to the Aspect school by telephone or email;
- telephone or email to Aspect Customer Service, who will direct the enquiry to the school;
- general enquiry via the Contact Us page on the Aspect website, which will be directed to the school.

The registration form can be obtained from the following processes:

- families who are interested in enrolling their child to an Aspect school are asked to attend a School Information Session. Aspect principals or their delegate are responsible for organising a school information session once per school term, in line with the School Information Session work instruction, for prospective parents or guardians who would like to enrol their child. This information session outlines the Aspect education program and the registration and enrolment process. The school registration form is obtained after attending this session.
- families who are unable to attend a School Information Session can obtain a registration form directly from an Aspect school. A School Enrolment Committee representative will provide them with information about the Aspect education program and the registration and enrolment process, before sending them the registration form.

A non-refundable processing fee is required for each application submitted.

## Application to more than one Aspect School

When a family wants to place their child on the waitlist of more than one Aspect school, they first apply to their preferred Aspect school and indicate which other Aspect schools they will consider enrolment. The preferred Aspect school is responsible for processing the application, inform the other Aspect school/s to place the student on their school's active waitlist and share the application documents.

## **Aspect School Enrolment Committee**

School principals are responsible for convening the Aspect School Enrolment Committee (comprised of school principal, psychologist and selected school coordinators) which meets once per school term, following the information session, to review registrations received. This committee determines if a child is eligible for placement in an Aspect school.

### **Eligible/Not Eligible for service**

#### *Citizenship and age criteria*

If the citizenship or age criteria is not met, a school representative will inform the parents or guardians that their child is not eligible for enrolment due to citizenship or age criteria not being met. If the parents or guardians are not satisfied with the result, they can make a complaint to Aspect (refer to Aspect's Complaints Management procedure).

#### *Diagnosis criteria*

If the child has been deemed eligible by the Aspect School Enrolment Committee, the principal will inform the parents or guardians that, based on the diagnostic information provided, their child has been deemed eligible for the program (Letter - Confirmation of diagnosis) and their child's name has been placed on the school waitlist.

The principal is responsible for referring the application to the Aspect Eligibility Committee if the diagnosis needs clarification. Parents/Carers will be informed, in writing (Letter - Application sent to full eligibility committee), that their case has been sent to the Committee for review.

If further information is required by the Committee, the principal is responsible for writing to the parents requesting updated information (Letter - Request for updated Psychological reports).

### **Aspect Eligibility Committee**

The National Director, Aspect Education is responsible for:

- convening the Aspect Eligibility Committee once per school term to review any registrations that require clarification, and
- reporting to Aspect principals the results of the Aspect Eligibility Committee, so that they can inform the parents of the outcomes.

The principal will inform the parents or guardians (Letter - Confirmation of diagnosis) that based on the diagnostic information provided their child has been deemed eligible for the program or not and, if confirmed, the child's name is placed on the schools waitlist.

### **Vacancy Management**

If a vacancy arises, students on the waitlist who can potentially fill the vacancy will be considered. The principal or delegate interviews families whose child might fill the vacancy regarding accommodations/ adjustments for their child following the interview pro forma.

If a student being considered for enrolment is not an Australian citizen, the principal or their delegate must check that the visa is still valid and eligible for enrolment.

Following completion of the interview, the principal, or their delegate will complete the Risk Management Plan pro forma, to assist with decision making.

Following the interview process, the school will inform the family if a child has been offered a placement (Letter - Enrolment Contract/Acceptance of Offer) or (Letter - Placement to Satellite Class) or will be retained on the school's waitlist.

Principals are responsible for forwarding parents the relevant enrolment package and liaising with them throughout the process.

### **Enrolment Package**

When a family is offered a placement, in addition to the enrolment contract, they will be sent documents based on the enrolment acceptance checklist.

A family can decline an enrolment offer and inform Aspect school if they want to be placed in the school's active waitlist.

To secure enrolment, the family must pay a non-refundable enrolment fee as published in the Aspect School fees schedule (NSW or SA).

When a family informs the Aspect school of their decision to withdraw their child from enrolment before commencing, they must also inform the Aspect school if they wish to be placed in the school's active waitlist.





# Other school policies

Aspect completed a review of all its policies in 2019 to update the references in the External Framework section. Previously the external framework had only referred to the Disability Standards for Education. With this review the relevant NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and South Australia Education Board standards are referenced.

The content of the policies/procedure itself have not changed significantly with the exception of the Safeguarding the people we support policy which was reworked. Following reviews by the Aspect Safeguarding Committee the 19 elements that underpinned the Aspect Culture of Safety and Wellbeing were reviewed and replaced with the 10 principles to align with the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Child Safe Organisation Principles. These 10 principles now guide the Aspect Culture of Safety and Wellbeing and the policy was updated to reflect this change

Summary of policy	Changes in 2019	Access to full text
<p><b>Student welfare</b></p> <p>The school seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment to support the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of students through the following policies:</p> <p>Person centred approach and recognition of values - define and work towards achieving individual's goals and personal lifestyle choices with support and input from those who care about them</p> <p>Risk management framework - identifies risks and defines criteria for the assessment of consequence of those risks</p> <p>Duty of care and dignity of risk - ensures that staff understand and implement the principles of Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk, recognising the rights of the people we support to make informed choices and take calculated risks. It is essential that each individual's dignity of risk is respected and supported in their decision making processes. Aspect facilitates each student's meaningful choice and control to maximise their independence; and minimises the risk to the individual or others wherever possible.</p> <p>Safeguarding the people we support - Aspect is committed to appropriately responding to and preventing incidents of abuse, injury, neglect and exploitation of the people we support, in both participation with Aspect, and as a partner of the broader community</p>	<p>Nil significant changes were made in 2019 with exception of the Safeguarding the people we support policy which was reworked to align with the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.</p>	<p>The full text of Aspect policies</p> <p>Person centred approach and recognition of value status;</p> <p>Risk management framework;</p> <p>Duty of care and dignity of risk;</p> <p>and Safeguarding the people we support can be accessed by request from the school principal or from Aspect's website</p> <p><a href="https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/content/aspect">https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/content/aspect</a></p>
<p><b>Anti-bullying</b></p> <p>For some young people on the autism spectrum, it can be very difficult to recognise bullying. The school seeks to develop supports to assist students to understand that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bullying is about the misuse of power in relationships</li> <li>bullying is when someone experiences repeated verbal, physical and or social behaviour that causes harm</li> <li>bullying is mean and can be very hurtful</li> <li>there are different kinds of bullying</li> <li>no kind of bullying is ever OK</li> <li>bullying should always be reported</li> <li>adults will do all in their power to take it seriously and deal with it</li> </ul>	<p>No changes were made in 2019</p>	<p><a href="https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/bullying">https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/resources/practical-tools-information-sheets/bullying</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/uploads/bullying_flyer-may_2018.pdf">https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/uploads/bullying_flyer-may_2018.pdf</a></p>

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## Summary of policy

### Discipline

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) considers that the behaviour of children with autism spectrum disorders requires support and understanding. Challenging behaviours are best understood and responded to by applying a positive approach as outlined in Aspect's Positive Behaviour Support policy.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) is a comprehensive approach to supporting situations where there is challenging behaviour and combines the science of learning (from Applied Behaviour Analysis) with human rights and values. PBS works in respectful collaboration with individuals and their families to use effective evidence based strategies to increase the quality of life for all involved.

### Complaints and grievances resolution

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) values complaints about the quality of its service and communications to support the continuous improvement of services and management.

Aspect's complaints management process provides a transparent framework for promptly and sensitively addressing and resolving complaints and disputes that may arise from complaints having regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality and privacy.

## Changes in 2019

Nil significant changes were made in 2019

Updated in line with Education and NDIS Standards.

Easy English resources and pictorial tool to support communication of feedback and complaints were developed.

## Access to full text

The full text of Aspect Positive Behaviour Support policy can be accessed by request from the school principal or from Aspect's website  
<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/content/aspect>

The full text of the Complaints Management Process can be accessed by request from the School Principal or from Aspect's website  
<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/feedback-and-complaints>

The Feedback and Complaints brochure can be downloaded from our website  
<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/documents/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure-Oct-2019.pdf>



# School determined priority areas for improvement

Area	Priorities	Achievements
Teaching and learning	Learning and Participation - improve consistency and quality in teaching and learning programs.	The school developed and implemented a new school wide K-6 Scope and Sequence and new units of work templates.
	Transition and Inclusion - review all processes relating to internal and external transitions to ensure practices are of a high standard and consistent across sites.	Both internal and external transition processes reviewed with changes implemented in terms 3 and 4 with student transition to new classes and/or new schools.
Family and Community Engagement	Build on a culture of collaboration between school and home to improve student skill development across home, school and community.	The school year commenced with a joint workshop with parent/carers and school staff to build collaborative partnerships. Ongoing opportunities were provided across the year for parents/carers to be involved in their child's education.
Staff development	Specialist Collaboration - improve learning support team processes to increase the team's engagement in teaching and learning programs and individual student supports.	Learning support team processes were reviewed during term 1, to ensure meetings are productive and include a focus on referrals, incidents, PBS planning, complex case reviews, home support, whole school LST projects.
Facilities and Resources	Establish new facilities to enrol high school students in 2019.	Facilities established with fourteen high school students enrolled in term 1.
Student achievement	Increase opportunities for students to be involved in decisions that affect them.	Students were invited to be involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- their individual planning meetings</li> <li>- whole school events</li> <li>- presentations about autism</li> </ul>

## Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

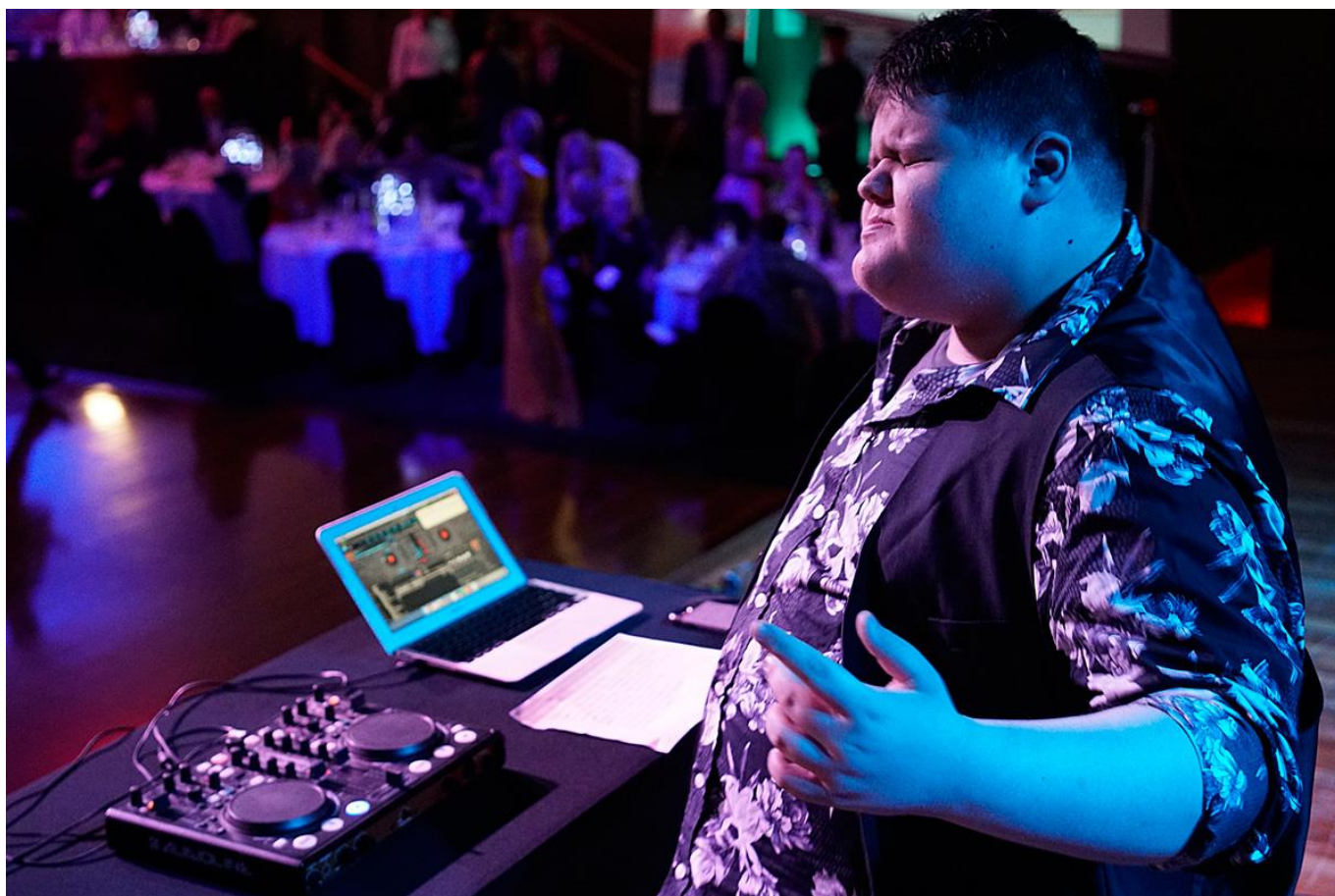
Aspect Hunter School wants all students to recognise that they are valued and an integral part of the school community, with parents and staff providing care and support that promotes self-esteem, mutual respect and responsibility.

The structure of the school's satellite program provides opportunities for students to participate in classes and cultural activities with host school students, particularly during Harmony week, National Reconciliation week and NAIDOC week.

Aspect's Purpose of "understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests & aspirations of people on the autism spectrum" and Aspect's Value of "we are passionate about people, about being positive and about what's possible" mirror the nine recommended values of the National Framework for Values in Education.

Aspect has a commitment to ensuring all team members know and embrace our core values to ensure they are reflected in interactions and relationships with stakeholders. Aspect recognises that in order to achieve this it is important to share information with staff and the community so that Aspect is known not only for the work that we do but also for the values we uphold.





# Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

## **Student Individual Plans**

Every student at Aspect Hunter School has an Individual Plan (IP). The IP is developed in collaboration with the parents and student where a student's strengths, interests, goals and aspirations are expressed by both parents and the student and are incorporated into the plan. The school, student and parents work together to achieve the goals set in the IP.

## **Family & Student Feedback**

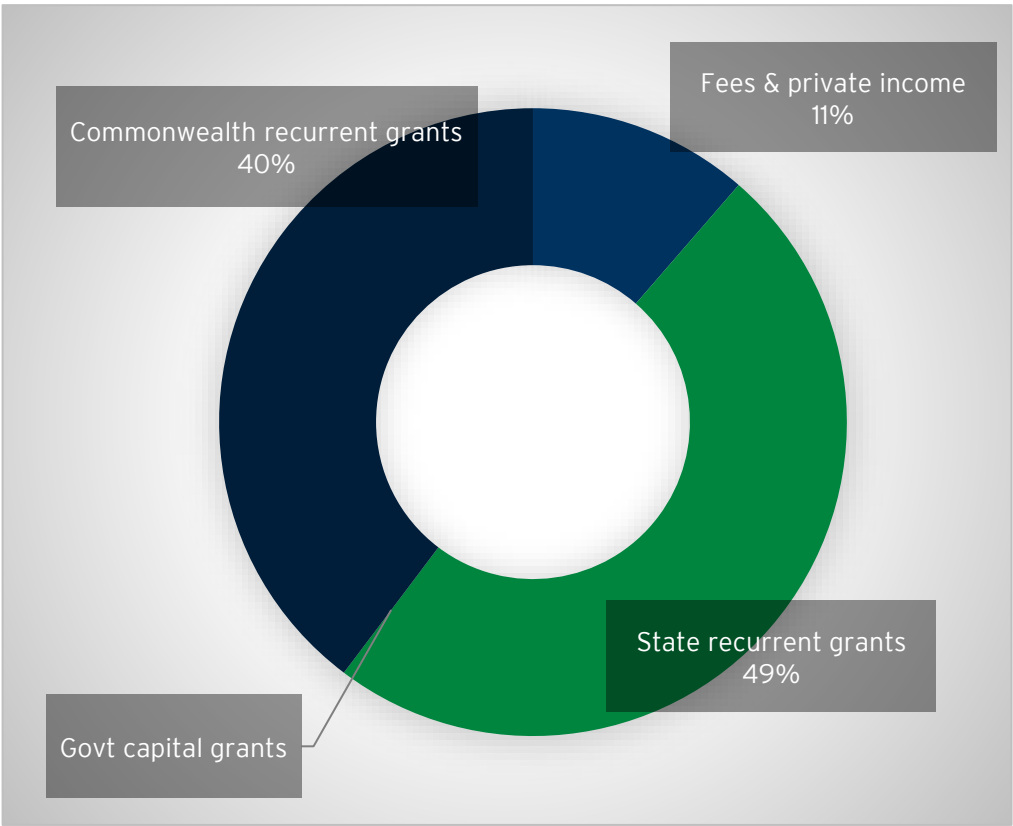
Families were given formal and informal opportunities to provide their feedback to the school. One of the ways is through a customer satisfaction survey which provides a Net Promotor Score (NPS). The survey is sent to Aspect Hunter School families asking them if they would recommend Aspect and what feedback or suggestions that they may have. Our school achieved an NPS score of 86% in Semester 1 and 100% in Semester 2 in 2019 which is a fantastic result.

## **Employee Engagement Survey**

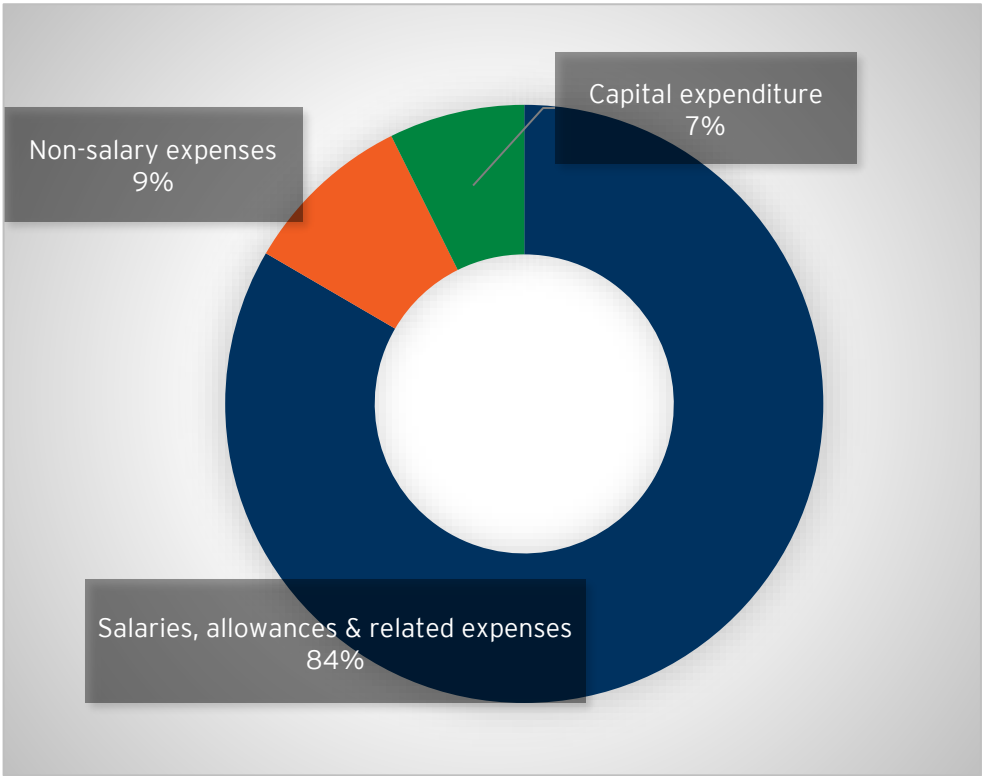
Aspect also holds a biennial Employee Engagement Survey called the Voice Survey. In 2019 Aspect Hunter School achieved a score of 88% for passion and engagement and 85% for progress. This means that Aspect Hunter School staff love what they do.

# Financial information

## Recurrent/capital income



## Recurrent/capital expenditure











*a different brilliant®*

understanding, engaging & celebrating the  
strengths, interests & aspirations  
of people on the autism spectrum

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