

2022 Annual Report

Aspect Hunter School



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Child safe statement

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is a child safe organisation committed to protecting the rights and interests of children and vulnerable people by providing them with a safe environment. This commitment extends to ensuring a culturally safe and inclusive environment that recognises and respects an individual's heritage, relationships and cultural practices.

Acknowledgment of Country

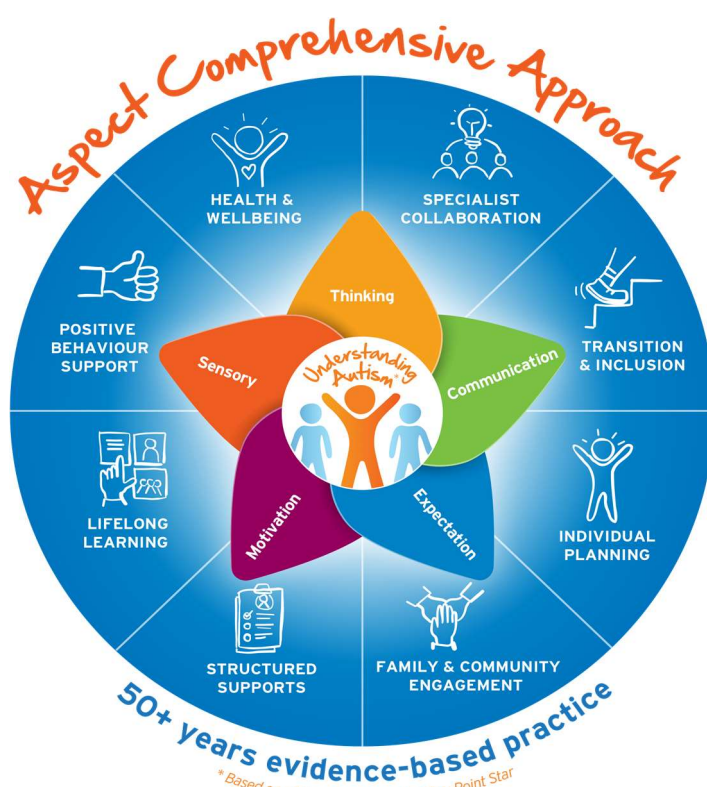
Aspect acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which we work, live and learn. We pay our respect to their elders, past present and emerging.

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is the country's largest service provider for people on the autism spectrum. Our specialised, evidence informed school 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 offers one of the best quality autism-specific education programs in Australia. We have over 50 years of experience and provide dynamic autism-specific support in purpose-built classrooms. We utilise the strengths and interests of students as a gateway to learning through quality, tailored programs that focus on the individual learning needs of each child.

Aspect schools provide specialised evidence-informed programs for children aged 4 to 17 on the autism spectrum.

The primary focus of our schools is to equip students with skills to become as independent as possible and 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 includes Individual Planning; Family & Community Engagement; Learning & Participation; Positive Behaviour Support; Structured Supports; Transition & Inclusion; Specialist Collaboration; and Health & Wellbeing.



Aspect's Strategic Plan

Our purpose

Understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests and aspirations of people on the autism spectrum
- *a different brilliant®*

Our vision

The best opportunities for people on the autism spectrum.

Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023



Work in partnership with people on the autism spectrum

- Implement our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
- Work in Partnership with People on the Autism Spectrum Charter
- Employ Autistic people across a range of roles



Deliver best practice, evidence informed services

- Research activities prioritised to focus on the Aspect Comprehensive Approach
- Continuous improvements to our autism-specific education
- A diverse and inclusive workforce



Extend Aspect's reach and enhance people capabilities

- Well trained staff with enhanced critical skills
- Customer-centric culture
- Strong and trusted brand identity



Investment in physical and digital infrastructure

- Capital Works Program for Aspect schools
- Innovative facilities co-designed with Autistic people
- Digital platforms that facilitate collaboration and communication

Our strategic support

Our people who are highly trained and value diversity and inclusion

Our systems and processes which are built to enable smarter work practices and foster collaboration

Our supporters who help to create a world where no one on the autism spectrum is left behind

By 2023



6% of roles at Aspect held by Autistic people



7,000 active participants and students receiving autism-specific education and supports

1,600 employees who are proud to be working for Aspect



Message from the Principal

In presenting the 2022 annual report, I would like to acknowledge the Wonnarua, Awabakal and Birpai people who are the traditional custodians of the lands on which our campuses are located.

In 2022, Aspect Hunter School enrolled 202 students across the Hunter, Newcastle and Port Macquarie areas from Kindergarten to year 12. The school comprises an administrative base at Thornton which offers primary and high school enrolment and a range of satellites classes located at Tarro, Waratah West, Abermain, Muswellbrook and Port Macquarie. All satellite locations offer primary education except for our Port Macquarie high school site. Unfortunately, during 2022 our Aspect Cardiff Satellite campus closed. The majority of these students transferred to the main school campus at Thornton.

We had a further 39 students enrolled in our Distance Education program in 2022, from across New South Wales in Years 3 to 10. The program is delivered online with direct teacher to student instruction and offline individual work. It also includes a 15-day residential program at our main campus in Thornton. In 2023, we will apply to extend the program to include Stage 6.

In 2022, a Social Worker joined our School Learning Support Team working alongside the school



Psychologist, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and Family Support Officer. The team work across our classes to build the capacity of our teaching and learning teams to put whole class and individual supports in place to build engagement in learning.

Aspect Hunter School has the most amazing staff team who demonstrate such passion and commitment to their role, students and our school. Further, we benefit from a highly supportive and engaged school community and enjoy working alongside our parents/carers in the education of their child/young person.

We look forward to what the 2023 school year will bring.

Lara Cheney

Principal

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 Education Standards Authority (NESA) mainstream curriculum - the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) (or for SA, Australian Curriculum Learning Areas). 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.

In 2022, we built upon our work with Multilit increasing the number of students involved in the programs but also provided additional professional learning for teachers. We also introduced a standardise assessment for reading with PAT-R. This involved who school training in Term 4 to support this work. Not all students were able to access this assessment tool so it was important to have modified assessment tasks for these students.

Literacy and Numeracy Assessments

For NAPLAN results, please refer to the My School website 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.

Senior secondary outcomes

Record of School Achievement

The formal Record of School Achievement credential was awarded by NESA to four students in 2022.

Higher School Certificate

Aspect Hunter School had three students awarded a non-ATAR HSC. Congratulations to these students.

Year 12 students attaining Year 12 certificate or equivalent VET qualification:

Year 12	Qualification/Certificate	Percentage of Students
2022	HSC – non-ATAR	100%
2022	AQF Certificate III or above	0%

Teacher professional learning, accreditation and qualifications

The following professional learning activities were undertaken by staff throughout 2021:

Description of professional learning activity	No. of staff participating
Administering Medication	ALL
Aiming our Strengths at Change	ALL
Aspect Comprehensive Approach Roadshow	ALL
Child Protection/Refresher	ALL
Code of Conduct/Refresher	ALL
Creating & Building School Brand & Reputation	ALL
Designing Rubrics for Learning & Assessment K-6 Planning (AISNSW)	All
Disability Standards for Education & NCCD	ALL
Safety Intervention Training/Refresher	ALL
Incident Response and Reporting	54
Initialit & Prelit Refresher	All Primary
MultiLit: Making Up Lost Time in Literacy course	All Primary
Hand Hygiene 4.0	30
ASCIA Anaphylaxis e-Training	24
Workplace Bullying Prevention for staff	18
An introduction to Autism (Positive Partnerships)	13
Manual Handling 6.0 (AU)	13
Supporting people on the autism spectrum using the 5 point star (online program)	10
Acknowledging and recording feedback and complaints	9
An introduction to the Positive Behaviour Support Template (Positive Partnerships)	7
Incident Review and Investigation	6
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inclusion and Cultural Safety	2
Supporting People to Stay Infection Free	1

Teacher accreditation

Level of accreditation	Number of Teachers
Conditional	14
Provisional	7
Proficient Teacher	44
Highly Accomplished Teacher / Lead Teacher (voluntary accreditation)	8
Total number of teachers	73

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

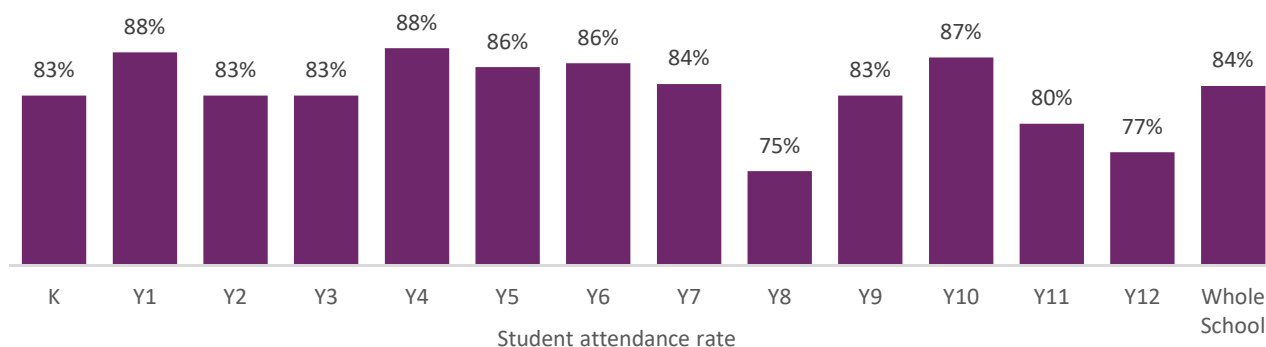
The composition of Aspect Hunter School staff is documented on the My School website www.myschool.edu.au.

Seven 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	83%	Year 7	84%
Year 1	88%	Year 8	75%
Year 2	83%	Year 9	83%
Year 3	83%	Year 10	87%
Year 4	88%	Year 11	80%
Year 5	86%	Year 12	77%
Year 6	87%	Whole School	84%



Management of non-attendance

Aspect Education has 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).

Unexplained absence will be followed up by the school. 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.

Aspect uses an automated SMS messaging and follow up email service to advise parents/guardians if their child is absent and they have not notified the school of the absence.

Retention of Year 10 to Year 12

Of the 5 students completing year 10 in 2020 60% (three students) completed year 12 in 2022. Two students exited after completing year 11 – one to mainstream and the other to post school options.

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.

In the case of an application for Aspect Distance Education the Aspect School Distance Education Enrolment Committee decides, in consultation with the family, if the Distance Education program is best suited to the educational needs of the student. When vacancies arise in the school or Distance Education program, 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
- 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-111, Stanford Binet V) which is not more than two (2) years old.

Reason for Distance Education pathway choice

As well as citizenship, age and diagnosis criteria, a child may be deemed eligible for Distance Education if:

- they are geographically isolated; or
- their individual circumstances prevent them from regularly attending school; and
- they agree to abide by the Distance Education requirements as set out in the Enrolment letter offer and contract.

Eligible students must be enrolled full time in the Distance Education program.

Registration to school/Distance Education waitlist

Expression of interest in Aspect schools may be made directly with the Aspect School. Enquiries can also be made with Aspect Customer Service by phone or email. or by general enquiry via the Contact Us page on the Aspect website and these enquiries 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, for

prospective parents or guardians who would like to enrol their child. This information session outlines the Aspect education program and the 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. 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 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. 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 they can inform parents of the outcomes.

The Principal will inform the parents or guardians 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 school's 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 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 through 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

Summary of policy	Changes in 2022	Access to full text
<p>Student welfare</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><i>Customer Experience & Service Innovation</i>— define and work towards achieving participants goals and personal lifestyle choices with support and input from those who care about them.</p> <p><i>Risk Management Framework</i> – identifies risks and defines criteria for the assessment of consequence of those risks</p> <p><i>Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk</i> - ensures that staff understand and implement the principles of both Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk, recognising the rights of the people we support to make informed choices and take calculated risks. 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><i>Safeguarding the People We Support</i> - 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>Customer experience policy new in October 2022. Replacing Person Centred Approach Policy.</p>	<p>These policies can all be accessed from Aspect's website autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</p>
<p>Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools</p> <p>The Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA), including the use of the Five Point Star, drives aspect's guiding principles for pastoral care.</p> <p>Aspect exercises due diligence in all of its duty of care responsibilities towards students, staff and the school community. Leaders of the school endorse activities and plan for the safety and maintenance of good mental and physical health and well-being of the students, staff and parents. Schools seek to make provision for particular needs of individuals who require special safety arrangements or avoid discomfort or threat to their health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>The Pastoral Care and Bullying Prevention in Aspect Schools procedure can be accessed by request from the school.</p> <p>The following related policies can be accessed from Aspect's website autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</p>

<p>Bullying or harassment is not tolerated in any form. All members of our community are committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment which promotes personal growth and fosters positive self-esteem for all. Aspect Schools aim to maintain a setting in which everyone feels valued and respected and where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted. Aspect encourages the reporting of complaints and feedback.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA) • Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk • Embracing Diversity • Person-Centred Approach and Recognition of Valued Status • Safeguarding the People We Support • Feedback, Complaints and Incidents
<p>Discipline</p> <p>Aspect adopts a positive behaviour support (PBS) approach when working with children on the autism spectrum ranging from strategies for all students through to more intensive strategies for students who may exhibit more challenging behaviours as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Support policy.</p> <p>Aspect follows a PBS approach but when behaviours occur that put the safety of any stakeholder at risk, the school will be required to implement appropriate procedures to safeguard all stakeholders' safety. All staff have responsibilities in relation to implementing discipline in Aspect Schools.</p>	<p>Aspect Positive Behaviour Policy updated April 2022 to reflect current best practice and provide more detail.</p>	<p>The full text of the Discipline in Schools work instruction can be accessed by request from the school Principal.</p> <p>The Aspect Positive Behaviour Support policy can be accessed from Aspect's website autismspectrum.org.au/about-aspect/policies</p>
<p>Complaints and grievances resolution</p> <p>Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) values complaints about the quality of its service and communications to support the continuous improvement of services and management.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>The Aspect Complaints Management Process can be accessed from Aspect's website autismspectrum.org.au/feedba ck-and-complaints</p> <p>The Feedback and Complaints brochure can be downloaded from the Aspect website autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/docu ments/Governance/Aspect-Feedback-and-Complaints-Brochure.pdf</p>

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 each student and their family. It incorporates a student's strengths, interests, goals and aspirations. Students, parents and teachers work as a team to achieve the goals.

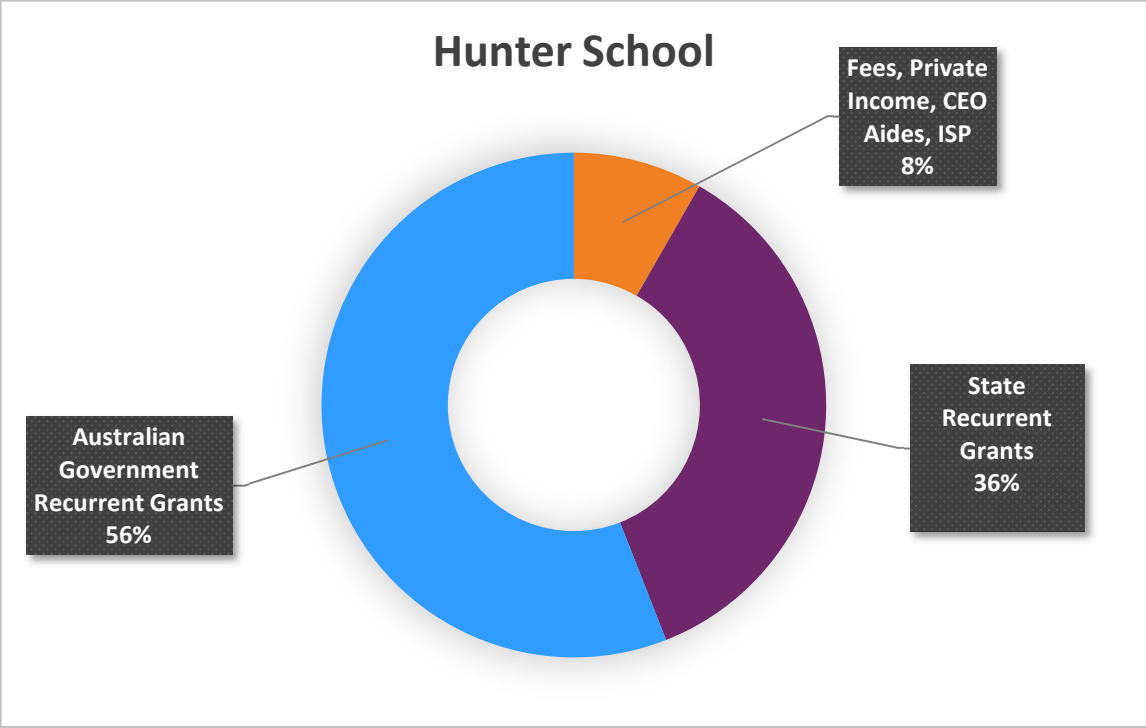
Staff, Family and Student Feedback

Aspect Hunter School welcomes staff, student and parent opinions. Feedback is collected in a variety of forums including student enrolment surveys and exit surveys, Net Promoter Scores, parent testimonials along with family engagement in school events.

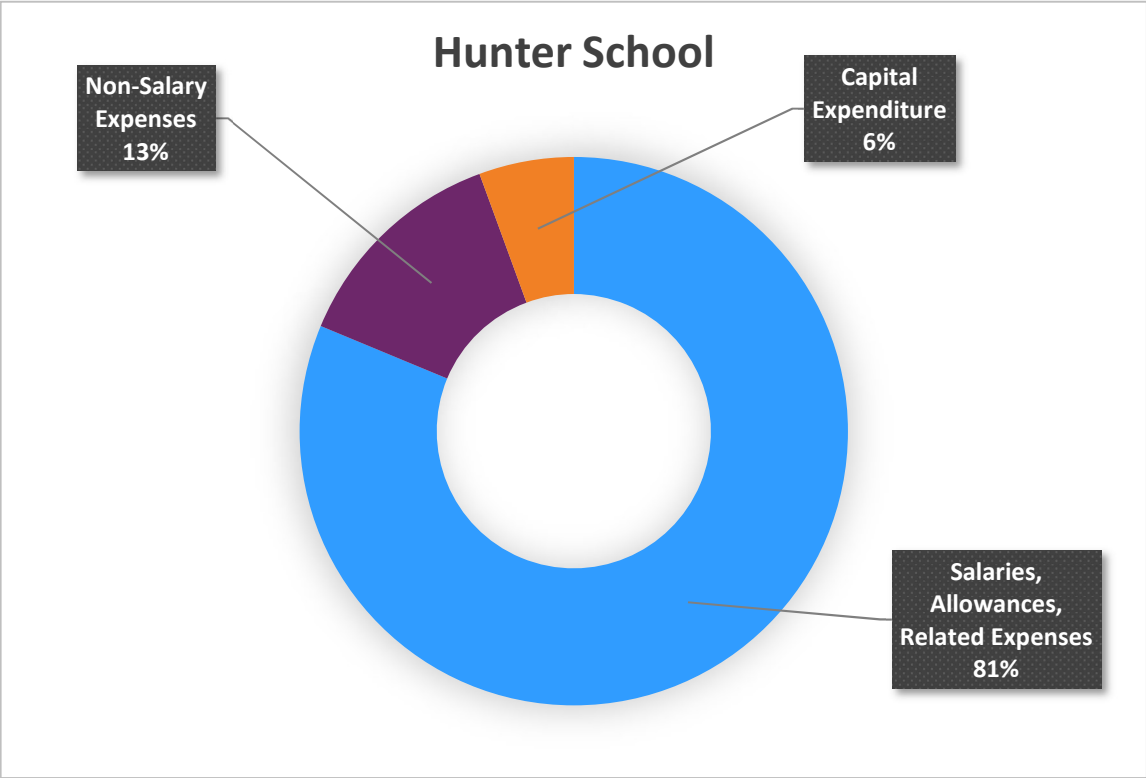
In 2022 our school engaged in the Perspectives: Your School in Focus survey. The survey was completed by 164 community members including 65 parents/carers. The school received an NPS score of 78% which is a wonderful result. Overall, the school maintained the positive scores, across all domains, received in 2020 survey results.

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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