

SASTA

Newsletter

May 2026

Contents

- 2 Your SASTA Team
- 3 From the Executive Officer
- 4 2026 Professional Learning for Term 2
- 5 Early Career Teachers Conference
- 6 SASTA Annual Conference wrap-up
- 9 SASTA Award Winners
- 11 Vale Mike Roach

MAY

WEBINAR: Unlock AI's transformative power in your school

Mary Anning Art Prize competition opens

JUNE

WEBINAR: Preparing Students for Online Exams

Design & Deconstruct Workshop

WEBINAR: Ediacara in the Classroom: Bringing Fossils to Life

JULY

Flinders Ranges Ediacara Teacher Trip

ConASTA 73 (Brisbane)

Early Career Teachers Conference

Friday 9 October

We're seeking presenters for our 2026 Early Career Teachers Conference. If you have practical strategies, ideas or experiences to share, we'd love to hear from you!

This is a great opportunity to support early career teachers as they build confidence and find their place in the profession, while also sharing your own practice with the wider SASTA community.



@SASTAInc



@sascienceteachers



South Australian Science Teachers Association



South Australian Science Teachers Association Inc.

ABN: 22 938 317 192

249 Henley Beach Road, Torrensville SA 5031

P 08 8354 0006 | E office@sasta.asn.au

www.sasta.asn.au

Your SASTA Team

SASTA Board

President: Dina Matheson
Vice President: Claire Hughes
Treasurer: Peter Turnbull
Brent Banham
Sarah Finney
Alexandra Fowler
Jarrod Johnson
Hilary Schubert-Jones
Sarah Todd

Board Representatives

Membership Services
Sarah Todd
Oliphant Science Awards
Peter Turnbull
ASTA Director
Dina Matheson
ASTA Representative
Brent Banham
Educators SA Representative
Claire Hughes

Honorary Life Members

Doug Anders
Tony Diercks
Elma Gurney
Bob Morton AM
Ronne Page
Mike Roach
Lester Russell
Peter Schodde OAM
Jack Smith
Ray Smith
Peter Turnbull
Alby Whitelaw
Dr Jane Wright

SASTA Office



Executive Officer
Tegan McClean



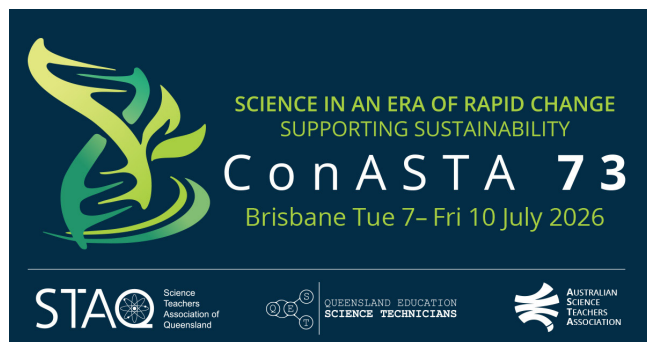
Office Manager
Rebecca Cooke



**Membership & Events
Coordinator**
Isabelle Chalmers



Education Officer
Rachel Pillar



Looking to connect with science educators from across Australia? ConASTA 73, hosted by STAQ in Brisbane, is coming up in July. Registrations open in early Term 2, and the draft program is now available to explore what's on offer.



Newsletter copy deadlines 2026

(Advertising deadlines one week earlier)

Edition	Deadline
August	10 July
November	16 October

Advertising rates & booking form available online at www.sasta.asn.au

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of SASTA or the editors. Whilst every effort is made to be factual, no liability is accepted for the accuracy of information presented.

© 2026 SASTA. Reproduction of material contained herein is permitted provided its source is acknowledged. All contributions should be emailed to marketing@sasta.asn.au

From the Executive Officer



Welcome to Term 2! I hope you had the chance to enjoy a well-earned break, slow down a little, and maybe even switch off for a bit before diving back in.

It was so great to see many of you at the 2026 SASTA Annual

Conference. While it was a smaller group this year, the energy across the two days was fantastic. There was a real buzz, with lots of conversations, idea-sharing, and that shared passion for science education that always makes these events so worthwhile.

It's also been a busy and exciting start to the year in the SASTA office. We're very happy to have Rachel Pillar on board as our Education Officer. Since starting in January, she's hit the ground running and has already made a big impact across our professional learning programs and member initiatives.

We also now have our 2026 SASTA Board finalised, and I'm really looking forward to working with such a committed group of educators to continue supporting our members and the broader science education community.

A big thank you as well to Isabelle and Rebecca for everything they do behind the scenes, especially as I've stepped into the Executive Officer role. There's always a lot happening, and their support makes a huge difference and keeps everything on track.

We're also really excited to launch the **SASTA Member Community on Microsoft Teams**, your online space to connect with fellow science educators across South Australia and beyond. It's a place to share ideas, ask questions, and support each other, whether you're just starting out or have been teaching for years. If you've ever thought "I wonder how others are doing this?", this is the space for you. Jump in, have a look around, and be part of the conversation.

We're continuing to build and update our Member Resources area, with all webinar recordings now available, along with recordings from our Annual Conference keynote speakers. If you haven't had a chance to explore these yet, it's well worth a look.

A quick heads up that registrations for the Oliphant Science Awards close on Sunday 17 May, so there's still time to get involved. Whether you're supporting students to enter or thinking about helping out as a judge, we'd love to have you involved.

We're also on the lookout for presenters for our Early Career Teachers Conference. If you've got ideas, strategies, or even just a few lessons learned that could help someone new to teaching, we'd really love to hear from you.

As always, keep an eye on our e-news, social media and website to stay up to date with everything coming up, there's plenty happening.

Thanks for being part of the SASTA community. We're looking forward to a great Term 2.

Tegan McClean
Executive Officer

SASTA Annual General Meeting

Thank you to everyone who joined us at the SASTA Annual General Meeting, held during the Annual Conference on Tuesday 14 April. We're delighted to confirm the official election of Sarah Todd, who had been serving in a casual vacancy, and Hilary Schubert-Jones who is a new addition to the board for 2026. We would also like to welcome back Dina Matheson, who was re-elected, to the Board for a three-year term.

At the recent Board meeting, Dina Matheson was re-elected as President, Claire Hughes as Vice-President and Peter Turnbull as Treasurer. We're lucky to have such a passionate and experienced team guiding SASTA, and we look forward to another great year ahead with your support.



Professional Learning for Term 2 2026



WEBINAR: Unlock AI's transformative power in your school

Wednesday 20 May | 4:00PM - 5:00PM
Online via Zoom

Presenter: Chris Bush, AI for Education Expert

In this webinar, AI expert and Leading Teacher Chris Bush will teach you how to harness ChatGPT and AI for revolutionary results. You'll learn how to use AI for planning, assessment, marking, and more. Join us to discover the power of AI to transform your classroom and school so you can work smarter, not harder.

What you'll leave with:

- Ready-to-use prompts: Explore a curated library of classroom-tested prompts to spark immediate AI integration.
- Prompt mastery: Learn the techniques to craft your own powerful AI prompts with an easy-to-follow guide.
- Discover the best AI tools and policies: Access handpicked resources and policies that will lead to the most impactful AI integration for your classroom and school setting.

The session will also include tips for designing formative tasks that mirror online exam conditions, and how to reduce anxiety by embedding small habits into everyday learning. Whether you're supporting students through high-stakes assessments or low-pressure practice, this workshop will equip you with tools and approaches to set them and yourself up for success.



Design & Deconstruct Workshop

Friday 12 June | 9:00AM - 3:00PM
Education Development Centre

Presenter: Jason Greenslade, Curriculum Leader Science, Westminster School

This workshop is aimed at people who want to further their skills in setting, assessment and providing feedback on the D&D + practical report task. It also will cover the writing and marking of practical questions for tests and exams as well. There will be time to examine

your own student work and participate in some cross-moderation and marking of work/drafts.

"A range of resources and strategies provided which included different science subjects and it was a really good opportunity to network with educators from different fields."



WEBINAR: Preparing Students for Online Exams

Wednesday 3 June | 4:00PM - 5:00PM
Online via Zoom

Presenter: Sarah Shoobridge, Scotch College

As online assessments become increasingly common in schools, early career teachers play a crucial role in helping students navigate this shift with confidence. This practical

session will explore strategies for preparing students for online exams, focusing on both technical readiness and cognitive skills. We'll cover how to build familiarity with digital platforms, manage time effectively in an online environment, and support students in developing typing stamina, digital literacy, and exam mindset.



WEBINAR: Ediacara in the Classroom: Bringing Fossils to Life

Wednesday 17 June | 4:00PM - 5:00PM
Online via Zoom

Presenters: Sarah Todd, Coromandel Valley Primary School & Miriam Doull, Mitcham Primary School

This session showcases teaching resources developed by South Australian primary and secondary educators who participated in the SASTA scholarship

program to visit the active research site, supported by the Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation. Ranging from Years R- 10, the resources include hands-on fossil simulations, visual reconstructions of Ediacaran organisms, interactive timelines, and place-based learning materials linked to the Flinders Ranges and Nilpena Ediacara National Park.

Early Career Teachers Conference

9 October 2026

Shaping the Future



**Call for Workshops
now open**
Share your expertise

SASTA is committed to providing opportunities for Early Career Teachers to connect, learn and grow within a supportive professional community. As part of this, we are seeking presenters for our Early Career Teachers Conference.

This one-day conference supports graduates and teachers in the first few years of their careers, providing opportunities to reflect on professional identity, strengthen classroom practice, support wellbeing, and build connections with other early career educators.

The program will include specialised workshops for both Primary and Secondary teachers. We are looking for presenters who can share practical, classroom-ready strategies, insights and experiences to support early career teachers in developing confidence and capability in the classroom.

When considering the focus of your presentation, you may wish to draw on one or more of the following areas. We particularly encourage sessions that include practical examples, resources or classroom-ready ideas.

Unpacking the curriculum

Supporting teachers to understand key components of the science curriculum, including Science as a Human Endeavour and capabilities and dispositions, and to develop effective and engaging teaching programs.

Science understanding and STEM education

Approaches to teaching specific areas of science understanding, developing students' scientific literacy, and integrating STEM learning in meaningful ways.

Inquiry-based learning

Developing strategies to support science inquiry skills, critical and creative thinking, and student-led learning.

Assessment

Using a range of assessment strategies to monitor student learning and inform teaching, including approaches to e-exams and building evidence for professional practice.

Classroom practice and relationships

Strategies for classroom management, building positive relationships, maintaining high expectations, and working collaboratively with colleagues, leaders and families.

Differentiation and inclusive practice

Strategies to support diverse learners and create inclusive, accessible science classrooms, including teaching outside your area of expertise.

Digital tools and emerging technologies

Practical ways to use digital tools, including AI, to support teaching, assessment and student engagement.

Supporting teacher wellbeing and career development

Exploring the realities of teaching in the early years, including managing workload, maintaining wellbeing, transitioning from provisional to full registration, and building a professional portfolio.

Beyond the classroom

Practical considerations such as planning and running excursions, managing risk, and creating meaningful learning experiences outside the classroom.

Workshop submissions close Sunday 5 July

2026 Annual Conference Wrap-up

The 2026 SASTA Annual Conference was held on Monday 13 and Tuesday 14 April at Morialta Secondary College, bringing together 92 delegates for two days of engaging professional learning, collaboration and connection.

While more intimate in size, this year's Conference was marked by a strong sense of enthusiasm, with delegates actively engaging in sessions, discussions and networking across both days.

The Conference attracted a diverse mix of primary and secondary educators, including experienced teachers, science leaders and early career educators, creating a valuable opportunity to share ideas, experiences and classroom practice.

This year's theme, Cultivating Curiosity, was reflected throughout the program, encouraging educators to explore ways to spark wonder, inquiry and deeper thinking in science classrooms.



The Conference opened with a compelling keynote from Professor Andy Lowe (Environment Institute, Adelaide University), who presented DNA tools to identify and help

eliminate illegally logged timber from global supply chains. His presentation brought global environmental challenges to life, showing how science is being used to tackle complex, real-world problems.

On Tuesday, Professor Kishan Dholakia (Adelaide University) delivered Trip the Light Fantastic, engaging delegates with insights into the science of light and its applications across research, medicine and technology. His presentation highlighted the impact of scientific innovation and its relevance to both industry and education.



The Cutting Edge sessions were a highlight of the program, giving delegates the opportunity to connect with current research and emerging scientific developments. From medical science and climate research to advances in sustainable technologies and our understanding of early life on Earth, these sessions were both inspiring and highly relevant, reinforcing the importance of bringing contemporary science into the classroom.

The program featured a diverse range of workshops designed to support classroom practice and inspire student curiosity.

A number of sessions generated strong engagement and valuable discussion, including:

- From Prompt to Pedagogical Superpowers! – Penny Collins, Reynella East College
- Phage Hunters – Andy Stone, Australian Science and Maths School & Professor Rob Edwards, Flinders University



- Explicit Instruction in Science: Making Daily Review Work – Renee Rees & Alexia Little, Cardijn College
- Ediacara in the Classroom: Bringing Fossils to Life – Miriam Doull and colleagues
- R-3 Science: Little Scientists, Big Questions – Laura Brace, Mitcham Primary School
- Practical Lessons: Using Dataloggers + The Wonder of Chemical Demonstrations to aid learning – Jason Greenslade & Amanda Salha, Westminster School



Across the program, there was a clear emphasis on practical, classroom-ready strategies, inquiry-based learning, and hands-on approaches that support student engagement and curiosity.

Delegates particularly valued sessions that modelled effective pedagogy and provided resources that could be readily implemented

in the classroom. As one attendee reflected, “I can see myself implementing the practices they talked about into my classroom.”



Sponsors and exhibitors added to the energy of the Conference, with interactive displays and activities generating strong interest and engagement throughout the event. SASTA extends particular thanks to our Gold Sponsors — Beyond Horizon VR, Credit Union SA, TeachTEK/RealityTEK and Thinking Mode — for their generous support of the Conference and the science education community.



The Conference also provided valuable opportunities for connection, with delegates and presenters sharing ideas, experiences and classroom strategies in both formal and informal settings. The Happy Hour sessions were a highlight, offering a relaxed and collegial space to connect, celebrate and reflect on the two days of learning.

SASTA extends a sincere thank you to all presenters, delegates, exhibitors and sponsors for their contribution to the 2026 Conference. Your ongoing support helps to strengthen our professional learning community and ensures that science educators across South Australia continue to connect, share and grow.

You can also check out the Conference highlight video on the SASTA website.



AUSTRALIAN
SCIENCE
INNOVATIONS

Science today. Scientists tomorrow.

2026 Junior Science Olympiad Exams

Years 9 & 10 - Wednesday 10 June

Years 7 & 8 - Friday 12 June

Registrations close 3 June

This program is proudly delivered by



AUSTRALIAN
SCIENCE
INNOVATIONS



(02) 6125 6228

asi@asi.edu.au

www.asi.edu.au

@auscienceinnovations

2026 SASTA Awards

A highlight of the 2026 SASTA Annual Conference was the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the outstanding contributions of science educators across South Australia.

SASTA Medal

The SASTA Medal was awarded to **Kathleen Best (Clarendon Primary School)** in recognition of her outstanding and sustained contribution to science education and to the Association.



A long-standing and highly valued member of SASTA, Kathleen has played a significant role in strengthening science education across South Australia through her leadership, professional learning contributions and ongoing service to the Association over many years. She has been deeply involved in the Oliphant Science Awards since 2017 as a committee member, judge and school coordinator, and will take on the role of Co-Convenor in 2026.

As Primary Science Specialist Teacher and Science Coordinator at Clarendon Primary School, Kathleen has fostered a vibrant culture of inquiry and student research, supporting students to explore authentic questions and share their work through school science fairs and statewide competitions. Her leadership has contributed to her school's recognition as a Science Active School and has inspired both students and colleagues to engage deeply with science.

A regular presenter at SASTA conferences and contributor to professional publications, Kathleen is known for her generosity in sharing knowledge and supporting fellow educators. Her collaborative spirit, commitment to excellence, and dedication to strengthening primary science education have made a lasting and meaningful impact on the SASTA community and beyond.

Outstanding Contribution to the Teaching of Science Awards

SASTA was proud to present the 2026 Outstanding Contribution to the Teaching of Science Awards, proudly supported by Credit Union SA.

This year's recipients represent excellence across primary, middle and senior years, and reflect the depth of expertise, leadership and passion within our science teaching community.

Primary Years - Erica Bolto, Kangaroo Island Community Education

Erica Bolto is a dedicated and innovative science educator who brings inquiry-driven learning into her classroom and the wider school community. Working in a regional R-12 setting on Kangaroo Island, she creates authentic, place-based learning experiences that connect students with their environment and make science meaningful and engaging. Through her leadership of whole-school science initiatives and her commitment to collaboration, Erica has helped foster a strong culture of curiosity and scientific thinking across year levels.



Middle Years - Trevor Stephenson, Seymour College

Trevor Stephenson is a passionate science educator who connects students with real-world science through engaging, inquiry-based teaching. His work linking classroom learning with South Australia's Ediacaran fossil record brings complex scientific ideas to life in meaningful ways.

Beyond the classroom, Trevor's collaboration with organisations including SASTA and the South Australian Museum, and his leadership in professional learning, continue to strengthen science education across the broader community.



Upper Secondary Years – Franklin Kovilpillai, St Peter’s College

Franklin Kovilpillai is a highly respected educator whose teaching is defined by clarity, rigour and a deep commitment to student success. His work in senior chemistry supports students to develop strong problem-solving skills and achieve outstanding academic outcomes.

A generous mentor and leader, Franklin has also made a significant impact beyond his classroom, supporting colleagues and contributing to high-quality science teaching across South Australia.

Helen Castle Memorial Scholarship

The Helen Castle Memorial Scholarship was awarded to **Sai Lakshmi Laguduvan Athmaraman (Whyalla Secondary College)**.

This scholarship supports country science teachers to attend the SASTA Conference and access professional learning, continuing the legacy of Helen Castle’s commitment to science education in regional South Australia.



Sai is a dedicated and enthusiastic educator who brings inquiry-based learning to life through hands-on investigations and real-world applications. Her commitment to professional growth, particularly in a regional context, and her willingness to share her learning with colleagues exemplify the spirit of this scholarship.

These awards reflect the strength, generosity and professionalism of the SASTA community, and the ongoing commitment of educators to inspire curiosity and excellence in science learning.

MAKE YOUR

Dreams[®]

COME TRUE



***As long as your dream is under \$1000 and you open an Access or Educator+ Account before the end of July.**



Vale Mike Roach

SASTA acknowledges with great sadness the passing of Mike Roach, SASTA Honorary Life Member and recipient of the SASTA Medal in 2000.

Mike made a significant contribution to science education in South Australia and across Australia. A passionate advocate for space science and astronomy, he dedicated his career to inspiring students and supporting teachers, and was widely respected for his generosity and commitment to the profession.



A long-standing member of SASTA, Mike served in a range of leadership roles, including President from 2000 to 2003, and contributed nationally through his work with the Australian Science Teachers Association.

He was particularly known for establishing the South Australian Space School in 1997, creating unique opportunities for students to engage with space science, and for supporting teachers through practical professional learning and accessible resources. His contribution was recognised nationally with the 2005 Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Secondary Schools.

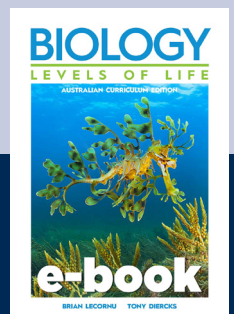
Mike valued collaboration and professional community, and his impact is reflected in the many students he inspired, the teachers he supported, and the opportunities he helped create.

SASTA extends its sincere condolences to Mike's family, friends and colleagues. He will be greatly missed.

BIOLOGY: LEVELS OF LIFE

Brian LeCornu and Tony Diercks

**BOTH E-BOOKS
UPDATED FOR 2026**



BIOLOGY: LEVELS OF LIFE - TEXTBOOK

PRINTED VERSION \$64.95 | E-BOOK \$17.00

ISBN 978-0-9577554-4-4 | 978-0-9925515-8-2

This textbook provides detailed coverage of all the content (Science Understanding) of the SACE Stage 2 Biology subject outline. It is divided into four topics, with each topic presented in chapters designed to make the material easy to follow. Each chapter concludes with a set of Study Questions. QR codes and hyperlinks connect to videos and scientific articles. The e-book is up-to-date for the 2025 school year. **A COMPLIMENTARY 15 MONTH SUBSCRIPTION TO THE E-BOOK IS AVAILABLE WITH EVERY PRINTED VERSION.**

The Biology: Levels of Life Textbook AND Workbook now available as **INTERACTIVE e-books!**

For full details visit the SASTA website.

BIOLOGY: LEVELS OF LIFE - WORKBOOK

PRINTED VERSION \$24.40 | E-BOOK \$10.00 | E-BOOK (INCLUDING ANSWERS) \$50.00

ISBN 978-0-9577554-5-1 | 978-1-7635294-0-3 | 978-0-9925515-7-5

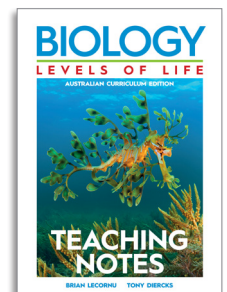
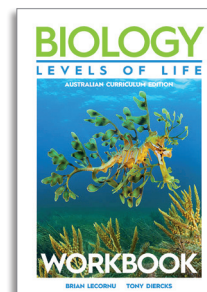
Written specifically to complement the textbook, the workbook covers all Science Understandings of the Biology subject outline. It can be used in conjunction with the textbook, or on its own as an aid for understanding and revision. By completing answers to the workbook questions, students will develop their knowledge and understanding of biological principles and concepts. In the digital version, students can enter answers on their device (and save them). **A SPECIAL VERSION OF THE E-WORKBOOK THAT INCLUDES SUGGESTED ANSWERS IS AVAILABLE FOR \$49.00.**

BIOLOGY: LEVELS OF LIFE - TEACHING NOTES

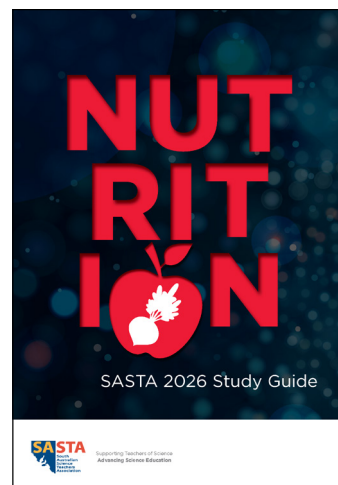
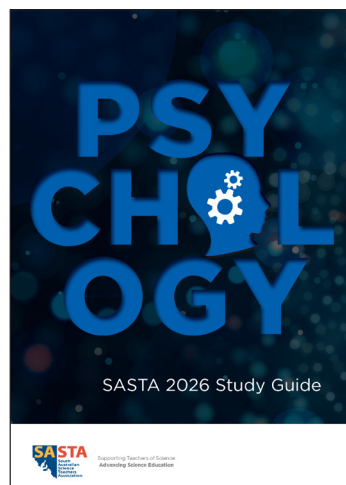
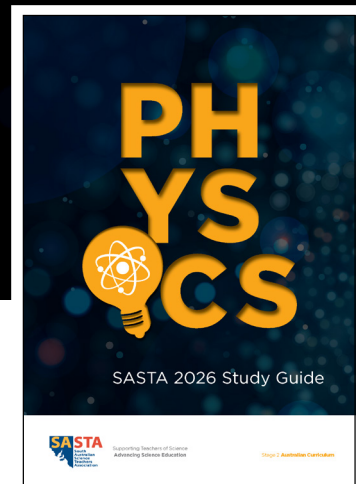
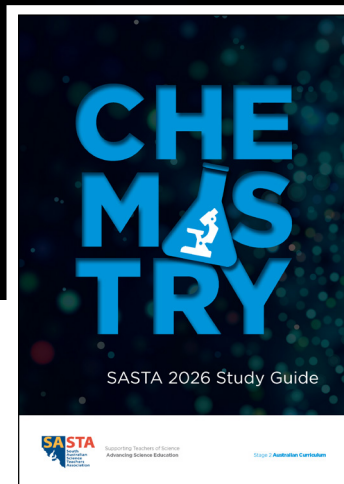
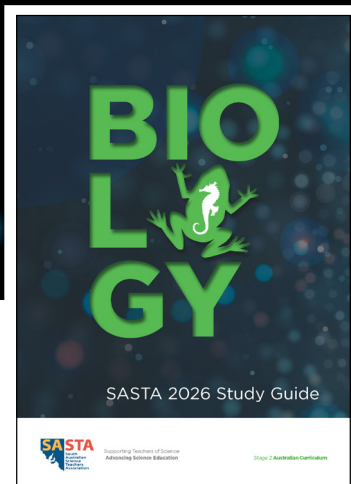
\$120.00 EACH

ISBN 978-0-9577554-6-8

Teachers will find the Teaching Notes invaluable in ensuring that all Science Understandings are covered for each of the four topics. There are teaching tips throughout, as well as additional information. Answers to Workbook questions will assist teachers in explaining concepts to students. Spiral bound to lie flat on the desk, and printed on high-quality spill-resistant gloss paper.



SASTA 2026 Study Guides



SASTA Study Guides are the perfect companion for students gearing up for their Stage 2 SACE exams. These guides provide a comprehensive range of questions, accompanied by worked solutions covering all topics in the Subject Outline. To keep things fresh and relevant, we update our guides each year with solutions from the previous year's exams and introduce brand new questions to further enhance exam readiness.

\$35 each

plus delivery or orders can be collected from the SASTA office

Available May 2026

Available to order at www.sasta.asn.au