

SASTA Newsletter

August 2026

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AUGUST

Marking & Moderation Workshops

7-10 Australian Curriculum Science Workshop: How can we design and assess differentiated tasks?

Mary Anning Art Prize competition closes

SEPTEMBER

WEBINAR: Moderating with ACARA 101

WEBINAR: SHE Task

WEBINAR: Design & Deconstruct

OCTOBER

Early Career Teachers Conference

Early Career Teachers Conference

Friday 9 October

Join us for a day designed to support early career and pre-service teachers as you build confidence, strengthen your practice and connect with others in the profession.

With practical sessions for primary and secondary teachers, you'll take away ideas you can use in the classroom, hear from experienced educators and have plenty of opportunities to connect with others at a similar stage of their teaching journey. **Registrations are now open.**



@SASTAInc



@sascienceteachers



South Australian Science Teachers Association



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A shout out to the SASTA Team

You may have noticed our August newsletter has arrived a little later than usual, and there's a pretty good reason!

August has been a huge month for the SASTA team. Alongside everything else happening across professional learning, events, resources and member support, we spent six days onsite delivering the Oliphant Science Awards and Science Alive!. There were many hours, many steps and a lot happening behind the scenes.

So, I wanted to take a moment to say a huge thank you to Isabelle, Rachel and Rebecca for everything they have put in over the past few weeks. We're a small team, and I'm incredibly grateful for the way everyone pitches in, supports each other and keeps things moving during our busiest times.

We also had a couple of milestones to celebrate in August. Rebecca has now been with SASTA for 11 years, and I've reached 8 years.

So, apologies for the slightly delayed newsletter. It's been a very full August, and I'm incredibly proud of what the team has achieved!

Tegan

Newsletter copy deadlines 2026

(Advertising deadlines one week earlier)

Edition	Deadline
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November	16 October
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Advertising rates & booking form available online at www.sasta.asn.au

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From the President



Hello, SASTA friends!

The science never stops, and neither do we. We're already halfway through Term 3, with plenty still to come. Check out the SASTA website for upcoming professional learning, including webinars

and in-person workshops. Professional learning isn't just about the learning though... If you've got something you'd like to share, consider submitting an abstract for the STEM Conference later in the year.

I am excited to hear about the adventures of our Flinders Ranges Ediacara Teacher Scholarship recipients. What an incredible opportunity to get up close and personal with some of South Australia's incredible history. This isn't just our history though; it's the Earth's. Within these rocks is some of the earliest known evidence of complex, multicellular life. How lucky are we that such a significant site is right on our doorstep!

A massive thank you to all our OSA volunteer judges. With so many amazing entries, it's certainly not an easy job. Of course, I must also extend my appreciation to the schools, families and communities who support our students to realise their passions for science. It was wonderful to see the winning projects on display at Science Alive! and to celebrate what our next generation of scientists are getting up to.

Science Alive! may be over for another year, but there are still plenty of opportunities to share what's going on in your schools. We've just celebrated National Science Week, so please do share with us what you got up to, whether during Science Week or at any time of year! You can contribute to our blog posts, social media, or even write an article for our publications. We'd always love to hear about what's going on around the state.

Stay well everyone!

Ngaityalya,

Dina Matheson

SASTA President

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unionsa** 

MAKE YOUR

Dreams

COME TRUE



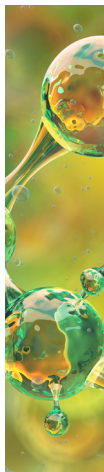
*** As long as your dream is under \$1,000 and you open an Access or Educator+ account before the end of August.**

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Professional Learning for Term 3 2026



Marking & Moderation Workshops

These workshops will provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss assessment and the application of the performance standards to samples of work, as well as having invaluable professional input with their own student samples. An opportunity to readjust marking standards prior to final moderation.

- Physics & Psychology - 24 August
- Biology - 31 August
- Chemistry - 4 September
- Nutrition - 7 September



7-10 Australian Curriculum Science Workshop: How can we design and assess differentiated tasks?

Friday 28 August | 9:00AM - 3:00PM
Education Development Centre

Presenter: Jason Greenslade,
Westminster School

This session will only focus on Australian Curriculum 7-10 Science courses – these are so critical for making sure we are retaining students in Science in the senior years. It is essential that we equip students in these year levels with confidence and the skills needed to explain, analyse and be critical.



WEBINAR: Moderating with ACARA 101

Wednesday 9 September | 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Online via Zoom

Presenter: Dina Matheson, Specialised Assistance School for Youth

This webinar introduces those teaching the Australian Curriculum V9 Science to the process of moderation and design of quality assessment tasks. There will be an opportunity for some low-stakes peer moderation. To truly get the most out of this, please bring along a copy of any Science task that you have, de-identified.



WEBINAR: SHE Task

Wednesday 16 September | 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Online via Zoom

Presenter: Jason Greenslade,
Westminster School

This webinar is designed to be a quick summary of the SHE task and how this might be introduced to students and how we might coach them on producing the best work possible.

There will be time in this webinar to engage in a marking exercise where we discuss KA3 and its consistent application to student work.

Student accountability in the age of AI will be discussed.



WEBINAR: Design & Deconstruct

Wednesday 23 September | 4:00PM - 5:00PM

Online via Zoom

Presenter: Jason Greenslade,
Westminster School

This webinar is designed to be a quick summary of the DnD task and how this might be introduced to students and how we might coach them on producing the best work possible.

There will be time in this webinar to engage in a marking exercise where we discuss IAE1 and its consistent application to student work.

Student accountability in the age of AI will be discussed.



Bringing Ediacara into the Classroom

In July, nine South Australian teachers swapped their classrooms for the Flinders Ranges as part of SASTA's 2026 Flinders Ranges Ediacara Teacher Scholarship, supported by the Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation (FREF).

With 23 applications for just nine places, the four-day trip provided an extraordinary opportunity to experience the science of Ediacara firsthand.

At Nilpena Ediacara National Park, teachers explored internationally significant fossil fields and spent time with Dr Mary Droser and members of her research team, learning about current research and the evidence scientists use to understand some of Earth's earliest complex life.



The group also explored the geological history of Brachina Gorge and enjoyed a stargazing experience at Skytrek Willow Springs.

For many participants, the opportunity to learn directly from researchers and experts was the highlight.

"It's hard not to get excited when talking with these types of people."

From the field to the classroom

The impact is already continuing back at school.

Teachers are finding ways to incorporate Ediacara into Earth and Space Sciences, fossils, geology, evolution, palaeontology and Science as a Human Endeavour.

Jatinder Pal Kaur Banvet from Mark Oliphant College has already developed an Ediacaran fossils PowerPoint, a Year 8 Earth and Space Science unit and a Year 8 Nilpena task, and continues to add resources as she teaches the unit.

SASTA has also established a Microsoft Teams Ediacara community where participants can continue sharing ideas and resources and remain connected with Ediacara experts. Previous scholarship participants will also be invited to join.

The next step is to develop, trial, reflect, refine and share the teaching resources emerging from these experiences, with suitable materials to be made available through SASTA Member Resources.

The experience also highlighted the value of connecting teachers from different schools and year levels. Participants valued the opportunity to learn from one another, exchange ideas and build professional connections that can continue well beyond the four-day trip.

A huge thank you to FREF, along with the researchers, rangers and guides who shared their knowledge and helped our teachers bring this remarkable South Australian science story back to their classrooms.

Early Career Teachers Conference

9 October 2026

Shaping the Future

YOUR
SCIENCE
COMMUNITY

SASTA
South
Australian
Science
Teachers
Association

Register now!
Program available
Find your people

SASTA's Early Career Teachers Conference is designed to support pre-service teachers, graduates and teachers in their first five years as they build confidence, strengthen their practice and connect with others in the profession.

This one-day conference offers practical, relevant professional learning, with specialised sessions for both Primary and Secondary teachers. This year's program covers four key themes: Foundation, Classroom Practice, STEM in Context, and Teacher Wellbeing and Connection, with plenty of classroom-ready ideas and resources to take away.

Our Share-a-thon is also back, giving you the chance to swap ideas, resources and classroom

tips with other early career teachers.

Bring along a friend from uni or a colleague from school, or come on your own and make new connections. We'll finish the day with our networking Happy Hour, so you can keep the conversations going in a relaxed setting.

And if you haven't used your professional learning credit this year, you may be able to access this valuable professional learning for FREE.

Join us on Friday 9 October.

Registrations are now open!

Visit: www.sasta.asn.au/professional_learning

STEM CONFERENCE

CALL FOR WORKSHOPS NOW OPEN

Have a STEM idea, classroom activity or approach that others could learn from?

The 2026 STEM Conference is all about sharing practical ideas, experiences and inspiration from across the STEM education community. If you've tried something that engaged your students, developed a great classroom activity, or have an approach that could help other educators, we'd love you to share it.

You don't need to have all the answers. This is an opportunity to share what's working, start conversations and learn from each other.

Join us and be part of the program for STEM for an Unwritten Future. Workshop submissions close Monday 28 September.

Submit a workshop: <https://bit.ly/45LNImm>



DATTA
South Australia
Design And Technology
Teachers Association

EdTechSA

MASA
The Mathematical Association of South Australia Inc

SASTA
South
Australian
Science
Teachers
Association

Early Career Teachers Conference Program

Session 1

1.1 Transition from Provisional to Full Registration

Adrian Dilger, Catholic Education SA

1.2 Designing Notes that Optimise Learning and Active Student Engagement

Mathew Disher, Concordia College

1.3 Teaching with AI: Opportunities and Challenges

Joanne Villis, St Dominic's Priory College & Zac Villis

1.4 Food and fibre in the Primary Years

Sue Pratt, AgCommunicators

Session 2

2.1 STEM outside the classroom

Sarah Todd, Coromandel Valley Primary School & Alex Lea, Green Adelaide

2.2 Wellbeing Strategies for Early Career Teachers

Andrea Raptis Westminster School

2.3 Inquiry-based learning

Dr Pranay Sharma, Cardijn College

2.4 How to effectively prepare students for Assessments

Daniel Rabbett, Sacred Heart College

Session 3

3.1 Making Science special: Practical Wisdom

Erica Bolto, Kangaroo Island Community Education

3.2 Fact or cap? Using influencers to teach scientific literacy

Dina Matheson, Specialised Assistance School for Youth

3.3 Relinquishing control to inspire creative Deconstruct & Design investigations in Stage 1 & 2 Science

Maylin Evanochko, Adelaide Botanic High School

3.4 Microplastic Mess: Using Real-World Problems to Drive Year 7 Science Inquiry

Swati Salvi, Seymour College

Session 4

4.1 Running Practical Lessons Effectively (Middle School Focus)

Jason Greenslade, Westminster School

4.2 Re-imaging STEM: Connecting Learning to Country, Context and Culture

Denise Rule & YASTSA Program Teacher, Department for Education

4.3 Navigating the Middle School Classroom - Behaviour Management Strategies

Jessie Evans, Kangaroo Island Community Education

4.4 Video games are more than just entertainment

Hilary Schubert-Jones, Future You

Session 5

Share-a-thon

An informal setting for multiple presenters to share innovative teaching ideas. Each presenter will share a strategy or tool during a 10-minute presentation and delegates will rotate around the room.

Foundations

Innovative Pedagogies

Tools & Strategies

STEM in Context

2026 Oliphant Science Awards

It's been another huge year for the Oliphant Science Awards, with **3,097 entries registered** across the competition.

Electronic submissions for Multimedia, Science Writing and Science Investigation were judged ahead of the onsite competition, with **37 volunteer judges assessing 559 entries**.

The Programming, Apps & Robotics Judging Day was held on Saturday 25 July at Trinity Gardens School. Students had the opportunity to meet with judges and demonstrate their projects in person, with **61 appointments and 14 judges** across the day.

SASTA again partnered with Science Alive! to host the onsite competition. It was a busy and rewarding week for staff and volunteers:

Wednesday – Project Delivery Day

A total of **1,871 onsite projects** were delivered and prepared for judging.

Thursday – Onsite and Sponsor Judging

68 volunteer judges assessed entries in Crystal Investigation, Games, Models & Inventions, Photography and Posters.

This year, **71 sponsor prizes** were awarded, recognising student achievement across a wide range of areas of science. Photographs were also taken of **226 winning entries** ahead of the public display.

Friday – STEM Careers Day at Science Alive!

Students visiting Science Alive! had the opportunity to explore the SASTA display and take part in activities from some of our science community partners.



Saturday & Sunday – Science Alive!

All Models & Inventions entries and winning entries from the other competition categories were on display across the weekend. iPads and TVs showcased electronic submissions, giving students, families and the wider community the opportunity to explore the projects and celebrate the work of this year's entrants.

While students can now find out whether they have received an award, their final placings will be revealed at the **Presentation Ceremony on Friday 23 October at Walford Anglican School for Girls**. Prize-winning students will receive an invitation via their school coordinator.

The **Virtual Open Day** will also return in late September, providing another opportunity to explore this year's winning entries. Winning projects from previous years remain available through the Oliphant Science Awards website and are a great source of inspiration for future entrants.



Science at Science Alive!

We were delighted to have several members of the South Australian science community join us again this year.

The **Australian Institute of Physics** returned with its popular hands-on laser activities, while the **South Australian Museum** brought back the Dating Game, challenging visitors to investigate and date a range of objects.

Across Saturday and Sunday, our **Mary Anning Art Prize** area gave young visitors the opportunity to explore palaeontology and create their own prehistoric artwork, with help from a palaeontologist.

A new addition for 2026 was the **Nature Education Centre**, who joined us on Friday with hands-on activities and some special animal visitors for students to meet.



Thank you to our sponsors

We were very pleased to welcome a number of new sponsors to the Oliphant Science Awards in 2026, helping us recognise student achievement across even more areas of science.

A special thank you to **Ultra Maritime, the CO2 & Greenhouse Gas Reduction Prizes, the Australian Entomological Society, Robinson Aerospace Systems, Soil Science Australia, and the Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation**, who supported this year's Commemorative Science Writing topic, Discovering Spriggina.

We are also incredibly grateful to our long-standing sponsors for their continued support of the Awards and South Australian students. Their ongoing involvement helps us celebrate curiosity, creativity and achievement in science each year.



BEHIND THE SCENES

Four SASTA staff supported the onsite competition and Science Alive! across the week, alongside an incredible group of volunteer judges and helpers.

We were also supported by 12 OSA Ambassadors this year, who helped across the competition and Science Alive! Their support is an important part of helping everything run smoothly during such a busy week.

The Oliphant Science Awards simply wouldn't be possible without our sponsors, ambassadors, volunteers, school coordinators, judges, committee members, teachers, families and school communities. Thank you to everyone who gave their time and support to help bring the 2026 competition together.

We can't wait to celebrate our prize-winning students at the Presentation Ceremony in October and see where their passion for science takes them next!



20
26

SA'S LARGEST
SCIENCE
COMPETITION

Science with Purpose: What my Research Taught Me About Teaching Climate Change

by Marina Baltikian, St Paul's College

This year at St Paul's College, our school theme is With Purpose, a theme that resonates deeply with SASTA's July focus on Science with Purpose. I am a science teacher here in South Australia, and I have recently submitted my PhD dissertation to the University of Eastern Finland, researching scientific literacy and how young people think about climate change. Before joining St Paul's College, I taught science across three countries, including China. That experience across different classrooms and educational contexts has given me a perspective I want to share, one grounded equally in research and in the day-to-day realities of teaching secondary science.

The problem in the room

Ask most secondary students whether climate change is real and urgent. The majority will say yes. Ask them to explain the greenhouse effect, rising sea levels, or the carbon cycle; many can do that too. But watch what happens when you ask them what they actually feel about it, or what they think should be done. That is often where the conversation stalls.

This gap between knowing and caring is not a failure of effort. It is a signal that something in how we teach climate science needs to shift. And I now have three peer-reviewed studies that help explain why.

What the research found

My PhD research examined scientific literacy and the socio-scientific issue of climate change attitudes among Lebanese secondary school students, 130 students across Grades 10 to 12 in private schools in Beirut. Three studies emerged from that work, and together they tell a story that I believe is directly relevant to science classrooms here in South Australia.

The first study, published in the EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (2024), found that the majority of students had very low scientific literacy. Most struggled to evaluate scientific arguments, interpret data, or assess the credibility of sources. These are foundational skills, and they were largely absent.

The second study, published in the International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology (2025), complicated that picture in a revealing way. Despite low scientific literacy, students showed strong awareness of climate change and broadly recognised it as urgent. They knew it was a problem. The knowledge was there, at least in part. But something else was missing.

The third study, published in the International Journal of Science Education (2025), brought it all together. When I examined which factors actually predicted students' sense of climate change urgency, scientific literacy, socio-scientific attitudes, grade level, and gender, only one emerged as statistically significant: their attitudes toward socio-scientific issues. Not their content knowledge. Not how long they had been studying science. Just their attitudes.

In plain terms, students who were more engaged with the ethical, societal, and values-based dimensions of science were more likely to acknowledge that climate change demanded urgent action. Students who had simply learned more content were not.

It is worth noting that the student groups across grade levels were not evenly distributed, so these findings should be interpreted with appropriate caution rather than as definitive conclusions. That said, the pattern they reveal is consistent with a growing body of international research pointing in the same direction.

What this means for your classroom

If attitudes drive urgency more than content knowledge, then the way we frame and facilitate climate lessons matters enormously. Here are three practical shifts worth considering.

1. Use climate change as a socio-scientific issue, not just a science

Socio-scientific issues sit at the intersection of science, ethics, society, and values, and climate change is the most prominent example of our time. When we teach it purely as content (causes, effects, evidence), we are activating only one dimension of student engagement. When we treat it as a socio-scientific issue, asking who is responsible,

what is fair, whose voices matter, what should we prioritise, we activate the attitudinal dimensions that my research suggests are far more powerful in building genuine urgency. Even a single discussion question reframed this way can shift the energy in the room.

2. Build values-based reflection into your lessons alongside factual

Rather than ending a climate lesson with a comprehension check, try ending it with a reflection prompt: What does this make you feel? Who do you think bears the most responsibility? What would you be willing to change? These are not soft add-ons to the real lesson; they are the pedagogical core of what my research suggests actually moves students from awareness to concern. Science and ethics are not competing priorities. They belong together.

3. Make urgency personal and local

My research found that urgency did not increase simply because students knew more facts. It grew when students connected the issue to something that felt real, relevant, and morally significant to them. Here in South Australia, we are not short of locally grounded climate stories,

heatwaves, bushfire seasons, changing agricultural conditions, and coastal pressures. Anchoring climate science in the world students actually inhabit is not a distraction from the curriculum. It is precisely the bridge that research says we need to build.

A final thought

Science with purpose means more than teaching science well. It means teaching science in ways that help young people feel equipped and genuinely compelled to act. My research suggests that the missing ingredient is rarely more content; it is more deliberate engagement with the values, ethics, and societal dimensions that make science matter in the first place.

That feels very much in the spirit of what With Purpose means to us at St Paul's College this year. And I hope it resonates with science teachers across South Australia, too.

If you would like to explore the research behind these ideas, all three studies are openly accessible here: <https://bit.ly/4vwksLG>

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.

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

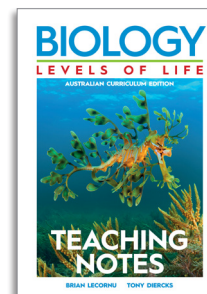
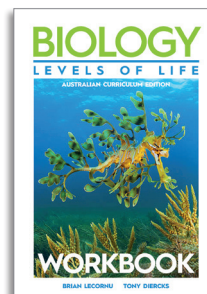
Written specifically to complement the textbook, the workbook covers all Science Understandings of the Biology subject outline. It can be used in conjunction with the textbook, or on its own as an aid for understanding and revision. By completing answers to the workbook questions, students will develop 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

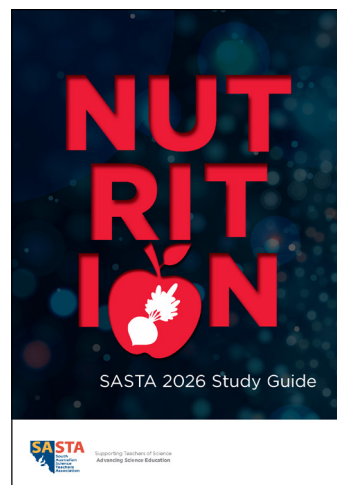
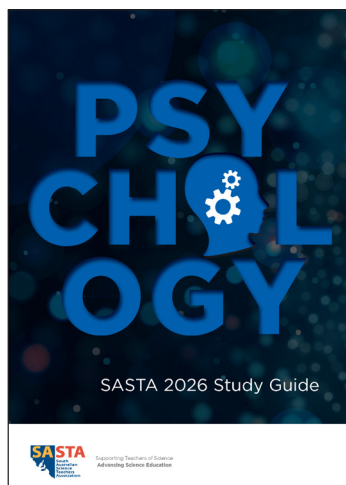
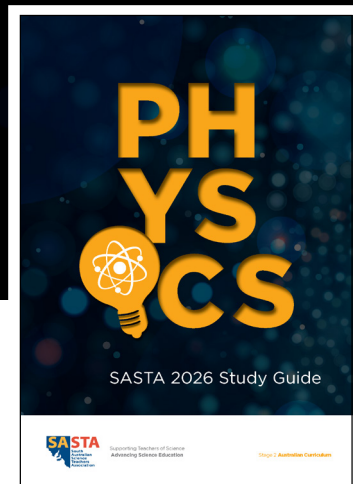
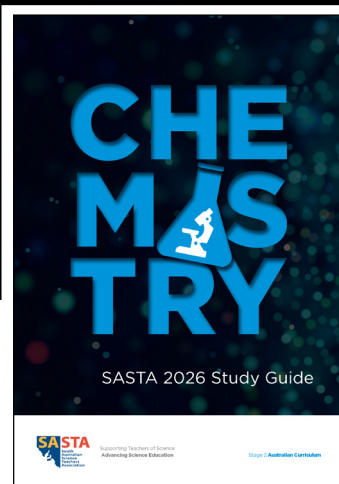
\$120.00 EACH

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 Now!

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