



# Paralowie R-12 School – South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy (SAASTA)

## School Profile

- South Australia
- Metropolitan
- Government
- Reception to Year 12
- Located in Kurna country

## Program Summary

Paralowie R-12 School is a school with approximately 1400 students, of whom around ten per cent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The school is part of the Northern Adelaide State Secondary Schools’ Alliance (NASSSA), which coordinates 45 vocational education and training (VET) courses across a range of industries on behalf of the school region. By collaborating and combining resources, the Alliance allows students access to a greater range of opportunities and aims to support a more seamless transition from school to training or employment.

In 2017, Paralowie R-12 School also became one of 16 campuses offering the South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy (SAASTA) program, which provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students with skills and opportunities in the areas of sport and healthy living. Paralowie R-12 School’s SAASTA program is offered to students in Years 10 to 12 who work towards a Certificate III in Sport and Recreation.

SAASTA offers a Certificate III in Sport and Recreation at all participating sites and, in the two Fitness Academies (Netball and AFL), a Certificate III in Fitness. It provides students with a direct sporting pathway through the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). The program puts emphasis on flexibility, developing students’ aspirations, self-esteem and sense of belonging and delivers real-world job pathways. The course provides students with the skills, knowledge and qualifications to enter into further studies and assists students in gaining employment in the sports industry, as well as the offering the potential to further enhance elite sporting careers.



*Paralowie R-12 School is located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide.*

SAASTA has also recently created SAASTA Connect, a program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 8 and 9 in South Australia. One of the aims of SAASTA Connect is to act as a pre-entry engagement and incentive program to the SAASTA Academy already operating in the school, to open up aspirational employment pathway options at an early stage. Paralowie R-12 School students have access to this innovative program.

‘Many Aboriginal students and their families are heavily involved in sport. So, the SAASTA program uses this focus as an engagement tool to keep them studying and keep them achieving at the higher end of the school system.’

*Nick Drury – SAASTA Sports Academies Coordinator, South Australian Department for Education and Child Development*

## Outcomes

Paralowie R-12 School became a SAASTA campus for the first time in 2017. Since its introduction, the program has challenged participants and their families to think differently about what is possible for the students, which has been a much easier task with the campus located at the school. In addition, a focus on students developing a stronger connection



to their culture has been established and woven through the course. Elements of the program are now being delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models to create an environment where students can see a direct link between the course and a career. Alumni of the program are also encouraged to provide support for students entering into the SAASTA program, which is building the profile of the program as they share their experiences and encouraging current students to think aspirationally about their future pathways.

‘I think it’s a big impact on your life when you’re figuring out who you are, because I never understood my Aboriginal side ... it’s just amazing.’

*Chloe – Year 11 student, Paralowie R-12 School*

In the years from 2013 to 2016, across the NASSA Alliance, approximately 100 students per year completed a Certificate III in Sport and Recreation. In 2017, the introduction of the Certificate III in Fitness supported approximately 65 students in gaining another qualification. SAASTA Year 12 students make up more than 33 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 graduates in South Australia.

‘One of the reasons we brought in the Certificate III in Fitness was because of its usefulness in a number of different industries. The skills that these individuals are being taught with this certificate will transfer into a number of different roles, whether you’re looking at working as a mechanic, a tradesperson or working in an office. We’re talking about communication skills, leadership and empowering young people to have a voice. All of those sorts of things come out of the course.’

*Simon Lucas – Personal Trainer and VET Trainer, Pushing Performance Health and Fitness*

Over the coming years, as success metrics are able to be collated, it is anticipated that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Paralowie R-12 School will continue to be engaged with SAASTA and benefit from gaining these formal vocational qualifications in local settings, which are linked with the local economic environment.



The SAASTA program supports participants to explore employment pathways in the sports and fitness industries.



‘Recognition within the school environment of Indigenous language, traditional cultural practice and connection to country along with acknowledgement and celebration of Indigenous achievements were seen to increase self-confidence, self-esteem and vocational learning aspirations of Indigenous young people.’

*Source: Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA), National Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Student Transitions Project report*

This emphasis on two-way learning and community engagement has also led to greater focus on culture through language, cultural practices and connection to country. In 2017, the school commenced a Kurna language program, run in conjunction with Tauondi Aboriginal College as a half-day per week program. The intention is to start with younger students to build a base to offer the Certificate III in Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language within the school. Two students from the school will be undertaking this certificate in 2018.

‘What we’re always trying to determine is, “What more can we do to ... better engage the students and find out what their needs are, what their interests are and how can we develop students’ skills even more.”’

*Dr Tom Putnam – Aboriginal Education Coordinator, Paralowie R-12 School*

## Industry Links

The Paralowie R-12 School’s SAASTA Academy is relatively new, and will maintain strong links with the NASSA Alliance in order to provide Year 10 to 12 students with access to 45 other VET courses in addition to the courses that the SAASTA program is offering.

Industry experts, such as the personal trainer delivering the Certificate III in Sport and Recreation for SAASTA, are providing students with real industry opportunities and guidance. Previous course graduates act as role models by also delivering elements of the Certificate III courses. These foundation links to industry will be further developed as the program matures.



Simon Lucas of Pushing Performance Health and Fitness works with SAASTA program participants, Tanay, Waniki and Denika.



## Why Paralowie R-12 School's SAASTA Program Works

Recent research indicates that the following key themes consistently underpin successful delivery of vocational learning and VET, including career education, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- **Context:** 'Nuanced, contextual factors will influence individual or group learning undertaken by Indigenous young people (Cuervo et al., 2015; Rigney, 2011).'
- **Flexibility:** '... recognition that a rigid or singular mode of education, by definition, cannot meet the needs of diverse learners (Anderson, 2009b; Bottrell, Te Riele & Plows, 2014; Te Riele, 2014).'
- **Two-way learning and community engagement:** '... happens in the context of an evolving relationship and structured partnership between Indigenous and school communities that supports Indigenous young people to grow their learning aspirations and stay connected to school or training.'
- **Aspiration, self-esteem and belonging:** 'To "dream big" was seen as an essential component in a young person's ability to have vocational ambitions and to achieve them (Mission Australia, 2014).'
- **Real-world job pathways:** 'In assessing what motivates Indigenous young people to study, a direct link to real employment, that is, getting a job, figured much more highly than reasons connected to a plan for career or further study (Fordham & Schwab, 2007).'

Applying these themes to an understanding of the design, delivery and operation of vocational learning and VET provides insight into "what works" and "what doesn't work" for this cohort of students.

Source: Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA), National Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Student Transitions Project report

## Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Links

The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* from AITSL outline what teachers should know and be able to do. As part of the SAASTA program at Paralowie R-12 School teachers are delivering vocational learning, VET or career education that aligns with the following standards:

Know students and how they learn

- 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
- 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

3.1 Establish challenging learning goals

4.1 Support student participation

Source: *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2011), Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*

## Contacts

If you want to know more about this program or think that it might benefit your community, please access the following links:

### NASSSA Pathways

P: 0418 855 460

E: [pathways@nasssa.com.au](mailto:pathways@nasssa.com.au)

### South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy (SAASTA)

P: (08) 8226 1204

E: [saasta@sa.gov.au](mailto:saasta@sa.gov.au)

### Paralowie R-12 School

W: [web.paralowie.sa.edu.au](http://web.paralowie.sa.edu.au)

### My School

W: [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)

