

2025

MANAGER'S REPORT



Primary Schools Music Festival

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Introduction

The Mission

As custodians of an iconic South Australian tradition, our **mission** is to engage our students in **artistic excellence**, **cultural diversity** and **social inclusion** through performance in Music and the Arts.

The Vision

Our **vision** is to strengthen state-wide participation in the Primary Schools Music Festival by **capturing a greater number of schools**, **engaging more students**, **increasing the number of teachers involved** and **further develop their skill level**.

What we've accomplished so far

2025 was a truly outstanding year for the Primary Schools Music Festival (PSMF)! Once again, our repertoire selection committee selected a vibrant, engaging and age-appropriate repertoire. The dedicated and talented PSMF Team brought to life a visually stunning performance, filling the performance space with joy, and energy, and inspiring everyone involved.

Our program continues to be in line with DfE Strategy's **four areas of impact**:

- **wellbeing** - by fostering a love for music and performance, we enhance the emotional and social wellbeing of our students
- **equity and excellence** - we provide equal opportunities for all students to participate and excel
- **belonging and safety** - the festival creates a sense of community and belonging
- **cognitive engagement** - through music, students develop critical thinking, creativity, and cognitive skills

Quote

Lily Gower - Music and Creative Arts Teacher - SA School & Services for Vision Impaired

"For over 15 years, SASSVI has proudly participated in the Primary Schools Festival of Music (PSMF). Each week, students from SASSVI, Kilparrin, and our local mainstream primary school come together as one choir to rehearse. These rehearsals offer more than just high-quality musical learning, they create vital social opportunities and foster a strong sense of community connection.

The large-scale concerts at the end of the year give our students a chance to be part of something truly special and empowering. Not just for the students, but for the parents and families. PSMF has always worked closely with us to ensure full access for students with diverse learning needs, including the production of choir books in large print and braille.

The opportunities provided by PSMF extend beyond the choir itself. During my time as music teacher at SASSVI, I have proudly supported vision-impaired students who have performed as soloists, participated as dancers in the Welcome to Country ceremony, and even made history with our first blind student performing as a member of the PSMF orchestra. This experience gave him the skills and confidence to join other mainstream ensembles and pursue further musical studies. He is now completing a Bachelor of Music at the Elder Conservatorium, with aspirations to one day compose original work for PSMF!

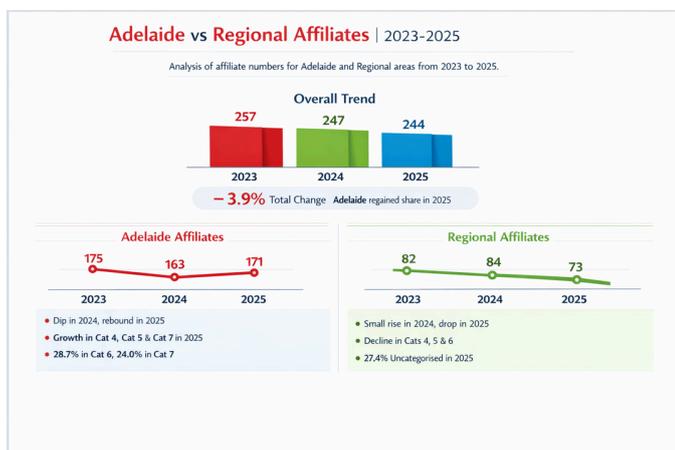
The Primary Schools Festival of Music is more than an event; it is an inclusive, life-changing experience that celebrates music, diversity, and the power of community. I am deeply grateful for the partnership and opportunities it has provided our students and wholeheartedly support its ongoing work in enriching young lives through music."

Programs and Services

School Category Affiliations 2025

Adelaide Affiliates	2023	2024	2025
Cat 1	4	3	3
Cat 2	17	16	16
Cat 3	14	15	14
Cat 4	21	19	22
Cat 5	27	23	26
Cat 6	53	48	49
Cat 7	39	39	41
	175	163	171

Regional Affiliates	2023	2024	2025
Cat 1	4	5	4
Cat 2	9	6	8
Cat 3	4	7	7
Cat 4	15	12	9
Cat 5	21	21	17
Cat 6	6	10	6
Cat 7	2	5	2
Uncategorised	21	18	20
	82	84	



Challenges for the program: Schools are becoming increasingly busy, with a number running rehearsals before school, during lunch, and having under skilled staff. Staff relocation affects school participation. This places unfair pressure on teachers, students, and our program.

We are also seeing wide discrepancies in what schools charge students - sometimes passing on costs that schools should not charge families, for example to pay a TRT. We know that the cost of buses has sky rocketed.

In addition, not having the Adelaide Festival Theatre confirmed for our concert series continues to create uncertainty.

Together, these challenges place considerable strain on the effectiveness and equity of our program.

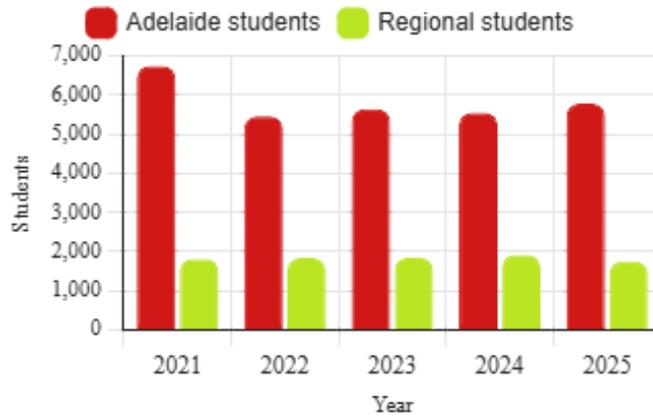
Moving forward: How do we collaborate with schools to inform and encourage them about the significance of our program, ensuring that fees remain minimal and equitable?

Student Participation

Adelaide Concert series: The bar graph below shows that regional students taking part in the **Adelaide concert series** remains steady. The number of Adelaide students taking part is slowly recovering from a high in 2021. The year 7 high school transition occurred in 2022.



Students by Year: Adelaide vs Regional (Bar Chart)



The chart below shows the number of students taking advantage of extra performance opportunities. The numbers vary year to year, depending on the number of concerts, solos, etc. The signing choirs have been a huge success and give younger students wonderful exposure to our program.



Adelaide Festival	Soloist	Host	orchestra	choreo leaders	Troupe	Guest Artist	Foyer/orb	Special groups
2025	52	8	83	8	56	400/16	80/4	403 (AAF)
2024	66	8	84	22	49	44	21	
2023	70	10	88	20	44	40	15	
2022	90	12	92	20	57	40	10	
2021	64	9	75	16	81	20	4	

Regional Concerts:



2025 Regional Participation Data									
	East of the Ranges	Murray Mallee	Northern Metro	Port Pirie	Riverland	Southern Metro	South East	Whyalla	Totals
No. of Government schools	7	8	11	6	12	12	19	8	83
No. of Independent / Catholic schools	1	0	2	2	7	1	5	2	20
No. of students participating	152	130	416	134	300	370	520	183	2205
Number of Concerts	1	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	16

2024 Regional Participation Data									
	East of the Ranges	Murray Mallee	Northern Metro	Port Pirie	Riverland	Southern Metro	South East	Whyalla	Totals
No. of Government schools	7	7	13	6	14	12	21	9	89
No. of Independent / Catholic schools	0	0	1	1	6	2	5	2	17
No. of students participating	165	132	390	109	307	392	580	188	2263
Number of Concerts	1	2	2	1	3	2	4	2	17

School visits by PSMF



Many hours are spent providing affiliated schools the opportunity to get to know both staff and students; to model choir teaching techniques; to assess choirs; to hold workshops; conduct Combined Choir Rehearsals (CCR), run auditions, and rehearsals plus so much more.

- Regional visits and assessments - 23
- CCR - 65 (90-minute rehearsal for neighbouring schools)
- Choir assessments (metro) - 144 (provides information for choir placement on stage)
- Various locations - 372 vocal soloists auditioned (52 required)
- Various locations - 23 choreography leaders auditioned (8 required)
- Various locations - 97 Guest Artist auditioned (16 required)
- Various locations - Orchestra, Troupe, AAF Signers, and Host auditions.

Staffing and Governance

The PSMF continues its close relationship with Dr. Anita Collins of Bigger Better Brains. Anita is internationally recognized for her unique work in translating the scientific research of neuroscientists and psychologists to the everyday parent, teacher and student. Once again, Anita wrote an introduction to the 2026 Songbook explaining why singing in a choir is important to students' learning.

The amazing science of singing together

Bigger Better Brains

When you sing with other people, something amazing happens in your body. Your heartbeat begins to sync up with theirs, your breathing matches, and even your body temperature can align.

This isn't just a nice idea, it's real science. Singing helps you feel connected in a way you don't just think, but actually feel. It allows you to feel calm, safe, and close to the people around you. Your body understands that you're part of something bigger.

This sense of connection also supports your immune system, helping you stay healthier and stronger. Singing releases feel-good hormones like oxytocin and serotonin, along with neurotransmitters such as dopamine. These chemicals lift your mood and lower your stress levels.

The effects don't stop when the song ends. Every time you remember singing with others, those positive feelings return. Whether you're performing tonight or watching someone else sing, it's helpful to remember that what's happening in this moment is only the beginning.

These feelings and memories will come back to you again and again, sometimes when you least expect them, and they will stay with you throughout your lifetime.

Singing also helps build your inner strength. Learning new songs, going to rehearsals, and finding the courage to perform in front of others all help develop the resilience and persistence networks in your brain. These are the parts that support you when you face challenges.

They help you do hard things, step into the unknown, and keep going even when it feels uncomfortable. This makes it more likely that you'll take on new experiences, stretch beyond what you've done before, and discover just how much you're capable of.

Written by Dr. Anita Collins for the Primary Schools Music Festival, November 2025.

Our Team

Congratulations to:

- Carol Young appointed as Adelaide Accompanist
- Natalie Bond appointed as Host Manager

Thank you to:

- All our volunteers, the quiet workforce that we would be lost without.
- The SAPPMS Board for their support and guidance.
- **A heartfelt thank you to Heather McDonald for her exceptional work as Host Manager.** Heather's vision and dedication brought to life the wonderful downstage opportunity for signing choirs, and in 2025 we witnessed an extraordinary milestone - **400 students signing *Advance Australia Fair***. Her leadership as Host Manager has been truly transformative. We've seen host audition numbers soar and the standard of hosting reach new heights. Thank you for the passion, professionalism, and creativity you have poured into this role. Our festival is richer because of you.
- Caroline Pomeroy, started with us in 2019. She has played at the Adelaide Festival Theatre; she played a shiny black piano in the rotunda at Elder Park for SING the movie and she has played at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre. Caroline is an extraordinary pianist and a great collaborative accompanist.
- The PSMF Team, for their passion, their creativity, their 'can do anything' attitude.

Highlights 2025

2025 had many highlights, each with its own impact on the program, a few of which are listed below:

- **Concert series** - from the opening of the choir entering to the moving **bagpipes** in You're the Voice, the concerts were spectacular. The set was unlike anything we have ever created before. I thank Nextstage, Novatech and the other talented and supportive crew that helped us create 'Stars in the Arena'. The **Journey to Performance** continues to be an informative addition to the program, giving the audience a 'behind the scenes' look at how the program comes together from start to concert.
- Bagpipers for You're the Voice.
- 400 students over the 4 concerts signing the national anthem.
- Teacher's Conferences - an energetic and vibrant way to begin the year (and Term 2).
- The SAPPMS Choir - another very successful year representing the Department and the Music Society.
- The wonderful and supportive volunteers, our 'quiet achievers'.
- Scholarships assisting students and families.
- The weekly BUZZ, updating everyone on what happened during that week.
- Sports Vouchers Plus was introduced and used by many of our orchestra, troupe, The SAPPMS Choir and host families.



You're the Voice - included bagpipes

Financial Performance

Ticket and merchandise sales

2025 tickets cost \$49.50.

Year	Ticket sales	Theatre	No# Shows
2025	13,641	Adelaide Entertainment Centre	4
2024	13,019	Adelaide Festival Centre	11
2023	12,321	Adelaide Festival Centre	10
2022	10,770	Adelaide Festival Centre	9
2021	11,323	Adelaide Entertainment Centre	4

Merchandise items include concert programs, mascots, shoelaces, pencils, backpacks, etc. Sales are showing to be a good source of income for both Adelaide and the Regionals.

Our **regional concerts** continue to 'hang in there' despite being short staffed, and they deserve recognition for the incredible work they do to keep the festival running in their regions. We will continue to support them in every way we can.



2025 Regional Finance Data

	East of the Ranges	Murray Mallee	Northern Metro	Port Pirie	Riverland	Southern Metro	South East	Whyalla
Income	\$ 8,949.36	\$ 6,803.33	\$ 24,217.39	\$ 5,877.01	\$ 24,419.31	\$ 33,811.27	\$ 52,535.73	\$ 18,481.50
Expenditure	\$ 7,305.88	\$ 7,089.16	\$ 17,949.48	\$ 6,003.93	\$ 17,158.19	\$ 31,492.96	\$ 50,310.00	\$ 15,152.26
Net Surplus / Deficit	\$ 1,643.48	-\$ 285.83	\$ 6,267.91	-\$ 126.92	\$ 7,261.12	\$ 2,318.31	\$ 2,225.73	\$ 3,329.24



2024 Regional Finance Data

	East of the Ranges	Murray Mallee	Northern Metro	Port Pirie	Riverland	Southern Metro	South East	Whyalla
Income	\$ 6,772.82	\$ 5,196.00	\$ 26,554.00	\$ 4,552.00	\$ 27,853.78	\$ 32,786.27	\$ 47,529.50	\$ 12,771.59
Expenditure	\$ 10,039.28	\$ 4,036.04	\$ 20,135.30	\$ 6,720.07	\$ 20,924.71	\$ 24,983.41	\$ 39,779.97	\$ 12,126.71
Net Surplus / Deficit	-\$ 3,266.46	\$ 1,159.96	\$ 6,418.70	-\$ 2,168.07	\$ 6,929.07	\$ 7,802.86	\$ 7,749.53	\$ 644.88

Fundraising and Sponsorship

In 2025, we added a Development & Marketing team member. This allowed us to run raffles, coordinate a wine drive, and put together clear sponsorship and advertising packages. These initiatives strengthened our fundraising and support structures.

Maximizing Donations

Funders, sponsors and private donors are valuable to our program and will make it possible for the PSMF to grow, to keep costs at minimum for students and families, and to provide exciting learning opportunities for students in public schools in South Australia into the future.

- **Brand Awareness:** increasing visibility and awareness
- **Strategic Planning:** aligning marketing strategies with our goals
- **Fundraising and Revenue Generation:** pursuing funding and revenue opportunities
- **Community Engagement:** building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders
- **Market Research:** conducting research to understand needs
- **Communication:** managing consistent messaging across all platforms
- **Innovation and Development:** identifying new opportunities

A Marketing and Development Officer is essential for driving growth, enhancing reputation, and ensuring the PSMF success in what has become a very competitive environment.

2026 Plans

Planning for the 2026 program is well underway:

- Glyn Lehman has been commissioned to write our 2026 Commissioned Work
- Nextstage and Novatech will once again be working with us on set design, sound and lights
- Hourly Paid Instructors (HPIs) allocation will be increased, Choir Teacher - 19 hours and Accompanist - 17 hours
- Regional HPI allocation will increase to 24 hours from 20 hours
- Staging our concert series at the Adelaide Festival Theatre.

Each year brings so much for us to celebrate and be proud of. From witnessing the remarkable achievements of our students to seeing the sparkle and magic of the concert series come alive, these moments remind us why our work matters so deeply. They are a testament to the dedication of our schools, staff, and families - and to the extraordinary young people at the heart of our program.

