

HISTORY OF SAETA



DATE ASSOCIATION COMMENCED

Research suggests that the South Australian English Teachers' Association (SAETA) was founded somewhere between 1955 to 1958.

KEY PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION

The South Australian English Teachers Association (SAETA) is the professional association of South Australian English Teachers. We serve our members in advocacy and professional development roles in these times of rapid change.

LEVELS OF CARE AND EDUCATION

Primary, Secondary

HISTORY

As mentioned earlier, research suggests that SAETA was founded somewhere between 1955 to 1958. This finding is based on the following information: In an article from a 1986 volume of Opinion entitled English 1937-1986: Part One, A Personal Reminiscence, Maurice O'Brien stated:

"The first indication of dissatisfaction with the status quo was the establishment of the English Teachers' Association in 1955, largely on the initiative of a small group of Technical School teachers."

Further to this, in his Academic Funeral Oration, after the passing of Warwick William Goodenough, Prof. Jack Cross said of Goodenough:

"He was part of a small group who founded the South Australian English Teachers Association in 1958."

These sources support this conclusion as does an early volume of Opinion in SAETA's records revealing a date of 1961. This Opinion referred to as the Journal of SAETA is numbered Volume 6 suggesting that the organisation and Opinion as its publication, had existed for a few years.

The most conclusive evidence on the date of the founding of SAETA, is the programme of the 1965 SAETA Annual Conference which states the organisation was hosting its 11th state conference.

Official Department of Consumer and Business Services show SAETA as an organisation incorporated on the 12th May 1966 but obviously it existed before this date.

Furthermore, it is apparent that SAETA existed before the national body AATE (Australian Association for the Teaching of English) and possibly before any other state-based English organisation, but this is yet to be confirmed decisively.

The motivation behind the founding of the organisation points to a desire to move away from a solely UK based syllabus to a more relevant Australian curriculum which recognised that not all students required or wanted a purely academic education in, or knowledge of English. This point was previously alluded to by Maurice O'Brien. By the 1950s and 1960s, a rich body of Australian Literature had many educators of the time wanting to use these resources for the teaching of English. At the time strong links with the University of Adelaide and patron Professor Colin Horne led to the evolution of the association into a relevant teacher-based association that undertook enjoyable professional development and advocacy for members and students.

The first president of the association was Peter McDonald, from 1955 to possibly 1958. Peter continued in various roles on the Executive Council throughout the 1960s. He was also integral in the founding of the national organisation AATE. Interestingly, the first female to take on the role of president, Elisabeth Butler wasn't until 1981. Although there were various females on Executive Council prior to this time, this is noteworthy considering the dominance of females in the English learning area.

In the 1970s and 1980s, innovative educator Garth Boomer helped shape the English curriculum by advocating for social justice, equity and educational reform through his involvement in SAETA, AATE and globally through the International Federation for the Teaching of English. SAETA was no longer just a local organisation but influenced and was influenced by English educators worldwide.

As SAETA moves towards its 75th year in 2030, it continues to be a vibrant and dynamic association that annually offers a range of PD opportunities including a Senior English Refresher Course, Stage 2 External Assessment evenings for students and teachers, Early Career teacher workshops, country-based PD for members and non-members and an annual State Conference. It also provides creative writing opportunities for students through the Young Writers and the Spring Poetry Competitions. Every eight years it jointly hosts the national ALEA/AATE conference here in Adelaide. As the Association moves towards more online PD, it is important to remember that this body of work comes from groups of volunteers who give back freely of their time due to their passion, for the teaching of English.



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