



We empower young refugee and asylum seeker women through education, to gain the language, life & work skills to integrate & thrive in our community

Annual Report 2021

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This Annual Report
was endorsed by
the RNS Board
on 31/08/2022.

RNS BOARD AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MEMBERS – 2021

Board members

Jane Kanizay – Chair

Melanie Ruchel – Deputy Chair

Natasha Norton – Public Officer and Secretary

Esther Wambui Migwe – Chair, Finance & Audit

Winnie Waudu – Chair, Governance & Compliance

Elaine Henry

Lina Marijan

Lisa Wilson – Foundation Principal

School Leadership Team members

Lisa Wilson – Foundation Principal

Susan Kent – Assistant Principal

Jacinta Bongiorno – Registered Nurse, Wellbeing
Coordinator and Health Educator

Nadia Faragaab – Engagement Coordinator

Marianna Oklander – Business Manager



RNS is a registered independent school and registered charitable organisation

All programs and services are free

Donations of \$2 and above are tax-deductible

FOUNDATION PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Every refugee and asylum seeker who comes through our door brings with them a story of **resilience, courage** and **hope**. They have shown immense bravery and resolve to flee harm and persecution in their birth country. They want what we all want – a safe and peaceful future and the opportunity to gain an education, be part of a community and get a job so they can live independently.

At River Nile School (RNS) **we change students' lives** through a personalised approach to learning, using specialist English as an Additional Language (**EAL**) Applied-Learning pedagogy. Our professional team take on an **authentic mentoring approach**, empowering students to address the complex challenges and trauma in their lives and build healthy and respectful relationships which strengthen their **wellbeing, engagement** and **learning achievements**. Each student is supported to **plan a career pathway**, specific to their aspirations and goals, as they transition from our school.



Our mission is to empower young refugee and asylum seeker women through education, to successfully integrate and thrive in our community. In pursuing our mission, we believe we are not only **changing our students' lives**, but making an important contribution to help secure **a thriving, harmonious multicultural society** – which benefits all in our community.

2021 – our 5th year as a school

Despite the significant impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, our school came through the lockdowns in excellent shape. With strong demand, a broad range of practical, real-life experiential learning programs and respected community and industry partnerships, we have a strong platform to empower our students to develop genuine employability skills and enhanced pathway and further learning options. The Covid-19 pandemic demanded we excel at pivoting and adapting to the rapidly changing needs of our community.

2021 again reaffirmed that the most important things are relationships – human connections, trust, respect, kindness, caring and being there for each other. In its essence, education is relational. We strive to be role models of this for all our students and each other. It's critical to our work satisfaction and wellbeing.

To see the strong results in student attendance, satisfaction, learning progress, outcomes and completion says a great deal about who we are at River Nile School.

I also take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the support and guidance of the RNS Board, for their energy, work, commitment and stewardship of our School's good governance.

– Lisa Wilson

The River Nile School accepts the responsibility to embed a culture of child safety and ensure that policies and procedures demonstrate zero tolerance of child abuse in the organisation in accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Training Reform Regulations 2017 and Ministerial Order 870.

MISSION AND VALUES

We empower young refugee and asylum seeker women through education, to acquire the language, life and work skills to integrate and thrive in our community.

Our School values guide everything we do. Our values and what they mean to our students and staff are:



Empowering Education

- **We believe education is a human right and can positively transform lives.**
- We will support you to **develop and achieve personalised goals and skills for life.**
- We will **model and demonstrate.** We won't just tell you how, we will show you how.
- Empowering education is student-centred, interactive and **promotes independence.** It gives students the opportunity to influence the themes, issues and knowledge they investigate.



Respect

- **We promise to treat you with respect and unconditional positive regard.** We accept and support our students and community members for who they are.
- We **care** about and are **kind** to each other.
- We **recognise** and **celebrate** achievements.



Belonging

- **Every student should feel safe, included and a sense of belonging at our school.**
- We **value people's differences** and unique qualities.
- Everyone has a right to **have their voice heard.**
- We acknowledge the importance of each person's **heritage, traditions, identity, needs and aspirations.**



Courage

- **We speak up for what is right and will advocate for our students.**
- Our students are willing to **have a go**, face fears and try again after set-backs.
- We will support our students to think about their sense of right and wrong, so that they can pursue **social justice, equity and fairness** in life.
- Every student at our school has a story of **resilience, courage and hope.** They have shown immense bravery and faced many fears in fleeing harm in their birth country and coming to Australia. These **strengths** will help them build a safer and brighter future.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

The River Nile School (RNS) is an independent, specialist, inclusive, senior-secondary school, established in 2017. The school delivers Applied Learning curriculum, to young women from refugee backgrounds, who have had disrupted schooling, are struggling to cope with mainstream school or find our setting more suited to their needs. We are also a registered charitable organisation that delivers everything we do with our students for free.

All students who attend RNS have English as an Additional Language (EAL) so developing student levels of language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) is a central focus.

RNS provides a high-challenge, high-support learning environment with a strengths-based approach. We offer small class sizes and teachers and student support staff work collaboratively to achieve the best possible outcomes for each student



with individualised learning and wellbeing programs for all students. RNS adopts a holistic model for supporting the unique educational and support needs of each student, so developing strong student-staff relationships is essential. As our students come from backgrounds where they may have experienced significant complex trauma, we adopt a trauma-informed approach in our practice.

STUDENT POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The young women enrolled at the River Nile School are aged 15 – 20+ years, from refugee, asylum seeker or disadvantaged new arrivals backgrounds and all are EAL learners. Our student cohort is at the lowest end of the socio-disadvantage profile and among the most marginalised and isolated in our community. Some are preliterate or have limited prior years in education, while some have attended school but have limited English language and literacy. All have an interest in learning, but many have struggled in mainstream education settings and have either stopped attending or been excluded. Our programs aim to **re-engage** our students in their own measurable, visible academic growth, simultaneously teaching them strategies to become independent and autonomous learners in their schooling, pathway choices and adulthood.

In 2021, as at the August census, the RNS had:

- **98.2 students** by Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) (or 99 by Headcount) of which 66 (67%) were enrolled in Year 11 and 32.2 (33%) were enrolled in Year 12.
- **94.6 students (96%) were on Visas**; a number of which were Permanent Residents and through 2021 where eligible were assisted to progress Citizenship applications.

- **35 students (35%) were identified as having a disability and were included on the NCCD (Nationally Consistent Collection of Data)** – of these 3 required extensive learning adjustments, 17 substantial and 15 supplementary. Most disability is social-emotional trauma related or intellectual.
- **12 students (12%) were 18 years or younger.**
- **87 students (88%) were over 18 years of age** and their own legal guardians, some live with a family, a sibling or relation but the vast majority live independently.
- **82% of our students are orphans or have no parent connection.**

Birth regions of our students in 2021 were:

- **66% African** heritage (Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Congo, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Congo, Tanzania)
- **21% Asian** heritage (Thailand, Myanmar/Karen, Vietnam, Pakistan)
- **11% of Middle Eastern** heritage (Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Palestine State)
- **2% Australasian** heritage (Australia, PNG)

STUDENT EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

The wellbeing, health and safety of our students is the foundation of the River Nile School approach to student management and we commit significant resources to student engagement, wellbeing and advocacy. We embrace a **Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP)** model as most of our students have experienced complex trauma, by the experiences that caused them to become refugees. Models of TIP show the importance of collaborating to support young people and their families who have experienced trauma. Our school environment is **safe, professional, welcoming and orderly**. Students often refer to it as being their home. Staff are seen as positive **role models** of relationships, actions and behaviours. We have a strong focus on **consistent predictable routines** to improve a sense of safety and security and limit triggers associated with the fight or flight stress response.

Once in Australia, there are several stressors that can continue to impact upon the mental health of our students and, in some cases, may be more salient to the development of psychopathology than pre-migration trauma exposure. At RNS, embracing our TIP and ensuring our students are able to engage in their education, we work extensively and collaboratively with many external agencies to provide advocacy and support navigating often complex systems. This support helps break down barriers and is a key to our strengths-based model in responding to student's hierarchy of needs.

These organisations include:

- Orygen Youth Mental Health
- Young People's Health Service
- Royal Children's Hospital
- North Melbourne Family Medical
- Community Health Centres
- Refugee Minor Program
- Settlement Services
- Safe Steps
- Foyer Youth Housing
- Food Bank
- Inner Melbourne Community Legal
- Rotary Emergency Relief Networks
- Dept. Families Fairness & Housing
- Dept. of Justice - Work and Development Permit Scheme

Most of our students, some with children, are totally alone in Australia with no family support. **Social welfare support** is critical in assisting our students to manage the complex demands placed on them with

language barriers, finance, housing and trauma present in their lives with often no stable presence apart from our staff to offer advice or practical help. Most of our students live on a Centrelink Youth Allowance (of ~\$530 per fortnight for a single with no child) but unlike most Australian born youth, have no family to fall back on for support for periodic high-cost essential needs. After paying board or rent and utilities, most of our students typically have only \$50-60 per week to pay for all other essentials. We also have growing student numbers who have arrived on sponsored humanitarian visas and are not entitled to any Centrelink support whatsoever for 2 years from arrival. We have quite a number for whom the relationship with the sponsor has broken down (e.g. due to abuse) and they are left completely cut off with no support.

All RNS programs and services are completely **fee-free** and RNS provides all students with an annual **MYKI** public transport card, **notebook computer**, lunch, **food staples** and **material aid** to reduce barriers to their school engagement.

In 2021, we had **12 RNS students who were mums** of pre-school aged children or who became pregnant through the year. RNS provides students with a **free childcare** service on-site to enable students who are young mums to remain engaged in their education. We are assisting these students and their children to return to a more normal family life. Assisting mothers

and children to at times be apart and independent is also essential to enable these young children to transition successfully to kindergarten and school.

Our school nurse led a massive effort to support **Covid-19 safety** including with **three onsite Covid-19 vaccination** days in 2021 (11 Aug, 21 Sep, 25 Oct). Students said RNS offering vaccination gave them confidence to get vaccinated because they trust us. This led to 97% of students being doubled vaccinated, which along with

RNS investing in and championing all other reasonable steps, protected our whole community.

We believe we were the first school in Victoria to have proactively arranged onsite Covid-19 vaccination.



SCHOOL PROGRAM

The River Nile School delivers Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) approved Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) curriculum to Year 11 and 12 students. Our Learning Program is linked to the VCAL strands of **Literacy** and **Numeracy** Skills, **Personal Development** Skills, **Work** Related Skills and a **Vocational Education Training** (VET) qualification which meets the **Industry** Specific Skill strand. The Program aligns with a whole school, integrated approach to curriculum.

As our student cohort is from **EAL** backgrounds, language is identified and utilised as a resource across all areas of the curriculum – **delivering programs through an EAL lens is key to the RNS model.**

At RNS the VCAL program is run over two years in recognition of the complex needs of learners that may impact upon their learning. Students may commence the course at different times during the year and are expected to complete the course within two years of commencing.

Over the course of two years, each student must complete 1,000 nominal hours of VCAL including a VET (Vocational Education Training) program. By providing a two-year program, RNS allows for a diverse range of personal and external circumstances and issues of our student cohort to achieve VCAL Learning Outcomes. The timeframe also allows for our student cohort to work within their literacy and language abilities and work at a pace that they can realistically achieve.

In 2021 our VET programs were run by the Inner Melbourne VET Cluster (IMVC) and Australian Catholic University (ACU) TAFE under contractual partnerships with RNS.



SPECIALIST AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

Specialist and co-curricular programs form a core part of the curriculum which students are required to attend. These are chosen to support the personal development, engagement and learning of our specific student cohort. In 2021 our offering included:

- **Women's health, women's rights** including reproductive rights, respectful relationships, child safety, consent, pregnancy and healthy living are considered in our education programs as well as individualised student support programs.
- **Student Leadership** to develop student's leadership skills and give students a Voice in our school and their communities.
- **Life Saving Victoria** (LSV) Multicultural Program run in Term 1 annually at South Melbourne beach.
- **Swimming lessons** at the City Baths weekly for 10 weeks for all our students.
- **Music program** weekly with our Music Therapist which supports engagement, wellbeing and language.

- **Sewing classes** on Friday afternoons with fashion designer, dress maker and tailor Rachel Bradstock
- **Sport and Exercise** classes once a week run by The Huddle, at North Melbourne Football Club
- **Voice Your Voice**, a project with The Huddle and RNS Intermediate class created an awareness campaign with a video on discrimination and racism in the workplace.
- **The Homeless Persons Program**, a project with Bolton Clarke for our RNS Senior class involving learning about the risk factors and impacts of homelessness such as family violence, trauma, poverty and physical and mental health.
- **Mentoring** personalised to each student's needs or a learning goal in partnership with the Centre for Multicultural Youth and The Helping Hand Project.
- **Digital literacy** programs – a priority across all classes and learner levels at RNS.

OPTIMISING GROWTH, OUTCOMES AND SUCCESS

RNS students' are Year 11 and 12 EAL learners, however a significant number have no or limited prior schooling. Many students commence at our School with no prior academic records from which to measure growth. Others have found learning in their previous education settings challenging.

There is considerable observed growth of student personal satisfaction and engagement in the learning, completion and attainment of VCAL and VET units and progress onto pathways to which they aspire, including further study and paid employment.

At RNS we **personalise learning** to ensure that all students achieve success and can access the curriculum at their point of need on the same basis as their peers. We endeavour to understand and address strengths, barriers and learning needs of our students in a holistic way to ensure that our students can access the curriculum. We understand that our students cannot learn effectively if these needs are not met.

We use a variety of **diagnostic tools** and measures to understand this and have developed many of

these ourselves so that we can measure growth. Tools we use are: **diagnostic numeracy** and **literacy rubrics** that have been mapped against a variety of curricula including **VCAL, EAL continuums and ACSF levels**. From this we are able to ensure that students are matched to an optimal learner level. We have developed **Learning Skills rubrics** which clearly outline the skills that are necessary to achieve success and help support all students with **executive functioning**. We understand that students who have experienced trauma have difficulty with memory so we teach in a trauma-informed manner that recognises this.

In 2021:

- RNS VCAL program was offered at **Foundation** (4 classes), **Intermediate** (1 class) and **Senior** (1 class) levels to meet our student learning needs.
- **Class sizes** ranged from 12 – 18 students.
- **Enrolments** are taken across the school year to meet the needs of new arrivals.
- We employed 3 **Learning Support** workers who each work between 2 classes and very closely with the teachers to ensure every student is supported.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

VCAL

- **20 students Attained the VCAL** in 2021 with:
 - **4 Senior**
 - **7 Intermediate**
 - **9 Foundation**

A terrific achievement given Covid-19 remote learning, online VET and our students' language difficulties and complex personal challenges.

- A further **72 students achieved VCAL units**

VET, INDUSTRY AND WORKPLACE LEARNING

Vocational Education Training (VET) Certificates – 81 students achieved completed certificates / units in the following:

Semester 1	Semester 2
Employment Pathways Certificate I 49 students Streamed in 3 classes ->	Community Services - 16 students <hr/> Retail – 19 students <hr/> Retail Cosmetics - 14 students <hr/> Community Services Certificate II – 8 students
Hospitality/Kitchen Operations Cert II – 15 students	
Allied Health Assistance C.III, 2 nd year – 7 students	
Allied Health Assistance C.III, 1 st year – 1 student	
Clothing & Textile Production Cert. III – 1 student	

The eligibility requirement to meet 80 hours of workplace learning for the Allied Health Assistance Certificate III was impacted by Covid-19 workplace restrictions, despite our best efforts to renegotiate placements for each student 3 times over the year. Hence this Certificate had one unit remaining to be completed by enrolled students in their 2nd year.

- **Work Readiness** training with **Service Stars** was completed by 12 students who were then mentored into casual hospitality work at the MCG (when lockdowns weren't intervening), with strong prospects for continuing work.
- **Scarf Hospitality traineeships** by 4 students.
- **Casual work** for students outside school hours was proactively supported. A notable success was 8 students gaining work with **Myer** for the summer break which led to ongoing part-time work for these students in 2022.
- 16 students successfully Attained the **Provide First Aid Certificate** over 2 days in May.

PATHWAYS AND DESTINATIONS

All RNS students receive one-on-one career pathway counselling and planning guidance and proactive transition support.

Given two years of Covid-19 pandemic impacts on mental health and social-anxiety/confidence, as well as on workplace learning and unit completion, **87%** of students were continuing with RNS into 2022. This much higher than usual.

RNS has a **Pathway Scholarship Fund**, supported by generous donors, to support our students with some of the costs of transitioning to further study.

Our inaugural **Don Edgar Memorial Scholarship** of \$5,000 was awarded to Dim 'Anna' Jamang in 2021 (see message from Anna on page 8).

4% of students moved into **employment**.

9% of students enrolled in **further study or traineeships** in a range of pathways, including:

- **Pharmacy** – our first student commenced university, at RMIT in 2021!
- **Pathology Collection** Cert. III at Melb. Polytechnic
- **Health Services Assistance** C.III at VU Polytechnic
- **Children's Service** Certificate III with Gowrie (Vic.)
- **Cookery** Certificate III with VU Polytechnic

RNS Alumni continue to access learning and tutoring with us for their further studies, if needed.



STUDENT AND ALUMNI STORIES

My name is Dim but I like to be called Anna.

I come from Chin State Myanmar and refugee background, the country is not safe and under military rule. I started study at River Nile School at the end of 2018. I finished my Senior VCAL in 2021. I was very happy to be selected as the recipient of the Don Edgar Scholarship. For my further study, a scholarship is really important and provides an opportunity for education with no need to worry about enrolment course, transportation and course supply costs. It also gives me hope for my future so I can focus on my study.

My dream is to study a Bachelor of Nursing one day. It is very challenging for me and very hard to get this now because of English skills requirements. But I will study Pathology Collection in 2022, it is a pathway for nursing.

The River Nile School generosity has inspired me to help others and give back to the community. I hope to be a role model for other River Nile School students.

I would like to thank Don Edgar who is no longer with us but I will remember his good work. I also want to thank Judie Bainbridge, RNS Principal Lisa, Susan, John, Nadia and the teachers and staff at RNS. I will do well with donors' investments and try my best.

– Dim 'Anna' Jamang

My name is Yasaman. *I was born in Tehran, in Iran. I came to Australia in 2013 sponsored by my Dad. He came to Australia as an asylum seeker. We lived in Sunshine, then Ascot Vale, Sydney for a bit, then back in Melbourne. I speak Persian, English and some Kurdish. My friends describe me as strong, a hard worker and funny. I heard about River Nile School from a caseworker. I was at MAC and after Year 11 started at River Nile.*

At one stage my dad's visa was cancelled and because of this so was mine. I wasn't living with him, I became homeless. River Nile School helped me into a refuge and then accommodation. Eventually I got my visa back.

After River Nile School, I did an internship for two months without pay, then a cadetship for two years with some pay at the Department of Justice and Community Service. During this I also had to study at Box Hill Institute. I graduated and now have a permanent job with the State Public Service.

The really exciting things are I am now an Australian citizen and I am building a house. When I was at River Nile school I was given free driving lessons because I had no money. I got my licence and now have a car. It makes me proud. What I would say about the River Nile School is that it's a very supportive place to learn and a great place to be a part. The staff are wonderful, friendly and reliable, like family.

In life what I want to say never give up and have goals. I've been through a lot, but I've become stronger as a result. Every time I fell, I got up. I feel I got everything I ever wanted and I'm only 21.

– Yasaman Babaei

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

RNS is a re-engagement school, with students enrolling across the year. Of its 2021 student cohort, 35% had a documented disability or learning intervention need (mostly related to social-emotional trauma), 12% of students were pregnant or mums of pre-school age children, 88% were their own legal guardian and all were managing complex personal challenges. As such, RNS has relatively high rates of approved and health related absences.

The school environment in 2021 continued to be challenging for students due the prolonged effects of Covid-19 with associated lockdown periods and impacts on mental health. Pivoting in and out of remote learning was challenging. All RNS students are given laptops and in many cases data toggles and mobile phone top-ups to ensure they have internet access. Some were provided with phones as well. They are all trained in the use of Zoom and WhatsApp. Several students and their families or share house connections contracted the virus and were in isolation. Significant numbers live in high density public housing and group homes which are often not very conducive environments for online learning and study. Physical resources were

delivered and workbooks posted or couriered where necessary.

RNS had a coordinated, school-wide approach to remote learning and attendance implemented by all staff. Teaching staff, social support workers and the Welfare Coordinator made contact with students each school day during lockdowns to support both learning and welfare. Students were provided with various options to learn and communicate with staff, for example, through a WhatsApp group, WhatsApp private messages, text message or phone call and email using their laptop. RNS Student Support Mobile Phones were managed by social support workers. Teacher, Welfare Coordinator and Principal mobile numbers were provided to students.

When on site learning was possible students were encouraged to discuss with their teacher if they knew they wouldn't be coming in on specific school days due to appointments, personal situations or welfare needs. We also encouraged social welfare and case workers to hold meetings in private rooms at our school, where possible, to minimize absences due to such meetings.

Attendance Rates (%) – Year 11 & 12	<u>Term 1</u>	<u>Term 2</u>	<u>Term 3</u>	<u>Term 4</u>	<u>Average</u>
50th percentile of students	88	80	90	88	87
All students	84	73	78	80	79

STUDENT SURVEY

RNS has considered the surveys commonly used by Independent Schools and 'Like' or Flexible and Inclusive schools, which would enable benchmarking and comparison with other schools. However due to the low levels of English literacy of our students, to ensure our survey is accessible to all our students, we have since 2017 used a survey with questions we designed in-house for our cohort.

Participation:

- 45% of VCAL students completed the 2021 survey
- Interpreter support was available if required.
- Students complete the survey in 1st languages.

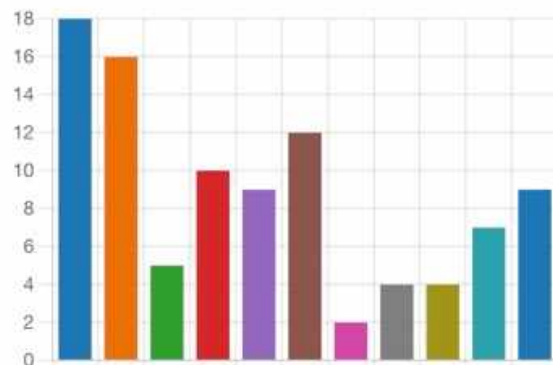
Results in **brown text** are important areas for RNS:

Re items **8-9**: Most of our students, as new migrants without parents, have little understanding of the Australian education system. We strive to develop students' understanding of this and to give them a voice in their education.

Re item **10**: Many people from complex trauma backgrounds have experienced fundamental breaches in human trust which can take a long time to heal. We strive to help each student build relationships with trusted adults to share challenges and so they can seek help when needed.

#		Always %	Sometimes %	Never %
1	I like coming to school	84	16	0
2	My teachers help me in class	88	12	0
3	My teachers treat me with respect	98	2	0
4	The other students treat me with respect	82	18	0
5	I feel safe when I am at school	98	2	0
6	I learn when I am in class	86	14	0
7	My school gives me the things I need to learn at school and online (e.g. MYKI, books, notebook, USB, headphones)	98	2	0
8	I make decisions about my learning in the classroom	75	25	0
9	I understand the work that I do in class	77	23	0
10	I feel comfortable to talk about my problems with at least one staff member / teacher	66	34	0
11	I am interested in the work that I do in class	86	14	0
		Yes %	Sometimes %	No %
12	I have friends at school	89	-	11
13	Did you enjoy / like online learning	33	56	11
14	Learning at home was hard	7	70	23
15	What did you find hard about online learning? Tick as many as you need to.			

Too noisy at home	18
No wifi/internet	16
Had to help brothers /sisters/chi...	5
No place to work, no desk or ta...	10
Family responsibilities	9
Lonely	12
Couldn't use laptop	2
No teacher help	4
Using apps like Zoom and What...	4
I was confused	7
Not hands on doing things	9



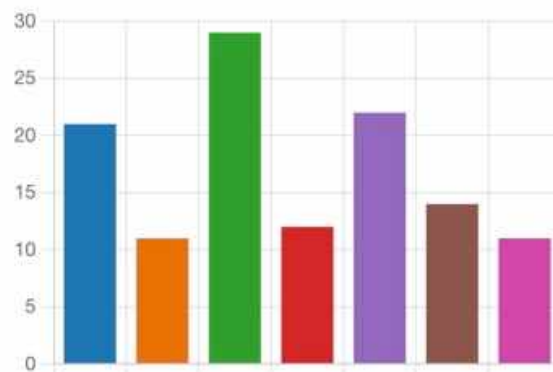
16 What did you think of online learning?

16 respondents (37%) answered **good** for this question.



17 Tick two of the following. Since coming to RNS, I have improved:

● reading	21
● writing	11
● speaking	29
● listening (understanding)	12
● feeling confident	22
● using technology (eg: laptop)	14
● numeracy (maths)	11



PARENT ENGAGEMENT

In 2021, 82% of students were orphans or had no parental connection. Some live with a sibling(s) or relative(s) also often newly arrived in Australia. 87% of students were >18 years of age and their own legal guardians. English is not the first language of our student's parents and most have limited schooling.

A parent survey is not offered as it is considered it would be difficult to achieve statistically significant engagement. For students that do have a parent, RNS strives to involve them in their child's education planning but has limited uptake. A very small number attend student-parent-teacher meetings and school celebrations.

STAFF

River Nile School teachers meet the registration requirements of the [Victorian Institute of Teaching \(www.vit.edu.au \)](http://www.vit.edu.au) and the school meets the prescribed minimum standards for registration as regulated by the [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority \(VRQA\)](#) in accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

In 2021, River Nile School staff team comprised:

Category	Headcount	FTE
Principal	1	1.0
Teaching	8	7.4
Education & Specialist Support and Administrative	20	14.6
	29	23

- All but 1 staff member were female
- 16 staff were from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, with a first language other than English and with most coming to Australia on refugee pathways.
- No staff were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage.

All teachers are fully qualified, with VIT registration. Two Teachers have completed a Masters of Education/TESOL, another commenced a Masters of Education in 2020, while another has post graduate qualifications in special education, disability and learning intervention. A further 4 staff have completed post Bachelor graduate qualifications.

Specialist student support staff include:

- A NCCD (Disability) and Learning (Intervention) Support, VIT registered, Educational Leader
- A Wellbeing Coordinator who is a Registered Nurse and VIT Registered Teacher
- An Engagement Coordinator
- 4 Student Social Support Workers
- 2 Learning Support Workers
- A registered music therapist

We also had 3 casual teachers employed with funding from the State Government's Covid-19 recovery Tutor Support Program, one of which was also a speech pathologist.



The high ratio of staff for the number of students is a reflection of the River Nile School's belief that our students require a high level of specialist, individual support in order to support their educational progress.

Teacher Professional Learning

To enhance teaching, learning and engagement for our student cohort, priority is given to professional development to address specific learning and compliance priorities. In 2021 much of the external PD was accessed online.

Sessions included:

- VALA Induction Day and Masterclasses
- VicTESOL professional learning
- Trauma-informed Practice with Foundation House and the Berry Street Education Model
- 'Flexi Schools' Network of the City LLEN
- 'Like Schools' Principal's Network
- First Aid Training
- DET Mandatory Reporting
- DET infection prevention and control in schools (Covid-19)

STAFF SATISFACTION

Staff have been offered the opportunity of a Staff Satisfaction Survey, but this has not previously been implemented as staff felt it would be difficult to achieve statistically significant or anonymous feedback (by staff category) while the school was small. As the school grows this will change. A school leadership survey, the voice project, endorsed by AHISA – the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia was undertaken in March 2020 and will be conducted again within 2 years. In 2021, staff had the opportunity to engage and provide feedback to the school leadership through regular individual discussion, staff meetings, probation and performance reviews and various consultative processes.

As the school has grown, there has been scope to employ more staff to ensure diverse student needs were being met, and to support additional learning intervention needs. With additional expertise in the school, there is more opportunity for staff **collaboration**, as well as **specialisation**; and staff can focus on their specific area(s) of expertise and passion.

To support staff wellbeing, RNS has offered regular professional **psychological debriefing** sessions with a registered psychologist since mid 2017, through **Mandala Staff Support** (MSS).

In 2019 we strengthened this by contracting MSS to provide a formal **Employee Assistance Program** (EAP) as well as one-on-one **professional psychological supervision** to social work staff.

Since 2019, RNS has also boosted employee benefits through salary sacrificing with an **Employee Benefits Card**, administered through PBI (Public Benevolent Institution) Solutions.

FUTURE PRIORITIES

The River Nile School is working towards a future where we can support even more young women from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds through our engaging and caring school model in innovative and responsive ways, to meet the evident demand for our specialist education service.

In 2022, priorities to support our growth include:

- **2023 Curriculum:** Significant work to plan for and support teaching staff with PD for the new curriculum resulting from the **Senior Secondary School Reforms** of the VCAL will be a priority in 2022 to set RNS up for success in the next school year.
- Continued **human resource capacity building** to support the growth of the school, for example by the employment of:
 - A **VET, Pathways and Transitions Coordinator** to strengthen vocational education and training and the school's capacity to manage and deliver VET programs in-house.
 - An **ICT Coordinator & Teacher** to strengthen our ICT environment, including technology and digital learning and eSafety.
- **Strategic Planning** 2022-2027 process to commence (following delays due to Covid-19 in 2021).
- **School infrastructure and property plan** continued development to ensure the school has property infrastructure that is modern, efficient, cost effective, environmentally sound and provides a secure base from which the school can flourish in the years ahead.
- **2nd School Leadership 360-Survey**, with the AHISA endorsed the Voice Project, to be undertaken to benchmark perceptions of school leadership and identify priority opportunities for continuous school leadership improvement.

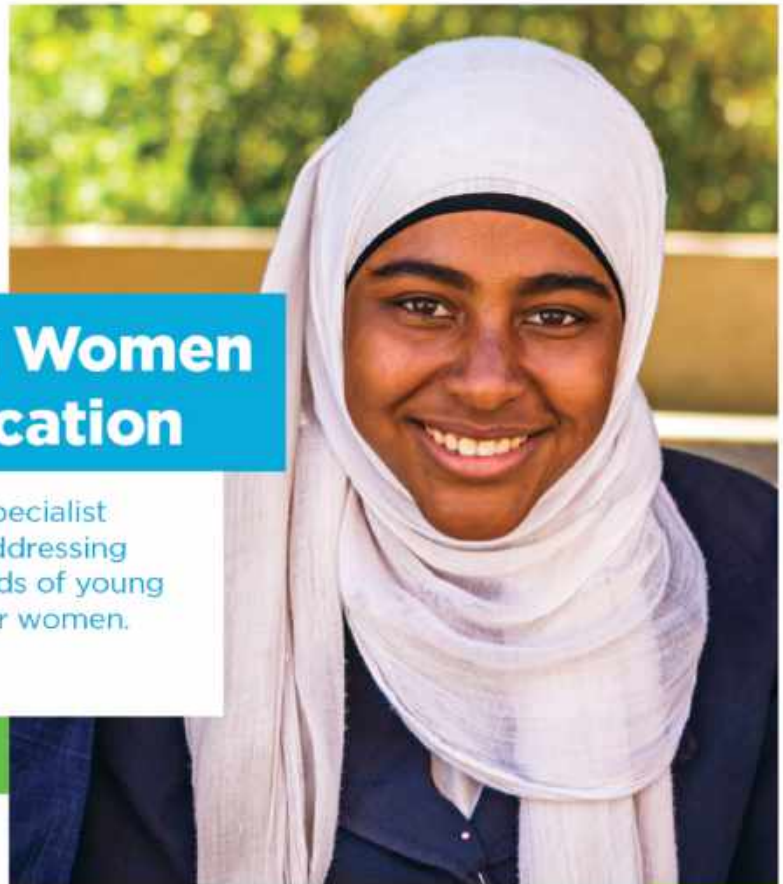
FINANCIALS

RNS does not charge student fees, we are a 'zero contribution' school. All programs, services, resources, materials, excursions, camps, notebooks, public transport MYKI's and childcare are covered by the school.

	2021 \$		2020 \$	
Income				
Private income – subscriptions, interest, rent	1,367		20,051	
Donations, Philanthropic Grants & Service Fees	178,845		129,067	
State Government Recurrent Funds	1,024,836		780,863	
State Government Education Allowances (CSEF, Conveyance, Students with disabilities)	95,753		75,772	
Commonwealth Government General Recurrent Funds	2,689,925		2,786,668	
Other Commonwealth Funds	-		117,287	
Other income – Independent Schools	12,892		10,383	
Total revenue		4,003,617		3,920,091
Expenditure				
Salary, wages and employee benefits related				
Principal and Teaching staff	1,074,262		1,043,491	
Education support, welfare and all other staff	938,662		495,186	
WorkCover	20,878		12,449	
Superannuation (Employer contribution only)	194,382		141,758	
Long Service and Annual Leave Provisions	59,423		82,295	
Other staff – HR consulting, First Aid Allowance, Welfare	76,829		54,889	
Total salaries, wages & related		2,245,589		1,830,067
Non salary expenses				
Teaching Programs, Resources, Office & Administration	359,407		332,735	
Student ICT - computers, iPads, technology consumables	65,851		86,889	
Building and Occupancy – maintenance, lease rent	254,874		194,910	
Depreciation	81,245		54,858	
Professional Management – accounting, audit, consultancy	49,973		79,360	
Other expenses – insurance, finance, communications	69,747		71,092	
Total non-salary expenses		881,097		819,845
Total expenses		3,126,686		2,649,912
Net Surplus		876,931		1,270,179

Balance Sheet	as at 31 December	2021 \$	2020 \$
Total Assets		4,676,505	4,572,127
Total Liabilities		456,253	1,228,806
Total Equity		4,220,252	3,343,321

An Independent Auditor's Report, prepared by Simon Aukstin (CA), McBain McCartin & Co., is available on request. RNS's Audited Financial Statements can be viewed at [ACNC The RNS Inc](#)



Empowering Women through Education

The River Nile School is a specialist senior-secondary school, addressing the unique educational needs of young Refugee and Asylum Seeker women.

All services are free.

rivernileschool.vic.edu.au

- Re-engages & empowers young Refugee & Asylum Seeker women, 15 - 20+ years, in an award winning, multicultural school
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) at Foundation, Intermediate & Senior Levels
- Pathways to further education and employment. Intermediate & Senior VCAL Certificates support entry to TAFE & university
- Flexible learning delivery with individualised learning and support
- Strong language, literacy and numeracy focus for *English as an Additional Language* learners
- Student Welfare & Empowerment Program includes advocacy, material aid, free food staples, MYKI & childcare
- Specialist Programs such as work readiness, driving and swimming

The River Nile School Inc

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Registered School Number 2111

River Nile School is located close to the Queen Victoria Market and to public transport in North Melbourne



rivernileschool.vic.edu.au

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