



Promoting our profession: enriching science teaching

03 June 2020

Head of Science

Dear Madam/Sir,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I am writing regarding our Science ASSIST service (<https://assist.asta.edu.au/>), Australia's national online advisory service for school science, that you and your colleagues may have used. It was developed in 2014 by the Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA) with funding from the federal government. Since its inception, the service has been providing free support to all science teachers, science technicians and school administrative staff.

Science ASSIST has been freely available since its inception due to the initial generous support of the Australian Department of Education and the current support of the CSIRO. As of 30 June 2020, the service will no longer receive any federal funding and whilst we are seeking new partnerships, this will be insufficient to keep the service operational. Feedback received from science teachers and science technicians on the impact of losing this service, indicates that it will be detrimental to the practical application of science education and will prevent the ongoing development of the community of practice that has been established. Whilst ASTA is actively advocating for continued funding from governments at the federal, state and territory levels, the feedback so far is less than promising.

To date Science ASSIST has served over 215,000 users who have accessed close to one million resource pages across the site. Most valuable is the direct responses you receive to your specific questions from our small but committed online team. Since 1<sup>st</sup> March, this year we have seen over 30% increase in user activity and questions across the site compared to the same time last year which we attribute to the various COVID-19 related advice that has been provided. These figures represent not simply the number of users but indicate the value the service provides to science teachers and science technicians. You may have read an article published by ABC Education on the importance of the service and I refer you to <https://education.abc.net.au/newsandarticles/blog/-/b/3524506/the-challenges-of-taking-science-from-lab-benches-to-kitchen-benches>).

ASTA is seeking your support to keep the service operational. In the absence of government funding, we will need to progress to a subscription service from 1 July 2020. ASTA will charge an annual subscription of \$150 per school. As most school budgets are set across a calendar year, ASTA is seeking a commitment from schools and proposes that if your school subscribes from 1 July, the fee of \$75 for the remainder of 2020 will be waived and the 2021 subscription be payable by 31 January 2021. Whilst most existing content will remain freely accessible, new, and updated materials, including the online question and answer service, will only be accessible with a valid subscription and password. We will be in touch again with instructions on how to subscribe and look forward to your ongoing support.

To discuss the service, please contact Teresa Gigengack, Science ASSIST Coordinator via [labsupport@asta.edu.au](mailto:labsupport@asta.edu.au). Thank you for your support and consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shenal Basnayake".

Mr. Shenal Basnayake  
Chief Executive Officer

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