

President's Report 2025 – 2026

It is just amazing what a small group of people can do! Despite another challenging year, it has been hard to believe what our little bunch of volunteers has achieved. Although ill-health – both my own and Peter Cunningham's, have again impacted our ability to contribute, fortunately, praise God, we are both on the mend, and our health continues to improve.

Relocating from the Beulah Hall to the Sheffield Uniting Church was quite a leap of faith and a lot of hard work for our volunteers. Like moving house, you never realise how much stuff you have, until you have to pack it up, move it, and then get it into order in its new space! I am convinced that Sheffield Uniting Church must be truly unique. Whoever would have thought that we could organise the church so that it can operate as a place of worship, a performance venue and a hive of our activity for our book-sorting and packing Library Aid team?

As well as the church being unique, I become increasingly convinced that our LAI charity is unique. It is entirely Tasmanian – operated. The books are donated from within Tasmania, mostly from schools and private donations. Boxes that our books are sent in, have been donated by two local companies – McCains and Simplot. The very basis of our operation, the collection of donated school books, has been provided by the management of De Bruyn's Transport. We thank them for their ongoing support to LAI, who for many years, have collected and transported the boxes of books completely free of charge. Their state-wide depots have been collection points for donated books who have transported them to their depot in East Devonport. This year we have also had support to offset shipping costs from local shipping company, Strait Link. And then, of course, all our local volunteers and committee members dedicate many hours of work each week.

Although there have been a few 'hiccups' along the way, it was a very satisfying feeling to send off another container destined for schools in the Solomon Islands and to learn of the difference it has made to the lives of the staff and children in these schools. It is truly heart-warming to see the photos and hear the stories behind the distribution of books and resources to schools, many of which were in quite remote places. It makes it all worthwhile.

God provides. We have been fortunate that we have so many willing helpers, how can we not succeed? With God's help and the wonderful support from the original committee together with so much support from many enthusiastic and committed local volunteers, we have developed a wonderful and efficient team. We have a great team of workers who turn up faithfully for working bees each week. It looks like we will fill the container destined for Fiji in the relatively near future.

Like previous years, LAI has worked with partners, to send our books to schools. This year, we have been assisting SWIM (Supporting Work in Missions) a mission of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia in the Solomon Islands. Next year, we will again be working in with the Rotary Fiji Schools Project to ship a container of books and computer equipment to Fiji. After that, we intend to work with Hope Education, a charity set up by a group of retired Tasmanian teachers, who have provided educational support to schools in Vanuatu for many years.

Our projects, of course, brings to focus the need for fundraising to be able to purchase and freight the containers. We have been fortunate to have a group of local volunteers who have put a lot of time, commitment and effort into organising some wonderfully successful events. Anita came up with the idea of holding a regular "Pop-Up Book Stall" while we are holding our regular Monday working bees. As we are on the main street, we attract passers-by and tourists to pop in to make a donation for books which are not suitable to send to our project.

Not only have they put our organisation 'out there' into the community, but they have also raised funds beyond our wildest expectations! We recently held a "Sheffield's Got Talent", Sunday afternoon concert, with performances by musical groups and singers who meet at the church. It was a great success, which had the audience singing along with the singing groups and requests for another in the near future. It also raised \$940. Unfortunately, it is never enough, and we still have a lot more work to do, before we have enough funds to freight the current container. Another Book Fair, a Quiz Night and Pet Show are planned for later this year.

Once again, I have so many people to thank for their support. We are so grateful to the many generous donors. Thank you to all the schools, organisations and individuals who have donated books and educational materials to LAI. This year, like last year, our donations of books from around Tasmania have been so abundant, that we had to put a stop to receiving donations for several months.

I cannot begin to thank people enough, especially the members of the committee for their support. Once again, a really huge thank you to Ian Hubble, who has been of great assistance behind the scenes, contacting our donors and assisting with the

logistics of running the organisation. A special thank you to Peter Cunningham. We have really appreciated your contribution. And a big thank you to all our local volunteers who turn up so faithfully each week.

Peter Cunningham's message several years ago seems so appropriate and has become our motto.

Once again, we thank God for His continued goodness and grace that has enabled us to accomplish all of this. I pray that He will continue to bless the new committee, enabling them to send several more containers of books and educational materials to improve literacy, educational outcomes and life opportunities for children in disadvantaged schools in developing countries.

Leoni Read
(President)
August, 2026