Chair's Report 2026

The last twelve months have been a period of growth for the ASA. Along with the full implementation of four-year funding from Creative Australia, we have built on and expanded our important programs and services to members. We have been heavily involved in advocacy for the sector, leading the way on AI and in cultural policy. Importantly, there has also been significant membership growth.

Advocacy has been demanding this year. I am extremely proud of the leadership role that the ASA has taken on, particularly in the battle to hold tech companies accountable for the theft of our work and ensure transparency, consent, compensation and respect for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property are embedded in legislation in future.

Freedom of expression continues to be an issue for authors, from the removal of library books to contested public appearances. The mass withdrawal of authors from this year's Adelaide Writers Week and mounting of an alternate, community-led festival (Constellations) in its place was an historic moment that demonstrated the power of collective action.

Superannuation remains an important issue, especially to authors engaging in freelance work. The ASA has shown our commitment to best practice in this area by implementing consistent superannuation payments to the many contractors we engage, and we continue to argue for fair payment of superannuation alongside our standard rates of pay. This year I was very pleased to see Creative Workplaces update their advice on superannuation in some detail, clarifying the rules for authors.

This is my first report as Chair of the ASA after taking over from Sophie Cunningham in November 2025. I want to thank Sophie for her excellent leadership which put the organisation in a position to tackle the demands of this year, and for staying on as Deputy Chair while I found my feet in the role. I would also like to thank the generous and thoughtful Dub Leffler for taking on the role of Deputy Chair mid year, and our insightful and attentive Treasurer, Jock Given, for everything you do to keep the wheels turning. Thank you to continuing Directors Sarah Ayoub, Josh Bornstein, Leanne Hall, and Mirandi Riwoe, for all your work and support. And a very warm welcome to newly elected Directors Emily Tsokos Purtill, John Byron and Laura Jean McKay who will bring a wealth of skills and experience to the board.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to outgoing Board Directors Kelly Gardiner, who served as Deputy Chair from 2022-2025, and Danielle Clode, who has represented the ASA on the Boards of Copyright Agency and Authors Legal. You have both been highly dedicated Directors and I have learned so much from each of you. Thank you for your hard work on the Board and on behalf of authors.

I am grateful for the work of our growing team in a year when staff have all been adapting to change and taking on more responsibilities. A huge thank you to our capable, dedicated and brilliant CEO Lucy Hayward, who has done extraordinary work, simultaneously steering the organisation through growth and rising to the challenges of a complex and demanding

period of advocacy. We are so lucky to have her on our side.

Lucy has been tireless in making the case that copyright must be respected, going up against some of the most powerful companies in the world. I am proud of the courage the ASA has shown this year. We have fought so hard for our members, for all Australia's creators and for the value of books and writing, and we will continue to fight for that value to be recognised, shared, and fairly remunerated, as human labour should be. I want to acknowledge everyone who has been taking part in this push, whether you have written to your MP, signed a petition, filled out a survey, discussed the issue, shared and cheered the ASA's posts, appeared on panels or at inquiries. Every contribution makes a difference.

Looking forward, it's important that the ASA makes the most of this phase of growth. As we continue to build strength, rise to challenges and effect change, we must also look at how we sustain our work: as individuals, within the team, with members, in our public advocacy, and in our governance practices. The Board will be working hard to ensure that this demanding period does not exhaust our resources, but is used to strengthen the ASA and develop our capacity into the future.

ASA Medal
Each year the ASA Medal is awarded to an Australian author or illustrator who has made an outstanding contribution to Australian culture. This medal does not just recognise a significant body of work, but also the often less visible contributions made to literature, through advocacy and support of other writers. The ASA medal is chosen by the Board from nominations from our members.

I am delighted that this year's medal is awarded to Tegan Bennet Daylight. A critically acclaimed writer across a range of forms and genres, including novels for adults and young adults, short stories, criticism and non-fiction, Daylight has also shown a deep commitment to the broader writing community over many years. A highly respected educator, she is a staunch supporter of emerging writers who has inspired countless students with committed teaching, depth of knowledge, and care for craft. A valued first reader and champion of her peers who consistently uplifts the work of others, Daylight is just the kind of writer that the ASA Medal is intended to celebrate.

Membership
We ended the 25-26 financial year with 4,757 members, representing an extraordinary increase of 12.4% on the previous year. Membership fees remain the ASA's main source of funding. They are how we run core services to members, including programs, professional development and advice. Membership fees fund our advocacy for writers and illustrators. Strong consecutive annual membership growth and a high rate of retention are the clearest testament to the value of the ASA, our services and our advocacy. This is what empowers the organisation to grow sustainably into the future and continue to make a material difference in the lives of authors.

Jennifer Mills
ASA Chair