



February/March 2026, Issue 67
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Welcome to the February/March edition of The Laura Standard. I hope you all enjoyed a wonderful festive season and I wish everyone a happy, healthy and successful 2026.

December saw the return of the much-loved Laura Party in the Park, held on the 19th, and it was a fantastic evening celebrating the festive season with our community. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all, with the visit from Father Christmas once again the highlight for the children. A huge thank you to the Mainly Music ladies for sharing the Christmas story — it is always so beautifully presented and a special addition to the evening. I would also like to personally thank the dedicated group of ladies who organise and coordinate this event. It is no small task, particularly at such a busy time of year, and your time, effort and commitment are greatly appreciated.

Harvest has now come and gone, bringing mixed results across the district. However, it was pleasing to see trucks continuing to pass through the town carting grain for an extended period of time. Wishing everyone a successful season in 2026 as I'm sure preparations are well underway.

It is wonderful to share that at the Australia Day Awards held in Jamestown, the Laura Nature Playground Committee was awarded the Active Citizenship Award. This is an outstanding recognition for a small committee that has achieved so much for our community. Congratulations to everyone involved — a very well-deserved honour.

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It is also lovely to share that a new group has recently formed in town, known as the Friends of Laura Mill. The group has come under the LCDTA as a subcommittee and is leading discussions around the purchase and preservation of the Laura Mill site, with the aim of retaining and celebrating its rich local history. The committee has already made great progress. This is a wonderful initiative, but one of significant scale, and we wish the group every success in their mission. If this project is something you are passionate about or you would like to learn more, please contact Roger Kleinig (0427 399 244).

Looking ahead, the Southern Flinders Staying in Place Project is progressing very well. The group has also officially come under the LCDTA as a subcommittee and is expected to be up and running towards the end of February. This is a fantastic program that will deliver significant benefits to our community. It will generate local employment opportunities through contractors providing in-home services, while also ensuring that our older residents can access essential support to continue living independently in their own homes for as long as possible. Importantly, this program is community-owned and community-led, ensuring that any financial benefits are reinvested directly back into our town. For further information about this program, please contact Sue Scarman (0418 844 935).

The Laura Folk Fair Committee is also extremely busy, with planning well underway for this much-anticipated event. The Folk Fair continues to be a major highlight for our town, providing a significant tourism drawcard and economic boost. Events of this scale require a huge amount of work and volunteers across the weekend, and in the coming weeks and months you may be approached to help fill rosters. If you are able, please consider giving your time to support this iconic community event.

At the time of writing this report, the school year is about to commence. Best wishes to all students returning to school, and a special good luck to those starting school or kindergarten for the first time (and to their parents also). We hope you all have a happy and successful year ahead.

As always, thank you to everyone who contribute their time and energy to making Laura such a vibrant community.

Emily Alm, Chairperson, LCDTA

Laura Not a Dying Town



This statement was the title of an article in the *Laura Standard* of 25 September 1936. The local paper reported that the Laura Milling Co...made an effective protest against this libel with a display...of its products...that would be a credit to any town in SA. The display was a float in the procession for the SA Centenary celebrations.

The statement is attributed to “a globe trotter, who spent less than 48 hours in Laura...being the outcome of impressions following brief conversations with one or two local residents”, and included in a published book referring to Laura as a “dying town”. The title of the book is unknown, but it certainly wasn’t ***Sunny South Australia***, by May Vivienne, published in 1908. She described Laura as “a charming little place... beautifully situated by the Rocky River...I was



Laura, from ‘Sunny South Australia’, (published 1908).

Note gas street lamp installed by B Lowe two years earlier. (Picture enhanced by ChatGPT – Ed.)

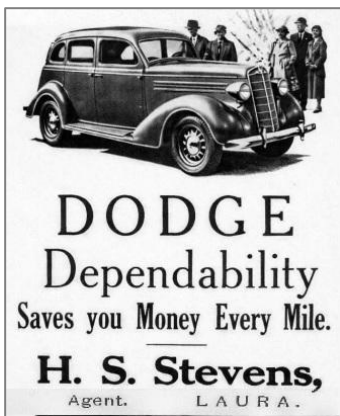
sorry to leave the pretty little township where everything seemed to be in the pink of condition”

The editor of the *Laura Standard* in 1936 was quick to defend the reputation of the town, writing that “*for its size is one of the most prosperous towns in* continued next page ...”

... from previous page

the Northern Areas and has live wire businesses that are the envy of other towns" (reference to Northern Areas in 1936 had no connection to Northern Areas Council). Positives quoted included a new venture by Laura Ice & Produce Co adding a butter making factory, the building of the new North Laura Hotel to replace the old one and the bituminising of the main street from the south to north bridges.

Forward the calendar ninety years to 2026 we still have much to be positive about our town. Recent investments include Little Blessings Brewing and the Opulent Eye Antiques in the former Anglican church. These properties have both been reroofed as part of their start-ups, as has the property of Dan and Wendy on the corner of South Terrace and Herbert Street which will soon house another new venture.



The Stevens Motors property has undergone major upgrading. Incidentally the 1936 issue of the Laura Standard carried this advertisement of HS Stevens from this site for Dodge cars. The family has remained with Dodge / Chrysler / Mitsubishi vehicles since the 1930s, possibly being the longest running dealership in Australia.

Real estate sales are buoyant, demonstrating that faith in our town is well justified.

Greg Slattery
President,
Rocky River Historic & Art Society Inc.

Did You Know ... ?

There are at least 30 places around the world named "Laura."

Queensland, Italy(2), USA(6), Canada, Marshall Islands, Poland, Uganda, Grenada, Peru, Pakistan, Indonesia, Uruguay, São Tomé and Príncipe, Slovenia, Russia, Romania, Ghana, Cuba(4), Brazil, Bolivia and Bangladesh.

The Laura Folk Fair

The Laura Folk Fair is a great attraction for our small town with a big heart.

The Folk Fair will be held on 18-19 April 2026, bringing a weekend full of entertainment, food, drinks and a great time to reconnect with old friends with a little encouragement to come to Laura.



We are asking to please consider helping the new look committee.

Your commitment to the community will be strong and time consuming, but the rewards to the community and to yourself would be incredible.

Please talk to one of the Committee members, or call Anthony Lines on 0427 817 463.

Sensory Tent Coming

SA Rural & Remote Plan Management is a small, locally focused NDIS Plan Management provider with a big heart for regional communities. We proudly support people across rural and remote South Australia, and our passion has always been about more than plans and paperwork — it's about people, connection and inclusion.



We are excited to be bringing a Sensory Tent to the upcoming Laura Folk Fair, helping to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone can enjoy this much-loved community event.

For some people, busy events with crowds, noise and constant activity can feel overwhelming. The Sensory

Tent has been designed as a calm, supportive space where individuals can step away, regulate and reset when they need to. It offers a quiet, low-stimulus environment that can help reduce sensory overload and anxiety.

The space will be suitable for children, teens and adults who may experience sensory sensitivities, including people with disability, neurodivergent individuals, and anyone who simply needs a moment of calm. Families and carers are welcome to use the space together.

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Inside the Sensory Tent, visitors can expect a peaceful atmosphere with gentle lighting, comfortable seating and simple sensory supports. It's a place to slow down, breathe and feel safe — before heading back out to enjoy the fair.

As a rural and remote Plan Management provider, we see firsthand how important inclusive community events are. In smaller towns especially, local fairs and festivals bring people together and help strengthen connection. Making sure these events are accessible to everyone means no one has to miss out.

We feel honoured to support the Laura Folk Fair and to give back to a community that continues to show such care for one another. Our hope is that the Sensory Tent helps more families feel confident attending and staying longer, knowing there is a safe space available if it's needed.

We look forward to seeing familiar faces and meeting new ones at the fair. Please feel free to stop by the Sensory Tent, ask questions, or simply take a quiet moment — everyone is welcome.

SA Rural & Remote Plan Management – locals supporting locals.



"ALPHA" is coming to Laura

If you have questions about life, purpose and Christian faith and would value a safe space to explore these big matters, then Alpha is for you.

Commencing 6pm on Thursday 5th February at House of Hope (38 Herbert Street) with dinner and an introductory video presentation and then from 7pm Thursday evenings concluding on 26th March. If you can't get to the first night (or, for that matter, some of the other nights), feel free to attend those you're able to.

Anyone and everyone is welcome.

For more information or to register (for catering purposes) contact Baptist Pastor Jenny Pryor 0407 999 871



A Golden North Memory

By Roger Simpson - 81 years, now at Parafield Gardens.

In the 1950's I moved to Laura, as a 9 year old boy, with my family. My father, Cliff Simpson, was the Postmaster for many years. I can still picture him standing at the counter tapping on the Morse Code key, sending Telegrams.

All these years later, I remember my first paid employment, at the age of about 14 years, during the summer school holidays, at the Laura Golden North factory. One of my jobs was the placing of the wooden pop sticks into the 'Merry Moment' moulds as the ice cream was setting in ice cold water. Also, some of my duties were at the different Golden North location in Laura, a large corrugated iron warehouse where the honey was stored/processed. I was paid three pounds and ninepence per week.

Over the years, I've had various types of employment, the first official one being the Laura ANZ Bank, followed by service in the Australian Navy, including being onboard the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne when it collided with HMAS Voyager in 1964, claiming 82 lives. To the present day, it's Australia's worst peacetime military disaster. My working life concluded with being the Chaplain to the SA Metropolitan Fire Service, Adelaide and country areas, including Port Pirie, for 12 years.

I'm mindful that the starting point for this varied/interesting working life journey was at Golden North. I wish the company well as it transitions to Murray Bridge.

SH  P
LOCAL

*Remember, shopping locally all year
long keeps our community viable!*



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koby.nettle@outlook.com

PGE 207037

LCDTA Community Raffle

The raffle was again a big success for the LCDTA with a profit of \$1546.

Thanks to all those who helped sell tickets and our patrons who regularly buy tickets. This year for the first time in my memory all prizes went to locals or family members of locals:

- 1st prize - \$300 – Riley Fuss
- 2nd prize - \$150 – Matthew Pech
- 3rd prize - \$100 – Daphne Crossman
- 4th prize - \$50 – Kane Hocking
- 5th prize - \$50 - Kerry Birrell
- 6th prize - \$50 – John Kitto

Our thanks to the Laura Information Centre for providing the prize money.

Laura Calendar

The calendar has again been well supported with a number of businesses changing their details. So best to check it to make sure you have the updated details! Thanks to community members for the ongoing feedback on the calendar. The white print in the information boxes is a result of feedback from an older resident who was having trouble reading the community information boxes when printed in black.

Once again Copy King in Kadina completed the artwork and printing. Our total income was \$3,609, and with printing costs of \$2,048.30 which left a profit of \$1,560.70.

A big thank you to Rhonda Pech and her team for organising maps and calendar packs for delivery and thanks to each of the deliverers. It's a nice community touch to hand deliver the calendars to each house and business in the town. Another thank you to Ellie and Steve at the Post Office for distributing the calendar to post boxes and out of town addresses.

550 calendars were printed this year with spares available from Laura Information Centre for \$2.

It was decided at a recent meeting to increase the costs for calendar entries by \$5 each calendar top entry. This is reflected in the 2027 insert sheet in the calendar.





Host a Demo to be rewarded

The consultant who hosts a gathering of 10 or more people to experience the Thermomix range will receive a reward. Thermomix range of products available.




Mum & Me Thermomixers





Jacqueline Palmer
0439883452
Thermomix Consultant
Thermomummy@outlook.com.au



Deb Palmer
0408082614
Thermomix Consultant



We are taking a break in February!

We will be closed from:

Monday 2 February 2026

Reopening:

Friday 6th March 2026

Our last weekend open before our break is
30th Jan – 1st Feb.

Stock up on LBB products before we close
for a month!

Booking [ONLINE](#) is recommended especially during busy times
eg Long Weekends, Easter etc.

Painter Dan

0434 371116

- Wallpaper installations
- Interior & Exterior Painting
- Repairs
- Based in Laura



BLD225910

ATTENTION



Public Notice, Laura and Surrounds



Take heed that amongst us all is a new writer/poet. At the age of 97, Mr. ALLAN HEADING of Laura has produced his first Book of Poetry, a selection of Poems written in days gone by whilst travelling Australia with his darling wife.

The book title is *Places, People, Events and Yarns*.

On Friday, 13th February 2026 (Black Friday) there will be an open event at the Laura Community Centre from 9:00AM to 12:noon. Tea and Coffee will be available, and maybe scones and coke!

No entry fee. Come along and salute our newest star. (CJ Dennis will be smiling)

For more info, contact "Gibba".

Laura Markets

A community fundraising event

Indoor and Outdoor stalls

Laura Civic Centre, Hughes St

Open 9am - 1pm

2026 Market Dates:

Sat 7th March

Sat 2nd May

Sat 4th July

Sat 5th Sept

Sat 7th Nov

&

Christmas Market Sat 12th Dec

Stallholder /market enquiries:

Lauramarkets5480@gmail.com

Nikki: 0410 459560

or Dan: 0434 371116



Southern Flinders Staying in Place

By Sue Scarman

A quick update for where this project is going. After the visit by Mable in November lots has been happening.

We have a name – Southern Flinders Staying in Place

We have a committee which is a sub-committee of the LCDTA.

We have a start-up coordinator who will be getting started hopefully around the 23rd February making contact with people who came to the sessions back in November.

If there is anyone who couldn't make it to those sessions, but you are interested please call Sue on 0418844935. Whether you are a potential client or interested in being a service provider we would like to hear from you.

If you are on an Aged Care package and would like to support your town more, Staying in Place is the model for you. The worker who comes into your home to provide the services will be a local person not someone who travels some distance and needs to charge your account for that travel. This will mean the money out of your package will go further for extra services for you. They will be the same worker each time and if you would like a different worker a quick word with the coordinator and this can also be arranged. It is your package and your life which should be how you want it to be.

It also means the money paid to the worker stays in our town. This model also pays a local coordinator and with a minimum of 15 clients/package holders there are profits made which go back into our community. How good is that? So, if you want to be a part of this by being a client or worker, please let us know.

As a worker/service provider, please consider contacting us if you already have skills. Either as a health practitioner, or in the aged care sector, if you would like to learn skills, we can help you. If you would like to be a cleaner or gardener in this model, please contact us. If you would like to help aged care package holders to get out and about in our community, whether it be for shopping or appointments or just for social outings then there is a role for you too. There are many ways you can be a provider for these package holders so if you have a little or a lot of time please contact us.

Mable is coming back late February and Home Made will be coming in March for more community meetings. In the meantime, they will be working with the local team remotely to help get us started.



BOOK LAUNCH For
Allen Heading

**with his book ' Places -
People - Events and Yarns '**

FRIDAY 13th February
(Black Friday) 2026
Laura Memorial Civic Centre

9am to 12pm

**10am Allen Heading talks on his
experiences and life. Books
available for sale on the day**

***Open Mic. on Books, Places
and Yarns***

Signing of C.J.Dennis book for Archives record.

Free entry, all welcome
Refreshments will be provided



LAURA COMMUNITY GYM

Providing an excellent opportunity for people of all ages to become fit and have fun.

Join the Gym now as a permanent member

Membership fees:

6 months \$150, 12 months \$200

Enquiries and application forms available from the Laura Post Office or call **Deb Palmer 0408 082 614.**



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or pick up from 11 Bristow St**

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When:

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Duration:

45 minute Sessions


5 week Program

Location:

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Enquiries:

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 Hayley's Dog House

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Hayley Woolford

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New Air Conditioners in North Terrace Cottages

The LCDTA has generously installed air conditioners in the cottages on North Terrace. Here are the wonderful letters of appreciation from the residents. Yet another example of the community spirit in our town.

Well done to the LCDTA.

Garnie Pickering Unit 9 Airconditioner
I'm very, very happy with my air conditioner.
The unit is working very well and the position
is excellent. My home is very warm and
comfortable. Health wise it makes life much
better and it's proved to be perfect, now that
I'm on a walker. The air conditioner is excellent.
I'm very pleased, all thanks to LCDTA

KEITH RAYNER
3/4 Nth. Tce.
Laura 540

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is a much overdue note
to say how much I appreciate the heat pump
you so generously donated. In the four
years I have lived here, this last summer
and winter, especially winter, has been the
most comfortable I have experienced.
To be able to move away from
the heater I used to have and still be warm
is definitely a lovely experience!
My sincere thanks.
Keith Rayner

Hi my name is
Jens Cronemyer
I live in unit 7
north terrace Laura
the Pensioner flats
I just wanted to
express my up most
appreciation for the
kindness of installing
the reverse cycle air con
- heater.

more letters next page ...

... Letters (cont'd)

15/1/2026

To whom it may concern, recently having Members at North tee, received and had installed Air-con units, through the kind people of Laura. During the last ~~heat~~ heat wave they were a good sent. I would also like to pay a big shout out to Phyllis for her unwavering support. on behalf of myself, I say thank you.

your Sincerely
Ben Deeble
unit 6

R W MURRAY
UNIT 10 of 4
NORTH TERRACE
LAURA SA
5480

to whom it may concern
My sincere thanks to the people involved in the supply and installation of THE AIR CONDITIONING UNITS to the homes. At 80yo it has helped me thru the winter with warmth to my unit. Summer will be soon on top of us all, I am sure, individually we will be served well!
6 from me A BIG THANKS!

R. W. Murray.
AKA "Gibbo"

Laura Racecourse Management Committee

We are seeking applications for local community projects/ committees to apply for GRANTS from our disbursement of funds. Applications must be in writing to Geoff Lange (Secretary) 31 Garden Street, Laura SA 5480 by close of business 25th February 2026. No applications will be accepted after this date.

This committee has dispensed \$104,000 to the community since 2009.

The Laura Emporium

Local arts and Crafts
Gifts and Cookware
Jams and Spreads
Boiled Lollies
Funny Signs
Art Gallery

Meryle's Café
Knives
Pickles and Sauces
Antiques
Candles and Soaps
Shell Display

If we don't have it you don't need it!

Buying and selling antiques and household items

Meryle's Café

Open Weekdays 7am to 4.30pm

Weekends 9am to 4.30pm

Come on in and enjoy a coffee and of course something nice to eat. Choose from their large range of cakes, pastries and cooked food

Emporium 0473 656 807 or Meryle's 0460 648 118



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A Legacy of Service and Commitment: Geoff Lange

After 15 years as a committee member, including 13 years serving as Treasurer of the Laura Community Caravan Park, Geoff Lange has decided to step down from his role.

Throughout his tenure, Geoff has been a highly capable and dedicated Treasurer, contributing hundreds of volunteer hours to managing the park's finances. During this time, he oversaw almost \$1m in building projects, improvements, and upgrades, supporting both new developments and enhancements to existing facilities across the park.

Geoff has also been a regular contributor at park working bees, participated in many interview panels, and, prior to the office becoming computerised, assisted by overseeing office operations in the absence of park managers.

Known for his dry sense of humour, Geoff was famous for responding to questions about the park's financial position with, "*We're struggling!*" — a line he delivered consistently, including to

Her Excellency the Governor at the opening of the new amenities block in 2025.

Geoff's commitment to community service extends well beyond the park. He has volunteered with more than 20 community organisations and remains actively involved on several committees today.

On behalf of the Laura Community Caravan Park, we thank Geoff for his outstanding service and dedication. We wish him all the best in retirement — including more time to support Port Power and, perhaps one day, celebrate another premiership.

We also welcome Wayne Miller, who has kindly taken on the role of Treasurer and will continue the strong financial stewardship of the park.

Article written by Barry Harvie.





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Petition: Stamp Duty – First Homebuyers

On Tuesday the 20th of January, Northern Areas Council passed a resolution to accept a request for collaboration from the City of Victor Harbor regarding a petition to the South Australian Government which they are promoting regarding property stamp duty.



The petition calls for a waiver of stamp duty for first homebuyers purchasing existing homes in regional South Australia, up to the first \$750,000 of the purchase price. The aim is to collect 10,000 signatures and present the petition to state Parliament in May 2026. By achieving this milestone it will send a strong message about the community's support for making home ownership more accessible in our region. The campaign started in December 2025 and will continue to April 2026, providing plenty of time for residents and supporters to get involved and help spread the word.

Those wishing to support the initiative by signing the petition, can do so at Council's Jamestown, Gladstone or Spalding Offices, or the Laura Information Centre.

We're Looking for Volunteers in Laura!

Do you have spare time and want to make a difference in your community?



CARE IN MOTION



Your community not-for-profit organisation

1300 132 932



www.careinmotion.org.au

Apply to volunteer
as a Driver or Aged
Care Visitor



- Drive once a week, fortnight, or month – we're flexible!
- Centrelink-approved volunteering
- Reimbursement policy available

Flinders Mobile Library

www.flindersmobile.sa.gov.au

	February	March	April
LAURA 12.45 - 4.15pm	Tuesday 10, 24	Tuesday 10, 24	Tuesday 7, 21
WIRRABARA 10.15 - 11.45am APPILA 2.30 - 3.30pm	Thursday 5, 19	Thursday 5, 19	Thursday 2, 16, 30

RETURN BOXES are located at the Gladstone Council Office, Laura IGA, Wirrabara Lucky 7 and the Booleroo Centre IGA.

The Library is part of the state wide LibrariesSA network and offers access to wide a range of physical and electronic services.

For more information -
email: flindersmobile.library@libraries.sa.gov.au
Phone: 08 8662 2305



Use your Library card to access magazines on line through Libby. Latest issues always available. Talk to us for more information or visit the website to download the Libby app.

Laura Information Centre

Open Daily 10:00am – 4:00pm

Ph: 8663 2260



For all your local and state information, maps and pamphlets

We also stock: * Golden North Giant Twins

Welcome to the Laura Information Centre for 2026!

You live in Laura, but have you ever:

- Visited the Laura Lookout
- Been for a ride or a walk on the cycle trails
- Used the outdoor gym equipment around the Primary School oval
- Had your photo taken with CJ Dennis or the Emus in the Caravan Park?

Why not choose one of these to accomplish this month and then drop into LIC for a look around and enjoy a delicious Giant Twin – we'd love to see you there!

We've got lots to show you:

Arts & Crafts

Aromatics & Candles

Doggy Treats

Books, Baskets & Glassware

Postcards & Greeting Cards

Dried fruit, Honey, Jams & Chutneys, Biscuits & Olive Oil

Hats & Caps, Aprons & Tea Towels & Bags

... to mention just a few!

Need a Justice of the Peace?

Jon Hawkins-Clarke	0417 849 441
James Heaslip	0408 635 001
David Medlow Smith	0403 035 231
Lynette Pech	0418 892 131
John Stevens	8663 2303
Jodie Zwar	0457 745 586

Northern Areas Council



- **Council Offices:**

Jamestown: 8664 1139
1300 664 108 (from landlines only)
Gladstone: 8662 2018
After Hours: 0488 999 808

- **Mayor:**

Keith Pluckrose 0428 452 199 keith.pluckrose@nacouncil.sa.gov.au

- **Rocky River Ward Councillors:**

Sue Scarman 0418 844 935 sue.scarman@nacouncil.sa.gov.au
Denise Higgins 0428 222 610 denise.higgins@nacouncil.sa.gov.au
John Barberien 0418 804 416 john.barberien@nacouncil.sa.gov.au

Bin Collection Dates

Red (Laura, Wednesday) Every week

Yellow (Laura, Friday) February 13,27 March 13,27 April 10,24

Yellow (Appila Rd, Friday) February 6,20 March 6,20 April 3,17

Green (Laura, Thursday) February 12 March 12 April 9

Laura Community Development & Tourism Association Inc.

PO Box 149, Laura SA 5480

www.laurasa.com.au

Chairperson: Emily Alm 0419 643 099

Secretary: Darren Pech 0429 705 520

Treasurer: Wayne Miller

For enquiries about *The Laura Standard*, contact:

Warren Mack (editor): 0417 131 758

Bronwyn Weston: 0438 635 061



The Laura Standard team, together with the LCDTA, thank all contributors for their articles and advertising.

Please forward articles in a Word document, with embedded photos and logo if required as JPG files, to lcdta5480@gmail.com.

Close-off date for all articles and advertisements:

20 March 2026

If you know someone who unfortunately hasn't received a copy of *The Laura Standard*, copies are available from the Laura Information Centre, Meryle's café and Little Blessings Brewing. Copies can also be emailed – contact the Editor.

This edition, and all previous editions, can be viewed and downloaded in colour and printed, at www.laurasa.com.au/News.

The Laura Standard is a community publication. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association. The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse articles.

Advertising Fees (Note change in rates for 2026)

Full page (193mm x 127mm): \$50.00

Half page (96mm x 127mm): \$30.00

Third page (63mm x 127mm): \$20.00

As an incentive for supporting *The Laura Standard*, advertisers will receive their sixth advertisement **free**.

The Gift that goes on giving

They say that Christmas is for children. So where does that leave us grownups? And where are we now that all the holiday hype and spending frenzy is over? Let's face it, it can leave us exhausted, and thankful that we have twelve months to recover before the next onslaught.

I mean, we all want to see our kids' happy faces as they tear open their presents on Christmas morning, but by then we've already endured Christmas pageants and visits to Santa's grotto and shopping sprees, etc., etc.

But there is something about children that makes it all worthwhile, even pleasurable - despite the odd exception to that rule, when we have to deal with the temper tantrums of overtired little ones (and sometimes even big ones).

It seems that this magic especially applies to babies.

Babies have the ability to reduce a grown man to a silly, soppy mess, all soft eyed, but ready to fiercely go into battle to defend this little one who has captured his heart, simply by being vulnerable and defenceless. (Ok dads. Think about the first time you held your newborn baby, and you'll get the idea).

It seems that being confronted by such vulnerability in turn makes us vulnerable to emotions we'd rather not confront; at least if we want to remain in full control of our lives. And yet somehow we find ourselves gifted with something that outstrips anything we could find under the Christmas tree, or even the star that adorns its top.

But that gift is at the heart of our Christmas story, the gift we glimpse in our children but sometimes forget in our busyness. Because buried in the pretty decorations, if we look hard enough, we can see a messy stable, a feed-box stuffed with hay, and just such a tiny, vulnerable newborn child, who claims our hearts and invites us into his dreams for our future, to accompany him into the coming year (and years) of our lives.

This is God's love come among us, which says, "Don't be afraid. My love is stronger than your fear."

Blessings for the coming year, and far beyond.

Sr. Sandra Sears CSBC