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## ITEM 5

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### **FREE REFORMED SCHOOL ASSOC. (TAS.) INC.**

administering the

### **JOHN CALVIN SCHOOL**

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## Chair's Report to the FRSA (Tas) Inc

### at the Annual General Meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

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Prepared by Colin Mulder

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Dear association members

I am pleased to present the Chairman's report on the activities of the board over the previous year and outline some plans that we have for the year ahead.

This past year was the first year that I have served in the board for many years and one of the most striking differences between then and now is the separation between the day-to-day management of the school by the principal and the overall governance of the school by the board. I am sure I am not the only board member who feels this way and it is taking some time to adjust to this new paradigm. There have been times that I questioned if I have the necessary skill set to do justice to the roles and responsibilities of a board member in this current environment.

There are two significant considerations that determine the priorities for the board. The first is the constitution which stipulates the duties of the board, the other is the adherence to the requirements of the Tasmanian Schools Registration Board. Although these are two separate documents, they in fact complement each other in many areas.

So that the John Calvin School can open its doors every year it must meet certain requirements as stipulated by our State Government. Some have suggested over the years that if the government would make unrealistic demands of us in exchange for the funding we receive, we should forgo the funding and be totally self-funded and do away with the impositions placed on us by the authorities. Unfortunately, this is not a realistic option, in order to operate a school in Tasmania requires that the school meets certain legislated standards, irrespective of the funding required to operate the school. The current registration for our school is due to expire and we will therefore be undergoing an audit this year.

The very first standard is governance, requiring that the board as the governing body, be able to demonstrate that it has the responsibility for the education delivered at the school, the strategic direction of the school, the overall management of the finances of the school and the management of the school principal. Although the current strategic plan is only 2 years old, the board intends to spend some time after the AGM reviewing the plans and recalibrating where necessary. Part of this process involves reviewing the school's development plan and the five-

year financial plan, it will also include a review of the risks that have been identified as potentially impacting the school in the future.

Although the board, largely looks at the bigger picture, it relies heavily on the work that is done by its committees who have oversight and provide direction, drilling down into areas of the school's operations. There are five main committees that regularly report to the board, and all have submitted their planned objectives that they aim to achieve in this coming year, I would like to share just some of them to give you a glimpse into the activities of these committees.

The Teaching and Learning committee are busy with the professional development of all teaching staff including staff induction and mentoring. This committee works in conjunction with the principal promoting a clear whole-school curriculum plan that is explicit in its Christian worldview. One of the ongoing objectives in the teaching and learning area is the development of teaching programmes that attend to individual student needs. This is a huge task that involves the identification of learning needs, and then considering how these needs can best be addressed. These individual plans require an extensive amount of resources to be implemented, in terms of the teacher's time and the learning spaces required.

The People and Culture committee continues to engage the association and strengthen school relationships. One of the major objectives of this committee in this year is to make sure we remember and celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the John Calvin School, that's right, we are 60 years old this year and what a wonderful milestone to celebrate. How we will celebrate is still to be decided however the treasurer has allocated some funds for this occasion so that we can have a joyous time. We would like some input and assistance with this and if anybody here tonight can spare a little bit of time and some creative thinking we would love to hear from you.

This committee has also been working on staff recruitment, the board's recruitment officer has been instrumental in the employment of staff over this past year, this role has proven to be an effective resource, and we hope that her continuing involvement will benefit us in the future. Although we are currently blessed with a full complement of staff, we need to be constantly working on future requirements, to that end the committee has developed in draft form a proposed policy to provide some financial assistance to students who might be interested in undertaking university studies in the field of education, we hope to do some more work in this area in the coming year.

At the beginning of last year, we were in dire need for teaching staff and were it not for the efforts of the existing staff and relief staff, the education of our children would have been severely curtailed, so many thanks to you all. I am sure many prayers were brought before God from our homes, but we also heard them from the pulpits, our Heavenly Father has certainly heard our prayers, and He has also shown His providential care in sending to us a number of new teachers. Stephanie Jonker, Ross TenHaaf, Emily Alaimo and Amy Eilander

The planned culture survey was conducted, and the participation was great, the committee has since held workshops with the various stakeholders and is using the data to identify areas for continuous improvement of our school.

The Governance committee has planned out the board calendar specifying the various tasks to be undertaken, it has also made plans for the board training conducted by an external facilitator, the board is aware that its composition is made up of willing volunteers who might not have the necessary expertise and skills required to be fully effective in our board/director

roles. We hope this training will assist us to provide a greater insight into our roles and responsibilities and allow us to serve the school in the best possible way.

Our current Business Manager would like to reduce her role, and we have therefore made a part time position for her eventual replacement and employed Herman Mills to take up this role. Together with the admin team, Karen has set up a school management system and developed policies for the school which we believe will serve us well into the future and ensure that we are operating within government regulations. For many years our sister Therese DeRuiter worked faithfully alongside Karen in the school's office and she has decided to take some well-deserved rest. Thank you Therese and we wish you God's blessings for the future.

The Finance and Risk Committee will be reporting on their activities and plans when the accounts and budget are presented later here tonight. Our current treasurer has a good grasp on the associations finances and we as board are grateful that he has made himself available for re-election at this AGM, continuity in this role can provide real stability and confidence for the board going forward. The committee is exploring opportunities to expand the member support base and continues to encourage regular and consistent support for the building fund and in so doing, decreasing our loan for the Westbury Rd property.

The facilities and Infrastructure Committee has also been working on a number of objectives. As reported in a recent Calvinist they have engaged with the FRC Launceston to ensure that when required there can be a smooth transition to the new site. Whilst we remain on the current campus, we have committed to ensuring that it is fit for purpose for our current student population. The new focus for the committee will be the development of plans for a move to the new site at Westbury Rd. Regular maintenance is required to ensure that this asset is kept in a good condition and the committee has maintained an ongoing dialogue with the current tenants regarding a conclusion of the current lease. We are aware that the association members would love to view the property, and efforts are being made to see if that is possible.

Our world continues to change at a rapid pace, and unfortunately the brokenness of sin so evident in our world is also evident in the school. The demands placed on teachers, teacher assistants, team facilitators, the principal and the admin team continue to expand. New programs together with the professional development training need to be constantly undertaken to address the needs of students. Thankfully our budget has made provision for this and together with a dedicated teacher faculty led by a committed principal we are confident that the students are receiving an excellent K-10 Christian education.

The Principal Dan Coote has completed his master's degree in educational leadership. This is a significant achievement, and we extend our congratulations. The board had agreed to make the time available for this endeavour and we believe that this investment will reap dividends in the years to come. Thankyou Dan for the work that you do for us, your enthusiasm and commitment to the JCS is clearly displayed and we hope that God will continue to uphold and strengthen you for coming year.

Before I finish, a word of thanks for the retiring board members, both Bill and Andy have made significant contributions in their respective roles, Bill was instrumental in the purchase of the Westbury rd. property, and he also worked hard to ensure that we have a MOU in place covering the eventual transfer of the Church to the School. Andy was our secretary and wrote all our minutes and correspondence, he also served as chair of the people and culture committee. Andrew's organisational skills were a real asset in carrying out these tasks. We wish both of you

all the best enjoying your sabbatical's. To the remaining board colleagues, I express my thanks and I wish you continued success in the year ahead.

You sometimes might question why we put so much energy, time and resources into the operation of our school, and each time I ask myself that question I think... where would all these children go if there was no John Calvin School? Surely a school that has values and a foundation that align with the Word of God is worth fighting for! This is a school that was set up for the education of the covenant children that God has entrusted to us. I encourage you all to remain committed to its continued operation and growth. May our Heavenly Father receive all honour, praise and glory, for His continued providential care over the John Calvin School.

Yours in Christ

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