



Beyond 2025 and the future of Bible translation

**AUTUMN
2025**

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Editorial from the CEO



Have you set yourself any New Year's resolutions for this year? What do they look like? While short-term goals are helpful, long-term goals are also important for organisations like Wycliffe as we move forward and seek God's will for the future.

Vision 2025 was adopted by Wycliffe Bible Translators International (now known as Wycliffe Global Alliance) and SIL International in 1999. It was estimated that it would take up to 150 years to start a Bible translation project for every language group that needs Scripture. The vision was born from a desire to see the work accelerated so that, by the year 2025, no language group would still be waiting. I was working with SIL in Papua New Guinea when Vision 2025 was first proposed in 1999 and remember feeling a mixture of excitement and disbelief. Could this really be possible?

Some of the considerations that Wycliffe and its partners have kept in mind throughout the years leading up to 2025 have been the following:

- a changing landscape of missiology and the Church's commitment to it
- establishing new partnership opportunities
- growing local involvement and ownership of translation projects
- the impact of globalisation
- opportunities and challenges of AI

So, how are we faring? How close are we to the realisation of Vision 2025? While it is true that 'nothing is impossible with God' (Matthew 19:26) the reality is that there are still 985 languages without any Scripture that need a translation of God's Word to begin. This edition of *Wycliffe Today* takes a look at how far we have come and the exciting new opportunities that are enabling incredible progress towards seeing God's Word translated into every language that needs it.

Max Sahl

Bethel Funerals

Bethel Funerals' story began in 1997 as a business that provides Christ-like care to grieving families-while also financially supporting Wycliffe Australia.

Visit bethelfunerals.com.au for more information.



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Transformed by the Word: God-appointed moments in time



by Lyn Wake

*So let's not get tired of doing what is good.
At just the right time we will reap a harvest
of blessing if we don't give up.*
Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

When my husband and I first joined the Bible translation movement in the 1990s, the year 2025 seemed a long time away. What loomed over us as a significant, future date for our organisation has now become a reality. So much progress has been made to translate God's Word for languages that need it and we are astonished at how quickly that time has flown!

Time is an interesting concept. For the ancient Greeks, there were two primary words for time. The first is *chronos*, which refers to the ordinary, chronological time frame we all live by. The second is *kairos*, which could be understood as moments or seasons that call for reflection and action within ordinary time. Yet recognising God at work within time is not always obvious.

It takes faith and wisdom to walk every moment in step with God's Spirit. Moments of joy often arrive hand-in-hand with crises - those seasons of struggle and repentance, wrestling and forgiveness, that create possibilities and renewal in the 'now and not yet' Kingdom of God. This liminal time of waiting can be difficult but we can rest assured knowing that God is ALWAYS at work, even in times of fear and uncertainty.

Here at Wycliffe Australia, we don't want to miss out on any opportunities God may be inviting us into as 2025 unfolds - and we don't want you to miss out either. So, no matter what circumstances surround our ordinary moments of time, continue to pray in the Spirit on all occasions to stay alert and sensitive to God's leading (Ephesians 6:18). Let's choose to trust God while we wait for him to break through, in his perfect timing, to display his glory and reap a harvest of blessing.

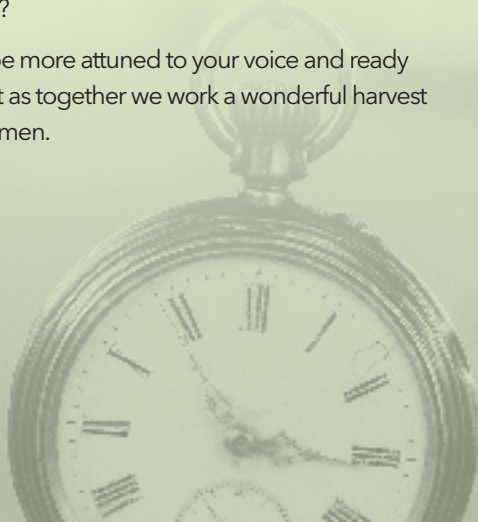
Be transformed by the Word as you engage with:

Galatians 6:1-10 & Psalm 130

For further reflection:

In what ways can you quiet your heart and mind to recognise God at work in your life?

Prayer: Lord, help me be more attuned to your voice and ready to move with your Spirit as together we work a wonderful harvest of good in the world. Amen.



Calling all teachers!

If you're looking for a change of scenery and a way to serve God overseas, Papua New Guinea needs you! There is an urgent need for teachers at the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accredited Ukarumpa International School - Primary and Secondary Campuses. We have new school facilities, good resources, supportive parents and a committed and professional teaching staff. Enjoy the challenge of teaching children from as many as 14 different countries, in English, while at the same time integrating a Christian worldview into your lessons. In all of this, you are supporting the work of Bible translation.



wycliffe.org.au/positions/teachers-primary-and-secondary/



ILLUSTRATION BY UKARUMPA INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL STUDENT ANNIKA CAREY

MISSION POSSIBLE
Bible Translation
Stories • Discussion • Prayer

ONLINE EVENT
WEDNESDAY, 30 APRIL 2025
7:30 - 8:30 PM (AEST)
zoom link: wycliffe.org.au/mission

Wycliffe

The journey of Vision 2025: *Bible translation in*

By Kirk J. Franklin

Missiologist for Wycliffe Global Alliance
Global Missional Leadership lecturer for
Melbourne School of Theology
Past CEO of Wycliffe Australia

The birth of a vision

In June 1999, a historic gathering occurred at the JAARS Centre in Waxhaw, North Carolina. Known as ICON99, it brought together the Wycliffe International Convention and the SIL International Conference. During this event, 350 delegates adopted 'Vision 2025': a commitment to ensure that a Bible translation project would be underway for every group needing one by 2025. Part of the resolution stated:

Motivated by the pressing need for all peoples to have access to the Word of God in a language that speaks to their hearts, and reaffirming our historic values and trust in God to accomplish the impossible, we embrace the vision that by 2025, a Bible translation project will be in progress for every people group that needs it.

This vision was more than a goal; it was a reimagining of Bible translation as a Holy Spirit-led movement that invited collaboration with the global Church. Vision 2025 called for new attitudes, partnerships, and approaches aligned with God's mission. It was also meant to be a challenge for the next generation to embrace.



KIRK FRANKLIN LEADING A SESSION AT WYCLIFFE GLOBAL ALLIANCE'S GLOBAL GATHERING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The vision in action

Vision 2025 brought a sense of urgency for making Scripture accessible in every language, ensuring that no linguistic or cultural barriers keep people from encountering God's Word. The vision also recognised that a new approach was needed, so sustainability, capacity-building and collaboration all became priorities. Genuine partnerships with Bible agencies and the worldwide Church became important, along with a commitment to unity and humility before God, acknowledging the Holy Spirit's leading.



The changing landscape in Bible translation

In the years following its adoption, Vision 2025 stimulated changes within the Bible translation movement. By 2011, more Christians in the Majority World were leading translation work. Consequently, Wycliffe International renamed itself Wycliffe Global Alliance (WGA) to emphasise this change from an international mission agency to a global movement for Bible translation.

One of the most striking outcomes from Vision 2025 has been the global expansion in Bible translation. In 1999, Wycliffe was still predominantly Western, but by 2010, over 70 per cent of Wycliffe Global Alliance organisations were from the Majority World. This reflects a collective shift toward shared ownership and local initiative.

A further strength has been the movement's adaptability. New technologies, fresh strategies, and a willingness to experiment have enabled Vision 2025 to respond to a rapidly changing world.

every language

A commitment to the future

With the year 2025 now well underway, we can reflect on the significance of Vision 2025. When this bold commitment began 26 years ago, it was estimated that it could take 125 to 150 years to start Bible translation projects for the remaining 3,000 people groups without Scripture in the languages they understand best.



Today, through the collective efforts of Bible agencies and the global Church, that number has dramatically reduced to 985 languages.* This progress reflects God's faithfulness and the tireless dedication of his people.

The journey is far from over, and the need for Bible translation remains urgent. This vision is not bound by a deadline but by a divine calling to participate in God's mission. It is an invitation to every believer to pray, support, and act so that all people groups may encounter the transformative power of God's Word in a language that speaks to their hearts. Together, we carry forward the legacy of Vision 2025, trusting in God to accomplish what seems impossible, for his glory.

Building capacity through the 'Third Space'

Vision 2025 marked a transformative shift in the Bible translation movement. It prioritised sustainability, capacity-building, and collaboration across the global church, emphasising humility before God and openness to the Holy Spirit.

This vision led to greater involvement from Majority World participants. Many from the African community within Wycliffe Global Alliance raised concerns about the old model of partnerships with Western organisations. These concerns included dependence on external funding resources, limited capacity-building, and the perception that Africans must appear 'poor' to remain relevant. Global Alliance leadership recognised these challenges and offered to facilitate a 'Third Space' where Africans and their Western partners engage in mutually beneficial ways.

In response, sixteen African leaders and nine Western leaders gathered in South Africa to try and improve partnership dynamics in global mission.

Instead of African organisations operating with local knowledge but resource constraints, or Western partners offering resources with assumptions and priorities, the 'Third Space' was the positive, mutually beneficial model to emerge from discussions.

As the event finished, one facilitator reported:

The two delegations expressed a vision for how they would like the partnership between them to look. The collection of potential benefits was exceptionally rich.



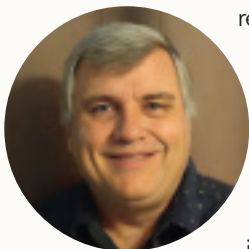
THE THIRD SPACE TEAM DURING A RECENT MEETING IN SOUTH AFRICA

* For more information visit wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/

Swifter translations with TaBiThA

By Deb Fox

The name Tabitha means 'gazelle' in Aramaic: an animal that is swift and gracious – just like the translation software program bearing its name.



The Bible Translator's Assistant or TaBiThA (originally referred to as TBTA) is being prepared for use throughout the world to provide help with Bible translations into new languages.

David Duncan has been leading the development of this technology since he and his wife, Neva, first joined Wycliffe Canada in 1996. David passed through our National Centre on his way to train software developers in the Philippines and Indonesia in the use of TaBiThA to help translate marginalised languages in their regions. He shares about the program and the opportunities it provides to accelerate Bible translation projects.

What does your role involve?

I work with Wycliffe Canada, in a subdivision they started called Prescience Labs. I've been involved with 'computer assisted translation' software. Aside from developing the tools for TaBiThA, I love that I get to work alongside minority language speakers and train them on how to use the software.

Why was TaBiThA developed?

A traditional translation of the New Testament can take more than 10 years to complete, and a full Bible at least twice that time. This can seem like an overwhelming task to minority language speakers. The design philosophy of TaBiThA is to provide accurate, clear and simple meaning in the target language. TaBiThA is not recommended as a draft, but as a language reference to be used along with other tools. Trials have shown that this first language resource can increase both quality and speed of translation.

How does it work?

Most computer assisted translation software uses words and patterns to 'learn' a language in order to create a translation draft. TaBiThA, on the other hand, does not need to have any translation work previously done. A linguist sits down with a mother-tongue speaker to translate around 300 statements into the target language. The software is then fed the data and it develops a set of rules that go with the language. After a year and a half using TaBiThA, you can translate about 7 or 8 books of the Bible and train the system with enough data that it can then produce Scripture and translation aids for any book of the Bible in the target language.



THE TABITHA PROGRAM IN ACTION

What are you doing with cluster language projects?

Once the first language in a language family has been analysed, it is a much quicker process to adjust it to related 'cluster' languages. Our first trial began with One Book and Translators Association of the Philippines (TAP). There is a cluster project starting in the Philippines for 2 languages covering 750,000 people. We want to get informed consent and buy-in from community leaders before teaching national translators how to translate the Bible with the help of new translation tools.

I also met with church leaders in Jakarta to discuss ways of reaching Indonesians without a Bible in their languages. We are partnering with Kartidaya (the local Bible translation organisation in Indonesia) to build the first grammar system in TaBiThA for Bahasa Indonesia. It is wonderful to not only be working with global organisations but to work in a multi-organisational collaboration, including Pioneer Bible Translators, SIL Global and other Wycliffe Global Alliance groups. It is so exciting to see what can be done through technology to help share God's Word!

AI for Bible translation: Why real people matter

By John Tan

When I met with David Duncan, he told me that the purpose of AI software is to speed up translation. It will not replace the Bible translation process. As an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) manager, as well as a Bible College and language student, I found this thought comforting.

Translation is not simply replacing words and phrases with that of another language. It is also carrying the meaning of those words and phrases across. Artificial Intelligence (AI) works very well with the process of substituting words and phrases, but, being artificial, it cannot be expected to handle meaning well.

Comprehension

How would you translate the word 'lamb' for people who do not know of such a creature? We could replace 'lamb' with the word for a similar animal in the target language, but this could lead to theological difficulties with interpretation later. Software can easily handle word substitutions, but it will not so easily teach such new concepts to a group of people.

Grammar

Both human intelligence and software can analyse how sentences are formed. But people tend to take shortcuts. We create new patterns or exceptions to the grammatical rules. Because of this, software can help us get the grammar right most of the time, but we still need a community to confirm and correct the translation work.

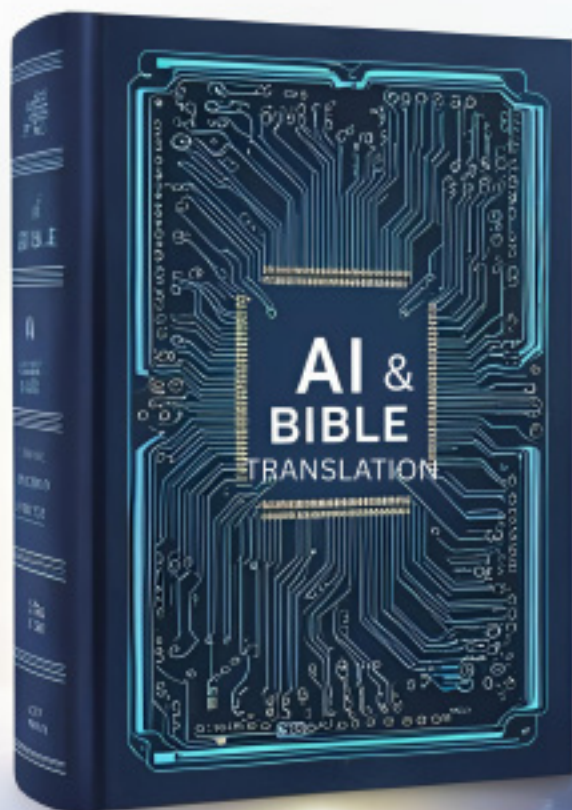
Theology

It can be quite easy to add our own interpretations to a text but Bible translators are not supposed to do this.

A translation team checks work for each other to help remove interpretation biases. AI will come with its own biases based on the data it is fed. We need to check this data well, either before or after the software works with it.

Bible translation has come a long way in the last decade in particular. It used to take many years to translate the New Testament, and many translators could not see themselves working on the Old Testament as well within their lifetime.

Scripture translation software can create a very rough draft of the Old Testament overnight if we feed it the New Testament in the target language. But it will still take about 16 years for people to work through this very rough draft to make it usable. Having computer software to help speed up the Bible translation process is exciting. Even so, we still need a team of ... real people!



A life of service: Vale Rob Head

31/05/1937- 14/12/2024

Rob Head dedicated his life to serving Jesus.

Rob and his wife, June, spent over 60 years in translation work with the Kaugel people in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea – a group with around 50,000 speakers.



Despite ongoing illness and tough living conditions, Rob and June were committed to their calling. They joined Wycliffe Australia in 1962, serving in various roles in Ukarumpa including Regional Area Director, Branch Treasurer and Secretary.

Along with Kaugel speakers, the Heads translated the first two dialects of the Kaugel New Testament which were dedicated in 1995. This was followed by a third in 1999, as well as other resources such as a hymn book and dictionary. In 2008, the Heads were encouraged to retire but they continued with remote assignments in Melbourne and regular trips back to PNG to complete the full Kaugel Bible translations. After June passed away in 2013, Rob continued returning to the Kaugel language area and made his last trip to PNG in July of last year, at the age of 87. In his last few years, he was producing and distributing the New Testament in audio format using MegaVoice devices.

Rob was farewelled on 23 January at All Saints Anglican in Upwey. During the service, one of Rob's younger brothers, David, said:

What does a linguist do in his retirement? We know now that Rob had no intention of retiring – he died with his boots on, still in service for his Lord. I always felt honoured and blessed to call Robert Head my brother.

Rob's daughter Nola said that life with her dad was always full of adventure:

Not many people can say their dad fought off machete-wielding bandits with a torch, or translated an entire Bible into a previously unknown language. He built 2 houses in very primitive conditions and always drove the family safely through treacherous conditions. He would fix cars, pull teeth, stitch people up, pull arrows out of people, create an alphabet, teach illiterate people to read, build fences, distribute rice, and was there for people no matter what. He lived a life exemplified by kindness to others.

Rumbai is one of Rob's closest friends who has been helping him learn the Kaugel language. He shared:

We miss one of the greatest missionaries, linguists and translators that we could have ever met. We honour and salute his many years of hard work and dedication. We wish to send our gratitude to Wycliffe Australia, the churches and supporters who helped Rob in his work.

Wycliffe Australia's CEO Max Sahl was a neighbour of Rob's in Ukarumpa. He shares:

Rob was a man of few words but when he spoke, you listened. He was a wonderful example of serving our God all the days of our lives. Surely Rob will hear the words 'Well done, good and faithful servant'. We are so blessed to have known Rob and to learn from his example.



Ministry Resourcing

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Wycliffe
Bible Translators 

What is Wycliffe Ministry Resourcing?

Wycliffe Australia's Ministry Resourcing department seeks to support the work of our members and organisational partners on the field. We are committed to building strong relationships, with an emphasis on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and prayer.

Our three main objectives are to:

- work closely with national Bible translation organisations
- support strategic partnerships with SIL International
- support Australian members on the field with their project needs.

The power of education

It has been so exciting overseeing the development of projects that support marginalised language communities. A key to the success of these projects is the partnerships we have fostered with local organisations, churches, and the generous individuals who have supported them financially and through prayer. As we enter 2025, there are so many projects that Wycliffe Australia and Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation continue to support. These are just a few of the ongoing projects that have grown and continue to flourish.

Greg Conwell

South Asia 1 - Multilingual Education Project 8881



One of our partner organisations in a South Asian country has identified a language community that has long been marginalised, dispossessed from their land, and discriminated against by mainstream society. The children of this community are provided with state-run schooling but the language is foreign to them. This means that the children struggle to understand their teachers and this often results in them leaving school early without having completed their education. Low levels of literacy in the community are the end result.

This project seeks to establish an early literacy and education program in the children's mother tongue, both in and out of school. That will lead to increased literacy skills and improved educational outcomes. It is also encouraging parents to promote the use of local language in their families as well as other programs to promote resilience in the community.

The project started mid 2024 and the project managers report some challenges due to extreme weather conditions and staff turnover. However, relations with the community have been established and classes commenced, with encouraging early results.

Target: A\$9,600

MORE

Visit wycliffe.org.au/projects/south-asia-1-mle/

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation Projects

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation is a separate company owned by Wycliffe Australia, which works through local partners to improve the practical aspects of life in marginalised communities. We aim to demonstrate Christian compassion and provide practical assistance in literacy and education, disaster relief, medical and basic health support. Donations to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

For WRDF projects, visit the WRDF website wycliffefoundation.org.au

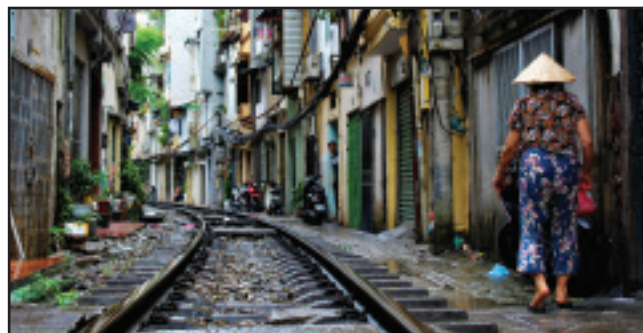
Wycliffe Field Support Projects

Wycliffe Australia is committed to helping our field teams and the organisations they work with to thrive and serve effectively in their communities. Ministry Resourcing can help with providing funding for computers, village housing, travel costs, delivery of training, consultants and other services.

See more projects at wycliffe.org.au/projects/

Immediate Bible Engagement for the Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam

Project 8825



For many Bru language speakers, economic hardship makes educational books a rare luxury. The challenge is even greater for Christians within the Bru community. This group represents approximately 95,000 people who have limited access to faith-based educational materials. With Protestants making up only about 2% of Vietnam's population, resources for ethnic minorities remain scarce.

To address this need, a multi-year project called Immediate Bible Engagement for Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam was launched. This was created to help meet the urgent need for Scripture engagement materials for minority language communities through the development and distribution of Illustrative Bible Engagement (IBE) materials. These materials were carefully designed to provide immediate access to Scripture through Bible stories and study guides, tailored to the linguistic and cultural contexts of each group. Over three years, 13,000 materials were distributed to 13 communities.

In 2024, 5,000 materials—including a bilingual Gospel of Luke, creative bookmarks, and a Bible study guide—were distributed to 5 communities, including the Bru. Bible Society Vietnam also conducted training sessions for pastors and evangelists, equipping them to use IBE materials in Bible study classes.

Designed with vibrant illustrations and engaging colours, these materials bring the Gospel to life, making God's Word more accessible. The Bible characters and events are depicted with authenticity, allowing readers to experience God's love in a tangible, personal way.

Each page they turn opens a world of hope, love and faith. Each page they read strengthens their faith and deepens their understanding of God's grace.

One of the local workers commented on the recent distribution of the books:

These materials do more than nurture their spiritual growth—they affirm their place in God's greater story, offering a light that no hardship can extinguish. As we watch them receive the books—eyes wide with wonder, holding them close like treasured possessions, whispering prayers of gratitude—we are reminded of the power of faith. Their simple, unassuming lives belie the enormous faith they hold. They may lack material wealth, but their hearts overflow with a faith so strong it humbles us.

Target: A\$11,111



Visit [wycliffe.org.au/projects/scripture-distribution-bsv/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/projects/scripture-distribution-bsv/)



PHOTO BY MARC EWELL

Scripture Engagement Training in Togo & Benin Project 8306



Church-based Literacy in Southeast Asia Project 8818



PHOTO BY MARC EWELL

Our local partner organisation in Togo and Benin has been meeting with various local leaders over the past few years to identify ways of offering support. They recognised that all of the Scripture engagement work was being handled by the translators, taking time away from the translation work. These leaders are also ageing so they recognised the need to train a new generation to ensure that the project remains sustainable well into the future. Throughout the discussions, the team decided to identify local pastors and church leaders from the community who could take the lead in Scripture engagement planning and activities. Local personnel have now been identified to be trained. The new trainees can then continue training others in Scripture engagement techniques, so outsiders will not be needed. This will keep Scripture engagement culturally appropriate and make it easy to explain biblical terms in the local languages.

This project will provide training for Scripture engagement personnel in 13 Bible translation projects, and for pastors-in-training at 5 Bible institutes in both Togo and Benin. Thank you for your support of this important work.

Target: A\$7,601

MORE

For more information, visit wycliffe.org.au/projects/se-training-tgb/

Most people in the Bunong communities in Southeast Asia cannot read or write, even in their own language. This means their language is in danger of dying out, and their cultural heritage could be lost. They also have difficulty interacting with government authorities, vital health information is often missed, they struggle commercially, and those who are Christians are unable to read Scripture and worship songs.

The Northeast Community Education and Development Organization (NCED) is committed to helping Bunong communities with this need, with assistance through Wycliffe Australia and Entrust Foundation. NCED runs literacy programs through 12 Bunong churches with participants of all ages - children, youth, adults and elderly people.

During the second half of last year, there were 10 training sessions held for churches in the area where this project is located. This training is going to continue into the future to strengthen the capacity of teachers for their teaching of their mother tongue. Students include children, youth, men and women and leaders of the church as well as the teacher trainers. Some materials have been distributed to the participants such as hymn books, short easy readers, and Good News gospel tracts.

Target: A\$22,220

MORE

For more information, visit wycliffe.org.au/projects/sea-church-based-literacy/



If you would like to discuss any of the Ministry Resourcing projects, please contact:

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