

Quakers Australia Committee Report

Working Group on the Use of Undirected Donations and Bequests

Membership of the Committee/Working Group:

Ann Britton, Topsy Evans, Ray Brindle, Gerry Fahey (convenor)

Part A – Report

Progress

The Working Group has been meeting monthly since June 2023 and has had joint meetings with the Thanksgiving Fund Committee and also with the new QA Treasurer and Finance Committee.

We have reflected on the current practice of undirected donations and bequests and considered the needs of Quakers Australia (QA) to support its work through finance.

We have reviewed the current Handbook entries regarding the Thanksgiving Fund: 5.6.5 and 5.6.8 and noted the current wording which is inconsistent and so needs to be changed.

We have also reviewed the issue of the Capital and the Income in the Fund. We understand the capital to be approx. \$92,011 while the income portion is approx. \$921, 832. Given that the capital is a very small amount and unlikely to be drawn down in the near future, if at all, the relevant section of the Handbook is redundant.

We also note that, before an application is made to the Thanksgiving Fund Committee (TGF) it is endorsed by a Regional Meeting or other Quaker body, which will have an ongoing supportive role in the project if it is approved. Given this discernment process, we do not see the need for a limit to be set for individual grants.

The ‘mechanism’ for releasing funds does work, but there is need for the TGF committee to be better informed about available funds (and access time for these funds) i.e. are there amounts available at a shorter time, or not. This means better communications between the QA Treasurer and the TGF committee, including access to the Fund balance.

We note that the Thanksgiving Fund Committee has a revised section 5.6.8 for the Handbook that they are submitting to Yearly Meeting for approval. This includes the suggested changes in our Part B.

With the presentation and acceptance of this report to Yearly Meeting 2024, we lay down this Working Group as our tasks are completed.

Issues (if any)

The Handbook entries need to be changed to be consistent and we agree with the new wording being offered by the Thanksgiving Fund Committee to cover donations coming into the fund at both 5.6.5 and 5.6.8 of the Handbook. The suggested changes are in our Part B.

We have identified the need for better communications between the Fund Committee and the QA Treasurer and Finance Committee and recommend that at least one member should be on both Committees.

We have also identified the need for greater clarity around the application process and the responsibilities of Meetings and Committees to support Friends who are applying to the Fund.

An implied purpose of the Working Group – we heard from the QA Finance Committee of the need for funds to support the work of QA, including the management of the Thanksgiving Fund and other funds.

We see that Standing Committee, Yearly Meeting or other Quaker bodies may request funds from the Thanksgiving Fund to cover specific management costs.

Part B Items for consideration by Yearly Meeting Business Meeting

Re our purpose:

- To consider the use of undirected donations or bequests over \$75,000 to Australia Yearly Meeting.
 - Such bequests or donations need to go into a fund of some form, and the Thanksgiving Fund is the appropriate place for them to go. We see the suggestion of a threshold as unnecessary.
- To consider any restriction or cap on grants made by the Thanksgiving Fund.
 - Before an application is made to the Thanksgiving Fund Committee it is endorsed by a Regional Meeting or other Quaker body, which will have an ongoing supportive role in the project if it is approved. We do not see the need for a limit to be set for individual grants.
 - We see the need for a much closer relationship between the Thanksgiving Fund Committee and the QA Treasurer and Finance Committee. To facilitate this, we suggest having one Friend who would be on both the Thanksgiving Fund Committee and the QA Finance Committee.
- An implied purpose of the Working Group was to consider a possible need for funds to support the work of QA.
 - If Friends wish to bequeath / donate money for the administration of Quakers Australia, then this needs to be clearly communicated along with the donation.
 - There should be prominent ‘Donations’ buttons on the website. This could be in the ‘Funds of Australia Yearly Meeting’ section and the ‘Thanksgiving Fund’ page.

The Working group asks that the Handbook be revised so that the two sentences referring to donations are consistent and that the cap on Capital/Income expenditure is removed. *Blue = changes, Red = removal.*

At 5.6.5 it will state:

Bequests are an important source of income for carrying on the Society’s work. Friends may direct bequests to their Local or Regional Meeting, to AYM funds or to specific AYM committees. *Gifts bequeathed simply to ‘The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated’ go to the AYM Thanksgiving Fund, unless the donor specifies otherwise.*

And at 5.6.8 it will state:

Fund income derives partly from bequests (5.6.5). *Bequests of money to Australia Yearly Meeting are normally added to the Thanksgiving Fund’s income, unless the donor specifies otherwise.*

At **5.6.8 Fund distributions**, remove the first two paragraphs:

Allocations are usually made from the income portion of the fund, which is separate from the capital portion. The income portion is made up of interest earnings on the fund and any donations to the fund that are not specifically marked as being for the capital portion.

However, the Committee may in any one year make a single grant of up to 10 percent of the capital, provided there is agreement by the Presiding Clerk, the AYM Secretary and one Regional Meeting Clerk. Furthermore, the committee may make grants of more than 10 percent of the capital in any one year, provided Standing Committee agrees.

And remove reference to Capital and Income from step 6:

6. The committee makes an annual report to Yearly Meeting with details of all grants made that year and the income and capital in the fund. (replace with: amount?)

And that under the Purpose of the Fund, the sentence referring to the Peace & Social Justice fund needs to be changed as this no longer applies for the Capital:

Current: Note that the rest of 5.6.8 applies equally to the Peace & Social Justice Fund (5.6.7).

Suggested: Note that *some* of 5.6.8 applies equally to the Peace & Social Justice Fund (5.6.7).