Queensland Baptists Administrative Services - Factsheet

How to complete your 2020 ACNC Annual Information Statement

Plenty of people have been asking about their 2020 Annual Information Statements (AIS) to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC). If you are registered on ACNC (and I hope that means all of you), and your financial year ended on 30th June 2020, then you need to submit your AIS by 31st January. If you have good reason in not being able to make it by the end of January, it is not going to be too much of a problem to run a few weeks late – but after that you will start to get some strongly worded reminders.

If you HAVE completed an AIS before, bear in mind that this year's process is handled a bit differently to the past, and so please follow this through carefully. Last year's information will only be of partial assistance in getting you organised for this year.

If you have never done the AIS submission process before, you will probably need to read this and our other documentation about how to set up your ACNC login and the like to get started.

The biggest change is the move to "program based" reporting. Rather than assuming that each charity only does one thing, and all its characteristics are identical throughout, the AIS this year gives you opportunity to set up between one and ten 'programs' which all have their own characteristics, beneficiaries and implications. For a medium to large church, this could involve you with a great deal of work to provide comprehensive information, and I am uncertain what benefit there is in providing this much detail. It is probably the first year I have looked at the Annual Information Statement without the benefit of the opportunity to talk it through with one of ACNC's commissioners, so I confess to not knowing their motivation here exactly. My recommended approach is to keep your answers generic and simple. While most churches could probably put in several programs (and indeed the limit of ten would pose a problem for many), I frankly cannot see the point of doing so. So my advice, for the time being at least, is to keep it simple and keep it generic.

This change has led to a reduction in the overall number of questions, and my general impression of the Annual Information Statement software is that it is responsive and less confusing than previous years.

Despite this, I will be very interested to see what ACNC come back with when they start to analyse the information provided. Unfortunately, this won't happen for at least another year.

Remember – the first stage is to get a user ID and password. I dealt with this process in detail in Network 341 (please check our historical library on the QB web site – or ask the office). Once you have a login, please log in by going to acnc.gov.au and clicking on the "Charity Portal log in" button on the top right of the screen.

Select "Manage Reporting", and then select "Start 2020 AIS".

It displays your churches name and that you are doing an AIS Submission. Click Start. It then takes you through a series of 18 questions across several pages. Click Next to move between each page.

As has been the case for a few years now, the form has some in-built "smarts" to ensure the data you are entering is valid. Thus, each time you enter an email address or phone number, you need to click on the "search" button to confirm it is a valid entry. Particularly with land lines, this is a strange process as it will give a short ring on the phone you have indicated to check it. The address fields are also interesting as they will build a matching list as you type and then self-fill the multiple fields.

The form starts with the name and ABN of your church (which cannot be edited) and the website of your church (which you can change if it

is wrong). Then you are led through a series of numbered questions. Each question is explained briefly below.

1. Address for Service. You will need to enter an email (twice) and physical address of the church. Remember to click on the magnifying glass next to the email address to verify it, and watch the magic unfold as you type in the street address and it looks you up.

2. Is your church an incorporated association? The answer will be no for virtually all QB churches. If you are incorporated by letters patent, or a corporation limited by guarantee (federal legislation) the answer is still no.

3. Does your church intend to fundraise? Despite the temptation to say yes because you will receive donations, please answer No. this is talking about raising money from the public under permit from the state government, and churches are exempt from this requirement.

4. Are you a religious charity? For most churches, the answer to questions (a) through to (e) will be "no" in each case, and the system will then declare you are a religious charity. Very few QB churches will need to answer "yes" to any of the questions and so will be Basic Religious Charities.

5. Indicate your charity size – small, medium or large – based on total turnover.

6. Did you charity operate in 2020? Please answer Yes, even if your operations were quite different to historically due to COVID restrictions and the like.

7. Describe how your charity's work helped achieve its overall mission and main aims. You might want to put in a long and complicated answer to this, but I suggest you keep it simple… something like "Conducted regular church services and other religious activities including acts of kindness and mercy in the community as a part of those religious activities."

8. Add your charity's programs in the table. This is a new question and quite complicated. At this point I don't really know what to expect of this approach, but my suggestion is to keep it very simple and generic. To do this – indicate your program name as "church activities". You then need to select a program classification, and "Baptist" is only the list. For beneficiaries, simply pick "families" and for locations, pick the town or suburb in which your church is located. Then hit "save".

There would clearly be the opportunity to do a lot more work and add a program for everything you do, but I would be inclined to simply leave it at that and say that all the specific activities you are running are covered by this one.

9. How many employees? Record how many full time, part time and casual employees.

10. Then, you need to work out the number of full-time equivalent employees. There is a calculator built in, but you can probably do this for yourself. If you have 3 full-time and 2 staff half-time, then the answer will be 4.

11. How many volunteers? We would encourage you to capture everyone who volunteers to do anything around the church. If that sounds like a lot of work, I suggest put in the number of members – who are hopefully all doing something around the place. A healthy number here is helpful.

Then you come to the Financial Details heading. Before it asks you any specific questions, if you answered question 4 correctly and are now classified as a Basic Religious Charity, you are offered the choice about whether you wish to enter your financial details or not. We are still recommending your say "no" and move on. This skips this entire section.

You are then taken to the Responsible People section. You will be shown a table of the people you currently have listed as "responsible people" at the church (usually the diaconate or senior leadership). If the list is correct, you can simply click the box at the foot of the screen and move on. Otherwise, you can edit the details of existing responsible people or add new ones.

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You are nearly done. You need to make a declaration that the

information you have entered is accurate (again entering your name, email and phone), and click on "submit".

And… then log out. You are done for another year.

Of course, if you have any questions or need further help, please do not hesitate to contact us in the office:

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