How to complete your 2021 ACNC Annual Information Statement

2021 Annual Information Statements

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC) requires all registered charities (including churches) to complete an Annual Information Statement (AIS) each year, generally within six months of the end of their financial year. The date of the statement pertains to the end of your financial year. Hence, if your financial year ended on 30th June 2021, your 2021 AIS is due by the end of January, thanks to a one month extension offered considering how difficult it is to complete anything by 31st December. If your financial year ends on 31st December 2021, then you will have until 30th June 2022 to complete the 2021 AIS.

The process of adding your AIS to the Portal is improving and simplifying each year, so I found the process fairly straight forward for this year. The most significant complication is adding the “programs”, and I have made the suggestion that you set up two programs on the Portal this year instead of only one as we have in the past. Other than this, if you have added the AIS last year, you will find the process quite straight forward for this year.

Logging In

The first stage is to get a user ID and password. I dealt with this process in detail right back in Network 341 (please check our historical library on the QB web site – or ask the office). This is a one-off process, so if you have previously logged in to the ACNC Portal, you simply need to go to the ACNC web site (www.acnc.gov.au), click on the Charity Portal log in button, enter your email address and ACNC password, and you will get to a list of “my charities”. Most of you will only have one charity – your church – but some of us do get multiple charities on this list. In any case, select your church where you can undertake any required work to your ACNC listing.

The AIS Process

To begin the AIS, select “Manage Reporting” and then select “Start 2021 AIS”.

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

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. The address fields are also interesting as they will build a matching list as you type and then self-fill the multiple fields.

The first page is an instruction page – which you can read through then click “Next”.

The form starts with the name and ABN of your church (which cannot be edited) and then you need to enter the website of your church. Don’t forget to click on the blue magnifying glass to check this entry.

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.

Then click Next.

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 virtually all churches, the answer to questions (a) through to (d) 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.

Then click Next.

6. Did your charity operate in 2021? 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. Fortunately, the “program” you added last year is displayed and you do not need to re-enter the details.

How many individual programs you break your church’s activities into is up to you, but my suggestion is to keep it fairly simple. Last year I suggested you add one program – and address all of the church’s activities under this one program. This year I would suggest adding a second program, which separately shows any mission support you undertake. This gives you the opportunity to independently define activities you undertake from your church’s location, and those you undertake in other parts of Queensland, interstate or overseas.

To add a mission program, click on “Add a program”. Call the program “(church name) Missions”. Click on Classification, and select “Religious”, then “Christian” then “Baptist”. Then indicate in as much detail as you wish who are the beneficiaries of this program. Tick as many boxes as indicate who you support through your mission support. Then, click “add a location” and type in the locations where you provide assistance. These can be quite general, but as you type, select from the list provided. If you are providing support overseas, click on the “This program is run outside Australia” box, and indicate the countries where you provide support. When you are done, click on “Update” and you will be returned to the list of programs, with your newly entered program added to the list.

If you have created this new mission program, you will need to edit your original program to reflect just the activities undertaken from the church site and remove references to any overseas or interstate activity.

If you have indicated your church is providing overseas support, you are now asked to indicate if this support is financial only or if you are actually running programs overseas, and to provide a brief description of your overseas support. Again, keep this simple – perhaps “financial support for orphan support in Fiji” or similar. You are reminded of the need to comply with External Conduct Standards at this point – again we have provided a lot of information about this previously, but no specific action is required here on the AIS.

Again, click on Next.

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.

Again, click on Next.

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 – questions 12-16 therefore do not apply.

Simply click on Next.

You are then taken to the Responsible People section (question 17). 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 or remove the details of responsible people currently listed, or add new ones by clicking on “Add Responsible Person”.

Once you are done updating your list of Responsible Persons, tick the box indicating that you confirm the details of responsible persons are correct, and then click on Next.

Checking and Submitting

You are nearly done. You can click on the button to review what you have entered before submitting if you wish. Then you need to make a declaration that the information you have entered is accurate (again entering your name, email and phone), your position in the church, and that you are the “responsible person” to complete the declaration.

Tick the box for the “Responsible Person Declaration” and then click on “submit”.

It is good practice to download a copy of the submitted AIS for your records. Simply click on the Download button to do this.

And… then click “Return to ACNC Charity Portal” where the next reporting date should now be extended by twelve months. And with that you are done for another year, and you can click on Sign Out in the top right-hand corner.

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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