

26 Hobart Ave  
Warradale, 5046  
11 May 1992

Mrs L. Davis,  
National President,  
Australian Church Women.

Dear Lorraine,

Further to our phone conversation I will endeavour to set down some of our thoughts and ideas about ways of seeking applications for awarding the \$2,500 scholarship set aside for "an aboriginal woman". (We are concerned that as the wording stands the money may be used for only one person and wonder if this is too limiting.)

I recently had conversation about the way to go about things with Rev. Bernie Clarke. Bernie is a Uniting Church minister who has worked with Aboriginal people for 30 years, firstly in Arnhem Land and then at the national level through the days of the founding of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. He is currently working in a consultative role with the Congress in South Australia.

Bernie suggests that before we do anything about the scholarship we (ACW) should be sitting down with Aboriginal women and listening to their agenda - He sees this as something far wider than the allocation of a scholarship - rather an opportunity for ACW to begin to build bridges with Aboriginal christian women. In doing this we would find where they saw the greatest benefit to be in the awarding of the scholarship. Bernie is well aware that this would not be an easy task, but considers it is the way we should be going.

I have shared these ideas with the other Trustees and all agree that we should have thought of this for ourselves and should go in this direction. We have all had experience in the past of endeavouring to involve Aboriginal women in various groups. Some attempts have had a small amount of success, but nothing really tangible has been established. We should not be discouraged by this. Looking back I realise that anything I have been involved in has been very much "our agenda" and our way of doing things. Bernie suggests that in setting up any consultation, 2-3 women should meet with 2-3 key Aboriginal women first to work out the way things should go, so that the agenda for the consultation is "owned" not imposed.

Our initial response to this was to recommend to National Executive that each Unit be asked to set up a consultation (maybe not in the capital city) to work through this process.

However, on reflection I wonder if it would be better if we were to try to arrange a meeting between Bernie and you and Betty and the Trustees when you come to Adelaide for the WKS selection meeting?

Dorothy Haensel

There is also a large amount of money in the W.K. Fellowship When the Deed of Trust which sets out the use of this money was drawn up there was little money available for fellowships and none of those involved imagined such a large sum becoming available in such a short time.

Is it possible that the sharing done in this way and then reported back to other groups by the participants could be seen to be within the ethos of the Fellowship so that sufficient money could be made available for such a consultation? If we do not feel that this is a possibility then we should perhaps be seeking ways to either use this money under the present terms or change the Deed to enable it to be used in this or some other way.

Alternatively we could seek funds from other sources. Government funding for such a reconciliation consultation could be possible - our concern with seeking money in this way is that we would see the need to retain complete freedom in agenda and this may not be possible with this sort of funding. There are possibly other areas in which funding could be sought which would not have this concern.

The decision as to whether or not we should promote such a consultation should not rest in the first instance on the availability of funding - the first decision should be as to whether the idea is one we see as being something we should pursue - then we should look at ways of making it happen if it is what our Aboriginal sisters would like.

Our approach could be to offer to share the preparation and work with Aboriginal women for funding or to offer to do the preparation if they would like.

Names of women who could be approached were suggested. It may be an opportunity to work in consultation with the Aboriginal and Islander Commission of the Australian Council of Churches

All present were excited by the proposal and pray that ways may be found to follow it through.

Dorothy Haensel. WKS Trustees.  
Lorraine Davis National Exec. A.C.W.