

Philanthropy and women leading change

Many wealthy Australian families identify positive community impact as the purpose of their wealth, as outlined in our publication [Why the Modern Family Office Matters](#). In fact, almost half of all tax-deductible donations are made by Australia's top 1% of income earners¹. Often, it's women who lead the way in philanthropy, building relationships, collaborating and implementing best practice approaches to maximise impact.

In August, we were delighted to welcome [Philanthropy Australia](#), along with a group of prominent women leaders in philanthropy to Mutual Trust's Melbourne office. Over lunch, Alice Walter, Partner Mutual Trust and Mary Chackola, National Engagement Manager, Philanthropy Australia, led an insightful and open conversation on the responsibilities, challenges and opportunities faced by women in philanthropy.

We are pleased to share a summary of the discussion below.

There is great value in multi-generational giving, if the next generation is supported and resourced for impact

The ability to work together, across generations, to engage in philanthropy is greatly valued by many families. This truly is a wonderful way to experience the joy and positive impact of giving.

However, it's important to consider the needs and desires of the next generation. Do they want to inherit the philanthropic work of earlier generations? Do they have the time and the skills? And what is the best way to 'train' family members in philanthropy? The rising generation might be interested in 'dipping their toes' in philanthropy, yet they may require support to develop the skills and expertise necessary to deliver significant community impact.

Philanthropy is inherently personal – it's driven by uniquely individual passions and interests. This is why, when it comes to 'passing the baton' to the next generation, it's critical for families to understand what their children want in the future. What can be done now that will help them down the track? How can they be supported with the right resources and learning pathways?



Ali Limb, Limb Family Foundation (left) pictured with Alice Walter, Partner, Philanthropy at Mutual Trust.

“Setting up and running a Private Ancillary Fund (PAF), requires a lot of work and a particular skill set. When thinking about engaging your next generation in family philanthropy, I believe it's important to give them choice and also the resources to be able to step into these roles feeling confident and effective.”

Ali Limb
Limb Family Foundation (spent down 2022)

A strategic philanthropy advisor can add great value in facilitating open conversations with family members and exploring where the youngest generation’s passions and interests lie. The advisor can then help to activate these interests, providing education and developing a strategy to engage in high impact philanthropy, fuelled by what matters most to them.

When it comes to maximising philanthropic impact, collaboration is critical

Collaboration, networking and relationship-building. These are skills which are critical to high impact philanthropy - and something which our event participants unanimously agreed women often do well. Given the fast-moving nature of the charitable sector, it’s important to build strong networks and connections to keep information flowing and drive impact.

Opportunity sharing is a great way to maximise philanthropic impact

There is incredible power that comes from sharing resources and opportunities with other philanthropists and donors operating in the same area of focus.

Beyond immediate benefits, such as shared due diligence and efficiencies of scale, the combined expertise and experience of a group with shared interests can greatly maximise the impact and reach of giving.

“Outcomes can be improved when philanthropists and donors work together and leverage the power of their combined resources.”

Elizabeth Delahunty
Trustee, The Baker Foundation

Building a network can be daunting – taking it one step at a time helps

For those beginning their philanthropic journey, building a network of peers can feel daunting. It’s helpful to take the process one step at a time, attending industry events and maintaining persistence in finding out ‘who is who’, as well as making oneself known to others in the field.

When it comes to building relationships with charitable partners, it’s important to avoid transactional arrangements and instead focus on forming trusted relationships based on shared values. It can be tricky to identify suitable charities to work with. A strategic philanthropy advisor can help by working with families to define their strategic direction, narrow down areas of focus and facilitate introductions across the charitable sector.

With limited formal learning pathways available, there is power in a strong peer network

“Philanthropy is an important and valuable vocation. However, formal learning pathways can be hard to access. That’s why it’s critical to consider what other ‘micro-learning’ opportunities might be available through your peer network.”

Pat Burke OAM
Senior Advisor, Engagement & Philanthropy
Philanthropy Australia

There is real skill and expertise behind good philanthropy, however in Australia the opportunity to undertake formal education in this space is limited.

Our participants agreed there is a strong ‘experiential’ element to learning in philanthropy. Building the right connections can open up doors to grow and develop, and it’s critical for philanthropists to continuously look for ways to learn, beyond what they already know.

It was reflected that incidental results are often achieved unintentionally through organic conversations. This is where women inadvertently end-up teaching, mentoring and encouraging one another to progress forward, sharing the key insights and experiences they have learned along the way.

If you would like to discuss how Mutual Trust can help you realise your purpose for giving, please reach out to your Relationship Manager.

Alice Walter

Partner, Philanthropy

ⁱ <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/philanthropy/report/philanthropy-overview.pdf>

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