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Grant maker to grant seeker: Tara Hunt and 1 Million Women

by Maria Chilcott | September 3, 2015



When Tara Hunt recently announced her decision to wind up her PAF and donate the majority of the remaining funds to one nonprofit working to tackle climate change, not everyone thought it was a sensible idea.

“Some people told me I was crazy,” Tara Hunt says of her decision to shift from grant maker to grant seeker. “It’s a huge risk, to choose one charity and give it everything I’ve got.”

Hunt says she enjoyed the grantmaking responsibilities and engaging with charities over the [Hunt Foundation](#)’s 10-year lifespan, but in recent times that engagement deepened with one cause and nonprofit she became so passionate about, she felt compelled to back it wholeheartedly.

That organisation is [1 Million Women](#) which aims to reduce the world’s carbon output through individual action.

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Ian Potter Foundation to 113 recipients including \$400,000 over three years to Bush Heritage



L-R: Natalie Isaacs and Tara Hunt from 1 Million Women

“Climate change is by far the biggest issue of our time,” Hunt says. “It will have massive humanitarian, environmental and economic consequences.”

“Because of the gravity of climate change, I chose to give the majority of the PAF funds to 1 Million Women so that I can make as big an influence in this space as I can.”

Supporting game changers

Previously, the Hunt Foundation had supported numerous environmental and Indigenous projects. Hunt’s aim had always been to support projects that make a sustainable difference.

“I like to support game changers: projects or organisations that have enormous potential, but

need funds to get them going,” she says.

“One of the first projects I ever funded was a mothers and babies program for Indigenous women in Queensland. I funded a garage they needed at the time and I could see that without this garage the program may have folded.

“I got an update from them recently and they’re about to receive some government funding for a new hostel. They’re really doing well. So that’s something that gave me a great deal of satisfaction, to see the impact the organisation has had.

“What surprised me the most [about being a grantmaker] was probably the shocking living conditions of Indigenous Australians.

“I was, and still am, overwhelmed with anger and sadness about what has become of these beautiful people. They had such a sophisticated culture, one of true sustainability and embedded respect for the land that sustained them.

“One of the projects I feel most proud of is the **Stolen Generations’ Testimonies** that I helped to fund. This is an online series of interviews with members and relatives of the Stolen Generations. These interviews are such raw and valuable insights into the deep damage that was done by the implementation of this

Australia and \$347,000 over three years to The Nature Conservancy of Australia Trust

\$3.7 million total

National Institute of Complementary Medicine, UWS & Blackmore’s Institute to University of Western Sydney \$400,000

FRRR Heywire Youth Innovation Grants to 15 community groups in rural, regional and remote Australia \$125,394

Westpac 2015 Mary Reibey Grant to The Big Issue’s Women’s Subscription Enterprise \$240,000

Greater Charitable Foundation to Starlight Children’s Foundation \$110,000

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damning policy.”

Finding focus

Hunt’s initial grantmaking strategy was to fund small grants over the long term, and then pass responsibility on to her three children. Four years ago, Hunt began to question this strategy.

“I heard an interview with one of the biggest US funders who discussed the idea of winding up philanthropic structures and making a potentially huge impact with the money.

“It got me thinking that you can’t be too attached to the structure or the status of being a grantmaker. It’s all about maximising impact for others.”

“The issue is: What’s the most effective way to give your money away? Is it the scattergun approach over time, or is it better to give larger chunks to fewer organisations, thus empowering them to do more?”

That thinking coincided with a change in Hunt’s personal belief about her children’s relationship with the foundation.

“Initially my thinking was that my kids will inherit the foundation and they can become future philanthropists. As they got older I realised that the foundation was entirely my idea borne out of money I had inherited, not theirs.

“I realised that I didn’t want them to have to run something I set up. They’ve been involved enough over the 10 years to understand the power and personal satisfaction of helping others. So they can choose to get involved in philanthropy in their own right, and in their own way, if they want to at some stage.”

“My 21-year old son was relieved when I told him that I was winding up the foundation as he felt the responsibility was lifted, so I decided to do it sooner than later both for that reason and because of the immediate issue of climate change.”

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There are no upcoming events at this time.



Hunt chose 1 Million Women after she and her 15 year-old twin girls volunteered with the organisation at a few events.

“I started to understand what the founder Natalie [Isaacs] was trying to do and why her model is so powerful.

“It’s all about the collective power of individual action. Women are powerful, they make up to 85 per cent of household decisions. So if millions of women are fighting climate change through their everyday choices, this is an incredibly powerful global movement, one that is actually influencing the global carbon output.

We, as individuals, must act in our own lives, not just leave it up to governments and corporates.”

Hunt adds that the model is also easy “to scale internationally, which has started to happen.”

Hunt has not only committed her PAF funds to tackling climate change—in what is probably a first, the former grant maker has now become a grant seeker, joining Natalie Isaacs as Co-CEO of 1 Million Women.

“I came on board as Co-CEO a couple of years ago because I really wanted to be part of 1 Million Women’s future growth and see it fly,” she says of her decision.

“I’m now implementing a couple of social enterprise ideas to help with a more sustainable funding source. It’s certainly a steep learning curve from being a grant maker to a grant seeker, but one that I am loving every minute of.”

One door closes

One of the difficult things for Hunt about winding up the PAF is having to say no.

“I still get regular requests for funding and it’s difficult when you can see it’s a worthwhile cause. But I still give them my time. Through my experience as a grant maker, and my work with 1 Million Women, I find that I can offer them advice around grant seeking, as well as strategy and governance.”

Hunt also remains passionate about growing environmental giving in Australia.

“I’m on the board of the [Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network](#)—the peak membership body for

environmental grant makers—which also advises individuals and trusts on how to give effectively and strategically.”

Earlier this year Hunt received a letter that, although it came after the decision to wind up the PAF, certainly made her feel it was the right thing to do.

“It was from Christiana Figueres, Head of the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) and it really sums up why I have wound up the foundation,” she explains.

“Figueres is the most powerful woman in the climate change space, and is strongly saying to ALL funders in this space that now is the time to back your favourite charity, one that you think is a game changer, and to help them make a bigger impact.

“Of course you don’t need to liquidate [your PAF funds] like I did, but giving a large chunk of capital is a brilliant way to help build capacity and empower an organisation.”

“It’s so much more satisfying to give your money away. You get so much more happiness from giving it away in your lifetime than holding onto it until you die so your kids inherit it and fight over it.

“Wherever I can I try and encourage others to just give it away! I steer them in the direction of [APS](#) (Australian Philanthropic Services) who were so good with managing my PAF over the last four years. I miss being a client!”



Australian Philanthropic Services (APS) is a not-for-profit organisation that inspires philanthropy and provides practical support to help people with their giving.

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For more information, visit the [website](#) or contact Antonia Ruffell, Chief Executive Officer on (02) 8004 6758.

1 Million Women is building a movement of women and girls taking on climate change through the way they live. Kick start your low-carbon life or learn more about the movement [here](#).



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