

**ADDRESS OF PETER PHILIPPSOHN AM
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TO THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES PLENUM
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In 1555 the newly elected Pope Paul IV turned the Italian Inquisition into an all out assault on the Jews and *conversos*. The Adriatic port of Ancona had been a safe haven for Jews from many parts of Europe. Long time Jewish residents and recently arrived *conversos* had enjoyed freedom of worship and commerce. Now, *conversos* were tortured, executed and their possessions seized.

An extremely rich Jewish woman Donna Gracia, then resident in the Ottoman Empire , lead a movement for all Jewish merchants to boycott Ancona and send their goods through Pesaro, a less convenient Italian port but one whose leadership was more sympathetic to Jews. This required the full support of Sephardi, Ashkenazi, Italian, Romaniote and other Jews. Many of these groups had no direct interest in the *conversos* plight.

Charismatic leaders, religious and lay spoke out to convince others of the need for a united front. It was a matter of *pikuah nefesh* the obligation to save lives.

Sadly, the boycott was short lived. Unity was not forthcoming. People's personal objectives - mainly financial - took priority. Consequently two years later, all converso Jews were banished from Ancona.

We are a fortunate community, we have organisations which provide a united front. You present here are all directly involved in one of these, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. However, tonight I want to talk about another uniting organisation which you all are part of.

This is the JCA.

I'm president of JCA. Many of you here are or have been presidents of organisations. I can confidently say that I have less power than the president of any of our constituent organisations.

This might strike you as bizarre. So let me explain.

The JCA was conceived at the time of the 1967 Six-Day War. There was understandable concern that if there was a call on our local community for massive support of Israel's survival, what would happen to local organisations who would be unable to raise funds for their essential projects.

The visionary solution was to create a Joint Communal appeal. One that could concentrate fundraising and could also put aside a reserve in case of ongoing crisis. That reserve would need to be a minimum of the funds required to sustain local purposes for one year.

The funds raised would then be apportioned by an independent group of three people – an allocations committee.

Now almost 45 years on, the fundamentals have not significantly changed other than the addition of the planning role which has become part of JCA's mission. Funding must always be based on planning.

Back to the powerless president and also the powerless JCA Executive.

The JCA is made up of 21 constituents. The presidents for the time-being of those constituents are the trustee and only voting governors of the JCA. They have the say. Though JCA Executive and other non-trustee governors sit at meetings of the JCA Board of Governors – none have a vote. The annual Allocation is only voted on by the trustee governors, the acceptance of new members is only voted on by trustee governors.

The JCA Executive is a non-democratic group. All nominations for JCA executive roles are vetted by a three trustee governor Nominations Committee and if they agree, then the nomination is put to the other 18 trustee governors for ratification.

I should note that there is one position on the JCA Executive which is not subject to these hurdles. That is the right bestowed on the president of the Board of Deputies to sit on the JCA Executive. This has enshrined the special relationship between the JCA and the Board.

Today, the Allocations Committee is made up of four people who serve a four year term with one new member each year. They start as the junior member and in their last year, chair the committee. This ensures that there are no entrenched attitudes developed.

We approach people with a good understanding of business and community to serve. This is a time consuming task as they become experts on the business operation of our constituents. Invariably they are honoured to serve and in many cases they continue on to our Planning committee where they utilise the intimate knowledge of community which they have gained.

Allocations ask our constituents the questions you would want to ask. "What's the money needed for and why?" We visit their sites, look at their accounts, discuss their operations, review their future plans. We ask them the hard and sometimes unpopular questions so that between Allocations and Planning we can plan for the community as a whole and so that we can confidently answer when you ask "is our money being well spent?".

We don't look at an organisation in isolation, we look at sectors e.g. all education, all aged care. If one of our day schools adds a class, does that mean that another school might lose kids and lose a class. While we welcome healthy competition, we don't want to be funding duplication.

Your JCA also funds parts of our community which mightn't have an emotional call but are essential. You here know that our community's political security is ensured by the Board of Deputies. The Board receives approx \$1m per annum via the JCA. Can you imagine if Vic and Yair and many of you in this room had to go around looking for tfunding. It would be a major diversion of energies from the Board's core activities and would have a significant cost.

How much does it cost to run the JCA. JCA expenses including the people involved in planning are just under 13% of funds raised. We aim to raise around \$12m per annum and allocate around \$11m. Those of you who are quick on maths would say that doesn't add up.

Let's go back to that reserve of \$11m which generates investment income plus another fund, the Bequests and All Purposes Fund which is around \$13m. Every year we take 12.5% of the balance of that fund after investment income and add that to the allocations pie.

Over the years, JCA has received bequests but has not had the soliciting of bequests as part of its charter. Last November, the governors realised that the JCA, who is the local community's premier fund-raise, was being excluded from some very fertile grounds. JCA is now actively looking for bequests on behalf of our constituents.

We also manage endowment funds. Here generous donors say to JCA, we want to support some aspects of the local Jewish community but we don't want the hassle of having to manage the funds and of having to review countless requests for funding. We agree with the donor what guidelines they want put in place and then evaluate requests and consult with the donor before making distributions. This year saw our largest endowment being two tranches of \$2m each from Millie Phillips for the education of young people.

Gen X and Gen Y are major areas of focus for JCA. We are involved with numerous initiatives to stimulate younger involvement in community.

One of these is the Observership program which has recently been launched. We called for expressions of interest from young people aged between 25 and 35 who wanted to get involved with our communal boards. We have had forty applicants most of whom are outstanding. We will be putting them through a training programme and then seconding them to constituent boards for one year terms. JCA will also be bringing an observer on to each of our major committees.

In this way, we hope to groom the future leadership of our community.

JCA walks a tightrope. Often we are asked “can’t you do something about this organisation or that?” Each of our constituents is independent. They have their own elected boards and are charged to act in the best interests of their membership. However in our annual Allocations reports, we will highlight to the organisations any concerns that we as a community have with their operation or direction.

As well as the lever of allocation funding, the JCA grants an annual capital appeal. Here the constituents put up a case for a major capital project or debt reduction campaign for which they seek communal support. Whether the project is in line with communal needs is the first priority. Then building plans and financial viability are carefully assessed before a slot is granted.

JCA has another role, that is facilitation. The creation of the recently launched gateway^{NSW}.com website which details the range of Aged Care and Health Services available to the NSW Jewish Community facilitated by the JCA.

Tonight, I have two agenda items. One has been to tell you of how JCA is structured and two to flag that we are now launching our 2012 campaign.

We need the support of the whole community and you it is incumbent on you as leaders to do that – lead.

This brings me back to 1555. As rich as Donna Gracia was, as persuasive as she was, she could not save the Ancona community because she didn't have everybody's support

Today, our major donors want to see that everybody contributes and in that we present a united front. If we don't have unity, we won't have a community.