QSA Notes

April 2025

Remembering Jackie Perkins

A great sadness has descended on QSA, its partners, associates, and the wider Quaker community. When Jackie Perkins died suddenly on 20 March, a long and significant chapter in QSA's history ended.

Jackie started volunteering for QSA in the 1990s before working for over two decades as QSA Administrator. She retired as Executive Administrator in December 2022, with many plans for a long retirement.

But it wasn't just the length of Jackie's tenure that was impressive. She oversaw an incredible transformation in QSA. Under her leadership, QSA moved from Hobart to Sydney, became an incorporated association, achieved and maintained funding under the Federal Government's NGO program, and expanded its reach by establishing new partnerships in Cambodia, India, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and First Nations communities in Australia.

Jackie was also an active member of the broader international development community, contributing to groups, including the Church Agencies Network (CAN) and the Australian

Council for International Development (ACFID), including serving on the Executive Committee of what was known then as ACFOA, and the Salvation Army's International Development Practice Advisory Group. Her participation in these networks and support for other smaller agencies in ACFID is a valuable contribution to the sector.

Those who worked with Jackie or knew her well recognise that many of these advancements were driven by Jackie and succeeded due to her tireless hard work and dedication. The time and energy she devoted to QSA were truly remarkable.

Jackie passionately believed in QSA's capacity to achieve tangible improvements in the lives of others by working with partners and the communities they served. For her, development work was not just about economic progress but also about human dignity. Ending poverty and achieving food security were key drivers, but she was equally passionate about human rights, social justice, and gender equality. She was a fearless advocate for women's empowerment, child protection, and environmental sustainability, integrating these principles into QSA's development programs.

Under Jackie's stewardship, QSA's projects delivered life-changing outcomes:

- Bangladesh: QSA's permaculture initiatives helped communities improve food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture techniques, benefiting thousands of smallholder farmers.
- Cambodia: Women's livelihood projects provided vocational training and small business support, empowering rural women to achieve financial independence.
- India (Tamil Nadu): QSA supported Dalit and other marginalised communities in accessing education, vocational skills, and sustainable farming practices.
- Uganda: Sustainable smallholder agriculture helped women and their families adapt to climate change, improving livelihoods through water conservation and permaculture training
- Zimbabwe: QSA contributed to water security initiatives and life skills training for young people with disabilities.
- First Nations communities in Australia: QSA worked alongside Aboriginal-led organisations to support cultural and economic self-determination initiatives.
- Refugees: QSA supported refugees in offshore processing centres and other groups in Australia and transit locations.

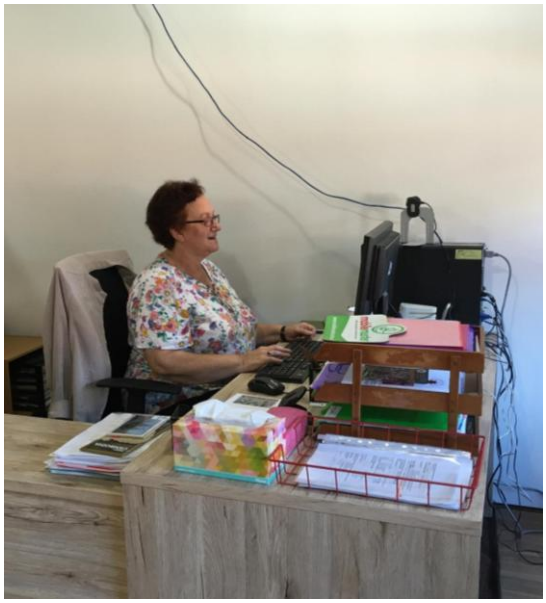
Guided by Quaker Principles, Jackie's commitment to service, integrity, and justice shaped QSA's ethos and approach, fostering deep and lasting relationships with project partners worldwide. Anyone visiting project partners could not fail to see Jackie's profound and lasting impact. She formed enduring friendships, taking a genuine interest in the personal lives of partners and their families and sharing stories about her home and family.

Although a skilled administrator, Jackie's passion was the people, particularly QSA's program partners and recipients. On her retirement in December 2022, she wrote in The Australian Friend:

My time with QSA has been extensive, full, very varied, and, for the most part, a sheer delight. The sheer delight part, as will come as no surprise to most of you, is not the organisation, its charts, policies and endless reviews, but the people. In that, I am fully in agreement with Val Nichols, who, as some may know, was one of its first administrators while QSA was in its growth phase, when she said, "QSA is not 'programs' really, it is people". And again, similar to Val, my lasting memory will be the faces and voices, the vibrant clothing, the wonderful smells of the cooking, the singing and laughter, and the delight in the faces of project participants in showing what changes they have made.

Click here to read the full article *My Time with Quaker Service Australia*

To honour Jackie's memory, we have created an electronic card for friends, colleagues, and members of the international development sector to share memories, messages, photos, and tributes. Please consider sharing your memories of Jackie, particularly of her at work, at https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/9PDMJWjS/JackiePerkins

With deep gratitude for all Jackie's contributions and heartfelt condolences to her family and many friends from the QSA Board, staff, partners and supporters.

Following is a selection of photos showing Jackie doing what she loved best: meeting and working with project partners and their communities.