

Executive Council of Australian Jewry



הוועד המועל של
יהודי אוסטרליה

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Organisation of
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26 May 2003

BY EMAIL

Mr. Gideon Taylor
Executive Vice President
Claims Conference
15 East 26th Street, Room 906
New York, NY 10010
USA

Dear Gideon,

I note that the 80/20 distribution policy is again the subject of debate. There is a very natural view among survivors that the basic responsibility of the Claims Conference is to address the needs of the survivors and I very much agree with this. This year, the direct needs of the survivors are being addressed as never before, both on the individual and on the institutional level.

But we must bear in mind that the need of the survivors encompasses more than just the physical. It includes the need for remembrance. The lessons to be learnt from the Shoah cannot be denied, whether these lessons are learnt by means of education, by commemoration, by research or through Holocaust Museums and Centres.

When the Planning Committee met to consider these matters, all the issues were canvassed fully and cooperatively, with many views and perspectives being represented and one of the critical factors was that the 20% which is allocated to this area does not in any way erode survivors' individual entitlements to restitution, but is drawn from moneys realized from unclaimed properties.

What clearly emerged from the Planning Committee meetings was that a significant proportion of available moneys must continue to be invested in education, research, commemoration - and the critical word is invested.

Without keeping alive the memory of the Shoah, without knowing what happened and passing on that knowledge, we run the risk of forgetting. That would be an abiding shame.

Whilst the stories which my mother tells me of those in my family who, unlike my mother and I, did not survive, may be painful, they have at the same time given me a rich heritage of where I come from and of how I fit into the context of Jewish history, albeit on a very small scale.

For this reason alone, if for no other, it is imperative that future generations of Jews know and understand. To maintain a heritage without a historical context is difficult, if not impossible. Without an understanding of the Shoah, we not only cannot grasp our recent past, but also, we run the risk of failing to create a positive future, for to grow from a deep understanding of the Shoah is the true triumph of the spirit.

I look forward to seeing you at our Board meeting in July,

Best regards,

Nina Bassat