

MINUTES

Formal Session 3: Monday 3 July at 11.15am AEST

YM23.16: Welcome and Opening Worship

Gerry Fahey brought a reading from Rupert Read's 2023 Salter Lecture, 'The horrible, wonderful truth about climate'.

'The love that we are, whether taking form as effort, as sacrifice, as giving, as joyfulness, as grief-strickenness, as worry, as desperation, as presence, the love that we have for our children, for life itself, this love is an indescribable gift and a truly mighty power. Friends, let yourselves fall deep into it, which means with and into and through all of us. There will be tears and dark nights, there will be impossible heartbreak and magnificent joy as well. Whether or not we survive, whether or not we flourish, the wonderful truth that 'when we allow ourselves to actually feel our pain, our fear, our grief, our anger, then we many millions of us are ready to act with determination to ensure that what is coming does not take us all down with it. This is in the end greater than the horrible truth out of which it arises. The horrible, wonderful truth about climate'.

YM23.17: Minute of Record Summary of Epistles

We heard the Summary of Epistles compiled by Elizabeth PO' (WARM).

The Presiding Clerk introduced Elizabeth PO' of WARM, who presented the Summary of Epistles:

Elizabeth explained that the 29 Epistles from Yearly Meetings around the world, which can be read on the FWCC website, shared issues common to many Friends, such as the need for spiritual nurture and community building following the difficult years of the Covid pandemic.

Friends in those Yearly Meetings wrote about working together on issues such as the war in Ukraine, racism and the need for justice. Several used the image of a tree growing from strong roots. US Northern Yearly Meeting used the actual example of the need for pruning to encourage growth with a real plant and the cutting of a tendril to plant in a new pot and to grow into a new plant.

Elizabeth left us with the question from the All Poland Yearly Meeting: **What is in your spiritual backpack?**

This was a question to consider in the following silence: *what do Friends need in their spiritual backpack to support them on their journeys?*

YM23.18: AYM Nominations Committee Report

Bev Polzin presented the AYM Nominations Committee Report, which is available on the YM23 website for Friends to read, and which offered the following names for appointment:

a) AYM Website Coordinator

Roger Sawkins, to serve until (2026).

b) Backhouse Lecture Committee (6-year appointments)

Drew Thomas, Mark Macleod (Both of TRM) to serve on this committee until 2029, joining Tracy Bourne, CRQ (2026) and Evan Gallagher, CRQ (2026).

c) Child Protection Committee

Ronis Chapman, Lorraine Thomson, both of CRQ to continue in this position.

d) Children & JYF Committee

Doug Amarfio (CRQ) and Craig Applegate (CRQ) until 2026, joining Di Bretherton (2024), Justine Shelton (2025) Jenny Turton (2024) all of VRM.

e) Climate Crisis & Species Extinction Working Group

The group wishes to continue until 2024.

f) Handbook Revision Committee

Judy Still, (VRM) until 2026 to join *Julie Walpole (TRM), Michael Corbett (QRM), and Ron Martin (VRM) all serving until 2025.*

g) Information Technology Committee

Roger Sawkins (QRM) and Michael Searle (CRQ) to 2026.

h) Nominations Committee

Judith Pembleton (QRM) until 2026.

i) Thanksgiving Fund Committee

Elizabeth Kwan and Mary Butler from SANTRM, to serve until YM26, joining Topsy Evans and Lee Harradine, (2025).

Australia Yearly Meeting representatives

j) Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting 2024

Margaret Clark (CRQ).

k) Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN)

David Purnell (CRQ) and Lorel Thomas (VRM) until 2026.

l) NCCA Assembly member

David O'Halloran (TRM) to join the Presiding Clerk until 2026.

(We note that appointing an Assembly member from outside NSWRM or CRQ, has implications for additional travel costs. Nevertheless, the opportunity to serve in this position, is one which we feel suitable Friends from other RMs should be offered.

m) NCCA Faith and Unity Commission

Janet Duke (VRM) until 2026.

n) Silver Wattle Quaker Centre – AYM Nominee

Duncan Frewin (QRM) until 2026.

We accept these nominations and make these appointments.

The report also included the following for noting:

a) AYM Treasurer

We note that Finance Committee has appointed Roger Sawkins as 'Acting Treasurer' until Yearly Meeting 2024, or until another Treasurer is appointed, whichever is earlier.

b) AYM Membership Secretary

We note that the IT Committee agreed to be responsible for all Membership matters.

c) Backhouse Lecture Committee (6-year appointments)

Judith Pembleton, QRM wishes to lay down her membership of this committee.

Taisoo Kim Watson QRM has agreed to serve until YM 2024 (not 2027 as previously agreed).

d) Child Protection Contact Friends

Remain as listed, with appointments made by Regional Meetings.

e) Children & JYF Committee

Restina Ninahawaze, SANTRM (JYF representative) has laid down this position.

f) Finance Committee

Steve Smith, TRM, (2024) has laid down his membership of this committee.

g) Friends in Stitches Committee: Margaret Bywater (TRM) to join Sally O'Wheel (TRM) and Tessa Spratt (VRM) as Co-Conveners of Friends in Stitches until 2025. (Minute SC10.22.1)

h) Future of the Sanctuary Working Group

These names were approved by the Urgent Decision-Making Meeting on 6 June: John Baker, Wies Schuiringa, and Rose Griffith (all of NSWRM) (as per Minute SC5.23.2). Their term ends 2024.

i) Information Technology Committee

Jacque Schultze's term finishes in 2023.

IT Committee: Daniel Buckmaster (NSWRM) as Convener; Julie Walpole (TRM); Garry Duncan (NSWRM) to join the IT Committee until YM 2025. (Minute SC9.22.4)

j) Nominations Committee

Liz Field (NSW) term finishes in 2023.

k) Publications Committee

Judith Pembleton is named as 'resource person' on this committee, no longer as a member.

l) QSA/AYM Relationship Working Group

Duncan Frewin and David Purnell. to YM23. (Minute SC9.22.4)

m) Quaker World Connections Committee

Sue Ennis (VRM) Sharon Matthews (WARM) Paula Paananen (NSW) terms finish in 2023.
(These four-year appointments are made by Regional Meetings.)

n) The Sanctuary Committee

Mavis Barnard does not wish to renew her appointment.

o) Search Committee for AYM Secretary

Bruce Henry (Presiding Clerk), Trish Johnson (QRM), Alan Clayton (VRM), Robin McLean (TRM). (Minute SC9.22.4)

p) Thanksgiving Fund Committee

David Barry and Kate Alessia have laid down their membership from this Committee.

q) Transition Implementation Working Group: Jennifer Burrell (NSWRM), Jonathan Benyei (CRM) and Kerstin Reimers (TRM), to YM25. (Minute SC10.22.1). While Nominations Committee continues to look for names to fill the voluntary positions of Staff Oversight & Support Friend and Probity Adviser, the members of TIWG will act in these positions.

r) Use of Undirected Donations and Bequests Working Group

These names were approved by the Urgent Decision-Making Meeting on 6 June: Topsy Evans (SANTRM), representing Thanksgiving Fund, Ray Brindle (VRM) representing Finance Committee, Ann Britton (NSWRM) and Gerry Fahey (VRM) representing 'independent' Friends (as per Minute SC5.23.2). Term ends 2024.

Associated bodies (not appointed by Australia Yearly Meeting)

a) QSA Company Management Committee

Therese Douglas (Co-Convenor); Rae Litting (Co-Convenor), Dan Ong (Treasurer) Garry Duncan (Public Officer) Mary Jane Hogan; Laurel Doel; Aletia Dundas, Paul Carter.

b) SWQC Board:

John Baker (NSWRM); Jonathan Benyei (CRQ); Treasurer; David Johnson (QRM); Ann Zubrick (WARM).

c) The Friends' School Quaker Values Committee

Tracy Bourne, (Co-Convenor), CRQ; Liz Field, NSWRM; Christine Venner-Westaway, QRM; Peter Webb, SANTRM; Mary Beadle, David Edmiston, Tom Dundas, Jen Newton, TRM; Oliver Lovell, VRM; Vacant, WARM; Bruce Henry, VRM (AYM Presiding Clerk); The Friends School Principal (ex officio).

YM23.19 A: AYM Treasurer's Report - Update

AYM Acting Treasurer, Roger Sawkins, presented an update to the Treasurer's Report from AGM23:

Since our AGM report we have continued to be busy. I became Acting Treasurer to simplify the work in the interim period. Steve Smith resigned from the Finance Committee (which now consists of Rob Walpole, Carol Thornton and Ray Brindle). The accounting firm that was to help us withdrew, but we have hired Stanton Collaborations and our accounts are now up to date in the Xero software. The new accounting firm are doing our bookkeeping and much of the financial administrivia.

We have opened a new bank account in connection with our investments so that we could move away from Macquarie bank. We also reviewed the AYM investment policy and made some changes. The investment arrangements are now in place and cash flow is no longer a problem.

We have also arranged payments and other aspects for the new employees, clarifying their contracts and sorting out tax, superannuation, etc. (including the Children & Junior Young Friends Committee contract).

We had discussions with several of the Working Groups involved with setting up and arranging the finances for the new YM Office and other arrangements.

We have had discussions with the organisers of YM 2024 about their proposals for a face-to-face meeting.

We have had discussions with the Meeting for Learning organisers about future financial arrangements.

We have had discussions with the Thanksgiving Fund Committee about the various reports which are outstanding.

At Standing Committee on 17 June, Nominations Committee reported that they have been able to find Friends willing to be a new AYM Treasurer and Finance Committee, and there have been some discussions about the handover process. These are being separately reported to YM by the Friends involved.

I sincerely hope that Yearly Meeting will make those appointments!

YM 23.19 B New Finance Arrangements

Standing Committee, SC6.23, held on 17 June received this report:

Four Quakers have offered to work together to provide a new Treasurer and advisory team: Jonathan Benyei (CRQ), Judy Henderson (NSWRM), Lee Harradine (SANTRM) and Candace Barron (NSWRM).

This group has extensive experience in finance and organisational management.

The group is committed to working together, offering diversity of skills and Regional Meeting representation.

The group would be prepared to take on this role from September 2023, allowing the existing committee to finalise the 2023-24 Budget and handover to the new group.

Recognising the difficulties endured by the acting Treasurer and Finance Committee over many months, the new group wishes to formally assume the role as a Finance Committee as a new entity from 1 October 2023. This will allow time to arrange police checks, handover and new banking, reporting transition formalities. Independence, transparency and accountability will be assured by the incoming group.

If this offer is accepted, Jonathan Benyei will lay-down co-Clerkship of Canberra & Region Quakers and would agree to be Treasurer.

We hear that Nominations Committee has had many difficulties finding a new Treasurer over recent months and welcomes the names suggested.

We note that Standing Committee received the offer from the four Friends Jonathan Benyei, Judy Henderson, Lee Harradine and Candace Barron and accepted it with thanks.

Yearly Meeting accepts this offer and appoints these people as the Finance Committee and Jonathan Benyei to the role of AYM Treasurer from 1st October 2023.

We are grateful that Roger Sawkins has offered to continue to be available for consultation after the handover to assist the new team.

YM23.20: Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group Report

YM agrees that YM23 extend the CE&SE Working Group for 1 (one) year to YM24 to enable the completion (with input from the Regional Meetings) of the draft 'Carrying out the plan' document. We see this will be a living document.

YM asks QPLC to consider conducting two lobbying workshops online during 2023-24 on the topic of climate crisis and species extinction, in consultation with relevant Quaker groups,

YM asks that relevant AYM committees who manage their funding review their guidelines with a view to releasing funds to support climate activism, education, community building and earth repair actions. Collaboration amongst several funding sources may be a way to encourage funding a greater diversity of actions.

YM notes that Friends accept and commit to the higher-level Action Plan developed by the Working Group. Many Friends are already active in this area, but we are asking the Quaker community to be more outspoken and supportive of action. Different Friends will be active in many ways to address this urgent issue.

YM encourages Friends who are led to take action under concern with respect to the climate and biodiversity crises to avail themselves of Clearness Meetings where they can test these leadings. Ongoing guidance may be needed from a support group. We encourage Ministry Committees or equivalent to discern and facilitate these opportunities.

YM asks all meetings to consider how they could keep the Climate and Biodiversity Crises in the forefront. This could be as a regular newsletter item, or kept in mind when dealing with relevant agenda items at meetings for business.

Due to real concerns about climate change, greenhouse emissions and in particular air and sea travel, Yearly Meeting feels AYM needs to develop guidelines for travel, including the consideration of Carbon offsets.

We ask AYM Nominations Committee to bring names for a group to develop these guidelines.

The Session closed with silent worship.