

Appendix 3: Handbook Revision Committee- Proposed Handbook Revisions for YM22

Note: New or changed sections in the middle column are in **red font with grey highlighting** for clear recognition onscreen and in grayscale printed copy.

1) Weddings in Meeting Houses. This matter for revision was left from YM2019.

4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment

Current text	Proposed revision	comments
<p>Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment</p> <p>Quaker partners wishing to declare their mutual commitment during a special Meeting for Worship write to the appropriate Regional Meeting Clerk to ask that the Meeting agree to recognise the relationship, and agree to a time and a place for a special Meeting for Worship for this purpose.</p> <p>A marriage or commitment celebrated ‘in the care of the Meeting’ will be supported by that Meeting and its Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee as for any other Quaker Concern. Sufficient time must be allowed for permission by a Regional Meeting. This would normally be through a scheduled Regional Meeting for Worship for Business, but other arrangements may be made (such as, but not limited to, a Clearness Meeting or special Meeting for Worship for Business) where time constraints require an early decision.</p> <p>Before agreeing to a couple’s request, the Regional Meeting, usually through a Registering Officer, establishes that both partners understand fully the nature of their commitment and that there is no spiritual or legal impediment. A Clearness Meeting could be</p>	<p>A marriage or commitment celebrated ‘in the care of the Meeting’ will be supported by that Meeting and its Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee as for any other Quaker Concern. Regional Meetings throughout Australia treat equally all requests for celebration of marriage or commitment within our Meetings in accordance with Friends’ usages, regardless of the sexual orientation or gender of each of the partners.</p> <p>Quaker couples wishing to be married or celebrate their commitment write to the appropriate Regional Meeting Clerk asking the Meeting to hold a special Meeting for Worship for marriage or commitment, and agree to a time and place.</p> <p>Sufficient time must be allowed for permission by a Regional Meeting, normally through a scheduled Regional Meeting for Worship for Business. Other arrangements may be made such as a special Meeting for Worship for Business, where time constraints require an early decision.</p> <p>Before agreeing to a couple’s request, the Regional Meeting, usually through a Registering Officer, establishes that both partners understand fully the nature of their commitment and that there is no spiritual or legal impediment. A Clearness Meeting could be offered.</p>	<p>There has been a significant re-write of this section.</p> <p>Text has been moved and sentences edited.</p> <p>The last three paragraphs were initially identified as requiring clarification.</p>

offered. Regional Meetings throughout Australia treat equally all requests for celebration of marriage or commitment within our Meetings in accordance with Friends' usages, regardless of the sexual orientation or gender of each of the partners. If the couple wish to register their marriage legally, there are formal procedures to be followed, and the Registering Officer will advise. The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet *Quaker Marriage And Committed Relationships* at:
<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets>, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date.

It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee will be asked to advise, as well as the Registering Officer. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.

A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment within our Meeting House and 'in the manner of Friends'. They write to the appropriate Clerk to ask that the Meeting agree to such a ceremony, and agree to a time and a place. This decision is normally discerned by the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business.

The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet, *Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships*, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. The pamphlet is at:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets>. It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee, as well as the Registering Officer will be asked to advise on the chosen wording. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.

If the couple wish to register their marriage legally, there are formal procedures to be followed, and the Registering Officer will advise.

A Quaker Registering Officer can only conduct marriages for couples of whom at least one partner is a member or attender, and with the permission of the Regional Meeting.

Couples who have a less significant link to Quakers may be married by the Quaker Registering Officer with the permission of the Regional Meeting.

A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment ceremony within one of our Meeting Houses 'in the manner of Friends', and could do so as a venue hire. The couple would bring their own celebrant. Each meeting decides if they hire out one of their Meeting Houses for such occasions.

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2) 4.5 Sojourners

Existing text 7 th edition	Proposed new text, changes are in red	Explanation for the proposed change
<p>Another sort of traveller is the ‘sojourner’, who typically comes to Australia for some months but retains Membership of her/his home Meeting. Australian Friends warmly welcome such links to overseas cousins within the global Quaker family.</p>	<p>Members of Friends’ Meetings overseas also travel to Australia, sometimes staying for extended periods, while retaining membership of their home Meeting (referred to as “sojourners” by some YMs).</p> <p>Australian Friends welcome such links to overseas cousins within the global Quaker family.</p> <p>Such visiting Friends are encouraged to share fully in the life of the local and Australian Quaker community, including at Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>Regional Meetings may decide to include sojourners in the database of Members and Attenders so they have access to the ‘Members only’ part of the AYM website and thus to Yearly Meeting attendance information.</p> <p>Sojourning Friends are recorded in the AYM annual Statement of Membership under the heading of “Overseas</p>	<p>Sojourners may want to attend YM and need to be able to access the AYM website to access YM information and Zoom links.</p> <p>They need to be registered on the database of Members and Attenders to have access to the ‘members only’ part of the website.</p> <p>Some sojourners may be in Australia for a few months and others stay for many years</p> <p>The handbook revision committee consulted with the RMs and realised that there is a wide-ranging practice how sojourners are added to the database and also how they are counted in the annual tabulation.</p>

	<p>members/ children who live in the RM's area".</p> <p>The term "sojourner" is, at this stage, used by some RMs but not by all. Some RMs also record overseas attenders who are temporarily involved with their Meetings.</p> <p>And at the end of 3.10: Please see 4.5 for more information about travellers, visitors and sojourners.</p>	
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3) 4.6.4 Testimonies to the Grace of God

Existing text 4.6.4	Proposed revision, in red	HRC comments
<p>Guidelines: A testimony is not an obituary or eulogy. It should make the Friend come alive, showing failings as well as successes. The testimony should show the underlying qualities in the Friend's life ... We need to have records of Friends whose lives witnessed to the love of God. They are sources of inspiration. (Bowman, B., 'The grace of God', <i>The Friend</i>, 19.10.2001)</p> <p>Meetings write a Minute of Record upon the death of a Member, or regular Attender, who has been closely associated with their Meeting. The minute may be brief and factual, or extended. It is a response from the Meeting to the spiritual value of the life lived.</p> <p>The Regional Meeting then discerns whether or not to appoint Friends to write a 'Testimony to the Grace of God' in the life of the deceased Friend. Regional Meetings are careful who they appoint to this service,</p>	<p>Guidelines: A [T]estimony is not an obituary or eulogy. It should make the Friend come alive, showing failings as well as successes. The [T]estimony should show the underlying qualities in the Friend's life. We need to have records of Friends whose lives witnessed to the love of God. The [Testimonies] are sources of inspiration. (Bowman, B., 'The grace of God', <i>The Friend</i>, 19.10.2001)</p> <p>Meetings write a Minute of Record upon the death of a Member, or regular Attender, who has been closely associated with their Meeting. The Minute may be brief and factual and is a record of the death of the Friend.</p> <p>The Regional Meeting then discerns whether or not to appoint Friends to write a 'Testimony to the Grace of God' in the life of the deceased Friend. Regional Meetings are careful who they appoint to this service</p>	<p>The handbook revision committee feels that this quotation is not a good reflection and</p> <p>puts the deceased Friend too much on a pedestal, "a source of inspiration". Most of us are just regular people with high ambitions. Few are saints whose lives "witnessed to the love of God".</p> <p>The quote is also not given in appropriate context.</p> <p>We recommend not having a Guideline for this section at this stage.</p>

<p>in view of the fact that there will need to be consultations with various family members.</p> <p>The preparation of a testimony is a collaborative effort. When consulting, the writers of the testimony need to make it clear to family and others that the resulting testimony will be publicly accessible and on our website.</p> <p>Those providing information have the right to see a copy of the completed testimony before the writers present it to the Regional Meeting and to request a restriction on access to the information they have provided.</p> <p>The completed testimony is brought to a Regional Meeting for acceptance or modification. When finalised, testimonies are sent to the AYM Secretary for inclusion in the Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biographies (see 5.5.3). This is useful for historical researchers.</p> <p>What a testimony covers.</p> <p>The testimony covers aspects of the Friend's life that reveal the workings of the Spirit in the world, as an inspiration to others. Testimonies focus on 'that of God' in the life now ended, the evidence of their spiritual life. It is neither a chronology nor a eulogy.</p>	<p>as there may need to be consultations with family members or others.</p> <p>A Testimony is the Meeting's response to the spiritual life of the Friend who has died, often expressed as the 'Grace of God' in that life. It covers such things as: their background, leadings, Concerns, struggles and expressions of their spiritual life. A testimony is succinct - it is neither a chronology nor a eulogy. It requires reflection by the writers to summarise the available information.</p> <p>When Friends are asked to write a Testimony, they might begin with a factual biography. The Friend may have provided such information to be safely stored by their Meeting. (AYM <i>Advices and Queries</i> 31 and 32). This could be added to the entry for that Friend in the <i>Dictionary of Australian Quaker biography</i> (5.5.3) together with other information relevant to the life of the Friend (e.g. an obituary, Curriculum Vitae, mention of writings and publications, a photo). This could be useful to historical researchers.</p> <p>The Testimony may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date and place of birth and death • occupation, marriage, children • date of Membership of the Religious Society of Friends, or length of time in the life of the Meeting • roles and participation in the life of the Society of Friends and in the wider community 	<p>Not all Friends have taken up specific roles or responsibilities but can still have a testimony written for them.</p> <p>An addition to avoid a lengthy testimony and clarify what the Dictionary can include.</p>
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<p>When Friends are asked to write a testimony, these points may be helpful inclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date and place of birth of birth and death • occupation, marriage, children • date of Membership of the Religious Society of Friends, or length of time in the life of the Meeting • roles in the Religious Society of Friends (though care should be taken not to list these to the detriment of more relevant material in relation to how their life revealed the grace of God) • Concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns and passions <p>All of these may show how the Friend's life revealed their spiritual journey or the Grace of God.</p> <p><i>Those providing information for a Testimony are offered a copy of the completed Testimony before the writers present it to the RM and may request a restriction on access to the information they have provided.</i></p> <p>The completed Testimony is brought to a Regional Meeting for acceptance or modification.</p> <p>When finalised, Testimonies, and supplementary information are offered for inclusion in the <i>Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography</i> [DAQB] (see 5.5.3).</p> <p>Shortened Testimonies to the life of some Friends are heard at Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>Further information about Testimonies may be found on the AYM website under administrative resources for Regional Meetings.</p>	
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4) 5.2.7 AYM archivist

This revision reflects new national requirements for record keeping. This revision needs to be accepted as it is presented in the middle column.

Existing text	Proposed, required text	comments
<p>5.2.7 AYM Archivist The AYM Archivist has responsibility for the general oversight of the records of</p>	<p>5.2.7 AYM Archivist The AYM Archivist has responsibility for the general</p>	<p>Email from Saadia Thomson, AYM archivist 15 January 2022:</p>

Australia Yearly Meeting. This includes advising and assisting the AYM Secretary with the records of the AYM office regarding the legal requirements to retain certain records, and the selection of items for the Australian National Archives.

The archivist liaises with the AYM Treasurer concerning financial records.

In addition, the archivist communicates with RM Archivists (2.5.3) for the same purposes and seeks to promote a wider awareness of the heritage of the Society in Australia. Advice and assistance may be given for exhibitions and publications.

All Meetings and AYM committees should develop a retention schedule for records.

This should identify:
a. records for permanent retention, including minutes, agendas and all background papers; legal records (e.g. titles to Meeting Houses); membership registers and other important administrative records; other records of importance to the Meeting
b. records for temporary retention, such as financial records (kept for five or preferably seven years). Reviewed for permanent retention or destruction after this period

c. records which do not need to be preserved by the Society.

oversight of the records of Australia Yearly Meeting.

All records created by AYM Committees, Working Groups, etc. are the records of the Society and as such, form a collection for the National Library of Australia (NLA) donation.

The archivist's role includes advising and assisting the AYM Secretary with the records of the AYM office regarding the legal requirements to retain certain records, and the selection of items for the National Library of Australia.

The Archivist also liaises with the AYM Treasurer concerning financial records.

In addition, the Archivist communicates with RM Archivists (2.5.3) for the same purposes and seeks to promote a wider awareness of the heritage of the Society in Australia. Advice and assistance may be given for exhibitions and publications.

AYM and all Regional Meetings are required to develop and maintain a Records Retention and Disposal Schedule which will identify:

a. Records for permanent retention, for example: Minutes, Agendas, Background papers, Land titles, Membership registers, important legal records; other records of historical importance to the Meeting.

Dear Handbook Revision Committee members

AYM Secretary Jacque Schultz and myself as AYM Archivist would like a revision of the section regarding AYM recordkeeping to be updated as it urgently requires revision. Jacque has asked me to forward the documents to you for your review at the earliest possible convenience.

We need to bring our recordkeeping practises [RK] in line with accepted (and legally required) processes due to the changes in RK across government, private businesses and Faith Institutions across Australia since the introduction of the National Redress Scheme and other legislative changes to RK in general since 2020. (bold by HRC)

Handbook revision committee query to Saadia:

The archive revision seems to be of a factual and legal nature, not a matter that Quakers can discern in our own Quaker ways and decide what speaks to us. Friends might want to change a word or so but as I understand it, they can't change any of the content.

Reply from Saadia:

Yes you are correct in your summation of the archive revision.

All Meetings and AYM committees should ensure the physical safety of their records (protecting against fire, damp, vandalism, theft). Hard copy is preferred as a storage medium, as electronic storage media are prone to degradation and technological obsolescence.

Confidential records (e.g. minutes of some Elders and Overseers' meetings and Nominations meetings) should be carefully identified as such and retained securely (such as in a separate locked fire-proof safe). Access should be restricted, e.g. to a Clerk and an Elder together, and the retention schedule should identify an embargo period.

Friends should be aware that using the 'standard' email addresses (@quakersaustralia.info) will greatly assist the archiving process.

b. Records for temporary retention, for example: financial records are to be kept for a minimum of 7 years. All temporary records should be destroyed as part of a normal administrative process within a 2 year maximum period of their due destruction date.

c. Records which do not need to be preserved by the Society.

All Regional Meetings and AYM committees should ensure the physical safety of their records by protecting against fire, damp/mould, vandalism, theft, and insects. Hard paper copy is the preferred storage medium, as electronic storage media is prone to degradation and technological obsolescence.

Confidential records should be carefully identified as such and retained securely; for example Pastoral Care Committee and Nominations Committee Minutes. Access should be restricted to a Clerk and Elder; Clerk and RM Archivist; or Elder and RM Archivist together to ensure record keeping due diligence and privacy of the records. The Retention Schedule will identify a suitable Restricted Access period in order to retain the privacy of the records.

Friends are reminded to use the standard email addresses XXXX@quakersaustralia.info for all communications regarding AYM administrative matters and business.

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5) 5.3.7.3 Wording for the Australian Friend committee not to be hosted by a RM and to become a committee of AYM.

Issue: The Australian Friend has been hosted by NSW RM since 2010. In DiA for YM 2020 the committee wrote that it would lay down its responsibility at YM 2020 but would continue until YM2021 if no other RM came forward to host the AF. AYM nominations committee had been informed beforehand.

No RM has come forward to host the AF. At YM2021, individual Friends from other RMs were encouraged to consider serving on the AF committee. During 2021 two such Friends came forward and this new arrangement with Friends from different RMs is working well, probably aided by our increased reliance on electronic communications due to Covid.

There is no such category of an AYM committee “in the care of AYM”. AYM committees are “representative”, “expert or temporary working groups”, “hosted” by a RM or specific AYM committees such as Standing Committee and AYM Nominations committee (5.3.7)

At 5.3.7 the Children’s and Junior Young Friends committee is also mentioned as a hosted committee. This committee has had members from different RMs for some years.

The AF committee and the AYM Nominations committee agree with the new proposed entry at 5.3.7.3

Proposal: *“The Australian Friend Committee is a committee in the care of AYM. Such a committee can have members from different Regional Meetings. The names of the committee members can be brought forward by the AYM or a RM nominations committee.”*

If this change for the AF committee is acceptable to Friends, the handbook revision committee, together with the Publications Committee will find a suitable way to make this change in the handbook and also include the Children’s and JYF committee as a committee in the care of AYM.