

## Quakers Australia Committee or Working Group Report

### Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group

**Membership of the Committee/Working Group: Peri Coleman, Gerry Fahey, David King, Elizabeth PO', David Shorthouse**

#### **Part A – Report**

##### **Progress**

1. **Travel Guidelines.** Minute 23.19 of 2023 Yearly Meeting asked for draft guidelines for travel by Australia Yearly Meeting that might also be useful to all Australian Friends, to be submitted initially to September Standing Committee for consideration and for approval by YM 2024.

The Working Group updated and strengthened the principles adopted in 2017. The draft guidelines were adopted by Standing Committee at its meeting in September 2023. A recommendation that YM24 adopt these guidelines is included in Part B of this report.

2. **Action Plan – For Our Home (Adopted at YM23, accessible at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/speciesandclimate/climate-action-plan-australia-yearly-meeting>).** The Working Group also progressed its main work by adding to the seven Action Statements agreed to at YM23 with more detailed actions that could be taken by Meetings and individuals. Some of those actions are ones that our Australia-wide, Regional and Local Meetings can take. Individual Friends have lifetimes of experience that will have fitted them for different actions. We hope this part of the plan will provide every Friend with ideas on what they can contribute to our response to the crises facing the Earth today. The completed Action Plan – For Our Home is recommended for adoption in Part B (B) below.
3. **The Working Group** held regular meetings by Zoom to complete its work. Two Workshops (by Zoom) were held in November and February. They were well attended and helpful in completing the documents. Jude Pembleton (QldRM) edited the draft text. Minutes of the Working Group meetings were circulated to Regional Meetings via RM Correspondents.
4. **The Working Group** authorised financial support to two Friends to attend the “Leading through Collapse” course run by Jem Bendell and Katie Carr.

##### **Issues (if any)**

1. The Working Group was established for the period from YM21 to YM24 and has completed its work. However Quaker concern about the climate emergency and species extinction will continue within Australia, the region and world-wide.

Friends need to consider how best to bear witness to our Earthcare testimony for example: “What needs to change to better respond to these emergencies?”, “What support is needed to facilitate such changes?”, “How do we report these changes and hold each other accountable for necessary changes?”

2. Adopting an Action Plan should not be the end of this work, but the beginning of implementing our commitment. Reporting on progress by Meetings and individuals may be the next step in our journey.
3. Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC). Gerry Fahey (VRM) has accepted membership of ARRCC’s Management Committee. WG proposes that Quakers Australia pays an annual subscription to ARRCC, and any arrears that appear to be due.

## **Part B Items for consideration by Standing Committee or Yearly Meeting Business Meeting**

**This report includes three documents and one other item for consideration by Australia Yearly Meeting. The text of**

### **1. Travel Guidelines**

The Travel Guidelines were adopted by Standing Committee in September 2023 following referral by YM23 Minute 23.19. Accordingly, the Travel Guidelines are included in Part B for approval by YM24 (see full text below).

### **2. Action Plan – For Our Home**

The now completed Action Plan is proposed for adoption in full by Yearly Meeting 2024. The plan comprises two parts:

**Part 1: Action Plan – For Our Home - adopted by YM23 (but now re-presented with some amendments (see below)).**

**Part 2: Appendix 1 Background and References - adopted by YM23 (No change is proposed).**

**Appendix 2 Carrying out the Plan – Seven Action Themes adopted by YM23 each with two groups of Proposed Actions for each Action Theme (new text for consideration by YM24 - see below).**

**The Working Group proposes that the amendment to Part 1 Action Plan - For Our Home, and Appendix 2 be adopted in full at Yearly Meeting 2024, thus completing the Action Plan – For Our Home.**

### **3. On-going witness to our Earthcare Testimony.**

**The Working Group asks:** How do Regional Meetings and individual Friends wish to proceed following completion of the tasks given to the Working Group, including Reporting on Implementing our Action Plan?

We propose establishment of a **Quakers Australia Earth Witness and Action Committee** (see proposed scope for this below).

4. **Subscription to Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC).**

We propose that Quakers Australia pay an annual subscription to ARRCC, and any arrears that appear to be due.

# 1. Travel guidelines adopted by Standing Committee in September 2023 (full text)

## Quakers Australia Travel Guidelines

1. This document updates and strengthens the AYM principles adopted in 2017:

- (1) avoiding unnecessary travel,
- (2) reducing the environmental and energy impact of necessary travel
- (3) offsetting the environmental and energy impact of travel that must be undertaken.

2. We must weigh up the advantages of meeting together, including the incidental exchanges that can enrich discernment and develop community, against the heavy responsibility that comes at this time of climate emergency. Proposals for travel by air, sea or land need to address the questions:

- a) Is the travel necessary, is it essential? (“essential” is “something without which we cannot do” and “necessary” is “something which is important, but we can do without it”). What impact does the proposed travel have? What options or creative ways forward are there, including reducing the number of meetings? Are there any ways of achieving the intended purpose without travel? (That is, including consideration of other means of communicating are available)?
- b) If travel is found to be necessary, can additional tasks or opportunities be taken, to ensure the maximum benefit is obtained from the travel?
- c) Is there a role for a Clearness or Threshing Meeting to assist discernment? This is particularly relevant to non-tangible outcomes (Handbook ref 1.6 & 1.7).
- d) If travel is to be undertaken, lower-carbon alternatives need to be adopted (e.g. coach, car, train, vehicle share, electric vehicle). Consideration of the traveller's well-being may be a relevant factor.
- e) Where a Friend or group has a stop in their minds about travelling, how does AYM accommodate this into the meeting arrangements?
- f) What offset or other mitigation measures are to be taken for the travel?

3. Quakers Australia will pay the cost of offsetting or other mitigation measures for travel taken on its behalf and will ask all QA Committees and Regional Meetings to adopt the same practice and to report these costs in their financial statements.

Offsetting and/or mitigation measures must use projects that are certifiable (or have a well-documented alternative), support carbon draw-down and/or recovery of biodiversity, or assist vulnerable communities take verifiable measures that mitigate the impacts of climate change.

4. Australian Quakers will endeavour to organise or schedule all meetings and events with due consideration for minimising or offsetting climate impacts (dates, locations, frequencies, hybrid or zoom only).

5. Hold in prayerful consideration proposals to travel that do not readily fit into our guidelines, particularly where difficult decisions need to be made.

6. These guidelines will be reviewed after two or three years (e.g. if appropriate less carbon intensive modes of travel become available). Standing Committee accepts these guidelines and we ask that they be promoted amongst Friends. (SC2023.09.06:)

Available:<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/speciesandclimate/guidelines-travel-australia-yearly-meeting>

## **2(A). Proposed amendment to Part 1 Action Plan - For Our Home (previously adopted by YM23)**

**After considering a response from the First Nations Peoples Concerns Committee (FNPPCC) CESE WG proposes to change the heading, order and text of one of the seven Taking Action Themes. The proposed new text is shown immediately following the original text and has been italicised and in bold.**

### **Taking Action**

#### **Public Witness and Action**

Australian Quakers will put our beliefs into action through advocacy, direct action, and public witness. Australia Yearly Meeting will regularly speak as a body on specific issues and possible legislation relating to addressing climate change and loss of biodiversity.

AYM will specifically speak out about the fact that the burden of climate change falls disproportionately on poor and minority communities and countries less-developed than Australia. Regional and Local Meetings, worshipping groups and individuals will work together to develop effective voices to be heard by national, state and local governments. We will broaden our collaboration with all Friends' organisations throughout Australia, the Asia/Pacific region and globally. We commit to working with the diversity of religious and secular groups such as the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change and local Councils of Churches, as well as with community groups that are committed to addressing the climate crisis and truth and justice in this world. Friends will also engage in situations where support for direct action is appropriate.

#### **Education and Mentoring**

We commit to reaching a shared understanding of the causes and costs of the climate crisis and biodiversity collapse and the urgency of our situation.

Ongoing learning about and openness to new and emergent information is our wish for all Australian Quakers.

AYM will support those members with particular knowledge of Climate Change and Eco-Justice issues to provide online information, webinars, workshops and travelling ministry. Regional and Local Meeting members will access and activate those resources to increase their awareness of the needs and opportunities to actively respond to the climate catastrophe.

## **Righting our Relationship with the Earth**

Right relationship with the earth speaks to our belonging to the land, this earth, wherever we are, and thus our responsibility to and care for the earth. We will reduce our impact on the earth, as individuals and as a community, by such means as making changes to our property and finding ways to use less energy in all aspects of life. We recognise that making significant reduction in carbon emissions and consumption of resources also requires us taking action for systemic change.

## **Original agreed to at YM23**

### **Listening to & Support for First Nations Peoples**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities are already speaking out about the likely impact of climate change on their communities., but also have a lot to teach us about care for country, sustainable relationships with the planet, and those people around us. We need to listen to their wisdom and walk hand in hand with them. First Nations Peoples may teach newcomers much.

## **Proposed NEW HEADING and TEXT:**

### ***Hearing and supporting First Nations Peoples***

***Original Australians have experienced and been aware of their cultural, community and personal dis-Integration from Land and Country (total environment) of which they were and still are part since the long-hidden so-called frontier wars. These were spiritual and personal advocacies for the Land and conscious resistances to colonialism, which we recognise was itself the primary setter of the conditions for the climate and extinctions emergencies. Original Australians have tried many ways to counter these emergencies. Very recently the Uluru Statement from the Heart sought that all Australians walk together to repair that which has been damaged by colonialism.***

***Together we are all becoming aware, vocal and active about the climate and extinction emergencies. There is so much we can do together to care for and heal Country and Planet, to live sustainably and equitably together, and with the Land and Earth. Over 65 living millennia of adaptive experience have given Original Australians insights and ways***

*of being and doing that have endured, and they continue to seek a mutually inclusive way forward, including their collective discernments of commonalities between Christian and First Nations spirituality in February 2024. We Other Australians have much to learn from them, and with deep listening we can understand and apply our shared knowledges and insights as one, so that the Earth and humanity can endure and thrive.*

**No change to the remaining Action statements is proposed.**

### **Putting our finances to work**

We recognise the effects our collective banking, purchasing and investing choices (particularly in relation to fossil fuel investments either via direct investment or through superannuation) have on climate change and biodiversity loss, and act accordingly. We can effect positive change, perhaps by supporting organisations and individuals who are taking action.

### **Mourning Loss & Instilling Hope**

We recognise that bold work at all levels of our Quaker organisation to address this crisis requires spiritual grounding, recognition of ongoing loss and building of resilient communities, both of faith and location, growing and nurturing our connections.

### **Repairing Earth**

Those Friends with particular knowledge of environmental restoration, regenerative farming or other skills that contribute to earth repair will provide, and be encouraged to share, online information, webinars, workshops and travelling ministry for all of us. Regional and Local Meetings and their members will commit to making use of those resources to help mitigate the climate emergency and biodiversity loss at the local scale.

### **2(B). New Text – Appendix 2 - Proposed Action Statements for each Action Theme (not yet adopted, for consideration at YM24)**

#### **Appendix 2: Action Statements (Carrying out the Plan)**

The CESE Working Group was asked at YM21 to develop an action plan (Action Plan - For Our Home) to lay out Australia Yearly Meeting's response to the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction crises. That plan provides a framework for action under seven main themes.

The plan was developed after many years of increasing concern, and that background is laid out in Appendix 1 - Background and references.

This second appendix contains the actions we can take. There are many actions that could be taken by Meetings and individuals, for each of the

seven themes in the Action Plan. Some of those actions are ones that our Australia-wide, Regional and Local Meetings will take. Individual Friends have lifetimes of experience that will have fitted them for different actions. We hope this part of the plan will provide every Friend with ideas on what they can contribute to our response to the crises facing the Earth today.

To tie these actions back to the Action Themes approved in 2023, we have introduced them in sections with the relevant portion of the previously agreed Action Themes, shaded grey.

## **Taking Action (Public Witness and Action)**

Australian Quakers will put our beliefs into action through advocacy, direct action, and public witness. Australia Yearly Meeting will regularly speak as a body on specific issues and possible legislation relating to addressing climate change and loss of biodiversity.

AYM will specifically speak out about the fact that the burden of climate change falls disproportionately on poor and minority communities and countries less-developed than Australia. Regional and Local Meetings, worshipping groups and individuals will work together to develop effective voices to be heard by national, state and local governments. We will broaden our collaboration with all Friends' organisations throughout Australia, the Asia/Pacific region and globally. We commit to working with the diversity of religious and secular groups such as the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change and local Councils of Churches, as well as with community groups that are committed to addressing the climate crisis and truth and justice in this world. Friends will also engage in situations where support for direct action is appropriate.

### **Group 1: Quaker corporate actions and responsibilities**

- Quakers Australia regularly speaks as a body on specific issues and possible legislation relating to addressing climate change and loss of biodiversity. Quakers Australia acknowledges the fact that the burden of climate change falls disproportionately on poor and minority communities and countries less-developed than Australia, and works towards addressing this. Recognition of the special place pacific island nations face will be a particular focus.
- The Quakers Australia Clerk and Coordinator will speak on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, using this responsibility to support our climate emergency and biodiversity witness. They will collaborate with those who have specific and relevant expertise in our Meetings and the wider community.
- Regional and Local Meetings, worshipping groups and individuals will work together to develop clear spirit-led voices to be heard by national, state and local governments on these issues.



- We will strive to broaden and deepen our collaboration with all Friends' organisations in Australia, the Asia/Pacific region and globally on these issues. We commit to working with the diversity of religious and secular groups such as the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change and local Councils of Churches, the Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility, Market Forces, and other organisations including community groups that are committed to addressing the climate crisis and truth and justice in the world.
- Effective Friends' advocacy will focus on governments at all levels and on community groups. Quakers Australia will seek to ensure that the work of all its committees and initiatives are coordinated, and so help mobilise Friends to actively contribute to national climate policy campaigns. The Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee (QPLC) addresses some Australian policy but little, thus far, on the climate emergency and biodiversity loss.
- Quakers Australia will use its communication opportunities to encourage Meetings and Friends to engage in public witness, such as advocacy, nonviolent direct action, and demonstration. Making our Meeting Houses available for community activities may be a way to facilitate this. Note: ARRCC is an example of a faith-based group carrying out focused outreach and direct action campaigns. Extinction Rebellion (XR) is a civil society group that is well-organised, committed to non-violent direct action (NVDA) and provides training for Friends who may be taking part in direct action for the first time.
- Friends can gather their individual voices together to advocate for specific changes, through making their beliefs known in support of campaigns for change and through participating in action. Each Meeting may decide to share publicly the work they engage in and speak to local, regional and national climate change concerns.
- Meetings can encourage Friends to participate beyond words in demonstrations and direct action. Where appropriate Meetings should also coordinate with the activities of local environmental groups. This means having connections with those groups, online or in person.

### **Group 2: Actions more applicable to individual Friend actions**

- Friends will engage in situations where support for direct action may be appropriate. Friends may also feel that the urgency of an injustice compels them to take part in public action, ranging from silent vigil, public assembly to civil disobedience. In some cases, pressure groups can act in tandem with others lobbying for change. Financial

support for young Friends or other fellow-travellers under this concern will be considered a high priority.

- Friends who have undertaken direct-action witness as part of their concerns, whether for peace or supporting refugees or other, will be encouraged to share their experiences and to participate in providing training for other Friends.
- We must consider how our testimonies interact to describe a wholeness, and so activate our work to integrate discernment, responses (vigils, statements and outreach), and advocacy.

## **Education and Mentoring**

We commit to reaching a shared understanding of the causes and costs of the climate crisis and biodiversity collapse and the urgency of our situation. Ongoing learning about and openness to new and emergent information is our wish for all Australian Quakers.

AYM will support those members with particular knowledge of Climate Change and Eco-Justice issues to provide online information, webinars, workshops and travelling ministry. Regional and Local Meeting members will access and activate those resources to increase their awareness of the needs and opportunities to actively respond to the climate catastrophe.

### **Group 1: Quaker corporate actions and responsibilities**

- Quakers Australia uses its communication opportunities to encourage meetings and Friends to engage in public witness, such as advocacy, nonviolent direct action, and demonstration. This may include sharing knowledge and experience with Friends.
- Quaker educational communities such as Silver Wattle, The Friends School and Quaker Service Australia (QSA) are encouraged to support Individual Friends and Meetings to mitigate and adapt to the twin crises of climate change and species extinction.
- Training programs and educational materials and tools that can be used by Friends will be placed in an electronic resource library. These would include resources relevant to individuals and groups of all ages and stages of life. Training materials that have been developed by Friends' overseas (for example Quaker United Nations Office, Britain Yearly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting) will be included, to reduce the amount of work required to develop such materials, and to celebrate the wealth of Quaker insight and experience available.

- Special events and groups can be created and offered with a focus on climate change and species extinction. In addition, there are learning and training opportunities offered by other organisations which our Regional Meetings can publicise and attend together to support our communal understanding.
- Quakers Australia urges Friends with expertise in understanding and mitigating climate change issues to mentor other Friends via workshops/online webinars and other means.
- Training in, and practical support for, non-violent direct action and associated contributions will need to be offered to Australian Friends by those who have the expertise and resources to do so. Quaker Meeting Houses are places where climate action and resilience to climate change can be demonstrated.

### **Group 2: Actions more applicable to individual Friend actions**

- Information about the availability and value of Clearness Meetings and Threshing Sessions as a support for discernment in decisions about actions and leadings is available amongst Friends.
- Friends in Meetings are urged to create opportunities to share with one another their own learning, experiences, and the resources that support them. Some Meetings have formed 'climate cafes' and have book clubs on climate themes. Some have established local Quaker Environment networks.
- Friends are urged to become familiar with their chosen resources for understanding why and how to take effective action, also to clarify and identify when and how they will learn together. One example is the Climate Action Network webinars hosted by FWCC AWPS bringing together Friends across the Asia West Pacific Region for understanding and support.
- Understanding and accepting the truth and sincerity of the warnings given to us by scientists and other experts is critical to stirring actions in all parts of the Australian community. We encourage Friends to use the CESEWG website (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/speciesandclimate>) which will be updated regularly.

### **Righting our Relationship with the Earth**

Right relationship with the earth speaks to our belonging to the land, this earth, wherever we are, and thus our responsibility to and care for the earth. We will reduce our impact on the earth, as individuals and as a community, by such means as making changes to our property and finding ways to use

less energy in all aspects of life. We recognise that making significant reduction in carbon emissions and consumption of resources also requires us taking action for systemic change.

### **Group 1: Quaker corporate actions and responsibilities**

- Quakers Australia (QA) will, through an organisational-wide focus on these issues, endeavour to identify and support those members with particular knowledge of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Eco-Justice issues to help facilitate structural shifts in our Meetings. This may be provided as online information, webinars, workshops and travelling ministry.
- Travel by or on behalf of QA and assistance to do so, will be consistent with the QA travel guidelines adopted by Standing Committee in September 2023.  
(<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/speciesandclimate/guidelines-travel-australia-yearly-meeting>).
- QA (CESE) web pages are available as a location for resources and tools to help Local and Regional Meetings assess their carbon footprints, if they have not already, and then move toward net zero as fast as possible.
- QA will keep under continuous review ways in which our expenditure and activities impact on the climate and biodiversity emergencies. We must regularly consider how our actions match our concerns and commitments to actions, as well as our support for young people and others who may be taking action on our behalf.
- Meetings are urged to assess, monitor and where possible reduce the carbon footprint of all their operations from property management, to travel, to materials and services used. This is a step-by-step process of organisational clarity and commitment, like having a heading for every project that reminds the decision-makers of the planetary repercussions of every purchasing decision. The results of these actions can be reported annually at the Yearly Meeting.

### **Group 2: Actions more applicable to individual Friend actions**

- Individual Friends are encouraged to commit themselves to both mitigate and adapt to the twin crises of climate change and species extinction, as a priority in their lives. There is a wide range of ways in which Friends can reduce the climate and biodiversity impacts of their lifestyles. These include: reducing water usage in our homes and gardens; reducing consumption of material goods through recycling, repairing and re-using them before or instead of replacing

them; seeking ways to share items rather than assuming individual ownership; reducing the impacts of travel by asking ourselves ‘is the travel essential or even necessary’ and ‘are options available that will have a lower carbon impact’.

- As a faith community we are called to live into our witness and be examples in the world. We can develop and grow our witness at home and in our communities by reducing our carbon footprint through living simply and reducing our use of resources, including electricity, water and travel. This can start with an audit of our current and expected emissions, using available online tools. Then a plan for staged transition can be mapped out and progressively implemented.
- Growing our appreciation of, respect for, and knowledge about the natural world around us is an important task before us. Friends can join local community groups learning about, caring for and restoring natural habitat. We can also develop biodiverse home gardens and Meeting House grounds that all help us to reconnect with the natural world we are part of and depend upon.

## **Putting our finances to work**

We recognise the effects our collective banking, purchasing and investing choices (particularly in relation to fossil fuel investments either via direct investment or through superannuation) have on climate change and biodiversity loss, and act accordingly. We can effect positive change, perhaps by supporting organisations and individuals who are taking action.

### **Group 1: Quaker corporate actions and responsibilities**

- Meetings’ spending, savings, banking and other investments will all be assessed and reviewed to align them with the agenda of addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. As mentioned previously, this is a step-by-step process of seeing clearly how our resources are utilised now, and making positive change in the world by progressive adjustments.
- QA and Regional Meetings’ (RM) annual budgets will reflect the suggestions made in this document. That may require a shift in the reporting and auditing requirements, for example, expenditure and offset arrangements for travel.
- QA will encourage associated organisations to follow similar processes.
- QA should provide information to employees about superannuation funds that operate responsible climate policies.

- QA and RM funding committees are urged to draw on the Action Plan to guide discernment in the decision making for distribution of funds through contributions and grants.

### **Group 2: Actions more applicable to individual Friend actions**

- We encourage individual Friends and their families to assess and review their spending, savings, superannuation and other investments to align them with the agenda of addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.
- Those Friends with expertise in divestment will be encouraged to provide training and/or support for Friends who wish to change their banking and superannuation investments.
- Friendly support through these changes, informally or through Meetings, can be a great help, a reminder to persist and be kind to yourself and others through the process. Perhaps a 'planning and accountability buddy' can help progress change.

## **Mourning Loss & Instilling Hope**

We recognise that bold work at all levels of our Quaker organisation to address this crisis requires spiritual grounding, recognition of ongoing loss and building of resilient communities, both of faith and location, growing and nurturing our connections.

### **Group 1: Quaker corporate actions and responsibilities**

- Our ongoing recommendation is that all Meetings for Worship for Business, Committees, and groups within Quakers Australia place on their agendas the standing item for “speaking to the climate emergency and species extinction”. This can be for sharing solutions and stories of good news, or more challenging information depending on the group’s composition and focus. This item acknowledges the overwhelm and denial that may exist, and meets it clearly without shirking our essential and continuing responsibility. Examples of this item are currently found in Canberra and Region RM (CRRM) and West Australia RM (WARM) Meetings, which place this item at the top of their monthly business meeting agendas. Other examples provide an opportunity for worship sharing around this topic, so Friends have a chance to feel heard, to speak about difficult subjects of concern, and our communities allow a space for that conversation to grow.

- As part of our corporate commitment to addressing climate change and biodiversity loss, we must find ways to engage in space for grief, mourning and fear, and also to discover hope in the face of climate change. Across our Meetings are Friends in mourning who will need support and encouragement to find hope and a renewed spirit for action – they may be experiencing paralysis, fearful of what may come, or disheartened by the difficulty of making meaningful change. As a community, we need to find ways to mourn what has been lost while celebrating and protecting that of nature which remains. This may include organised visits to sites of disaster or degradation, learning about the situation there, and discerning how to acknowledge or respond to the story of that place or event in caring ways.
- Shifting baselines, where we have incremental loss over periods longer than a person's lifetime, lure us into accepting declining standards or conditions. While First Nations' experience and stories may help us find a doorway to growing our connection with the lands we dwell on, we must develop an understanding of the history of our landscapes and the damage we have done (see also Repairing Earth and Listening to and Support for First Nations People).
- Encourage Meetings and Friends to offer spaces/time, such as worship sharing and workshops where we can share our grief and support each other. Attending the Quaker Earthcare Witness (US) worship sharing sessions, and 'Work That Reconnects' sessions offered by Friends and others, and following a local river walk process such as undertaken by WARM are some ways of doing this.
- Our experience of big feelings is part of this changing and challenging environment and we need to ensure we are creating space to allow the depth of feelings, our connection to the earth and natural processes, and the presence of God. Writing supportive and encouraging letters from our Meetings to organisations that are acting boldly and decisively for the benefit of our world is one way to put those feelings into a creative activity that may bring transformation.
- Quaker support for our regional neighbours to adapt will be an increasing concern of our service and aid work. SafeGround has estimated that climate-driven migration will soon overtake all other drivers that displace people. QA will support Friends and programs with specific skills in community-based refugee resettlement. Climate refugees (Pacific Islanders and others) need our support and help including lobbying the Australian government to allow them to become permanent residents.

- Friends will support Quaker work in the world's multinational forums and organisations established to address emerging environmental crises. We see this as an inspiring thread of connecting local Meetings to the wider Quaker world. 'Service work' applies to Quaker support for Australian national action, and also QSA work. Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva and New York are creatively and actively engaged with United Nations and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change work, along with many others in Yearly Meetings around the world, all of whom need encouragement and support.
- Many Quakers are caring for children, and inevitably their futures will bring privations and difficulties as a result of the planetary emergencies: we cannot know what will be needed for the next 100 years. QA and RM responses to parents and children's meetings will include shared supportive resources and strategies to help ease some of the pressures of emotional and other hardships. For example, Safe Quaker Communities and committees responsible for children may need to review some of their processes and policies.
- Meetings can support local groups with a variety of resources including venues and contacts in the community.

### **Group 2: Actions more applicable to individual Friend actions**

- We are not alone in this work, and friendship is of great support. Joining with like-minded individuals, neighbourhoods and other faith communities can help us to strengthen our actions, share concerns and grief, and grow mutual support amongst us.
- Friends who are actively engaging with climate change and biodiversity issues are encouraged to bring their experience back to their Meetings in the form of writings or share-and-tells, and also to utilise support groups, clearness and threshing meetings. These forms of encouragement and succour from Meetings may help sustain us all, preventing burnout, and deepening our connections with each other.
- The impacts of climate change fall hardest on those least able to adapt and weather the storm. Building resilient communities takes time and skill: some Friends may be called to do the work of ensuring strong communities, local food and housing security, or other services for people in their local communities. Supporting such initiatives as community gardens brings great benefit even to those who are not highly skilled, as does taking part in the sharing economy, community art projects, serving on community associations, and home visiting in the local community.



- Friends with grant application writing skills may be led to work with local communities to identify potential sources of financial support for local projects that will grow resilience, for example supporting community owned renewable power projects, or organising bulk-buy discounts for specific communities where numbers of people wish to undertake home insulation or water conservation retrofitting.
- Being involved with community gardens as well as food-sharing and land-sharing programs in our neighbourhoods enhances and encourages the use of the land we and our Meetings occupy. This may be to grow food for the benefit of our community, biodiversity conservation or habitat rewilding.
- As individuals, Friends can be welcoming to those forced to relocate to Australia and elsewhere in the face of environmental changes, food shortages, and climate-related natural disasters.

## Repairing Earth

Those Friends with particular knowledge of environmental restoration, regenerative farming or other skills that contribute to earth repair will provide, and be encouraged to share, online information, webinars, workshops and travelling ministry for all of us. Regional and Local Meetings and their members will commit to making use of those resources to help mitigate the climate emergency and biodiversity loss at the local scale.

### **Group 1: Quaker corporate actions and responsibilities**

- Meetings and Friends can lobby governments to provide more significant financial support for widespread habitat protection, restoration and connectivity works. We can lobby both for increases to grant funding used by local Landcare and Coastcare groups, as well as lobbying for a nationwide, paid program of landscape-scaled revegetation of our degraded and cleared lands, providing employment for local people in rural and remote areas.
- We can work with local Landcare and other groups to restore and enlarge our local areas of natural habitat. We can participate in schemes designed to re-generate native vegetation through paying to off-set energy used in households and travel.
- At the local government and State/Territory scale, we can investigate, support, and join with the work of local government biodiversity officers and organisations such as regional landscape or natural resource management authorities, and discover what rewilding is happening in our cities, suburbs and beyond.

- Our Meeting's premises occupy land and are responsible for its care and sustainable management. Their gardens and grounds can be adapted to provide biodiverse spaces that can assist heating and cooling for our buildings, grow food for our plates or for sharing, and sustain a more ecologically appropriate urban environment.
- Meetings are encouraged to include a standing agenda item in their regular Meetings for Worship for Business for the consideration of any insights gained or work undertaken to meet the developing climate emergency and species extinction events. Minutes of record are then available for a report to Yearly Meeting on progress with implementing this plan.
- As inhabitants of this earth and often unaware of the natural processes around us, we are likely to be unaware of the incremental loss of biodiversity over periods longer than a person's lifetime. This can lure us into accepting declining standards or conditions (shifting baselines) as being normal. We must develop an understanding of the history of our landscapes to rebuild and re-wild, connecting the landscape and restoring habitats. First Nations understandings are essential to this and where possible should be gratefully acknowledged and used.

### **Group 2: Actions more applicable to individual Friend actions**

- Friends with grant application writing skills can work with local habitat restoration groups to identify potential sources of financial support for local restoration projects.
- We all occupy land and are responsible for its well-being. Gardens and grounds can be adapted to provide biodiverse spaces that can assist heating and cooling for our buildings, grow food for our plates or for sharing, and sustain a more ecologically appropriate urban environment.

**Note if the text for the next Action Statement is changed (as presented above) then the newly agreed text will replace this Action Statement (shaded) and the order of Action Statements will change as agreed to previously.**

### **Listening to & Support for First Nations Peoples**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities are already speaking out about the likely impact of climate change on their communities, but also have a lot to teach us about care for country, sustainable living, relationships with the planet and those people around us. We need to**

**listen to their wisdom and walk hand in hand with them. First Nations Peoples may teach newcomers much.**

**Group 1: Quaker corporate actions and responsibilities**

- By seeking out and becoming aware of the effects and impacts of the colonial origins and developments of what we now know as the Australian nation, we can develop action perspectives that are focused on cooperation with Earth and each other, rather than exploitation, competition and exclusion. This dynamic is the essence of countering the climate and extinction emergencies.
- In February 2024 many First Nations Christian spiritual leaders came together in Naarm (Melbourne) to discern and frame their collective understandings of spirituality. The outcomes have very strong overlaps and resonances with Quaker spirituality and testimonies. We are encouraged to consider and align with the truths that speak to living sustainably in the ever-evolving creation that is the Earth.
- By seeking and growing relationships with First Nations Peoples including through their environment groups we have opportunities to support their concerns and together build better and stronger recoveries for Earth. By engaging with indigenous ‘green’ businesses, funds, and activities, Meetings can pro-actively help to heal the harms of colonialism and its attendant racism, as well as addressing Earth sustainability.
- Lobbying government is a very important way of supporting First Nations people, to right the wrongs of colonisation. For example, as Native Title is granted, appropriate recompense needs to be made to Traditional Owners for the degraded lands that are returned to them to manage and recover. These funds need to be sufficient to allow for any existing or remaining contamination of the land to be remediated and for the habitats of the land’s non-human residents to be restored.
- We urge Quaker Meetings to “Pay the Rent” for the land they occupy or meet on in the spirit of the first two dot points above. This is a considered collective way to acknowledge the thousands of generations who have cared for and been dispossessed from the Lands we meet on. Sharing our relative wealth derived from colonialism is an important early awareness step for Earth and relationship repair. Amounts and calculations may vary between Meetings, with the Rent funds being distributed to First Nations organisations and individuals for their chosen purposes. Suggested reading <https://australianfriend.org/pay-the-rent/>

## **Group 2: Actions more applicable to individual Friend actions**

- Where local Traditional Owners offer the opportunity to be and work with them in the restoration of their lands, we encourage Friends to accept this. Friends can seek out and learn indigenous knowledge about Country, for example landscape fire practice, habitat biodiversity, bio-chronology and bio-climatology. Such broadened understandings can support and generate better management priorities and practices in urban, rural and remote areas.
- There is much Indigenous knowledge about biodiversity, landscapes, waters and climate that we can all together rely on and apply. There is considerable forgotten and hidden knowledge recorded by non-Indigenous observers, and we all together have the opportunity and duty to contribute to its research and making that environmental knowledge widely available to be jointly and fully applied.
- We ask Friends to “Pay the Rent” on the land and dwellings they occupy and own in a manner consistent with that suggested for Quaker corporate actions at the fifth dot point above, or instead to make an additional contribution to their Meeting’s payment.

## **(3) Quakers Australia Earth Witness and Action Committee**

*Australian Quakers need to have shared oversight of the way forward but if we assume that someone else is looking after our commitment to this work, the work will slip through the cracks.*

*We suggest:*

A QA committee, Quakers Australia Earth Witness and Action Committee (EWAC), is established to have oversight of this plan, working closely with the Presiding Clerk, other Committees, all Regional Meetings and Friends across Australia. The Committee will be made up of Friends from each RM and special groups, YFs, JYFs. The QA ARRCC representative could be a member.

The focus of the EWAC will be on making sure Friends and Meetings are addressing and carrying out the plan and drawing Friends’ attention to the wider implications of our impact on the whole Earth community. The Committee will build communications across all Meetings and support systems for those Friends who are taking action under the care of their Meetings. The Committee can draw on the Earthcare Fund for this work. This Committee would be responsible for ongoing work on the plan, oversight of Friends engaged by QA (e.g: an Earthcare worker or Friend travelling under concern) and updating the web and other resources.

The EWAC will work to develop an Earth Witness process in all QA Committees and Regional Meetings. This can be based on the 'Green Voice' model' developed by Ireland YM: *"For either the appointment of a committee or a Green Voice, a background in ecology or environmental science is helpful but not necessary. The goal of these roles is not to solve all the sustainability concerns of the Meeting, but to help identify them and encourage action from across all the levels of our Society. A keen interest in preventing climate breakdown is more than sufficient, as this is what we should hope to inspire in everyone.*

*Ideally, the end result of any eco-group or committee should be to have the entire Meeting included in its membership and to focus everyone towards tackling climate breakdown and widespread biodiversity losses. In fact, if the Meeting can achieve a point where it is active and ambitious in implementing its sustainability plan and integrating it into every aspect of its business, a committee or Green Voice may not be needed at all."*  
(<https://quakers-in-ireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/regenerating-our-common-home.pdf>)

Close relationships with other groups inside and outside Friends are critical, including: FNPCC, QPLC, ARRCC, Faith Ecology Network, NCCA-ACET and others.

Until the Earth Witness and Action Committee is appointed by YM, the CESEWG could continue to operate with a focus on carrying out the plan and coordinating Friends and Meetings across Australia.

