

EXTRACT: DOCUMENTS IN ADVANCE 2023

Appendix 2: Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group – Draft Action Plan

ACTION PLAN - FOR OUR HOME

Australian Quakers respond to climate emergency & species extinction

Call to Action

As people of faith, seekers of the truth, and kin to all life on earth, we must act with urgency to prevent further suffering and destruction of our planet and to repair the damage already evident. We urge everyone involved with AYM to actively undertake this leading and to help halt the destruction of life on this sacred earth.

Background:

Throughout our history, Friends have responded to that of God in every person by working to relieve suffering. Our shared experience of how we have been called to live in the world is expressed in our testimonies. As the climate crisis causes untold suffering, contributes to instability and injustice, and ultimately threatens all life on earth, all our testimonies demand that we act now.

Friends' spiritual and historic commitments in relation to our place upon, and responsibility to care for, the Earth were foundational in our work and we encourage Friends to explore our Society's previous responses, in our first appendix, "Background and Reference Documents".

Our second appendix "Action Statements" provides specific actions within each theme of the Action Plan, that can be taken by individuals, Local and Regional Meetings and Australia Yearly Meeting.

What is this Action Plan?

This action plan is in response to a request from Australia Yearly Meeting to the AYM Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group, that they design, develop and drive a national Australian Friends' action plan to address the climate emergency and species extinction. The plan should build upon AYM's earlier statements: the 2008 Quaker Earthcare Statement, and the YM 2019 Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Epistle. This plan sets out the ways and means for all Australian Friends to carry out that commitment.

As members of the Religious Society of Friends, we witness the truth of our times. In this moment, we recognise we are facing an existential crisis that requires more than individual actions. In the last few years and across the Australian continent we are experiencing the growing crisis: the catastrophic 2019 fires in eastern Australia, repeated flooding from several La Nina events, the issue of water justice in the Murray-Darling basin and biodiversity loss in many areas including our precious coral ecosystems. And, in our region the effects of sea-level rise are being felt in the Torres Strait islands and neighbouring pacific island nations. Scientists tell us that what we do in the next decade may well determine the fate of humanity. First nations peoples and social justice issues are inextricably linked to the climate and biodiversity crises; marginalised and economically disadvantaged communities suffer greater effects than those who are

buffered by privilege. Many people already suffer and call us to act. Future generations depend on us to act urgently. Knowing the enormity of this unfolding threat to our existence requires all of us to think, act and respond in new, creative and supportive ways.

Australian Friends' recognition that our world and its occupants are an "enspirited whole" helps us to meet the climate and species extinction emergencies by deeply linking our responses to our lived experiences and our testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and earthcare. We share the concerns of many people worldwide that yearn for global peace and justice. We endorse the statement by our Quaker representatives at the United Nations who say to the international community: "Our human existence is dependent on the health of the planet. Yet we exploit nature and human beings for profit over wellbeing, resulting in environmental crises that threaten the survival of our and other species. We can heal these relationships and protect future generations.

The Earth is our spaceship; its natural resources are limited. Unsustainable and unjust economic approaches are driving environmental crises, including climate change. The "global economy is almost five times the size it was half a century ago and has already been accompanied by the degradation of an estimated 60% of the world's ecosystems."

Proposed Actions

This plan stretches us beyond our past positions and actions, to attend to the long view ahead in our decision making. We will address the overarching and interdependent economic, environmental, social and political systems that drive the climate and species extinction emergencies and their associated injustices. Specifically, we are called upon to apply and expand our work in seven areas, all of which are interrelated and equal:

1. *Taking Action*
2. *Educating & Mentoring*
3. *Righting our Relationship with the Earth*
4. *Putting our Finances to Work*
5. *Mourning Loss & Instilling Hope*
6. *Repairing Earth*
7. *Listening to & Support for First Nations Peoples.*

1. Taking 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.

2. Educating & 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Mourning Loss and 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.

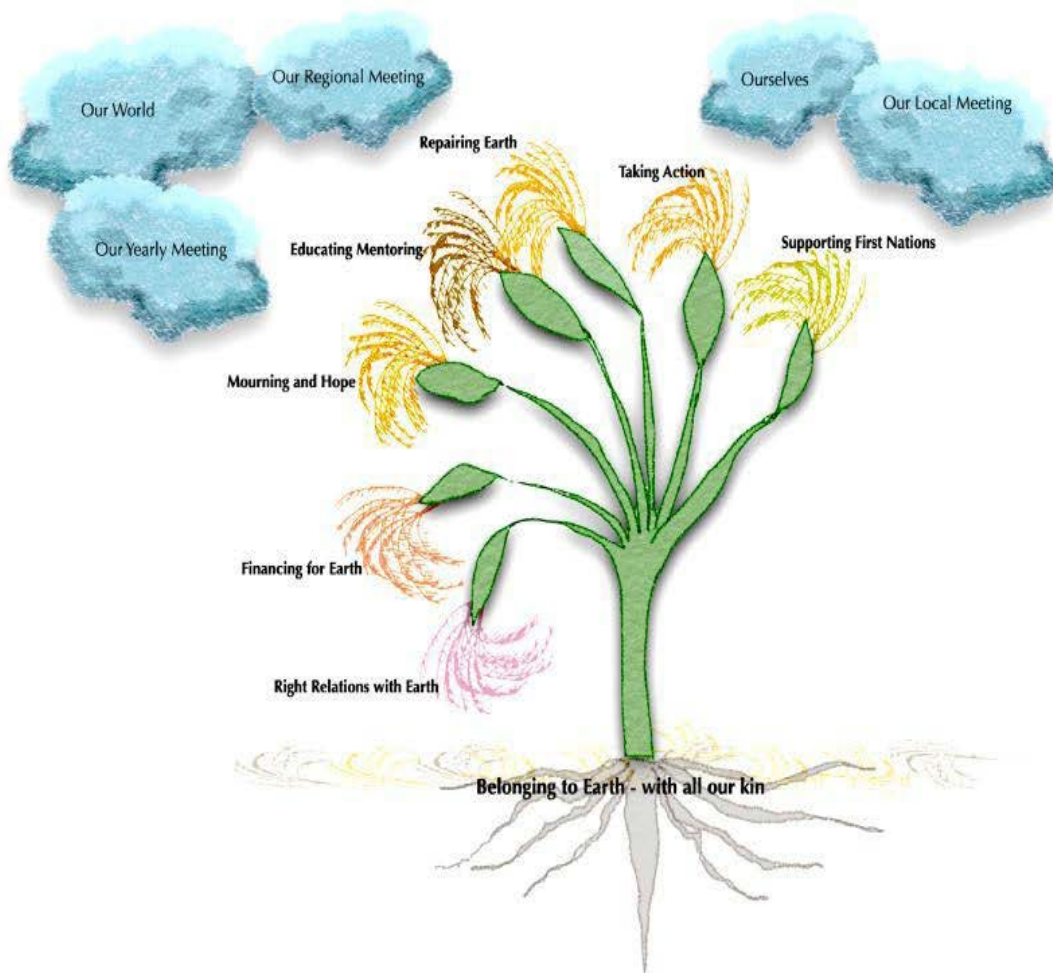
6. Repairing Earth

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.

7. 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.

[Separate documents recommend resources and activities in each of the seven focus areas, plus references.]



We are called to consider the world as an en-Spirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes.

We seek to mend what has been hurt, and to strengthen our courage to discern and bear witness to this spiritual care for the Earth.

For all we can find to inspire and keep us hopeful, we acknowledge the painful truth: we are involved in a climate emergency and extinction crisis.

In despoiling the earth we have worked against the Spirit. Friends must listen anew; and more urgently prepare to aid each other and the wider world.

*- extract from 2008
AYM Earthcare statement*

MINUTE FROM DOCUMENTS IN RETROSPECT 2023:

YM23.21: Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group Report

Yearly Meeting 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.

Yearly Meeting 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,

Yearly Meeting 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.

Yearly Meeting 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.

Yearly Meeting 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.

Yearly Meeting 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.

We hear the call for guidelines to be developed for travel for Australia Yearly Meeting.

The AYM Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group (CESE WG) sees the call for travel guidelines linking into the AYM Climate Action Plan which has now been adopted at this Yearly Meeting.

The AYM CESE WG offers to coordinate the development of draft guidelines by liaising with the Finance Committee (present and incoming), the AYM Clerk and office and other Friends with recognised skills or concerns about this matter to develop a set of guidelines that can be accepted by Standing Committee or YM and implemented by Friends.

YM hopes that the draft guidelines will be useful to all Australian Friends.

We ask that the draft guidelines be submitted initially to September Standing Committee for consideration and for approval by YM 2024.

NOTE: In Session 6 this Minute was amended. Minute YM23.21 reflects this amended wording.