

Children & Junior Young Friends Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Events

The C&JYFs Committee has met regularly through the year in cooperation with the Child Protection Committee.

Role of Coordinator

The Coordinator, Sofia Jones, assisted in planning, implementing, and reporting on the C&JYFs program for Yearly Meeting 2022. She reported that there was not a lot of support offered to run the program and low levels of interest were evident. The pandemic meant that families had been isolated, there had been few in person gatherings and over-exposure to online activities has led to reduced contact between children and JYFs at the national level. Only 7 families with young children and 2 with JYFs registered their children for Yearly Meeting. Sofia also sent out a card to the families of children and JYFs around Australia and assisted with the planning of the Easter Family Gathering at Silver Wattle. She has now completed her term and is laying down her role.

Consultation Project

At the last Yearly Meeting it was decided that the paid worker should focus on a consultation project with families to identify and consider the needs of meetings, families and young people and bring children and JYFs into the heart of the Quaker Community. A new committee took up the role of designing the project and articulating the officer/consultant role. A call for expressions of interest in the position was sent out to Regional Meetings and advertised on Quaker social media. There was not initially any interest in the position but approaches to individuals, and universities, and a second call for expressions of interest, has produced some response. We now hope to complete the project in the second half of this year.

Coming Events

On a positive note, the Easter Family Gathering is fully booked out, with a waiting list, suggesting some resurgence of energy and enthusiasm, at least for in-person events. Planning for Yearly Meeting 2023 is underway and the Children and JYFs Committee is also supporting the online Jackbox Games run by Tina Bell and her son Ryan.

Issues/Analysis

Our initial research on the consultation project suggests that Australian Quakers are not alone in experiencing a depletion of energy and participation by young people after the pandemic, and that similar problems are affecting Quakers in other countries, as well as other religious organisations. It is not just that young people are weary of online events, though this is part of the equation. Psychologists have noted a marked increase in mental health issues, especially in adolescents. For example, the Australian Psychological Society reported a 65% increase in eating disorders, as a consequence of the pandemic. Finding ways to build inclusive faith communities that can support young people is imperative.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Submitted by Committee members: *Di Bretherton (VRM), Restina Nininahazwe (SANTRM), Justine Shelton (VRM), Jenny Turton (VRM)*

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