

Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group (CESE WG) continued its work and meeting regularly, but met more frequently during 2023.

Minutes of our Meetings were made available to Regional Meeting Correspondents, who have been invaluable in growing our climate conversations. Each of our meetings commenced with a period of sharing, a reading and an acknowledgment of Country. Our period of sharing is an important part of our journey.

Our activities during 2022-2023 included:

1. The Public Statement accepted at Yearly Meeting was circulated amongst Friends and to organisations such as ARRCC and QUNO. It is available on our webpage: <https://tinyurl.com/2t3bcy7y>
2. Held a meeting with members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Climate Sprint Team to share experiences preparing a Climate Emergency statement and plan. This consultation occurred in September 2022 and greatly encouraged the CESE WG in its work. The Sprint Team generously agreed to the CESE WG using its plan as a template for an Australia Yearly Meeting Plan in any way we felt appropriate.
3. The CESE WG considered a request from ARRCC for financial support for a half-page advertisement in a major newspaper to share the Open Letter to the Prime Minister signed by over 60 Australian and Pacific signatories from religious denominations and organisations including Bruce Henry our Presiding Clerk. The CESE WG decided to contribute \$2000, and asked Regional Meetings to consider adding to this amount, as well as growing the Earthcare Fund. This support was critical in enabling the Open Letter to be published.
4. Prepared and held an online gathering for Friends to consider progress with the Action Plan being prepared by the Working Group, held in late January 2023. Planning, organisation and technical support for the gathering was greatly assisted by Emily Provance (AYM communications and media support officer). The CESE WG is grateful for Emily's support and inputs from wherever she was located and at the times that were often outside of the usual time of our meetings. Following this gathering we have revised the Overview Statement.
5. Considered, with AYM Secretary, AYM Presiding Clerk and Margaret Clark (QPLC) progress with our draft Action Plan and possible directions for the climate emergency concern for consideration by YM23. Part B of this report contains the CESE WG's recommendations for consideration by Friends. We hope that this will stimulate all Friends Meetings to undertake deep thought and discernment of the direction Friends should take to address this critical ecological crisis.
6. The Working Group has been connected to the work of the Quakers in Asia West Pacific Climate Action Network (part of the Asia West Pacific Section of the FWCC), and the Quaker Global Sustainability Network.
7. Our work continues during the lead-up to YM23. As part of this report, we attach the revised overview statement, with a Background and Reference document (**Appendix 1**). We hope to circulate a draft of Action Statements (**Appendix 2**) at our Preparatory

meeting. These can be found on our website here:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/speciesandclimate/plan-yearly-meeting-draft-documents>

Issues/Analysis

We see the need for a shift in our understanding, relationship and engagement with our planet. This is an existential issue and crisis and calls us to explore our deepest held values and beliefs.

The Ecological crisis does not work to Quaker timescales, we are challenged to respond and be present in the world and as well as being responsive and accountable to our Business Meetings and processes.

We do not anticipate that the Action Statements will be complete for YM23 but will require the on-going engagement of Friends and Meetings. We see this Plan as a Living Document.

We remind Friends of our report to YM in 2022, where in part we noted:

We are engaging with the enormity of the task to develop a clear recommendation for AYM regarding appropriate responses to the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction. We experience a tension between the need to support existing actions by Friends and related groups, and the more difficult task of focusing on developing a plan at the systems level. It is a challenge for us to consider how best to support the diversity of actions that individual Friends are involved with.

While we know many Friends are engaged in action and work within Friends and across other groups, our communications are not as effective as they could be. Are our Meetings keeping this concern at their heart or is the burden being placed on those in designated roles (such as the CESEWG)?'

We are still hopeful that we will be joined by a Working group member from Young Friends and a correspondent from Tasmania.

The online gathering on 29 January 2023 was attended by 43 Friends. The Working Group was greatly encouraged by the responses from Friends to the draft material presented and discussion on its contents. The Working Group has tried to ensure that inputs from friends are reflected where possible in the new text.

Friends need to be aware of the possibility that Australia may take on co-hosting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP29) in 2024, most likely in partnership with Pacific Island nations. If this does happen then we will find ourselves called on to support and work with International Friends, such as QUNO and the FWCC.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Do Friends accept and commit to the Action Plan developed by the Working Group?
2. We ask RMs to supply a short, written report on their activities in their Meetings in relation to advocacy on climate and biodiversity mitigation, to the CESE WG by the end of May 2023 to be shared prior to, and tabled for, the Preparatory Session.
3. That YM23 extend the Working Group for 1 (one) year to enable the completion (with RMs) of the draft Action Statements (Appendix 2)
4. That QPLC, in consultation with relevant Quaker groups, conduct two lobbying workshops online during 2023-24 on the topic of climate crisis and species extinction.
5. That relevant AYM finance-related committees to review their guidelines to release 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.

6. That Clearness Meetings are provided as needed for individual Friends who are led to travel among Australian Friends under a specific climate and biodiversity crisis ministry.
7. We ask all Meetings for Business, at AYM, RM, local and committee level to consider the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis, as a standing item on their agendas.

Working Group members: David King, David Shorthouse, Elizabeth PO', Gerry Fahey, Peri Coleman. **Contact:** CSpeciesAndClimate@quakersaustralia.info

Appendix 1: Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group

Background and References to Action Plan

The Urgency of This Moment

Friends have a long tradition of respecting science-based knowledge and incorporating it into rigorous discernment to inform our faith and action.

For over a century, but with increasing urgency, scientists have been reporting on the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. We are aware that today we are faced with approaching tipping points or “abrupt climate change” -- after which it becomes difficult to predict or adapt to environmental changes. As this Plan was being drafted, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that no more fossil fuels (gas, oil and coal) should be extracted from the earth and that we must commit to achieving the reductions necessary to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

For too long, successive Australian governments have argued that we cannot make a difference in global efforts to tackle the climate crisis. In truth, however, Australia always had a significant contribution to make in the global energy transition, through reducing our export of fossil fuels and by accelerating adoption of solar and wind power for electricity production.

It is now time for Australian Quakers to heed the many calls by scientists for urgent and active change by us both as individual citizens and our governments and adopt new practices that may require difficult personal decisions, including letting go of past habits and practices.

In Australia, our unique fauna and flora and internationally recognised natural communities are also under great pressure and in poor condition, as the Australian State of the Environment report summarised in its recent report (2022) thus:

- Australia’s environment is generally deteriorating;
- Climate change threatens every ecosystem;
- Indigenous knowledge and management are helping deliver on-ground change;
- Environmental management isn’t well coordinated;
- Environmental decline and destruction are harming our well-being.

The Human Cost and Deep Inequity of the Climate Crisis

Many people around the world are already experiencing an unliveable situation. Floods, cyclones, droughts and fires have left their impact across regions and many countries, often on those less able to cope with already considerable starvation and disease burdens. The resulting forced movement and migration of peoples has been poorly responded to, challenging us to find new ways to welcome climate refugees as well as assisting developing nations to address the causes of climate change and poverty.

And these effects are not being felt equally, even within Australia. We have experienced the effects of climate change in our lifetimes and across the Australian continent: extreme fires and floods destroying homes and habitats, depleted natural and agricultural landscapes, eroding and salinising soils and lowered productivity. First Nations people are often subjected to the harshest conditions and the least relief. Extreme weather can be deadly for communities without access to basic utilities or housing, and adequate medical care.

Australia Yearly Meeting's commitment to addressing climate emergency and species extinction grows directly from our testimonies of Community; Earthcare; Equality; Integrity; Peace and Simplicity. We strive for a society where all people can live full lives without fearing for their health and safety. We seek to live in right-relationship with each other and the 'more than human world' (*To Learn a New Song: A Quaker Contribution Towards Real Reconciliation with the Earth and its Peoples*, Brindle, 2000).

The Human and the More than Human World and the Need for Responsibility

Just as we are the species currently destroying the planet's life support system, we are the species capable of undoing that damage.

As humans, we take responsibility for the global climate crisis.

We, as Quakers, resolve to help mend what has been hurt. We must prepare to be both en- Spirited and practical. (*Creating hope: Working for justice in catastrophic times*, Goodley, 2022).

Australia Yearly Meeting's Role

Although Australian Friends are relatively few in number, our reputation for advocacy based on ethical and moral principles and our historical support for peace, social justice and indigenous concerns give Quakers authority in public forums. We must not hesitate to exercise that voice.

In doing so we must ask ourselves whether we have heeded our 2008 Quaker Earthcare Statement, our 2019 Quaker Earthcare Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Epistle, and our Advices and Queries Nos. 44-47?

Attachments to this Appendix

1. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2008 Quaker Earthcare Statement.
2. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2019 Quaker Earthcare Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Epistle (which includes copies of Advices and Queries 44-47).
3. Minute establishing the AYM Earthcare Action Committee (YM08.61).
4. Minute establishing the AYM Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group (YM21.31) and Terms of Reference.
5. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2022 Public Statement (YM22.36).
6. A single page with abstracts of Backhouse Lectures, including those by Susannah Brindle, Rowe Morrow, and Yarrow Goodley.

1. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2008 Quaker Earthcare Statement

The produce of the Earth is a gift from our gracious Creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the Earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age. - John Woolman (1720-1772)



We find delight in the grace of creation, and are humbled by the richness of its gifts. Our very existence depends upon sustaining our intimate relationships within nature. Yet much has been harmed or lost

forever through our lack of reverence, our ignorance, denial, waste and ill-considered action. We have set ourselves against the Spirit.

We have ignored our interconnectedness with all other living things, weakened our own well-being, and we have diminished the opportunity for fair livelihood.

Once our lack of care caused limited damage. Now our thoughtlessness endangers whole ecosystems, and even the entire biosphere, through global warming, pollution, destruction of habitats, and accelerated extinction of species. We also acknowledge that wars, poverty and overconsumption are part of this spiral of destruction.

We seek to transform this culture of domination and exploitation, of false witness and idolatry, and instead develop a culture of caring for the planet, preparing for future generations of living things and honouring God's gifts. Each of us must now strive to live a just life which values the air, the waters, the soil, living things and the processes sustaining all life.

Given the extent of the crisis and the need for transformative change, despair and fear are likely to arise in us all at some stage. We can be set free in the Spirit to live our lives in radically different ways.

We are called to consider the world as an enspirited 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.

Friends are not alone on this journey. We must listen to the call of creation, recognise and respect the profound knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous peoples and learn from scientific understanding. We will work with those many others already deeply engaged, who make the links between religious belief, lifestyle, social justice and peace.

We commit to the demanding, costly implications of radically changed ways of living. Let us do so out of joy, celebration, reverence and a deep love of life.

Adopted at Yearly Meeting 2008, Melbourne, Australia

2. Australia Yearly Meeting 2019 Quaker Earthcare Epistle on Climate Emergency & Species Extinction

This Epistle arises from Australian Friends' concern about our own –and others' – further response to key environmental crises. We balance the outer urgency of these darkened times with the necessity of inward listening to the Light.

The space between these many words of our Earthcare Epistle is for the silent-soundless-voiceless ones who hold us all in the vast complex matrix of Life. If you find your quiet disturbed by this call for Friends and others to change our language and action, please note the clear need for kindness to self and all others is a soft insistence – we want you to be well in all ways, along with our planet. We are together finding friendship and new ways of being. Friends may find it useful to read this epistle within Meeting in three parts over several weeks, allowing time for the journey: a lament for the world as it has become, a need to reconnect with our source, and practical ways forward.

Friends, in response to concerns about the climate emergency and species extinction, we offer this Quaker Earthcare Committee Epistle as a call to action shared at Australia Yearly Meeting, Hobart 2019.

From Quaker Earthcare Statement (Australia Yearly Meeting 2008)

*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.*



Acknowledging the Great Harm [A Lament for the world as it has become]

Decades of warnings about rising global temperatures have not led to sufficient political, community, or personal action, that would reverse the effect of greenhouse gases affecting life on earth. Nor have we acted to halt the major species extinction event. We face great harm.

Through global heating we expect serious diminishment to our predictable planetary climate dynamics; affecting ice caps and glaciers (particularly those feeding five of Asia's most significant rivers); our global conveyor currents, and regional weather patterns. We face acidifying oceans affecting marine life; and rising sea levels that will affect islands, estuaries and coastlines (particularly the islands of Asia and the Pacific. On land these rising temperatures brings shifts to timing and extent of rainfall, heat and seasons.

These geophysical effects of global heating interact in complex ways, disrupting life processes, threatening innumerable species on land and sea, with the prospect of a mass extinction event across the Earth. In Australia this means we face the bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef, further deterioration of the Murray Darling River Basin, loss of snowfields, and dislocation of other bioregions and habitats across the country. This also accelerates species loss.

The climate emergency and loss of biodiversity undermines in complex ways everything from agricultural viability and public health, to social stability, human development, and international peace. Rising greenhouse gases and species extinction remain insufficiently addressed. This lack of action undermines people's trust in political processes.

Global heating exacerbates species extinction. The rapid disappearance of species around the Earth is between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate. More than 27,000 species are threatened with extinction, more than 27% of all assessed species. Australia has more than 1800 plants and animals on the threatened species list, with the highest rate of mammal extinctions in the world. Government promises of no more species extinctions have not been sufficiently guaranteed.

There are some signs of hope found in new technologies, in the 2016 Paris Agreement, broad statements of good intention by some business groups and the cautionary warnings of risk assessors and financial regulators. These have not stopped global heating. The valuable project work of volunteers and crowdfunding is no substitute for system wide intervention.

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.



Strengthening our Courage to Discern and Bear Witness [*Reconnecting with Source*]

Our 2008 Australia Yearly Meeting Quaker Earthcare Statement points us towards a better relationship with creation. Friends' Testimonies, and our work with silence, stillness and spiritual discernment encourages us to celebrate:

- Wonder and appreciation for life on Earth;
- Stewardship, that fosters development based on environmental capacity and human need;
- Peace and social justice, including right relationship with Indigenous people;
- Restorative practices that build trust one-to-one, socially, and between nations
- Creativity, ingenuity, and love in our work;
- Informed, inclusive decision making;

Australia Yearly Meeting adopted its Earthcare Statement in 2008. We found “delight in the grace of creation” and warned “we have ignored our interconnectedness with other living things.” As a Society we promised we would “seek to transform this culture of domination and exploitation...and develop a culture of caring for the planet.” We knew then that it would required of us to “commit to the demanding, costly implications of radically changed ways of living.”

Friends are aware of the pressing issue of climate action and accept that concern for the environment needs to underpin all of our decisions and actions both individually and corporate. It is true many Friends support organisations which publicise and promote environmental change. Many Friends also have made dramatic adjustments to their lifestyle as a personal response. But it does not seem to be enough.

Others show the way. In the face of insufficient corporate action and political neglect, we see a multitude of communities around the world declaring a state of climate emergency. Young people in particular are demanding authentic action from decision makers as well as their elders: challenging the overly-accommodating policies towards corporations.

Their school strikes for climate, along with nonviolent groups such as the Extinction Rebellion, remind us of the immediacy of the crisis. They reject half-hearted gestures, unfulfilled promises and wilful neglect. They refresh the world with their calls for greater integrity, simplicity, community representation, and equality of all beings.

We thank the young and not-so-young campaigners for their inspiring leadership. They deserve our respect, and loving, practical support for their concerns. We also draw to the Light the polluters and despoilers. All need the care of the Spirit.

Deepening our Resolve to Mend What Has Been Hurt [*Practical Ways Forward*]

We take our share of responsibility for the global climate crisis. We resolve to mend what has been hurt. We must prepare to be both en-Spirited and practical. We draw again to the ways of Friends, seeking direction from the Inward Light, confident this way we will find the best ways forward to offer service.

Thus, Australia Yearly Meeting:

- 1) *Resolves to more accurately name the environmental crisis* affecting the planet as a climate emergency, crisis, or breakdown, preferring phrases such as global heating over global warming. The mass species extinction occurring is also a threat to life on Earth. Our plain words must communicate the catastrophe honestly and accurately, prompting both love and truth in our hearts;
- 2) *Reminds Friends of the necessity of spiritual discernment based in silence and stillness.* We are more likely to know how best to act when we each:
 - a. hold gratitude for all: our aim is not to frighten people into action, but to draw them to a vision of the Earth which engenders joy, trust and generosity;
 - b. keep open to the Spirit through daily practice, weekly Meeting for Worship, regular attendance at Meetings for Worship for Business, and by testing leadings;
 - c. trust in nonviolent methods and gentle steady speech: this also eases anxiety, despair, doubt, fear, uncertainty, blame, loss, grief, isolation or disorientation, much of which can arise once the extent of the climate emergency and species extinction is understood;
 - d. expect diversity in our individual and organisational responses, while remaining united to reduce climate harm;
 - e. meet to study and reflect on the workings of the Spirit and Quaker Ways;
- 3) *Calls on all Friends to collectively support each other to:*
 - a. deepen Friends' personal and committee understanding of the material, spiritual and practical dimensions of the climate and extinction crisis;
 - b. listen to and support our younger Friends in their calls to act promptly, mindful not to shoulder them with the full burden of effort, and to encourage them to find hope despite adversity;
 - c. consider changing our individual and Meeting behaviours, including habits of a lifetime, to come to new decisions and practices that contribute to solutions; these may be concerned with shelter, transport, energy, food and other issues of human need, production, trade and consumption;
 - d. experiment together as you address the causes of the crisis, sharing your findings, material and spiritual;
 - e. foster a sense of belonging, appreciation and interdependence in the wider natural world; for example, by the Meeting trying such means as:
 - i. walking country together;
 - ii. engaging with permaculture design principles;
 - iii. applying the science and arts to develop ecological literacy and insight;
 - iv. cultivating community gardening; and
 - v. forging regional and international friendships as a Meeting;
 - f. listen well to the traditional owners of the land on which Friends meet; cultivate meaningful relationship; learn more about the original custodians'

- ways and language; be prepared to discover what it is to belong to country;
- g. actively cultivate and learn those skills in which Quakers have a reputation for expertise: building peace, justice, trust, hope, reconciliation, listening to the Spirit and developing the capacity of groups to take strategic nonviolent action; be prepared to teach these skills more widely, as they build community resilience and enable shared security.

- 4) *Recognises that the climate emergency will require much more of Friends as individuals and as a Society.*
- a. In most cases we will need to change the way we live and our expectations. Together we may find ways to switch from fossil fuel consumption, plastic packaging (derived from oil and contributing to overconsumption and species extinction); wasteful transport; and to remove ourselves from fossil fuel investment; participation in destructive agriculture; problematic production, and unnecessary consumption;
 - b. Time is in contention. Our technologies have cut many processes down to microseconds, but in so doing humanity has upturned geological epochs. Living in the Anthropocene requires us to re-evaluate what we can each achieve in a day and a lifetime. The stillness we find in worship allows us to know what is to be done, and what we must be let go;
 - c. Changes may feel like loss: we may sense inconvenience, sadness, grief and pain, or personal injustice. Mutual, communitarian support of each other has the power to console, empower and inspire;
 - d. For those who lapse into despair, loneliness or fatalism, we offer informed hope, bold companionship and cheerful practicality;
- 5) *Recognises that both within and beyond our Meeting the impacts of the climate emergency are being unevenly experienced by people who are poor, and so encourage Friends to:*
- i. specifically address the social justice emergency arising from the environmental crisis;
 - ii. be friends to those marginalised in the community. Their resilience has much to teach us, but climate crisis impacts them in disproportionate ways, and sometimes when they are without the means to respond. We seek to listen to people who are members of First Nations, or have experience being refugees, or older, or managing disability or sickness, or being homeless, unemployed or experiencing disadvantage in some way, so that they experience the full promise of community;
 - iii. bring compassionate attention to those who have not awakened to the need for global healing and trust in the spirit;
 - iv. learn more of the role played by militarism, racism, gender dynamics, social or economic policies, trade agreements, distributional systems, or political and corporate governance frameworks, which may be aggravating the climate and extinction crisis;
- 6) *Asks the Australian Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee, First Nations Committee and associate organisations such as Quaker Service Australia and Silver Wattle Quaker Centre to hold the climate emergency and extinction crisis in their hearts and minds as they undertake their business. Junior Young Friends have in turn asked Australia Yearly Meeting to cater events guided by the ethics of a plant based vegan or vegetarian diet.*

- 7) *Supports and where appropriate, affiliates with coalitions of climate action and species' protection groups. In particular, we ask Friends to support young people's groups as they make their voices heard. This may involve us joining school strikes and similar actions. We must avoid unnecessary busyness, but seek closer connection with transition town, community garden, local bushcare, landcare or species protection groups to apply and learn together what belonging to the land means locally. Australia Yearly Meeting is already affiliated with the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, a multi-faith network committed to action on climate change, especially for religious people who tend to underestimate their carbon footprint.*

If your Regional Meeting has not joined yet, this may be the right time. Friends are encouraged to download a Climate Change Action Kit and apply it together as a Meeting, and create or join a Living the Change session inviting other faith groups. Volunteer groups like the State Emergency Service and the Red Cross provide training for trauma support and referral: Meetings would benefit from a number of their members undertaking training, and considering ways in which the Meeting House may be made available to the wider community in times of disaster. In our work with other groups, we should seek to be models of the change we want to see.

- 8) *Asks the Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk, supported by the Quaker Earthcare Committee, to write to key decision makers, including:*
- a. *the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, State Premiers, and State Opposition leaders, requesting support for the declaration of a climate emergency, and to take appropriate action to quickly phase out fossil fuels and to hasten the introduction of renewable energy power sources, and public transport;*
 - b. *the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Future Fund, and the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia (which represents and develops policy for the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, with members from corporate, industry, retail and public sector funds) asking these bodies to value investment towards biophilic (life affirming) outcomes and divest from fossil fuels and other corporate activities which undermine climate viability;*
- 9) *Asks Regional and Local Meetings to*
- a. *write to, and where appropriate visit, local political parties, state and federal elected members, mayors and shire presidents and corporate leaders to express your Meeting's concern about the immediacy of the climate emergency and threatened species extinction, and the urgent need for action. Seek to establish trust and foster long-term conversations.*
 - b. *Regard themselves as the most active part of Yearly Meeting action on climate emergency and species extinction;*
 - c. *learn and be guided by Quakers' methods of faithful advocacy which has a long history of sustaining campaign movements*
 - d. *continue to find ways to reduce energy consumption (through reducing or eliminating fossil fuel use) and increase appropriate energy production (through renewable energy)*
 - e. *report to next Australia Yearly Meeting 2020 on their actions on the climate change emergency, and species extinction, and reflections on the way forward.*



If these new directions seem peculiar to a business-as-usual world, they still represent the deepest truths and convictions of Quaker faith and practice – to find spiritual guidance in order to live simply; in peace; with integrity; working justly in community; upholding equality; and respecting earthcare – in a time of climate emergency and species' extinction like none has ever seen.

Quaker Earthcare Committee Hobart 2019

RESOURCES:

- Friends are invited to refer to the Quaker Statement 2008 in full at <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/friends-statement-earthcare>
- The AYM Earthcare Committee 'invitations' comprising sections on Pray, Read, Act and Celebrate are at <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Earthcare/earthcare-invitation-newsletters-0>

Australian Quaker Advices & Queries are also useful:

44. All life is interrelated. Each individual plant and animal has its own needs, and is important to others. Many species in Australia and worldwide are now extinct and many more are endangered. Do you treat all life with respect, recognizing a particular obligation to those animals we breed and maintain for our own use and enjoyment? In order to secure the survival of all, including ourselves, are you prepared to change your ideas about who you are in relation to your environment and every living thing in it?

45. Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?

46. The land of Australia is not our possession. We are no more than temporary guardians of it; neither the first nor, probably, the last. In the brief time of European settlement, vast areas of this country have been damaged. Do you try to live in harmony with the land, knowing that you are part of it? Do you protect and husband its water and other resources? Do you look with respect on the claims and rights of others to share in the wealth and freedoms of Australians?

47. We live in a land of unique grandeur and beauty, harsh and majestic, but at the same time fragile. Have you discovered its wonder and mystery, and has this awareness quickened your spiritual insight and helped you to recognise that of God in everyday life? Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing Creation.

3. Minute establishing the AYM Earthcare Action Committee (YM08.61).

YM08.61 Earthcare Action Committee

Jane Grows, New South Wales RM, reported on the proposal to establish an Earthcare Action Committee and an interim Earthcare Action Network to implement the Earthcare Statement.

We agree to establish an Earthcare Action Committee under the care of Yearly Meeting.

As it has not been possible to form this Committee during Yearly Meeting 2008, we agree to appoint an Interim Earthcare Action Network to undertake preparatory work and, in consultation with AYM Nominations Committee, to bring names for the Earthcare Action Committee to Standing Committee in July 2008.

We appoint the following to act as the Network organizers:

- Jane Grows, New South Wales RM
- Adrian Glamorgan, West Australia RM
- Vidya, Canberra RM
- Jasmine Payget, New South Wales RM

We ask the Network to identify people who have an interest and/or expertise in this area, so that all who wish to be involved can be offered the opportunity.

We ask each Regional and Local Meeting, Young Friends, Quaker Service Australia, Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee and the Indigenous Concerns Committee to appoint Earthcare correspondents.

We ask the Secretary to distribute the Earthcare Statement to Quakers nationally and internationally, to the National Council of Churches in Australia, to the Climate Institute, to church and other faith newspapers, and to Resurgence, Yes! and Utne Reader (<http://www.utne.com/>).

We agree to include a discussion paper developed by the Earthcare Statement Drafting Group in *Documents in Retrospect*

4. Minute establishing the AYM Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group (YM21.31) and Terms of Reference.

YM21.31 Item not agreed upon through the YM21 Business Process – Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group

Australia Yearly Meeting agrees to establish a Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group and approves the Terms of Reference as amended at this meeting.

YM appoints the following as members of this Working Group for a term as specified in the Terms of Reference: Peri Coleman (SANTRM), David Shorthouse (CRM), Bea Farquhar (TRM), David King (QRM), Gerry Fahey (VRM), Elizabeth PO' (WARM).

Regional Meetings are reminded to appoint a correspondent to this Working Group.

YM recognises that the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group is one expression of Australian Friends' concern for Earthcare. While the manner in which this working group will take forward our Earthcare concerns may differ from the way that the AYM Earthcare Committee took forward this concern, we see it as the right time to lay down the AYM Earthcare Committee.

We ask the AYM Treasurer to make the funds previously budgeted for the Earthcare Committee available to the newly-formed Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group.

TERMS OF REFERENCE
AUSTRALIA YEARLY MEETING WORKING GROUP ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND
SPECIES EXTINCTION (EXPERT)
Accepted YM21 July 2021

Title

Australia Yearly Meeting Working Group on Climate Emergency and Species Extinction (Expert)
(AYM Climate Emergency and Species Extinction, AYM WG CESE)

Purposes

- To build on the work and spirit-led influences of the Australian Quaker Statement on Earthcare (2008) and the Quaker Earthcare Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Epistle (2019).
- To design, develop and drive a national Australian Friends' action plan on climate emergency and species extinction.
- To work with like-minded groups on the climate emergency and species extinction issue.
- The Working Group should encourage Friends to work with other like-minded groups on the climate emergency and species extinction.
- To discern all matters, relationships and actions through the powerful and fearless grace of the Divine, in keeping with Friends' ways.

Term

These Terms of Reference will be effective from Yearly Meeting in July 2021 and continue until Yearly Meeting 2023, or until terminated by Australia Yearly Meeting.

Membership

Membership of WG AYM CESE will consist of up to eight Members or Attenders of the Religious Society of Friends Australia, as appointed by Australia Yearly Meeting, in close consultation with Regional Meetings clerks/co-clerks, drawing upon the 'expert' knowledge and experience available across our Meetings. It is anticipated that the working group will reflect the diversity of Friends, including the voices of children and Junior Young Friends.

Roles and Responsibilities

The WG AYM CESE is accountable to Australia Yearly Meeting and Standing Committee of AYM for:

- Encouraging and supporting Friends to engage with local, state/territory and national governments and those in Opposition, businesses, community leaders and other local and national influencers on climate emergency and species extinction issues.
- Fostering collaboration with like-minded national groups, both secular and religious, in ways that harness the Quaker experience and leadings.
- Endeavouring to work with First Nations' Peoples whose knowledge of Australia's environment is of importance for understanding how to live in this country.
- Monitoring and engaging on relevant or related work of the Australian Government and other national stakeholders (e.g., corporations and public entities).
- Linking or coordinating with other AYM committees/groups on climate emergency and species extinction issues.
- Linking with: Friends around the world and across the Asia West Pacific region, British and American Friends, as well as the Quaker United Nations Offices.
- Undertaking other relevant work, on behalf of AYM, as discerned by the AYM WG CESE membership.
- Reporting to each mid-year Standing Committee and Yearly Meetings during its two- year term.

Correspondents

All Regional Meetings are asked to appoint a correspondent to the AYM WG CESE working group, serving as a liaison between the AYM CESE and their Regional Meeting.

Engaging non-Members

The WG AYM CESE has the capacity to temporarily co-opt other Friends to contribute its work, in order to give the working group the benefit of specific expertise.

Meetings

Meetings will take place monthly, or more, as determined by the WG AYM CESE, primarily by zoom or other electronic means. During the two-year term they will also:

- host pre-AYM preparatory sessions via zoom, or during residential AYM; and
- make available representatives to each Standing Committee meeting.

5. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2022 Public Statement (YM22.36).



Public Statement from the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group of Australia Yearly Meeting

Quakers in Australia call for sustained action in all areas of human activity to transform the root causes of environmental destruction and climate change to create a fairer, healthier and more equal society. We continue to be deeply concerned about the slow progress towards climate justice both in Australia and other countries.

Australian Quakers believe we must 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.

We call on the new Australian Government to carefully consider the voice of Australian people who have so clearly expressed similar impatience with Australia's response so far. That voice has heard the authoritative warnings from climate scientists, emergency response leaders and many others with expertise in disaster relief following fire, flood and crop failure. Many Australians understand the existential nature of the climate emergency and the ominous implications of continued decline in our biodiversity and unique natural ecosystems. But others feel threatened and are worried by the changes required of them, in addition to those now suffering enormously from the effects of the climate crisis. They need our love, support and government assistance during the difficult years of transition that lie ahead.

Australian Quakers 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."

In this part of the world, we must heed the voices of our Pacific Island neighbours and others in the region who are already bearing the burden of rising sea-levels, growing salination of land, and cry out for help. Our neighbours did not cause the climate crisis but are suffering its consequences. As good neighbours we must respond by playing our full part in addressing the causes of climate change and in helping communities mitigate its impacts.

We grieve with those who are so saddened and concerned about the world they currently live in or will inherit that they feel driven to take direct action. We must find ways to hear their voices, and not ignore their cries for help and more urgent action. Quakers recognise the climate emergency is more than physics and chemistry. It is about humanity recognising the value of being guided by the interdependent values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, community and earthcare.

Adopted 9 July 2022 at Yearly Meeting 2022

*Bruce Henry
Presiding Clerk*

6. A single page with abstracts of Backhouse Lectures, including those by Susannah Brindle, Rowe Morrow, and Yarrow Goodley.

While many Backhouse Lectures touch on our relationship in the Earth these three Lectures have a particular focus for us as the Working Group tasked with bringing a plan to Yearly Meeting to meet and work in the ecological crisis we live in.

2022 Lecture - *Creating hope: Working for justice in catastrophic times* presented by Yarrow Goodley looks at the critical issue of climate justice – at how our responses to the climate emergency have the potential for great suffering, as well as great redemption. Video available [here](#).

‘This lecture looks at the critical issue of climate justice, and at how our responses to the climate emergency have the potential for great suffering, as well as great redemption.’

2011 Lecture - *A demanding and uncertain adventure: Exploration of a concern for Earth restoration and how we must live to pass on to our children - and their children, and all living things - an Earth restored* - by Rosemary (Rowe) Morrow

This lecture illuminates the original state of Earth, how humans have affected its environment, and provides theology and sustainable methods for restoring the Earth to health. Follows the author’s personal story of the change in her thinking over the course of her life. Provides examples of Earth restoration projects and the people instrumental in achieving their success.

2000 Lecture - *To Learn a New Song: A Quaker Contribution Towards Real Reconciliation with the Earth and its Peoples* - by Susannah Kay Brindle.

Australian Quakers profess obedience to the leading of the Spirit. But, in a land where what happens to the natural environment mirrors the sufferings of the Aboriginal peoples, Susannah Brindle asks, ‘What sort of Spirit? What sort of leadings?’

This lecture is a plea for openness to a more inclusive Spirit than that defined by European cultural traditions and scientific rationalism. Drawing from a Quaker heritage and truly being “‘present where we are’, we become learners rather than teachers. Then we may yet find the love and courage to humble ourselves before the Earth-wisdom of Aboriginal spirituality, to venture beyond our acculturation and to ‘learn a new song’—the Earth’s song of real reconciliation and true justice.”

For more information go here: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/backhouse-lectures>

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.

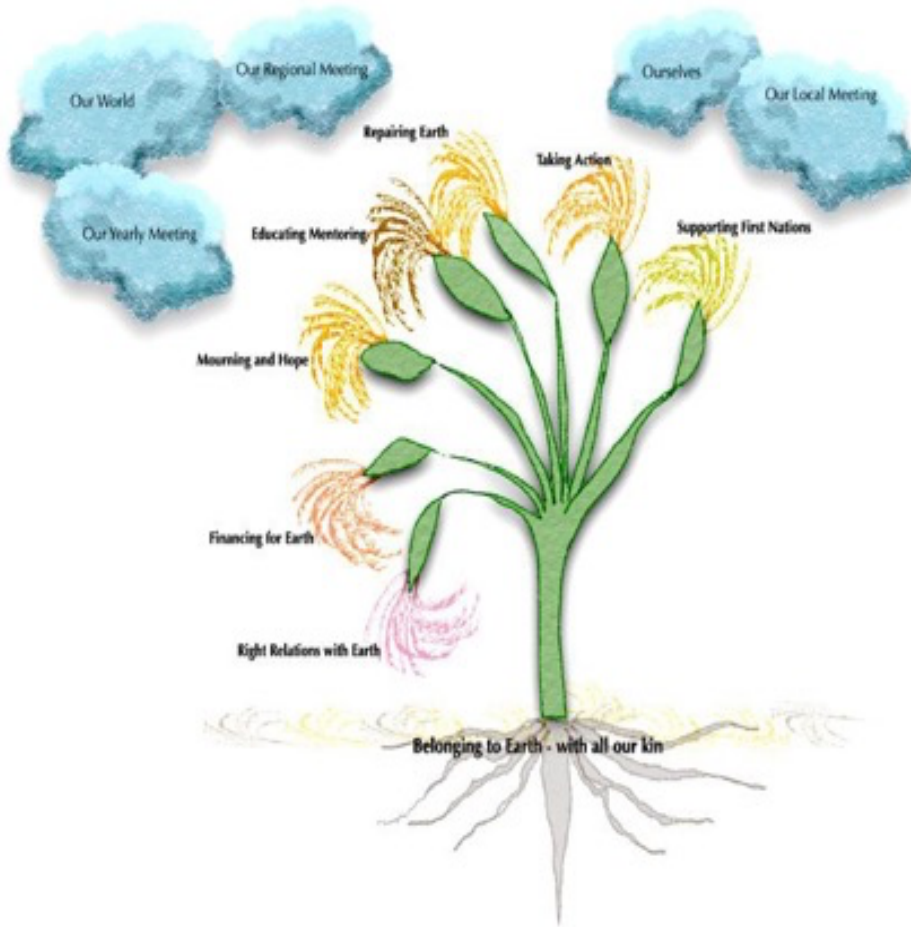
6. Repairing Earth

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