

YM23 Preparatory Session Report

Preparatory session: Handbook Revision	Date of Session: 17 May 2023 @ 7.30pm
Clerk: Margaret Bywater	Note taker: Judy Still

Report:

Part A. The prep session noted:

1. Most of the revisions agreed at Yearly Meeting 2022 have been incorporated in Handbook 7 (revised December 2022) as on the AYM Website.
2. The Handbook revision committee is mindful that we have not involved the Liaison Friends during the year. We hope to increase this important role in the coming year. We note that the changes to the operations of Quaker Australia Office will require the drafting of a new section within the Handbook.

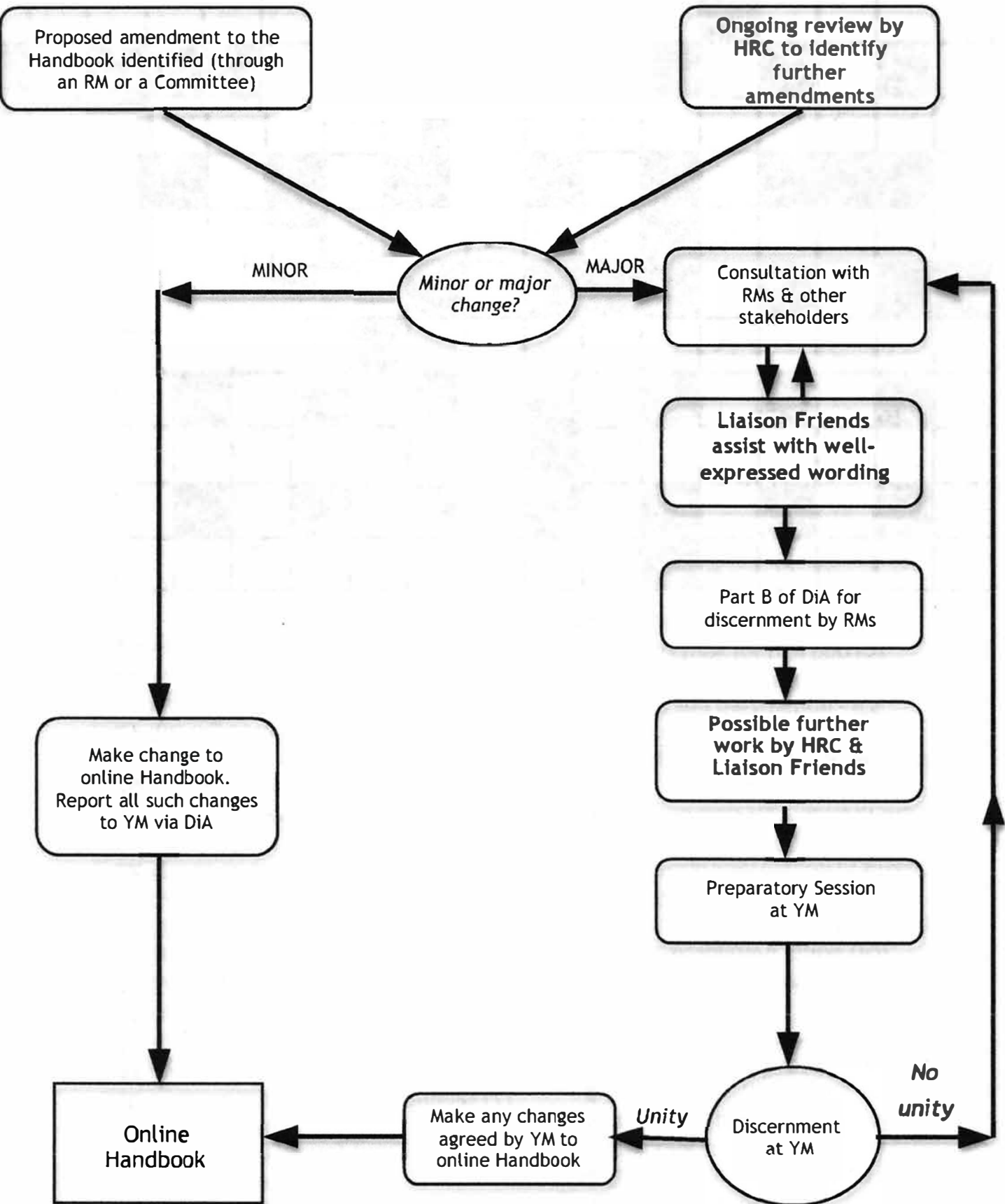
Part B. of Handbook Revision Committee Report Matters for Consideration:

3. There is much agreement from Regional Meetings on the four areas brought forward.
4. **Section 4.3 Committed relationships including marriage**
– Friends believe that marriage is a form of a committed relationship. Friends preferred lower case rather capitalisation in this section. ***The Handbook Committee will make the appropriate lower-case changes to the agreed text of section 4.3.***
5. **(Additional) Section 5.3.7.4 Other Committees**
– All Regional Meetings agreed and supported the additions to this section 5.3.7.4. There **will be** some minor alterations to reflect the updated terminology for the Quakers Australia Office.
6. **(Additional) Section 1.9 Service to the Meeting (Our Nominations Process)**
– Two Regional meetings commented on the wording ‘**available time**’. Friends asked that the two paragraphs (starting with ‘*The Nominations Committee serves*’) needed reworking and asked the Committee to do so and send it to the Yearly Meeting Secretary for inclusion on the YM23 website. **(See attachment 2)**
7. **Revised Flowchart**
– The purpose of the flowchart is to explain the process of drafting an amendment to the Handbook. This process is not included in the text of the handbook. **(See attachment 1)**
8. One Regional Meeting requested clarification on minor and major (*additions or changes*). Friends understood (incorrectly) that this is explained in the handbook. We hope that the committee is trusted to discern which changes are minor. These are reported to Yearly Meeting but not usually needing further discernment. Major changes are subjected to discernment by the full membership of Quakers Australia.
9. There was considerable discussion in particular relating to **Associated bodies** on the flowchart. The section relating to Associated Bodies has been removed from the amended Proposed flowchart. We hope that this will be accepted at YM23. **We have amended the flowchart – deleting all reference to ‘Associated Bodies’.** **(See attachment 1)**
10. **Quakers Australia Office** The Handbook Revision Committee will work with the Transition Implementation Working Group to bring a new Handbook section to YM24.

Attachment 1

Handbook Revision Committee

Flowchart of the process of changing an entry in the Handbook



Attachment 2

Proposed addition to Chapter 1.

(Words in red show changes since Documents in Advance)

Service to the Meeting (Our Nominations Process)

Quakers all share the tasks undertaken in a church by the ministers, pastors and other paid staff.

Those who serve the Meeting are not elected by the Membership. Rather a small group of experienced Friends is ~~tasked with~~ **responsible for** matching the needs of the group with the gifts of those in the Meeting. This small group is called the Nominations Committee. They discern and bring forward recommendations of names of Friends to serve the Meeting in particular roles.

The Nominations Committee serves as a filter for all appointments for service to the Friends community. The discernment process undertaken by the Committee includes clarification of the details of the role, worshipful consideration of those in the community who may have gifts ~~and available time~~ **and availability** to serve the Meeting, and recognition that a Friend may learn what is needed by undertaking the tasks of the role to which they are nominated.

Before bringing names to the Business Meeting, the Committee consults the recommended appointees and ascertains their willingness **and availability** for their names to go forward to serve the Meeting, if the Meeting so determines.

Nominations Committee does not appoint people, it recommends to the gathered Business Meeting names for appointment, and the Meeting discerns the appropriateness of the names and makes the appointments. It may be that a name is not accepted by the Meeting; Nominations Committee then advises the Friend that they were not appointed and begins further discernment around the particular task.

The full process is variously described in sections **2.3.3, 2.5.4 and 5.3.8.2**

If this section is accepted by Friends, the Handbook Committee will then proceed to revise 2.3.3, 2.5.4 and 5.3.8.2