

Handbook Revision Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

- Most of the revisions agreed at YM22 have been incorporated in the Handbook 7 (revised December 2022) as on the AYM website.
- **Section 4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment** missed being updated. An RM registering Officer brought to our attention the need for inclusion of the commitment/marriage vows. We propose a further amendment to include those vows. In so doing, we noted some discrepancies and recommend amending them.
- We bring a revised **Flowchart** of the process for revision of the handbook for approval by AYM
- We have revised **Section 5.3.7 Types of committees** as requested by YM22
- Midyear SC agreed that we include an introduction to the **Nominations** process for inclusion in Chapter 1.

Issues/Analysis

The two new members of the committee feel that they are still 'on trainer wheels' in this role. This has meant that our progress is slow and reactive rather than proactive. We are hopeful that another Friend will be found to join this committee.

We are mindful that we have not heavily involved the Liaison Friends during this year.

We note that the changes to the operations of the AYM office will require a new section in the Handbook when the new system is established. We expect that this section may be ready for *Documents in Advance YM2024*.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(See www.quakersaustralia.info/Handbook and **Appendix 3** to *DiA* for proposed wording)

- Proposed revisions to **Section 4.3. Committed relationships including marriage**
- Proposed addition to **Section 5.3.7 Types of committees**
- Proposed additional section **Service to the Meeting (Nominations Process)** in Chapter 1
- Revised **flowchart** of the *Handbook* revision process

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Appendix 3: Handbook Revision Committee-Proposed Handbook Revisions for YM23

1. Proposed revisions to Section 4.3. Committed relationships including marriage

Reasoning: The changes approved at YM22 have not yet been made in the online handbook. Further, we discovered that the revised pamphlet *Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships*

no longer includes the words of the usual Quaker Commitment vows. As a result, we have again reviewed the whole section.

1. We recommend that a Guideline be added to 4.3.1 Introduction, that guideline to read:
Friends, in the presence of God and this assembly, I take this my friend ...(name) ... to be my life partner/husband/wife, trusting with divine assistance to be loving and faithful as long as we both on earth shall live (Traditional Quaker marriage vow)
2. We recommend that the title of each of the subsections be altered to reflect the main heading, as follows:

Existing heading	Recommended heading	Reasons
4.3 Committed relationships, including marriage.	4.3 Committed relationships, including marriage.	To reflect the expression of equality in the main heading
4.3.1 Introduction	4.3.1 Introduction	
4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment	4.3.2 Planning a Celebration of Commitment or wedding	
4.3.3 Affirming and witnessing a marriage or commitment	4.3.3 Affirming and witnessing a Celebration of Commitment or wedding	
4.3.4 Committed relationship difficulties	4.3.4 Committed relationship difficulties	

1. Minor amendments to 4.3.2 Planning a Celebration of Commitment including marriage

Text approved at YM22	Proposed amended text	Reason
<p><u>Paragraph 5</u></p> <p>The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet, <i>Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships</i>, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. The pamphlet is at: https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets . It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care</p>	<p>The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet, <i>Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships</i>, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. The pamphlet is at: https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets .</p> <p>If they are to differ significantly in essence from the traditional Quaker vows, permission is discerned at a Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee, as well as the Registering Officer will be asked to advise on the chosen wording. All</p>	<p>The pamphlet no longer includes the wording of vows. The pamphlet is referred to elsewhere within this section of the Handbook.</p>

<p>Committee, as well as the Registering Officer will be asked to advise on the chosen wording. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 6</u></p> <p>The Regional Meeting gives permission for the marriage and establishes a Meeting for Worship for that purpose.</p> <p>If the couple wish to register their marriage legally, there are formal procedures to be followed, and the Registering Officer will advise.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 8 (final para)</u></p> <p>A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment ceremony within one of our Meeting Houses ‘in the manner of Friends’, and could do so as a venue hire. The couple could bring their own celebrant. Each meeting decides if they hire out one of their Meeting Houses for such occasions.</p>	<p>ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.</p> <p>If the Regional Meeting gives permission for the Commitment or marriage to be celebrated under the care of that Meeting, RM then establishes a Meeting for Worship for that purpose.</p> <p>A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment ceremony within one of our Meeting Houses ‘in the manner of Friends’, and could do so as a venue hire. The couple could bring would arrange their own celebrant. Each meeting decides if they hire out one of their Meeting Houses for such occasions.</p>	<p>To clarify that RM permission is not automatic.</p>
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4.3.3 Affirming and witnessing ...

Current wording	Suggested wording	Reasons
<p><u>Paragraph 3</u></p> <p>A long-standing tradition amongst Friends is the production of a Quaker Marriage Certificate, which states the full names of the couple, the time and place of the ceremony, and details of the marriage or commitment vows they made. All those</p>	<p>A long-standing tradition amongst Friends is the production of a Quaker Commitment or Marriage Certificate, often hand-produced by an artistic friend. This certificate states the full names of the couple, the time and place of the ceremony, and details of the commitment or marriage vows they made. All those present are asked to sign, as an</p>	<p>To reflect our Testimony of Equality. Moved here from the end of the paragraph.</p> <p>As above</p>

<p>present are asked to sign, as an acknowledgement of their presence at the ceremony and their loving support of the couple. Suggested wording for such a certificate, including wording for the vows, is available in Appendix E. A Quaker Marriage Certificate is often hand-produced by an artistic friend.</p>	<p>acknowledgement of their presence at the ceremony and their loving support of the couple. Suggested wording for such a certificate, including wording for the vows, is available on the Australian Quaker Website under Administrative Resources for Regional Meetings, in Appendix E.</p> <p>A Quaker Marriage Certificate is often hand-produced by an artistic friend.</p>	<p>This reference was missed when Appendices were removed in Edition 7</p> <p>This sentence has been moved.</p>
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2. Proposed change to Proposed addition to Section 5.3.7 Types of committees

*NB: This section needs to be considered in conjunction with the rest of **Section 5.3.7 Types of Committees**.*

The working of Committees has undergone considerable change with the introduction and use of modern communications technologies. Now a meeting of Friends spread across a huge geographic area is easier to organise.

These technologies also allow some Committees, that once needed to be established in a single location, to be more representative of Friends around Australia. As a result, no Meeting is expected to host the scattered committee. Examples include the Children and JYFs Committee and the *Australian Friend* Committee.

Care is needed to ensure that online meetings continue to seek the guidance of the Spirit as is the case with committees meeting in person.

When a task involves a limited working term (for example the change from a Yearly Meeting Secretary to an AYM Office team) a Working Group may be established, which may include Friends from one location or several.

Other Working Groups arise from a Concern shared by a number of Friends who volunteer their service regarding the Concern.

Recommendations for membership of all of these committees is still discerned by the AYM Nominations Committee, for final consideration by Yearly Meeting.

3. Proposed Proposed additional section Service to the Meeting (Nominations Process) in Chapter 1

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 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 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 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**. We have yet to determine where within Chapter 1 this section will be placed. The current contents of Chapter 1 are:*

Chapter 1 Quaker beliefs, worship and decision-making processes

[1.1](#) Our beliefs; [1.2](#) Our testimonies; [1.3](#) Our worship; [1.4](#) Meetings for Worship for Business (also known as ‘Business Meetings’); [1.5](#) Concerns; [1.6](#) Clearness Meetings; [1.7](#) Threshing Meetings; [1.8](#) Community

4. Revised flowchart of the *Handbook* revision process (next page)

NOTE: The items in bold indicate new items in the flowchart (as compared to the previous flowchart).

Handbook Revision Committee

Flowchart of the process of changing an entry in the Handbook

version of 29 October 2021. Layout by Stephen Hodgkin

