

ITEMS NOT RESOLVED THROUGH YM22 PREPARATORY SESSIONS

It was agreed that, in the revised business process for YM22, Items not agreed upon through discussion at Regional Meetings and the Preparatory Sessions would need to come to Yearly Meeting to be considered at a YM22 Formal Session.

1) Child Protection and Other Safety Concerns Working Group (*revisions to the documents listed made following the Preparatory Session, and will be circulated to Regional Meetings by 1 June*)

- a) Code of Conduct for Australian Quakers
- b) A Community Agreement to be used for all on line gatherings of Australian Quakers*
- c) Incident Form

2) Children & JYF Committee

- a) Items considered that will need ongoing discernment beyond YM22, and therefore, will **NOT** be brought for consideration at this YM:
 - What are the needs of families and young people within Australian Friends?
 - How can Australian Quakers best support young people and families in their spiritual development and to be engaged in their meetings?

b) Items remaining for YM22

Background:

- The current structures and processes to support young people are complex and multi-faceted. At the AYM level this includes the CJYF Coordinator and Committee and the CP Committee. At the meeting level, this includes families and young people, Quaker approved child carers, children and JYF Committees, Child protection contact Friends and correspondents.
- We recognise there is a need to consider more deeply the needs of young people and families within Australia Yearly Meeting, and that a process is needed to make space for this consideration.
- We see great value in having a paid worker and also see value in moving forward in a way that has a more connected communication network, more centralised and accessible role for the paid worker, which also enables us to meet our obligations as ethical employers. What structures might support this more effectively?

Recommendations:

- i. We recommend that young people and families be brought more into the heart of AYM and aligned more closely with other national coordination being undertaken in AYM by continuing the paid C&YJF Coordinator position (may need a new name –referred to here as ‘paid worker’).
- ii. We recommend that the management of this paid worker be the responsibility of the AYM Office in order to provide more support and coordination of the work. We acknowledge this will add to the workload of the AYM office, and may require additional support from a Friend/consultant with the necessary HR skills. We see that bringing the work of this person to a more central location with AYM will support their work and enable more cohesion and connection with the rest of AYM.
- iii. We recommend that, for the next six-twelve months, the paid worker focus on a consultation project with families and young people, local and regional meetings, worshipping groups and isolated Friends to:
 - identify and consider the needs of meetings, families and young people;
 - build community, relationships and support for those working with

- families and young people;
 - connect people with similar challenges, ideas and needs; and
 - consult with other Yearly Meetings and learn from their experiences (e.g. A/NZ).
- iv. We recommend that this project be designed by the paid worker, the C&JYF and Child Protection Committees, in consultation with Friends with relevant expertise in social research. We wonder if it might be possible to consult with young people as part of this project by bringing them together in-person.
- v. We recommend that this project will propose a way forward for the paid worker and C&JYF Committee to support families and young people within AYM. We ask that Friends consider that the way forward include a broader mandate and consider the needs of families, young friends, children and JYFs. This may include borrowing from BYM the concept of A Quaker Life Committee.
- vi. We recommend that the current C&JYF Committee become the support committee for the paid worker in this consultation project.
- vii. We recommend that AYM Nominations Committee identifies a Friend to take on the role of the paid worker from 1 September 2022 (to allow for a one-month transition with the current C&JYF Coordinator).
- viii. We recommend that the C&JYF committee work with AYM Nominations Committee to develop a role description for the paid worker.

3) Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group

- a) Item 1: We ask Young Friends to appoint a Young Friend to our Working Group. Resolution lies with Young Friends.
- b) Item 2: We ask for a TRM correspondent to be appointed. Resolution lies with Tasmania Regional Meeting.
- c) Item 3: We request that Meetings Australia-wide look to see what support they can provide their members who are committed to working on these intertwined issues. (links with Item 6)
- d) Item 6: Can all Meetings for Business, at Yearly Meeting, RM, local and committee level consider how they can acknowledge the Ecological Crisis at the start just as we acknowledge First Nations peoples?
We ask Yearly Meeting:
 - i. to request Regional Meetings and the CESE Working Group to continue actively considering this matter, and to report to the next Yearly Meeting (2023). The Preparatory Session acknowledges that this may require deep exploration and even struggle to find the way forward in responding urgently to the CESE crisis; and
 - ii. encourage Regional Meetings to move ahead with more action on the climate emergency and species extinction crisis

4) Handbook Revision Committee

- a) ***Section 4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment.***
 - *Marriages of couples with less significant links to the Meeting.*
 - *Reference to Marriage Act*
 - *Role of RM in the marriage*

b) Section 4.6.4 Testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of Friends who have died

- *New Guideline for this section*
- *Amended wording re Minute of record of death*
- *Amended wording re appointed Testimony writers*
- *Reinstatement of deleted words*
- *Reminder of the funeral as source of information for the Testimony*

c) Section 5.3.7 Types of AYM committees

- *The naming of a type of committee (e.g. Australian Friend Committee) which is neither representative nor hosted was returned to the Handbook Revision Committee.*

d) Flowchart of the Handbook Revision process

- We were reminded that the redrawn Flowchart has not been brought to Yearly Meeting for consideration. This has not been to Regional Meetings, so will be deferred to at least YM23.
- The Handbook Revision Committee will have a Share & Tell at YM22 about the Flowchart

6) AYM & QSA Relationship Working Group

We would like to make the following key points to Australia Yearly Meeting to assist in hopefully finding a way forward.

- It is important to assert that the Working Group was appointed by AYM, and followed the Terms of Reference also determined by AYM. Each of us was approached because of specific expertise and experience in fields directly relevant, including governance, related law, conflict resolution, and international development. We feel that we have pursued the Terms of Reference faithfully and transparently, with very substantial commitment of time over more than one year, and that our process has consistently been after the manner of Friends. The Report as presented is what has emerged from this work.
- There has clearly been some real unhappiness among some Friends around some of the statements made in the report; and frankly conflicting views around particular details. At some points, we have had a sense of the Working Group being blamed for generating conflict or ill-feeling. We feel it is important to state that conflict and strong disagreement among Friends around the issues raised were current before the inception of our work, and in fact the Review was intended to seek ways forward in addressing this.
- The most contentious issue emerging in the Preparative Meeting, and in earlier feedback on the report, regards the matter of right process in revision of the Handbook of Practice and Procedure. This and the related recommendation took up a far larger proportion of the Meeting's time than any of the other recommendations, and was not resolved. We feel that this issue is not one which is likely to be resolved in a standard session of Yearly Meeting; also, that as it is a matter of clearly differing assertions of facts, rather than of perceptions or feelings, that this is not a matter which could be resolved through a mediation process. We lay this before AYM to decide what process should be undertaken to seek resolution.

We commend again to Friends a close reading of the Recommendations as circulated, but also urgently ask that all of those who have a wish for resolution to be reached, or progress made on the issues which have exercised Australian Friends for some years, to commit the one to two hours required to carefully reading the Report in full, and to giving the matters raised therein careful and prayerful consideration in advance of Yearly Meeting. In particular, we would ask Friends to consider their response to specific proposals (or options provided) as they are at the heart of what Yearly Meeting requested us to review.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Relationship of QSA with Australia Yearly Meeting

- 1(a) That the wording of the QSA entry in the 6th edition of the Handbook be reinstated and that any proposals to change the substantive terms of that entry be subject to the well-established forms and processes of Australia Yearly Meeting.
- 1(b) Given the now demonstrated ability for groups to conduct business through video conferencing applications such as Zoom and Teams, that QSA revert to its former arrangement of “a committee of the whole”. This is seen as the simplest solution to the issue of meaningful participation of all Members. It is also seen as the approach most in accord with Quaker values in not having a status distinction among and between Members.

In terms of having a committee that is not too unwieldy in terms of numbers, that the membership of the “committee of the whole” be constituted by seven regional meeting nominees, a Young Friend nominee and the AYM Presiding Clerk and Secretary as ex officio members. That is 10 members in total.

- 1(c) That the Recommendations from a QSA review committee be included in Documents in Advance for the next Yearly Meeting following the submission of the review committee’s report and that these Recommendations be part of the determinative processes at that Yearly Meeting.
- 1(d) That Australia Yearly Meeting maintains a record of the progress of implementation of the Recommendations from a QSA review committee report that have been agreed at Yearly Meeting and that an updated report on such progress be given to each subsequent Yearly Meeting.
- 1(e) It is unfair and impractical for Australian Friends to require QSA to be all things that Friends would wish to see done in the world. In recognising that QSA has necessarily marked out a specialist remit for itself (for example in aid and development, not emergency relief) within a framework linked closely to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s funding mechanisms for Non-Government Organisations, there must be space to both dialogue with QSA about that mission, and look more broadly afield for what other areas Friends may be called to operate. This requires a clear mechanism within AYM, to both engage directly with QSA, and to enable ongoing conversations within AYM about issues beyond QSA’s remit, which may lead to alternative expressions of Quaker faith in action. More development education within AYM is needed to help Friends more deeply appreciate aid dynamics, which can appreciate QSA’s choices, and more broadly help Australian Friends contextualise the existence of poverty and its relationship with militarism and exploitation of the earth, dispossession and colonialism. AYM should also periodically review whether there are any corporate leadings to invest efforts in other areas not defined by QSA’s work.

2. Legacy Issues

- 2(a) This Review:
 - I. draws attention to the provision in the 6th and previous editions of the Handbook that “QSA’s strategic direction, management plan and project selection criteria” are matters that are required to be submitted annually to Yearly Meeting for approval;
 - II. notes that such matters often involve complex matters of discernment and the need for informed judgment; and

- III. recommends that, given the findings of successive QSA review committees that many Australian Friends have a strong interest and concern about the nature and geographical spread of QSA's remit, as well as issues relating to project selection, that a special session on these issues be arranged at next Yearly Meeting.
- 2(b) In the light a strongly expressed desire among Australian Friends for greater involvement by QSA with First Nations concerns in Australia, we reiterate the recommendations of the 2012 Review (albeit with a different time frame) for:
 - I. a review of QSA's Statement of Purpose by both QSA and the AYM First Nations People Concerns Committee with a view to making a recommendation to the QSA AGM at next Yearly Meeting that the Statement of Purpose be reconsidered for its inclusivity of Aboriginal projects; and
 - II. representatives from AYM First Nations People Concerns Committee and QSA commence a dialogue about Regional Meeting's engagement with the identification and choice of Aboriginal projects and report back to QSA within six months.

As an initial step, we call on Friends who have been active in concerns around Indigenous Australians to share their knowledge of organisations and communities with which they have worked, as a first step to identifying areas where QSA support could be appropriate, and partners with whom relationships could be built. This call to partnership also applies in relation to project selection by Friends with knowledge of the Pacific region.

- 2(c) That, in line with a previous recommendation, the specific mention of working with Aboriginal groups within Australia, contained in the 6th edition of the Handbook, be restored.