

**YM23 Preparatory Session Report:  
Meeting for Learning working group**

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**Clerk:** Julie Webb

**Note taker:** Sharon Matthews

**Report:**

**Present:** Aileen Britton – *tech host*, Brenda Roy – *Elder*, Trish Johnson – *Elder*, Fiona Gardner – *MfL facilitator*, Catherine Heywood – *MfL facilitator*, Jenny Spinks – *MfL facilitator and note taker*, Sharon Matthews – *MfL working group*.

Jennifer Burrell, Dennis Dorwick, Claudia, Sheila Keane, Bruce Henry, Rowe Morrow, Kerstin Reimers, Felicity Rose, Robyn McLean, Vidya, Liz N, Bev Polzin, Carol Holden, Jo Jordon, Drew Thomas, Roger Sawkins.

Julie gave the acknowledgment of country and we moved into silence.

Julie introduced Aileen, Brenda, Trish, Fiona, Catherine Jenny and Sharon.

Catherine brought us up to date with **how MfL has travelled through the Covid 19 pandemic**. WA's second retreat was held in 2019. Covid prevented the program happening in SA in 2020 and 2021. We considered attempting something on line but participants were reluctant and we decided against it. Last year SANTRM's first retreat was held at Sevenhill near Clare and we are looking forward to the second retreat there in September.

Fiona gave the **background to why we are having this session**.

In the early days of MfL it was sensed that a YM MfL committee was needed, not only for recognition but also to be supported spiritually and practically, and for accountability so that what MfL did was in right ordering.

Several years later, a broader committee was initiated in SA, and QLA was approved by YM. The committee acted as a lily pad to enable a YM culture where all sorts of learning flourished, including MfL.

Now we are in a situation where Silver Wattle has developed a huge range of programs, Regional Meetings offer good learning activities, and with Covid we have all learned about learning on line.

There is no need for QLA.

We asked ourselves where does this leave MfL? Will we keep going? Do we need a committee? The answer was we do think there's a value in MfL and we still feel led to offer the program if YM agrees. We want a specific committee to support us, so we sent a report and recommendations to RMs via Documents in Advance, and YM have organised this session for us.

Also, there is a financial matter for us to think about tonight – having a process that is in right ordering to appropriately allocate QLA's remaining funds.

There were no questions or comments at this stage.

Julie moved us on to **working through Part B, including 3 extra recommendations to cover the financial matter.** A few adjustments were made to the recommendations to create a minute to go forward to the YM business session.

The following was noted during this process:

- Fiona reminded us of the roles of the facilitators and hosting group as explained in part A.
- Sheila Keane from Silver Wattle said do consider the resources that Silver Wattle can offer to MfL. They include use of the venue and admin resources such as registration tools.
- A question about a MfL website led Roger Sawkins, with his IT hat on, to explain that when QLA is laid down the QLA website will be archived. MfL will then need to have a committee page to appear in the system. It can be simple and could include, for example, people's experience of MfL.
- Felicity Rose, who was part of the Tasmanian RM group who hosted QLA for a few years, explained that they put resources into developing the website to enable easy access to Quaker learning resources.
- Regarding the QLA funds Roger, with his YM acting treasurer hat on, said there is just under \$39,000. It is some years since money has gone to any QLA functions other than MfL. With QLA winding up, he has had to ask Friends to no longer donate to the fund. We need a process to divide up the money to match the purposes for which it was donated.

The minutes being approved.

**Friends who had participated in the MfL program were given the opportunity to share what it had meant to them.**

There were many responses affirming current and past facilitators including Frances Thorsen and Sue Wilson, and the importance of what MfL offers.

Words such as 'unique' and 'extraordinary' were used to describe the experiences of discovering things we didn't know about ourselves, and our understanding of Quaker ways.

Friends appreciated:

- The safe, spacious and inclusive space to build deep connections to self, to Spirit, to nature, to the MFL retreat group, and also to others in their own RM through support groups.
- Listening to each other in listening groups and in support groups, giving people the opportunity to go deeper and discover what's been hidden.
- MfL moving around Australia – enabling people to attend, who otherwise wouldn't have, and fostering deep connections in the regional meeting.

Recommendations in your Report which you will bring to Yearly Meeting:

1. We recommend that the Meeting for Learning Program continue in its current form.
2. We suggest that a new AYM Committee, perhaps called the Meeting for Learning Support Committee, be established as:
  - a) An “interest” committee of four Friends, from anywhere in Australia
  - b) Main tasks, the prayerful oversight and administration of Meeting for Learning, including handling finances, publicity, timelines, liaison with the facilitators and the host Regional Meeting Report to AYM.
  - c) To meet as often as the work requires
  - d) We recommend that the current Working Group provide a role statement and promote among Regional Meetings the need for members for a Support Committee. We suggest that the Working Group hand to the Nominations Committee the role statement and a list of precious participants.
3. We hope the Host RM and the facilitators would continue in their roles, as explained in their report. We hear a suggestion that the Working Group or new Committee might consider utilising the resources of Silver Wattle. While the facilitators very much value what SW offers, and enjoy being mutually supportive, they feel it is in right ordering to have a group that particularly supports what they do. We encourage the current Working Group and the MfL Support Committee to continue the dialogue with Silver Wattle.
4. We would suggest that the Meeting for Learning Support Committee consider having its own email address. It’s also possible that the Committee may feel led to manage a Meeting for Learning webpage.
5. We suggest that the current Facilitators and David Barry as the SANTRM host RM and Sharon Mathews from WARM continue as a Working Group to support MFL for 2023 in the interim.
6. The Treasurer has informed the Working Group that there about \$39,000 in the Quaker Learning Australia account, and the issue of where to allocate the QLA funds will be raised.

We recommend that QLA be laid down by AYM and that a process be developed to allocate those funds appropriately, including sufficient funds to support Meeting for Learning.

We recommend that the new MFL Support Committee liaise with the Treasurer to recommend to Standing Committee a process whereby the funds will be allocated in a way that supports both MfL and the other functions of QLA. This may also include Silver Wattle.