

NOTES ON YM22 SESSION ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QSA AND AYM (held on Monday 4 July via zoom)

The session was introduced by the Presiding Clerk Ann Zubrick, who outlined the stages of the changing relationship between QSA and AYM. In 2019, QSA reported on a new governance structure it felt was needed for its role – a public company. This move was endorsed by YM19, and led to a re-arrangement of the Linkages Committee. Misunderstandings about the new structure and its implications followed, and after YM20 two zoom sessions were held to allow Friends to express their concerns. A working group was formed in 2021 and took some time to explore the situation fully. Its report was tabled in May 2022, including recommendations about the entry in the Handbook and the options for the linkages committee. QSA and Regional Meetings responded to the report, indicating an ongoing divergence between the QSA management committee and the views of RMs and individual Friends.

The Clerk then invited Friends to consider the following question – **Where are the opportunities for discussion and building relationship between QSA and AYM?**

Comments were heard from a range of Friends:

- The relationship is both personal and institutional. There is hurt, frustration and anger among those involved. Two different processes would be warranted to address the personal and institutional aspects.
- Good governance among Quakers allows for different needs of different organisations, on the understanding that each organisation makes clear the reasons for its decisions on structure. QSA should explain in detail the reasons for not accepting the working group proposals.
- QSA's response stressed the legal differences between QSA and AYM. But it does owe Quakers transparency in its activities. The linkages committee was seen as an avenue for this, even though its management role did not continue. The selection of Management Committee members is by NSWRM, and the linkages members come from different RMs.

Ann Zubrick posed a further question – **What are mechanisms for discussion and relationship building?**

Comments were heard from a range of Friends:

- QSA has used different means to communicate with Friends – talks to RMs, articles in the AF and on the website. But this communication has not worked as well as hoped. The working group report seemed to assume that QSA is still a committee of AYM.
- QSA comes 'under the care of' NSWRM. The constitution says the Management Committee has power to set-up committees. The ability not

- connect in person has been constrained under COVID, and the use of the internet may not feel 'personal' enough. The terms of reference of the linkages committee could be reviewed to connect better with Friends. The involvement of paid staff makes it hard to move QSA easily to another state.
- Concerns about QSA were present before the pandemic, and some Friends found it difficult to raise these at formal QSA sessions. It would help if there were opportunities during YM gathering for wider discussion on issues of development and aid.
 - The report of the Working Group deserves full reading to appreciate the extent of its thorough work. It includes reference to recommendations from previous reviews of QSA which have not been implemented.
 - The question is – what are the proposals for dealing with the substantive elements of the WG report?
 - RM responses to the report seem to favour a 'committee of the whole' approach, but it is not clear where the AYM Secretary and AYM Presiding Clerk fit into the structures as ex officio officers.
 - We can't keep putting off the difficult questions. Can we make decisions on the urgent matters in the report?

Ann Zubrick ended the session by saying that a summary of the session would be put on the website. The QSA response to the Working Party report would also be posted for those who have not yet seen it. The clerks would think further about ways forward in preparation for the formal session on Friday 8 July.

David Purnell