

Quakers Australia Committee or Working Group Report

Name of committee/concern/group Child Protection Committee
Membership of the Committee/Working Group: Ronis Chapman, Lorraine Thomson (both CRQ)
Part A – Report
Progress In the past year we have met often to review and update the Child Protection Policy and Procedures. This has been in draft form for comment for two months and will be presented to YM24. It can be found at https://sites.google.com/quakersaustralia.info/qa-child-safety-policy/procedures?authuser=0 We appreciate the assistance of Holly Dwyer in making the policy more attractive and accessible. The revised policy has the title ‘child safety’ rather than ‘child protection’- this is a term which highlights the positive nature of what we are trying to achieve in QA- a safe and nurturing environment for our children and young people. ‘Child Safety’ is currently used more widely than ‘child protection’ among other faith-based organisations and community groups. We greatly appreciate the feedback we have received so far on the draft Child Safety Policy and we have made numerous changes as appropriate based on that feedback. We will continue to do so until YM24. We have held several meetings with the Child Protection Contact Friends from the Regional Meetings at which the contact Friends can raise any concerns about child safety in meetings. We have also covered particular topics, for example, reportable conduct schemes which are in place now in several jurisdictions and which relate to organisational safety for children and young people. The Regional Meeting Child Protection Contact Friends are vital to each Regional Meeting as they hold important information about requirements of the particular jurisdiction in which they operate We can advise that, in cooperation with the QA Coordinator, all Regional Meetings have completed the annual audit of child protection practices in Regional Meetings. We are aware that in a couple of RMs the roles of Child Protection Contact Friend and Safe Quaker Community Contact Friends have been combined. We think that this may be a way to deal with the shortage of Friends to undertake these roles, as well as highlighting that we are all part of a community that we wish to be safe for all.
Issues (if any) As mentioned in last year’s report, we understand that some Friends see the policy and procedures as impediments to including children and young people in our meetings. This concern is absolutely understandable, particular when some meetings have no children attending. We hope that through the revised Policy, Friends may be able to reframe these concerns into an appreciation that the policy is providing a safe framework within which children and young people may be nurtured and included in our meetings. From a very pragmatic view point, legal requirements are tightening on organisations that care for children, in particular faith-based organisations, and insurance depends on us taking this seriously.
Part B Items for consideration by Standing Committee or Yearly Meeting Business Meeting That YM24 approve the draft Child Safety Policy and Procedures, see: QA Draft Child Safety Policy & Procedures - Procedures (google.com)