

Rainbow Friends and Allies Meeting

PART A: REPORT

Achievements / Activities

At Yearly Meeting in 2022, Rainbow Friends and Allies held a social lunchtime gathering, an evening Epilogue inviting people to bring their “Pets and Plants” with open sharing, and a Share & Tell on “Gender and Equity” exploring cis and trans gender experiences.

We were invited to attend the Friends Online Recognised Meeting and speak about Equality as part of their series on Testimonies. This was an opportunity for five of us to share different perspectives.

Rainbow Friends provided a statement on gender to the AYM AGM in January to give a broader perspective on the recording of members as female, male or other. Our statement was included as part of the AYM Statement of Membership:

“Rainbow Friends are aware that as of December 2022, Australia Yearly Meeting includes gender diverse people who identify as: female, gender fluid/genderqueer, gender unimportant/gender agnostic, male, non-binary and xenogender”.

In March, we published an article on “Exploring Gender” in the Australian Friend with personal contributions in prose and poetry from eight Rainbow Friends on their gender and gender expression.

In February and March, Rainbow Friends and Allies joined Quaker stalls at LGBTIQ+ events: in Melbourne at Midsumma; in Sydney at the Fair Day as part of the Mardi Gras and World Pride; and in Canberra at the Fair Day as part of FreshOut and World Pride.

During the year we welcome talks and discussion. Sheila Keane led a discussion on “Spiritual Formation”. Adrian Glamorgan, the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Asia West Pacific Secretary, joined us to explore ways to support LGBTIQ+ Friends overseas.

About us

Rainbow Friends and Allies Meeting have been holding a Meeting for Worship on the 4th Sunday of each month, since September 2020. We are recognised as a Meeting for Worship within AYM and have a page on the website.

Our Meeting usually has six to ten Friends at each Meeting for Worship. Friends join us from nearly every Regional Meeting. After worship, we have social time, sometimes with a focused discussion on a topic.

We have a roster of elders, discussion facilitators and zoom tech support. We share the responsibility of providing pastoral care and support for each other within Rainbow Friends.

Issues/Analysis

Our Rainbow Friends and Allies Meeting offers to continue working with Regional Meetings and AYM to raise awareness of the diversity of gender identity and gender expression.

We hope to explore writing and updating Quaker pamphlets with inclusive language.

We continue to be concerned that Regional Meetings are asked to provide the gender of Members as “female”, “male” or “other”. We hope that this will be explored with sensitivity and awareness of the nuances of reporting on a person’s gender. This is a complex issue of visibility, mis-gendering, personal exploration of gender identity, and willingness or not to share about

personal gender identity with others. Rainbow Friends and Allies will continue discernment on this issue towards finding a more equitable and inclusive approach

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

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