

The Integrity Project

Organised by Wies Schuiringa (NSWRM) and Sue Ennis (VRM)

Endorsement for the project by AYM is sought so the project can be promoted as supported by Quakers in Australia.

- The project arose from a deep frustration and concern in Wies Schuiringa, about the lack of integrity in federal and State parliaments, the lack of repercussions for politicians when they had obviously shown a lack of integrity and the very weak proposed federal Integrity Commission bill that was not presented in parliament in late 2021. The strong and comprehensive integrity bill by an independent member of parliament was voted against to be presented in parliament.
- The Integrity Project is about Quakers going public with our Testimony to Integrity, it is a Concern.
- Since this project developed in late 2021, the need for a federal integrity commission has gained a lot more traction and it was part of the campaign by the independent candidates in the last federal election. The new Labor government has committed to establish an Integrity Commission.
- Despite these good intentions, the Integrity Project will continue as changing the subculture in the federal parliament will take a lot of determination. Not adhering to integrity has become entrenched and involves billions of dollars e.g., in contracts awarded without tenders, legislation passed or not passed, revolving door appointments with influential industries. The report *State Capture* describes non-integrity well. The project contributes to the groundswell for Integrity in Public Office.
- The project consists of holding a banner with the words "Show Integrity in Public Office" at the entrance road to the parking garage of federal parliament. The words Quakers, Religious Society of Friends are also on the banner. Good photos and video are taken of these actions, followed by an intense social media campaign. Friends are invited to join the action and/ or the social media campaign. Social media workshops will be held on 20 July.
- This action will be held four times during two years: on 4 August 2022, the second week of parliament sitting in February 2023, the second week after the mid-winter break in 2023 and in February 2024. The banner text might change in response to political circumstances.
- A media release and other promotional materials are being developed and will be updated for each action. Friends around Australia will be encouraged to contact their member of parliament to advocate for a strong federal integrity commission. They can also contact their State and Territory governments and local governments with this information. Quaker newsletters will be provided with updates.

A Clearness Meeting was held for Sue and Wies with three Friends at VRM. Other Friends have been consulted and an information session for Friends was held in March. The project was presented to TRM, VRM and NSWRM and support was given.

More information about the details of the project can be provided.

Advices and Queries, Australia Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends, 2008

- 37. Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.

- 41. If pressure is brought upon you to lower your standard of integrity, are you prepared to resist it? Our responsibilities to God and our neighbour may involve us in taking unpopular stands. Do not let the desire to be sociable, or the fear of seeming peculiar, determine your decisions.

“One of the ways we try to live out these testimonies in our daily lives is by identifying *concerns* —issues of interest and importance in our community and the world-- and then working trying to improve the world around us.”

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/concerns>

“Quakers try to live according to the deepest truth we know, and we connect most deeply to this in the stillness of worship. This means speaking the truth at all times, including to people in positions of power. As we are guided by integrity, so we expect to see it in public life.”

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/about-quakers/our-values>