

Quakers Australia Committee Report

Transition Implementation Working Group (TIWG, also known as 'Twig')

Membership:

Jonathan Benyei, Kerstin Reimers, Jennifer Burrell

Part A – Report



The Staff, and the Team –

- David Tehr, Coordinator; Holly Dynes, Communications & Publicity Manager
- Bruce Henry, Presiding Clerk
- Jonathan Benyei, TIWG; Kerstin Reimers, TIWG; Jennifer Burrell, TIWG.

We are overjoyed to report that the volunteer positions have also been filled -

- David Purnell, Probity Adviser, from January 2024
- David Liversidge, Staff Oversight & Support Friend (subject to YM approval, from July 2024 for a 3-year term of service).

We welcome these Friends to the QA Office Team. We believe we are a team who work together in a true spirit of Friendship and also friendship. We have found joy in creating the new structure of service for Australia Yearly Meeting.

A single twig breaks, but the bundle of twigs is strong.
Tecumseh (American First Peoples Chief, 1768–1813)

Please refer to <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Transition> for any details regarding the history of the change.

Progress

The transition to the new Office structure has been successfully bedded down.

TIWG lays down its service at YM25July. We anticipate that by that time, the new structure will be working effectively and efficiently in the service of us all.

Issues

1. We have become aware that the title, 'Staff Oversight & Support', is a stumbling block for a number of Friends. We wish to stress that this role is conceived as a support (including pastoral care) for the two paid Office staff, as well as an interface between the staff and the Presiding Clerk, who is their legal supervisor. We realise that we need to ask Yearly Meeting to approve any change.
2. The Presiding Clerk and Staff Oversight & Support team have agreed with Holly that an extension of her current contract (which ends 31 July 2024) for a further 2 years will be mutually beneficial.
3. We recommend that the Probity Adviser duties, which are not onerous, become a part of the Public Officer's duties into the future. David Purnell is willing to take this on as part of his lifetime appointment as Public Officer.
4. We now realise that the words in the duty statement of the Communications & Publicity Manager, '*Maintaining and suggesting improvements to the QA websites to ensure easy access by Friends and non-Friends to current and relevant information*', are ambiguous. For clarification, it was intended that the Communications & Publicity Manager's role include not only content and content management, but also organising the Enquirers' website to ensure its accessibility to seekers; to be in effect the website manager for the Enquirers' website (<https://www.quakersaustralia.org.au/>).
5. It may be useful for all Newsletter editors, and Australian Friend editors, to discuss their processes and content guidelines with Holly. We hope that an informal discussion can be organised during YM24.
6. We continue to offer any assistance required by the Handbook Revision Committee regarding changes to the QA Office.
7. We have discussed the term 'Quakers Australia' and 'Australia Yearly Meeting' with the Publications Committee and other Friends. In explanation, when TIWG created the new office structure, we made a conscious choice to use 'QA' for the new staff positions. We believed this would clearly distinguish the new and quite different roles from the previous 'AYM Secretary' and would also reinforce the transition we were undergoing. We also note that the terms 'AYM' and 'YM' are consistently confused, and that the term 'Quakers Australia' is more easily understood by newcomers than 'Australia Yearly Meeting'. Our legal name is 'The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Inc.' and there is thus no strict obligation to keep 'AYM', or indeed to change to 'QA'. In short, we believe that the two terms for our faith organisation may be used interchangeably at present.

Part B Items for consideration by Yearly Meeting Business Meeting

1. We suggest a change in role title from 'Staff Oversight & Support' to Staff Liaison Friend, which we hope will be more acceptable to Friends.
2. We ask Yearly Meeting to approve an extension to Holly's contract for a further 2 years, until 31.7.2026.
3. We recommend that the Probity Adviser duties, which are not onerous, become a part of the Public Officer's duties into the future.