

Pastoral Care YM23 Report

The YMOC asked regional meetings to appoint two or three pastoral carers, including a younger or inexperienced pastoral carer where possible, to join a committee of pastoral carers during YM23.

Several Friends who were asked to serve as pastoral carers requested that a role statement be circulated. YMOC, in consultation with previous PCs, drafted a role statement. This was posted on the YM website and circulated to regional meetings.

As a member of the YMOC, Jo Jordan agreed to take responsibility for convening the first meeting of pastoral carers. Jo asked Lesli Grant and Clinton De Young to join as conveners on the committee because she would be out of the country for three weeks before YM23.

The conveners met for the first time on May 11th to discuss the role of pastoral carers and how they might fulfil that role. The pastoral care convenor from YM22 recommended that the PC committee have their own home group and this was accepted. We agreed that a roster of PCs be prepared to cover each day of YM activities. Those on the roster would be required to be contactable by phone but not necessarily present online. We agreed to compile a list of pastoral carers with their contact details and make this available to pastoral carers, elders, Help Desk and YMOC. We discussed the option of preparing a page with photographs of PCs with contact details to circulate during YM as a visual reminder of the PC Committee. The convenor agreed that we would not allocate pastoral carers to prep sessions, although elders would be allocated.

A preliminary meeting was organised for the 1st of June at 6.30pm AEST, prior to prep sessions of YM23. Six Friends attended this meeting but not all pastoral carers had been appointed by their regional meetings by this time. During the meeting the role of pastoral carer was revisited, the list of PCs and their contact details as well as a roster of PCs prepared to be on call. All of these suggestions were accepted. Some friends expressed concern about private contact details appearing on sections of the YM website which were accessible to the general public. We agreed to add the letters PC before our names online, to be more visible. Some PCs were willing to have their name and contact details posted on the timetable, which is accessible to the general public.

When Jo Jordan was away for three weeks, Lesli Grant took on the role of coordinator. Lesli welcomed those who were newly appointed, circulated notes made at the first session, compiled an updated list of PCs with their contact details, and made a start on the roster. Clinton stepped down as coordinator because of many other pressing YMOC responsibilities.

A second meeting of pastoral carers was held on the first day of YM23 on 1st July at 10am. Fifteen Friends were appointed to be PC by their Regional Meetings. This was the first Yearly Meeting when a representative from Rainbow Friends joined the pastoral care group. During this session it became clear that some Friends who had been appointed would not be able to continue in the role. Others had personal or employment commitments which limited their participation during YM. A roster of PCs on call was promptly completed and the list of PCs and their contact details was confirmed. Soon afterwards these documents were

circulated to PCs, elders, Help Desk and YMOC. Lesli Grant informed us that, unfortunately, the page of photos with contact details could proceed as originally planned.

Pastoral Carers met as a home group on the second day of YM with twelve PCs attending. It was agreed that our time together could include discussion of other matters and act as a support group for each other as well as a pastoral care group for all at YM.

During YM at least four Friends joined the PC homegroup each day, and sometimes there were up to 9. We were aware that 7am was a challenging time for WA Friends.

During the week we were notified by Friends, or contacted by Friends themselves, on 14 different occasions. The issues were usually of a physical or emotional nature. No names were shared within the group. Issues arose at different times of the day, and during different sessions of YM, which happened to be triggering for some friends. As can be expected in any large group, several Friends became unwell, some seriously, and others met with unexpected accidents and injuries. We learnt that the issues faced by younger friends and new friends needing pastoral care differed from the needs of older friends.

We believe that the PC group was able to offer support to Friends during a time which can be emotional, exhausting, confusing and upsetting as well as life enhancing and inspiring. On each of these occasions the pastoral carers were able to offer a listening ear, refer the issue to another Friend to follow up where necessary, or recommend another source of ongoing support.

We have some recommendations for future Yearly Meetings.

1. That during the first session of YM, one of the convenors of the pastoral care group be asked to give a brief outline of the role of PC to the whole of YM.
2. That PCs continue to meet as a home group at a time which is convenient to all.
3. That members of the PC group be more visible. This may be with contact details posted daily on the timetable, or images of pastoral carers circulated widely.
4. That the buddy system be re-introduced, particularly for those new to Friends or to YM. We were aware that some participants felt overwhelmed by tech issues.
5. That two or three representatives from Rainbow Friends join the pastoral care group.
6. That several younger Friends join the pastoral care committee because younger Friends have different needs to older Friends.

Those who served as pastoral carers valued the opportunity to offer a listening ear and to discuss within the group the most appropriate ways to offer help and support. They enjoyed getting to know each other in a supportive environment and opportunities to share their responses to this Yearly Meeting.

Jo Jordan