

Documents in Advance 2019

Report from AYM Committees /Working Groups /Associated Bodies



Handbook Revision Committee (HRC) and Liaison Friends

ACHIEVEMENTS/ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

At YM18, the HRC was joined by a group of Liaison Friends from regional meetings (RMs). By October 2018 several RMs had made such appointments and work began in earnest. This has proved to be a positive experiment, and we suggest this model could serve as a template for other AYM Committees.

We have met very frequently by Zoom, usually weekly or fortnightly since October 2018.

We are very pleased to bring forward to YM19 a revision of almost the entire *Handbook*, including its Appendices.

We recommend that the revision of chapter 6 be held over until the Right Holding of YM Committee has made significant recommendations, as this may involve major changes to practice.

ISSUES/ANALYSIS

Our agreed goal is that our *Handbook* should be current, clear, and provide useful guidance for Friends, not only with regard to our practices and procedures, but to the underlying values and principles which guide us as processes change. We welcome the creative Spirit and rely on the discernment of Friends.

Our approach has been based on this. We ask Friends for discernment in their Regional Meetings to carefully discern the knotty, substantive issues where the HRC believes there is ambiguity in the present text, or lack of clarity about our processes.

We are aware that there is a great deal of discernment in such a large volume of text.

We ask that comments about style, punctuation, etc., should be sent to the RM's Liaison Friend or to the HRC, rather than be incorporated into the RM response to this DiA report. We recommend that our style guide, an editorial guide based on the current Australian standard Commonwealth *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (at present in its 6th ed. 2002), should not be subject to Friendly discernment. It is included in the Appendix for transparency.

We will incorporate the RMs' initial discernment into the draft *Handbook* (Attachment) for discernment at YM 19. We hope that YM19 will reach unity to approve a new 7th edition, which in its turn will be revised as necessary,

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subject to carrying over any matters which have not been discerned by YM19.

SUMMARY OF DISCERNMENT ITEMS

The draft text is positioned alongside the text from the current *Handbook* for ease of comparison.

Discernment items are identified throughout the draft revision of this *Handbook* in comments alongside the text, e.g. 'DiA: We recommend ...'

Comments alongside the text are also used for notes, e.g. 'DiA: For noting: This text was approved by YM17'.

We hope this layout is helpful.

The following is a summary of discernment items. Friends are asked to refer to the full section for context and further explanation. We invite the discernment of Friends.

Cover, title page verso, and other introductory material

- We recommend that after approval of the YM19 draft by YM, this become the 7th edition of the Handbook, and that an update statement is included on the title page verso.
- We recommend that the 7th edition of the Handbook should be professionally copy-edited, including a new Contents table, after YM approval. Approximately \$800 would be required.
- We recommend that when the Handbook is downloaded or printed there is a visible indication (e.g. in the footer) of the date the last update was made, and ask the AYM Secretary to implement this.

Preamble and Preface

- We have reversed the current Handbook order, and deleted the heading 'Preamble' as it did not seem necessary.
- We recommend that the section on amending the *Handbook* be moved to Appendix C with the flowchart.

Contents and Index

- We hope the contents will be able to be generated from Word. This may require professional assistance.
- We recommend no index, as it does not seem necessary in an online publication. A PDF can be searched for any keyword or phrase using CTL+F.
- We recommend that the Handbook not be published as hard copy or e-pub, as it can be downloaded or printed as a PDF document.

Chapter 1

- We ask RMs to discern a better title for this chapter, as 'The Quaker Way'

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implies there is only one way.

- We recommend that sections 1.0, 1.2, and 1.3 should be deleted.
- The section on Meetings for Worship for Business has been revised, and a new section on Standing Aside has been added.
- Section 1.7, Threshing meetings, was not previously in the *Handbook*.

Chapter 2

Parts of chapter 2 were approved by YM18.

- Section 2.3.2, Properties: We recommend that: A list of properties is no longer necessary, as a list of Meetings is now on the AYM website.
 - Question: should the list of properties (as opposed to Meetings) be added to our website?
- Section 2.3.6, Local Meeting Ministry, and Oversight or Care, Committees - general, was not previously in the *Handbook*.
- 2.4.3 Business Meetings. We believe the previous version lacks detail and clarity. We think the new version is clearer, more precise, but still describes existing practices.
- 2.6, Publications. This is a new section, with text amalgamated from other Handbook sections plus the AYM Publications Policy. Publications Committee has approved this text.
 - We ask if it is correct, and if so if it is in right ordering, for AYM committees and Meetings to have their own social media presence.
 - We recommend that sections 2.6 and 2.6.1 should be moved to the Publications Committee webpage, and referenced from the Handbook.

Chapter 3

- Section 3.3. We recommend that references to *Australian Quaker Meetings, Office-holders, Members, Attenders and Children* be changed, as it is no longer printed. It is called 'membership database' in our draft revision, and includes the online list of *Meetings, members, attenders, and children*, which can be printed on demand.
- Sections 3.4-3.7, Members, have been re-worded.
- 3.7.4, Visitors' reports: We recommend that RMs should archive the reports using a confidential archive process.
- 3.9, Young Friends: this text was provided by YFs at YM18.
- 3.11, Checking our membership database. This section was not previously in the *Handbook*.

Chapter 4

- We have split this chapter into two parts ('Caring for one another: Part 1: Life milestones' and 'Caring for one another: Part 2: Support and conflict') to reflect the care we extend to each other through life's milestones, and the care we extend during times of stress and conflict.
 - We recommend that the Safe Quaker Community Committee give

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consideration to revising Part 2 as a Policy.

- Section 4.3.1, Care of Children. This was not previously in the *Handbook*.
- Section 4.3.2, Protection of children. This text was brought forward by the AYM Child Protection Committee at YM17 and is still considered by them to be current.
- Section 4.4.2 has been re-worded. We ask if, should a couple request a change to the wording, can this be delegated to the Registering Officer and couple; does Ministry & Care need to be involved - and does it make a difference if it is the ceremony is 'in the care of the meeting'; and whether it needs to be minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business?
- Section 4.4.3 (and section 3.8): both sections include the phrase 'in the care of the Meeting'. We have been asked to consider what this actually means. Draft wording has been provided in the comment.
- 4.7, now headed 'Other life transitions'; we have moved the section on Friends' Fellowship of Healing to chapter 5.
- Section 4.8.4, Testimonies to the Grace of God: we have heard that some Friends are uncomfortable with the phrase 'the grace of God', and ask if this should be re-worded.

Chapter 5

Parts of chapter 5 were approved by YM17 and YM18.

- Section 5.2.3, the AYM Secretary. We have moved the sections on *Documents in Advance* and *Documents in Retrospect* to this section.
- Section 5.2.8, Website Coordinator. This was not previously in the *Handbook*. Wording has been supplied by the IT Committee.
- Section 5.2.9, Membership Secretary, This was not previously in the *Handbook*. Wording has been supplied by the IT Committee.
- Section 5.3.5, Finances and employing staff. This section has been re-worded to clarify who bears the legal responsibility as the 'employer'.
- Section 5.3.8, Specific AYM Committees. As a comprehensive list is on the AYM website, including the purpose and nature of each committee, and kept updated, we feel this list no longer belongs in the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*.
 - We have retained the information regarding Standing Committee (SC) and Nominations Committee at this time. We ask if these changes are helpful.
- 5.3.8.1 Standing Committee. We have moved the urgent decision-making process to this section. We note that there is extensive information outlining SC's role on the webpage and also in our Rules. Should the Rules be revised in the future, we recommend that the section on SC, especially as it relates to urgent decision-making, should be reviewed.
- 5.3.8.2 AYM Nominations Committee. We recommend that, as the bulk of this section unnecessarily repeats chapter 2, this could be referenced from here and detail could be moved to the Nominations Committee webpage.

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We particularly recommend this for the section on Process.

- Throughout 5.4, many sections have been approved by the relevant individuals or committees.
 - 5.4.5, Friends Peace Teams. This section was not previously in the *Handbook*.
- Section 5.5.4, *Australian Quaker Meetings, Office-holders, Members, Attenders and Children*. This register is now referred to as our 'membership database'. We recommend that this section should be deleted, as this is no longer a 'publication' (please see section 3.3 above).
- Sections 5.6.6 Peace & Social Justice Fund and 5.6.7, Thanksgiving Fund: we recommend that the detail contained in these sections should be transferred to the respective committee webpages.
- Section 5.6.5 Donald Groom Peace Fund [laid down YM14.50(a)]. We recommend this section be deleted.

Chapter 6

- We recommend that chapter 6 is reviewed after the Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee has made relevant recommendations. No changes have been suggested for YM19.

Appendices

- We have re-numbered the Supplements and re-titled them Appendices.
- We agree to the Friends School request to delete the former Supplement 5, on The Friends School.
- Appendix A, Rules of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated as revised 2002. Retaining this is a legal requirement. Changes to the text are not within the remit of the Handbook Revision Committee.
- Appendix B, Style guide and glossary. This has been extensively cross-checked to the source document, the *Commonwealth Style manual for authors, editors and printers*, at present in its 6th ed. 2002. We recommend that our style, as it follows an Australian standard manual, should not be referred to YM for correction, but left with the HRC. We regard the style guide and glossary as a living document to be updated for editorial guidance whenever deemed useful.
- Appendix C, Flowchart of the approvals process for Handbook revisions. This was approved at YM17, and after a minor update, at YM18.
- Appendices D-H. Changes to the text of these Appendices are not within the remit of the Handbook Revision Committee.

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PART B: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Our *Handbook* is viewed as a procedure manual, and is therefore a living document which requires ongoing amendment in order to accurately reflect our changing practices.
 - a. Due to this, we recommend that the HRC should be an ongoing Committee.
 - b. We wish to alert AYM Nominations Committee that HRC members will complete their 3-year term at YM19. Some individual Friends may wish to continue their service on this Committee, if this is so discerned.
 - c. We recommend that HRC Liaison Friends (appointed by their RMs) should continue as a valued adjunct to the core Committee.
2. We ask Friends to discern items identified in each chapter for discernment. These are summarised in Part A above.
3. We recommend that annotations should be positioned in the online *Handbook* for sections not fully discerned at YM19.

This will be less misleading for people using the *Handbook* for guidance, than it would be to leave outdated text without acknowledging that there is not yet clarity on a discrete matter.

The original text would be retained but annotated. These annotations would be visually distinct, with a clear indication of why the issue requires further discernment, e.g. where all RMs are not in unity and the issue is not resolved at YM but held over for further discernment; the HRC needs more time to develop a well-considered draft wording; another Committee needs time to develop its response to a matter related to its practice; etc.

4. We recommend that, if all RMs are in unity about a proposed future change, Standing Committee should be able to authorise it to go into the online *Handbook* immediately. This will help to keep our *Handbook* current.
5. Appendix B, the Style Guide: we recommend that matters of style, layout, grammar and syntax should be entrusted to the HRC and its Liaison Friends, noting that a style guide is now part of the *Handbook's*

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Appendices. This style guide is intended to be a living document and like other stylistic amendments, should be entrusted to the HRC and its Liaison Friends with input as desired by the Publications Committee.

6. As already agreed by YM18, factual and minor amendments are made to the online *Handbook* at any time, through the HRC and AYM Secretary. These should be reported to the following YM. Any Friend is welcome to point out factual errors to the HRC, or to alert the Committee to sections which are unclear or do not reflect current practice. This is indicated in Appendix C, Flowchart of Handbook revisions.

Attachment: draft revised *Handbook of practice and procedure*.

Committee members:	HRC: Jennifer Burrell, Elizabeth Field, Wies Schuiringa Liaison Friends: Michael Searle, Vidya (CRM); Susan Freeman (NSWRM); Roger Sawkins (QRM); Julie Walpole, Robin McLean (TRM); Catherine Heywood, Peter Bennett (VRM); Vivienne Dawes (WARM)
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