Let your life speak.
Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee

Report to YM19 Preparatory Session
‘We want people to feel enriched and blessed’
QRM’s planning for our national gathering in 2021

Friends, concerns have been raised about QRM’s plans for a ‘Business and Backhouse’ gathering over 4 days in Brisbane in 2021.

This was deeply considered at a Friendly Group yesterday and discernment from yesterday’s meeting will be presented at the end of our consideration of the Right Holding of YM Committee’s report.
The Right Holding of YM Committee
story so far ...
(greatly abbreviated)

• The original catalyst for the establishment of the Right Holding of YM (RHYM) Committee was a very hot summer. A 3-year experiment was set up:
  • Move the YM gathering from January to July
  • Use Friends’ School in Hobart every third year (as this means a lower cost).
Where we are now

• The time of year for holding our YM event is still under consideration. The RHYM committee expects to bring recommendations on this as well as other matters to YM20

• The every 3 years YM in Hobart has been a failure from the host RM’s viewpoint
‘YM needs to be simple, fit for purpose, with a meaningful engagement of young people’
The story so far continued …

YM18 changed the terms of reference for the Right Holding of YM Committee to enable this Committee to look at broader issues, consult widely, and ask some fundamental questions, e.g.:

• What is the purpose of our Yearly Meeting gathering?
Friends think the purpose of our YM gathering is

1. Community – an all-ages gathering
2. Community – the opportunity to learn and share
3. Business – discerning the Spirit through our business process
How do we know?
Consultation by workshops and surveys

• We are very grateful to Friends who have given us the benefit of their thoughts, especially those who have attended workshops at Regional Meetings or Yearly Meetings
• Our report in DiA and our thinking are based on the generous contributions of many Friends across Australia
• We will make sure that all our reports and documents are on the RHYM Committee’s page on our AYM website
‘Our YM allows for wider discernment on complex issues’
Friends’ comments on our discernment process

• ‘Clarify what decisions need to go to YM – don’t waste time on trivia’
• ‘Spread DiA business throughout the year to allow less rushed discernment by RMs’
• ‘Standing Committee to make some decisions and meet more often using Zoom – more matters settled in Standing Committee’
• ‘If all RMs agree on something – take it off the YM agenda’
• ‘SC could sift or triage decisions … Does it really need to go to YM?’
We recommend a review of Standing Committee’s role and decision-making powers, noting a clear definition is not presently in our Handbook.
‘It’s important to be part of the change and to be challenged’
Financial year issues

Our AYM Treasurer alerted the Committee to the great difficulties of changing the month in which we hold our YM gathering while keeping the same financial year.

- This is because we hold our AGM, which includes our annual audited financial report, and also our annual budget approval, on our previous YM schedule

- This can be better managed if we agree to a permanent arrangement for our financial affairs. Then we can experiment with different times of year for our national gathering
We recommend that the YM gathering cycle is disassociated from our YM financial year.

This would

1. Give us more flexibility in future to consider which month/s would be best suited to our annual YM gathering

2. Permit our AYM Treasurer to make a settled arrangement for reporting and approving our financial matters.
‘Being with other Quakers is inspiring and enriching’
Models for consideration

We bring forward 2 draft models for consideration, Friends. Both have serious issues and neither is recommended at this time.

We hope Friends will assist us by giving us their thoughts throughout the coming year, so that we may bring a fully considered new model to **YM20** for discernment and, we hope, approval.
‘If YM were a party or celebration, how would we organise it differently?’
Collaborative organisation model: how we organise our national gathering

Elements of this are being trialled by TRM now
‘How will we respond to the expectations of Friends?’
A model affecting our process of discernment
Some elements of this will be trialled by QRM at YM21
‘YM allows one to feel supported and that being a Quaker is normal’
Thank You

• To all Friends who contributed to the workshops run last YM and at Regional Meetings over the past 12 months – your thoughts have been captured and deeply considered by the Committee

• To all Friends who completed the YM surveys over the past 3 years – these have been analysed and deeply considered

• To all Friends who attended the Friendly School and Friendly Groups this YM – everything has been captured on butchers’ paper
Are you up for more consultations?

Stay tuned!

We plan more workshops and possibly webinars over the next 12 months.
‘How will we identify winners and losers in any change?’
Learnings from this YM’s Friendly School and Friendly Groups
• A strong concern for inclusion of children and JYFs
  • ‘Organising children and JYF programs is not a “burden”’
• A strong concern for our environmental impacts in a time of climate crisis
  • ‘Whatever we do, will it be responding to climate change?’
• The Committee needs to work on success measures: how do we know if a YM has been successful?
‘Can all needs and expectations be met by YM?’
RHYM report in DiA: Part B recommendations 1-8

All Part B recommendations were supported in principle by all Regional Meetings
We recommend that

1. AYM should continue actively experimenting, past the lifetime of this current committee.
RM responses

- **CRM**: We agree.

- **NSWRM**: We support the recommendations for points 1-5.

- **QRM**: We suggest more exploration is needed and wait for a response from Standing Committee (*all recommendations 1-8*)

- **SANTRM**: SANTRM remains concerned that a YM without children is not complete as a meeting, lacking our whole community. We feel that YM gatherings should be the responsibility of AYM itself, with only local logistics being handled by host regional meetings. We would like Easter or September to be reconsidered as a time for YM gatherings, with sufficient forward planning. Is it possible for us to have a ‘fallow’ year, when RMs consider themselves unable to host at that time? (*all recommendations 1-8*)

- **TRM**: We appreciate the work done by this committee and support these recommendations. We encourage forward thinking to be wholly inclusive of JYFs and children who are our future (*all recommendations 1-8*)

- **VRM**: We accept points 1 – 4.

- **WARM**: We support these recommendations. We hope that YM continues to include elements for both heart and mind (*all recommendations 1-8*).
2. This committee should continue to refine guidelines and options, with input from Friends across Australia.
3. We note that the trial of holding YM in Hobart every 3 years has ended. It was not successful from the host RM’s viewpoint. We hope that we can reach greater clarity on our future models by YM20, when this Committee expects to lay down its service.

CRM: We note and agree. We have received letters recently in response to this item indicating that the current model (mid-winter YMs) does not generally work for families with young children.
4. This Committee continue throughout the coming year to seek input on the suggested models for holding YM in the future, with a view to presenting a final report at YM20. We hope that the use of models will enable us to experiment adventurously while retaining cherished elements of our current model.
5. A review of the role and authority of standing committee (SC), and therefore our rules, should be commenced in 2019-20.

If accepted at YM20, this process could support the planned ‘business-only’ YM21 to be hosted by QRM. We hope that an all-ages gathering will also be held in 2021.
5a. A separate working group should be set up to explore a definition for matters which can be decided by Standing Committee. The Handbook does not currently contain such a definition. This should consider (a) matters which can be decided by SC (b) matters which can be decided by SC only if all RMs are in unity.

This is a prerequisite to meet the strong theme that the agenda for YM should be triaged or pruned. This will meet the other strong theme that SC should meet more frequently online.

**CRM:** 5a) we ask who should appoint the working group to consider 5a. Should be SC or Nominations Committee of AYM or some other group? **We agree to this working group and have no view on who should appoint the membership.**
5b. The same or a separate working group should consider how this would change the agenda for YM.

5c. Both groups should be tasked to work with QRM prior to YM21.

**CRM**: 5b) & 5c) we agree.
5d. We do not believe it is our role to establish such committees, but suggest that members of the RHYM and Presiding Clerk’s and AYM Secretary’s support committees may be able to work on this. The AYM Clerk, Secretary and Treasurer should be members ex officio.

**CRM:** d) we do not agree that RHYMWG members should have this role.
5e. We believe the AYM Clerk, Secretary and Treasurer may need additional practical support during a time of change.

**CRM:** 5e) we agree.
6. Use of technology.

a. Only venues with strong technological backbone and equipment, such as large screens, should be considered. We agree that venues which support videoconferencing (so Friends not present can view and/or participate in sessions) should be preferred.

b. With this in mind, the IT committee should continue investigating fit-for-purpose AV equipment, with consideration of the value proposition of renting vs purchasing, and of outsourcing video streaming and videoconferencing every YM.
CRM: 6a) we believe this statement is not consistent with 6b. We agree that venues which support videoconferencing (so Friends not present can view and/or participate in sessions) should be preferred. 6b) We agree.

NSWRM: We note that it would have cost $45 per hour for rental of audio-visual equipment and an operator from Avondale at YM18.
7. All-ages gatherings.

There is support for a paid worker for JYFs, and a strong recognition that children and JYFs form an important part of our community. We agree that a paid coordinator/worker should be considered as part of our budget for YMs.

CRM: We agree

NSWRM: We support this recommendation

VRM: We accept that support for a paid worker for JYFs at YM should be considered, in addition to the paid worker for the children.
8. Organising an event.

There is a suggestion that we should ‘hire a conference organiser’. It is possible that a Friend, properly reimbursed, would be prepared to take on this role. This committee believes this may be a useful option to explore. This would also have a budget impact.

There was another suggestion that we could ask JYFs and YFs to support some of the organisation, if they were appropriately reimbursed, but this may not be appropriate at this time.
CRM: 8a and 8b) this is an option for any RM planning a YM. **NSWRM:** We are not convinced about the suggestions to hire a conference organiser and to ask JYFs and YFs to support YM organisation.

**VRM:** 8a: we agree that hiring a conference organizer would be a good option to explore. We suggest a trial for two years. There would be a budget impact unless it is funded by the surplus funds. 8b: we do not see this suggestion as practical.
2021 and QRM’s experiment
QRM’s plans for 2021

• A ‘Business and Backhouse’ national gathering
• From Thursday to Monday
• The venue being considered, in central Brisbane, will accommodate around 100 Friends, with meeting rooms and catering on site
• The DiA process and Prep Session processes are still being worked out
QRM are unable to organise an all-ages gathering, a children’s or JYF program, Friendly School or Share & Tells

We respect QRM’s courage in bringing forward a difficult proposal, which has been accepted by Standing Committee
• Many Friends have been deeply exercised about the loss to us all of intergenerational community at our national gathering.

• We value community and regret the lack of an all-ages gathering.

• We value learning and sharing and would also regret this lack.
But at the Friendly Group on Thursday …
the Spirit moved

We agreed a vision, Friends:

• An all-ages national gathering at the same time and at (close to) the same venue as the ‘Business and Backhouse’ in Brisbane in 2021
• Friends have offered to make a children’s and JYF program happen

• We hope other Friends / RMs will offer to organise other aspects of our treasured YM, e.g. Friendly School, Share & Tell, Epilogue, concert …

• We hope the YM Planning Support Committee may be able to help make this happen

We feel a new sense of energy and hope. We commend this vision to this Preparatory Session.
We recommend that the YM Planning Support Committee continue, and ask AYM Nominations to consider appointments as needed.
In 2021, if we accept this vision, we will be trialling both draft models in the Right Holding of YM report at the same time!
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