

The Australian Friend

ISSUE 1220 DECEMBER 2020 ISSN 1326-0936

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Relationships



Editorial

The articles received for this issue of *The Australian Friend* cluster around the theme of Relationships. Friends have been writing poetry touching on this theme, and we have articles about relationships with other Quakers at Yearly Meeting and in Geneva.

Brendan Caulfield-James article 'The paradox of power' looks at the danger of abusive power in human relationships and in our relationship with our environment. What can we learn about right relationships from the teaching of Jesus, and from the way God relates to his creation? Can we learn to use 'a currency of grace rather than a currency of greed'?

As we try to tackle global warming, this issue of our relationship to nature is of vital importance. Helen Gould tackles the issue of how we derive our food from nature. An article about the preservation of Indigenous heritage asks us what we need to learn from First Nations people about a proper relationship with land.

Jonathon Porritt's book *Hope in Hell* asserts that Global Warming is not primarily a technical problem, but a spiritual problem. We hope that this issue provides some helpful spiritual insights as we face an uncertain and challenging future.

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM



Notice of Annual General Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia.

This will be held at 12pm on Saturday 16 January 2021 in an online meeting, via Zoom.

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Cover photo: Relationships



The paradox of power

BRENDAN CAULFIELD-JAMES | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

The greatest achievement of humanity is not its works of art, science or technology, but the recognition of its own dysfunction, its own madness.

A New Earth, Eckhart Tolle

Recent protests, expressing discontent with authorities worldwide, highlight the difficulties we humans find in exercising power. Members of religious groups have not been immune to this flaw. While paying lip service to the noble teachings of our founders, we continue to succumb to the allure of power. This has led to grave, if not catastrophic outcomes.

When power over others becomes an obsession, it is then the primary focus. Every other consideration takes back seat. Any means, fair or foul, is legitimised to achieve the desired goal. It is the kind of power that drove Herod to massacre the Innocents. It was the way the Romans brutally conquered and subdued their colonies. It is the kind of power manifest in all empires, dictatorships and totalitarian regimes. It was the kind of power that crucified Jesus. And it is the kind of power that is trashing the Earth today.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus proclaims a very different kind of power. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those persecuted for righteous' sake. These are the ones who will inherit God's Kingdom. The apostle Paul reveals that three times in his life he pleaded with the Lord to release him from a nagging mystery ailment but the answer came, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor 12:7-9). Showing the other cheek, walking the extra mile and offering one's outer cloak as well as undergarment – all point to a caring

use of power. The woman caught in adultery experienced how compassion proved more powerful than the letter of the Law. Early Quakers embedded this in their testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, justice and equality.

Darwin's theory of Evolution gives us an insight into this kind of power. Having created the Universe, the Creator chose to share power with her beloved creation rather than dominate it. In her book, *Ask The Beasts*, theologian Elizabeth Johnson writes, 'As such unbounded love will do, the Spirit of God unleashes autonomy in the beloved rather than seeking to control the other by any other form of power-over, even if benevolently exercised.' She goes on to add, '...the creative Spirit of God desires free partnership, not subservience'. It is partnership between Creator and creatures 'that moves with extravagant divine generosity to create conditions that have enabled the biodiverse community of life to become so interesting and beautiful'.

Quaker Pastor Philip Gulley, himself a survivor of abusive power, examines this issue in his book, *If the Church Were Christian*. In an early encounter with an Elder who had clear designs on promoting herself, he recounts, 'She bullied and intimidated the other Elders, manipulating the Quaker process of discernment to get her way'. He warns that choosing to accommodate such behavior for the sake of peace is far from harmless. 'Not only does abusive power harm the spiritual well-being of its targets, it has a detrimental effect on those who wield it. Hunger for power diminishes

our capacity for appropriate humility, crippling our self-awareness, therefore making transformation all the more difficult and unlikely'. So consuming can this lust for power be that the perpetrator loses all sense of proportion. 'I don't care if only two people remain in the church. We must do it!' is an instance he cites of this addictive behavior. It is not uncommon for such people to jeopardise themselves and their work rather than see control slip away from them.

According to David Steindl-Rast, a Christian monk, the word 'authority' was originally applied to those who possessed 'a firm basis of knowing and acting'. As a consequence of this expertise, their power to command authority in their specialised fields was acknowledged and respected. Authoritarianism, on the contrary, is the abuse of this power. Elizabeth Johnson elaborates, 'In controlling, manipulative, fearful, narcissistic and egocentric relations, one party seeks to gain advantage by bending the other to his or her own will. The core integrity of the other is disrespected by ploys that tend to dominate.' The test of true leadership and authority, Steindl-Rast says, is the question, 'Does it build others up or put them down?' In his book, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence*, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks states, 'the answer to religious violence is probably to be found in religion itself, among those who understand that religion gains influence when it renounces power'.

Crucially, the way we exercise power to-day has vital consequences for the

future of our Planet. The lockdown imposed on us by Covid-19 provides us with a timely opportunity to put our house in order, by redressing our misuse of power, which is considered the most likely source of this pandemic. 'The more we become aggressive towards nature, the more we push into rich biodiversity and tropical forests, the more we put ourselves at risk', writes Italian physicist and author, Paolo Giordano. The accelerated extinction of multiple animal species is forcing bacteria that lived in their guts for millennia to move elsewhere for survival. Humans devouring more wilderness for agriculture, mining and urban development are causing pathogens to be released that normally would remain in these areas. A recent report from the World Health Organization supports this, concluding that 'The seven drivers of zoonoses (diseases that can be transmitted to humans from animals), ... are all anthropogenic, that is, the result of human action'.

As the newest species in the evolution of our planet, we humans still struggle to find the right balance in our relationships with one another. The paradox is that when we empower others, we empower ourselves. We have yet to grasp this truth. The onset of Covid-19 is a distress call for us to review our role as co-creators with the Creator of a Universe, where all creatures are meant to flourish. Snap back to business as usual is neither desirable nor likely. A new set of values and guidelines is crucial to getting us on track. This pandemic comes as a transforming moment for us to deal in

the currency of grace rather than greed. It can throw a lifeline to both ourselves and the Planet. Change, says the Buddha, can happen 'in the twinkling of an eye'. The desired transformation could well be forced upon us as quickly as the lockdown.

If the Church were Christian, it would be modelled on God's vision of a fair go for all. We would see 'that of God' in one another, including in all of creation. We would embrace our interdependence with the whole. As a single sacred community, we would behold a Universe charged with grandeur and mystery. In times of adversity, such as the present, we would acknowledge a greater wisdom at work, as Job did. Maintaining faith in a benevolent Creator, we would seek to discern a way forward in keeping with the values of a loving Father's Household. We can take heart in the knowledge that transformation usually happens as a result of some unexpected event. We are experiencing such a moment now.

Some scholars suggest a more accurate translation of Mathew's Gospel (5:48) is, 'Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate'. For Phillip Gulley, a church that is Christian would radiate 'compassion, compassion, compassion!' To most major religious traditions this is central. The Apostle Paul put it this way, 'For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another' (Gal 5:13). True compassion results in an awareness of the common

bond of mortality and immortality we all share. At this deep level, it brings healing in the widest sense. The Body of Christ is an extended community where each of us plays a vital role in nurturing the well-being of all.

There is urgency in Gulley's plea that 'The sooner authoritarianism is challenged, the healthier the church will be'. So will the created Universe we inhabit. 'Delaying appropriate challenges to abuses of power only serves to reinforce the validity of the abuser and his or her right to demean others'. We would do well to heed his warning which has greater relevance to-day than he may have envisaged. If our mindsets remain unchanged, we will end up recreating the same dysfunctional world. Darwin has demonstrated that when survival is threatened by seemingly insurmountable problems, a species will either die out or rise above its limitations through an evolutionary leap. Both the Old and New Testaments tell of a 'new heaven and a new earth' arising out of the old. As co-creators, the choices we make determine the kind of world we manifest. Our hope rests in the belief that a loving Creator will want a blessed future for us all.

Trusting in a Creator who is faithful, theology dares to affirm that the living world with all its members is being drawn towards a blessed future, promised but unknown (Elizabeth Johnson).

AF



Being animal, eating animals

HELEN GOULD | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



The Australian *Quaker Advances and Queries* number 44: ‘All life is interrelated... Do you treat all life with respect, recognising a particular obligation to those animals we breed and maintain for our own use and enjoyment?’ Number 32: ‘Are you able to contemplate your death... Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully.’

My doctor told me that I needed to eat red meat for the vitamin B12 which I was perilously lacking in. ‘Can I get it from vegan foods?’ (Gluten and dairy upset my delicate tummy). ‘Some people can, but not you, Helen’. So I began supplementing my protein intake (mostly chick peas and locally caught fish), with red meat in small portions which satisfy me. I knew I needed to research the ethics of meat eating.

I had spent a couple of years in the 1970s with Aboriginal people in Arnhem land, and occasionally they

shared goanna, snake, magpie goose and more, all delicious. It matters that the animals I eat are able to live a satisfying, natural life, and that their death is as free of fear and pain as possible. So sometimes I eat kangaroo. Also, more of the kangaroo can be eaten than is true of farm animals, according to Eric Rolls.¹ I also sometimes serve lamb, from Breakout River Cowra. The animals free range on good pastures, and my butcher says that they are slaughtered on-site.

People sometimes say, but it’s better for the environment, to eat your protein in pulses and grains. Do we actually know? Farm animals’ waste fertilises the soil, and farmers who care about their soils will manage stocking levels, and move animals regularly to benefit the whole: soil, microbes, fungi, plants, animals and humans. Cattle do burp a lot of methane, a gas which gives the Earth fever, but if you feed the cattle biochar the methane is reduced. The animals love the charcoal, and they excrete it. Dung beetles take it down into the soil where it does lots of good: sequestering carbon, retaining water, providing homes for microbes, and preventing toxins from getting into our food. A 2019 literature review ‘demonstrates that the use of biochar as a feed additive has the potential to improve animal health, feed efficiency and livestock housing climate, to reduce nutrient losses and greenhouse

gas emissions, and to increase the soil organic matter content and thus soil fertility when eventually applied to soil.’²

Moreover, cattle are not our only food source of methane: producing rice and composting can make lots of methane too. In their book *The Ethical Omnivore*³ Dalrymple and Hilliard say (p113) ‘we rarely actually know where our food comes from, who grew it, how it was grown, or what additives it might contain.’ All intensive, big-agriculture systems of food production are bad for soil and people.

If you’re going to reject intensively produced meat, then the same discretion should be applied to the plant foods you consume... An omnivorous diet that includes a balance of plants and animal products is viable in most [Australian] landscapes because animals can be raised on land that isn’t fit for crops. But, in the driest inhabited continent in the world with a very low proportion of arable land, if more of us move to a vegetarian diet, how are we going to increase our local, sustainably managed plant food industry to match demand? Is it acceptable to destroy habitats and clear land for crops?’⁴

Of course destroying habitats kills animals.

We too are animals. We are born, grow, we eat and shit and piss, we love and make love and fuck, we get pregnant



and give birth, suckle our young, we get sick and one day we die. And animals act, have personal preferences, and feel emotions – like us and in ways unique to them. Animals, too, have culture. Birds sing, including songs in frequencies that we cannot hear; and many species teach their young ones. In my blessed bit of country, I have heard the gradual and sometimes abrupt changes in song-lineages of the grey butcher-birds. Their families may die out or be displaced, and it's likely that the occasional bird just decides to improvise a new song. In northern Australia, palm cockatoos use sticks to play their own unique drum beats, a personal signature. Birds may mourn the death of their loved ones. I have seen a corella standing vigil for at least an hour, next to the body of her electrocuted mate. Magpies remember people who feed them, and remember and harass people, like me on my bike, who they see as a threat when they are nesting. Roosters sometimes fib – telling a hen that there's good food right here in order to jump on her – but the hens wake up to that trick very quickly.

We know that many animals can feel affection, love, anger, fear, solicitude for others. Rats have a sense of humour and can laugh; some dogs greet humans by lifting the corners of their lips in a smile. Dolphins may body-surf. Examples multiply.

I disagree with Descartes who argued that animals were mere machines, and we were not. On the other hand, *pace* – peace be upon – Richard Dawkins, I don't think that we are 'lumbering robots' any more than animals are. We

are living beings, not sophisticated machines, and I choose to emphasise our similarities with animals rather than our differences.

There are huge cultural differences around these issues. I am more or less WEIRD, shaped by the dominant values in Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic societies, societies which are actually unusual. The concept of WEIRDness was developed in about 2006 by Joe Henrich (now Prof of human evolutionary biology at Harvard University), together with two cultural psychologists, Steven Heine and Ara Norenzayan. In an interview in *New Scientist*⁵ Henrich says that 'the picture of 'human psychology' portrayed in the textbooks ... doesn't represent the psychology of *Homo sapiens* at all'. There's a lot to the concept of WEIRDness, and I won't go into it, except to put us on notice that views that are common in our society are atypical of human societies in general.

People from WEIRD societies are often deeply ambivalent about being animal, which is why those wonderful little Anglo-Saxon words like 'shit' and 'fuck' may still shock us (think, Anglo-Saxons – a conquered people, lower-class), whereas the Latin-derived words such as 'excretion' and 'copulation' (think, Norman conquerors, 'better educated', higher class) don't carry the same revulsion, or power either.

And, as Dalrymple and Hilliard say, (p89) 'Killing ... is no small thing'. In their chapter 'Looking the animal in the eye', they don't balk at talking about 'the grim and glorious realities of life

and death'. The book has a photo of a pig heading for a juicy red apple. In that moment of delighted distraction he will be stunned and then killed and butchered.

If we think of animals as radically different to us, we may be morally blind to the fate of the ones we use as meat. Of course big business stands to make a lot of money out of our ignorance. On the other hand, if we recognise our kinship with animals, we may feel revolted at the idea of eating them. I think this is linked to an existential fear of death.

And there is the third way, the way of ethically raising animals, killing them in a way that minimises their suffering, using as much of them as possible, and eating them mindfully. I hope that Quakers see this as more than a personal choice. It is our community responsibility. The information that we need to evaluate the environmental consequences of our food choices is rarely available – could we corporately work towards greater transparency while sensitively welcoming to our Meetings people who eat different foods to us?

I felt in my gut the rightness of this third way, when I accepted that I, like the animals, was meat, and that that meant that I could be prey. And we are all so much more than meat and prey. I have lived where the apex predators are those relict dinosaurs, species name *Crocodylus porosus*.

I love the work of the eco-feminist

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Know Thy Friend

David Purnell

CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING

Born in Sydney, I moved to Canberra as a child with my family straight after WW2, and have spent most of my life here. I have a younger brother and sister. Both my parents were active in community life (such as the Congregational Church, service clubs, the repertory theatre and the musical societies) at a time when these social supports were developing in the newly planned city. They and the church minister were great role models for engaging in community. This encouraged me to take action in directions that have been important to me. The population has moved from 15,000 in 1946 to 420,000 now, and I feel connected with the place and its social milieu.

After school and university I joined the Public Service and spent several years in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (including a year in Perth where I met my future wife Katherine) before moving to become an administrator at the Australian National University. This led to an appointment with the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee in the 1970s during the exciting Whitlam era when tertiary education was given a strong boost.

An unexpected development for me was when Australian Frontier was established by Peter Mathews, a dynamic Congregational minister, in the 1960s, to enable stakeholders involved in community issues (e.g. care of the elderly, education programs, town planning) to meet in a form of dialogue to consider ways to enhance their work.

As convener of a panel of people in arranging such meetings, I found it was an eye-opener to get such a range of participants together with a clear focus on improving mutual understanding and communication.

Katherine and I decided to join the Quakers in 1970 after attending for several years and feeling at home. It was especially valuable to have such Friends as Brigit and David Hodgkin, Kenneth and Winifred Townley, Edna and Lister Hopkins, and Dorothy Gregory, to learn from.

To us, the integrity of the Quaker approach to worship and action was very important. Our three children also became part of the Meeting. At the same time, Katherine and I shared with our children in the formation and development of an alternative school with a strong child focus.

In the mid-seventies I took on the

position of full-time national secretary for the Religious Society of Friends. For nine years from 1976 to 1985 I had openings to travel around Australia, to build the national organisation, and to foster links among the different Regional Meetings.

I was on the national Quaker peace committee, and remain part of the Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee. I also took on the voluntary role of Secretary of the Churches Commission on International Affairs of the Australian Council of Churches, which took radical positions on peace and justice issues during the 1980s. This was a period of important growth in my awareness and commitment to peace and justice.

After my time as YM Secretary, I became a consultant on conflict resolution and peace education, taught some school programs, and helped set up a mediation centre in Canberra. Mediation has been a major part of my working life – I have done many hundreds of sessions with clients, and also been involved in training and assessing new mediators and in lobbying for funding of mediation services.

To me, mediating with those in conflict is completely at one with my Quaker principles. I have extended my interest to restorative practice in the justice system, education, and community life. There are many examples – family conferencing, sharing circles, and Indigenous 'courts' with elders as part of the process.

I was on the Board of Life Line Canberra when it began in 1970, was part-time administrator of the United Nations Association of Australia in the

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Some Yearly Meeting thoughts

JESS*

When I was asked to write about my experience at Yearly Meeting this year, I hesitated – for a few reasons, but mostly because while I had an amazing time this year, I haven't enjoyed YM in the past. YM can be busy, and for some that can be stressful. The processes and format, can seem strange and confusing initially. It's easy to forget how daunting and bewildering YM can seem to newcomers.

This was the first Yearly Meeting that I felt able to participate in fully. And I could do that from home! Having YM online made things much easier for me – I could still go to work for a couple of days per week, I didn't need to travel interstate.

Even better, when I had had enough 'people-time', I could log off and be on my own for a while. Despite the restrictions, an online YM suited me,

though, I understand for some people it was less accessible.

The business process seemed to run smoothly despite the changes needed to accommodate zooming instead of face to face meetings. The combination of new and old social activities re-versioned to fit with the online format, opened up new possibilities for the future.

There were quite a few highlights for me this year. Hearing the words 'siblings, sisters and brothers' used in the State of the Society Address made my heart smile.

It is so lovely to hear inclusive language – language that embraces people who are non-binary, genderfluid, genderqueer or others who don't identify as either male or female. It reminded me again how ahead of the times Quakers are with regards to LGBTIQ equality (even though it doesn't always feel that way).

Another highlight for me was the LGBTIQ Share and Tell, which functioned as the zoom version of the regular YM LGBTIQ lunch catch-up. I met some lovely people from interstate – who I now consider small 'f' friends. The social aspects of the S&T were balanced with business activity resulting in a new monthly 4th Sunday LGBTIQ Meeting for Worship (via Zoom).

Overall, I'm very glad I was able to be there, and that YM went ahead in a new format.

* Jess has asked that her full identity and affiliation be withheld for professional reasons.

AF

KNOW THY FRIEND – CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

1990s and early 2000s, and helped set up a centre in the 1990s for men to share more of their lives and problems with each other in a safe setting. I was a member of the first ethics committee of the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare.

In 1998 I was awarded the medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for my peace work.

In the 1990s I served as Presiding Clerk of AYM from 1992-1995 and found this rewarding, especially in

clerking the business sessions so as to enable shared discernment in carrying forward Quaker worship and witness in Australia and beyond. I became part of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) through my role as Assistant Clerk (1994-1999) and then Clerk (2000 to 2004). I continued by being part of the Asia-West Pacific Section.

Katherine and I parted in the mid-80s, and I formed a new partnership with Christine Larkin, who is an

active Quaker. We have shared many experiences together such as co-editing *The Australian Friend*, and having a term at Pendle Hill in USA. I now have a wonderful extended family including Christine's children and grandchildren, my siblings' offspring, and with Purnell grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I have been blessed in many ways.

AF



My Geneva Quaker Experience

THERESE DOUGLAS | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

I have had the privilege of living in Geneva, Switzerland and becoming an active member of that Quaker community for the short time I was there. I would love to share some of my experiences with you!

We arrived in Geneva in January 2018. The weather was bleak and grey, and the days were short.

My partner began his employment a few days later and I had already organised to start intensive French classes that same day. I was determined not to become isolated from the local community!

I knew there was a Quaker Meeting based in the building where Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) is located.

The tradition had been that the first Sunday of the month the Meeting for Worship would be predominantly in French. So, I decided to wait till the following week to attend my first Meeting as I had no prior knowledge of French! I had studied German in high school which would have been handy if we had moved to Zurich or many other spots in Switzerland!

Meanwhile I started to get a rhythm to my days. Before we left Australia, I had just completed a 2-year diploma in yoga studies and I was keen to continue my practice and look for opportunities to teach.

I walked to my first Sunday Meeting for Worship in time for the starting time of 10:30am. It was a cold, quiet Sunday morning with very few shops open as the nation regards this as a day of rest and relative quiet.

That Sunday there was probably about 10 people in attendance. Over the months to come I became very familiar with the Meeting and grew very fond of the community. Despite Geneva being a French-speaking city, the majority of members/attenders speak English as their first language. Many are expats with some connection to the vast array of United Nations agencies and non-government organisations based in Geneva. Backgrounds ranged from British, American, Swiss, French, German, Mexican and Australian.

People come and go because of work and family commitments. Many employment roles in Geneva involve travelling and many people only live there for a few years before being rotated onto different locations. So, it is quite a challenge for the Meeting to maintain a sense of community.

I found that at the Geneva Meeting there is generally a more even mix of gender and age compared to the Australian Meetings I have attended. But each week the mix of faces would change. Many people who were part of the community may not attend Meeting for Worship but were able to attend Business meetings or other activities. Initially I found this quite bemusing and wondered if it was due to a sense of wanting to be part of committees rather than being part of a worshipping community...

As time went on and my French improved (which wasn't hard as it was non-existent to begin with!), I became braver and attended the French spoken meetings as well.

I was invited to take on a role as a member of the spiritual care group (originally known as the elders) of the community and took up this position in September 2018. The intention was that the commitment would be for three years. Having held a similar position in Wahrenonga meeting I was looking forward to playing a deeper role in the life of the Meeting.

A long-time member of the Meeting suggested I approach the clerks of the Meeting to see if I could offer yoga classes during the week using the Meeting room. We came to an agreement that I would offer a beginners' class for an hour and a quarter each Tuesday at lunchtime. This was so that the workers at QUNO could also attend. I didn't want to do this in a paying capacity, so participants were invited to donate and this money was given to the monthly cause nominated by the Social Concerns Committee.

The role of 'Elder' in this Meeting at that time was very full: you were expected to open the Meeting House, prepare tea and coffee, greet everyone, and also share the notices and welcome newcomers and bank any donations received! I raised my personal concerns about this load many times as I felt it detracted from what I saw as the main role of the committee in Meeting: to hold the Meeting and create a space for silent worship.

As the months went by, I became confident enough in my very basic French to also be the person rostered on the French speaking Sundays. I was always in awe of those expats who could



Quaker House Geneva

easily just slip into speaking French on those days!

Meanwhile my yoga classes progressed and turned into a kind of 'outreach' arm. As I met people in other circles, such as my French lessons or other yoga classes, I would invite people to come and try my traditional style. I ended up having people from many nationalities attend: Swiss, Dutch, Spanish, American, English, Chinese, Japanese, Moldovan and Australian! Afterwards we would often have a cuppa at a local café so a mini-community evolved. There were members of the Quaker community as well. A number of the participants had physical disabilities and loved the gentle style and the meditation and yoga nidra.

With the onset of COVID-19 I was the lucky person to facilitate the first Zoom Meeting for Worship for the community. As I am sure Australian Meetings have found, there were advantages and disadvantages to this. One of the advantages was a resurgence in numbers as previous members living elsewhere could reconnect with the Meeting. I actually 'zoomed in' during my quarantine period in Perth! But I also noted with sadness the absence of a number of people who live with disabilities. I know that currently the Meeting is trialling a mixture of virtual and physical attendance.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the wider Swiss Quaker community as well.

Given there are four official languages in Switzerland (German, French, Italian and Romanish), national gatherings were always a swirl of languages! I participated in two yearly meetings and helped to plan and run an annual retreat. Because of the multiple language usage, planning teams spoke in English as well as German and to a lesser extent French. By being exposed to the members of other Swiss Meetings I also realised how unique the Geneva meeting is in terms of its expat mix and its mobility.

I represented the Swiss Yearly Meeting at the British Yearly Meeting in 2019. This was a real privilege and quite a different experience from the tiny Swiss gatherings. It was probably more similar to the Australian Yearly Meeting in terms of its size and multiple activities with people coming from all over the country and reconnecting for perhaps the first time in a year. Keeping in mind that Switzerland is only half the size of Tasmania it is much easier for Swiss Quakers to access activities throughout the year.

2020, of course, has been a very difficult year for everyone. As mentioned, the Geneva Meeting quickly changed across to Zoom sessions. I also taught yoga online

and offered an additional late evening class. So, I was able to continue to be in contact with many people. But I did note with sadness those with physical disabilities no longer participated.

After the death of my mother in late March I decided I didn't have the energy to continue as part of the spiritual care committee. I was approached to consider the role of co-clerk but by this time we had made the decision it was time to return to Australia which we did so in August.

My last activity in Geneva was the annual spring picnic in the beautiful garden. The weather was beautiful and there was plenty of space to be comfortable. There were about 20 people in attendance, and everyone had brought their own picnic. Since then, I was grateful to be able to join their Meeting for Worship whilst in quarantine in Perth, Australia, and intend to zoom in from time to time.

Meanwhile I have a new location to explore on the mid-north coast of NSW. I feel so blessed to be back in Australia and to be healthy!! I have some beautiful memories and friendships from my time in Geneva and am grateful for the opportunities to reconnect virtually. I think I am finally cured of my wanderlust.

AF



Bells Over Auschwitz

The place of prayer is a precious habitation, for I now saw that the prayers of the saints was a precious incense ... I saw this habitation to be safe – to be inwardly quiet when there was great stirrings and commotion in the world. John Woolman. Journal, 1770.

At night they could hear them,
 the bells from a nearby convent
 calling the nuns to prayer.
 The prisoners heard them in their bunks,
 naked to hinder their escape,
 crammed together to avoid freezing.
 Were the nuns singing Vespers
 in Gregorian Chant
 whose God is compassionate and close?
 Were they singing the songs of Hildegard of Bingen
 in lofty soprano voices
 soaring to the heights,
 reaching the sublime?
 Would supplications from the singers
 elicit miracles from God?
 There were some.
 And in that horrendous place
 prisoners learned lessons
 lost to philosophers:
 that without morality people are dangerous,
 that friendship can defeat terror,
 that love delivers us from evil.
 With what equanimity did God
 hear the songs and see the sleepers?
 God's present is wider than ours:
 what we wait for the future to see,
 He sees now:
 the jailers, after death, in the company
 they had freely chosen,
 suffering from it;
 the singers raised to a higher state.
 Freedom and its consequences
 in a tapestry of love made just.

Reg Naulty, Canberra Regional Meeting

I read in Eddie Jaku's recent book 'The Happiest Man on Earth' [p.109]: "There was a Catholic Convent near Auschwitz, not far from Block 16, and each evening the nuns would ring a bell very loudly."



The 'Our Father' Revisited

Our Abba/Our Amma

To whom we owe our very existence
 Who brought us and all of life
 Into being, and
 Who awaits us
 In the eternal now

May your name be honoured
 By our being in right relationship
 With you, with one another
 And with all of life

May your kingdom come
 Your indwelling and
 Your outpouring
 Here and now as well as later

May your will
 And your ways
 Be done
 In us, through us and around us

Grant us this day
 Today's needed portion of
 Earthly bread and
 Heavenly leaven

Soften us
 That we might receive
 Your grace
 And pass it on

For we remember our frailties
 And we need
 Your safeguarding and securing
 Against evil

That we might grow
 In all ways
 By all means
 In You

Teach us the way of
 Watching, waiting and walking
 With You
 Seeing as we are seen
 Loving as we are loved.

Amen

(Anon.)

Who Is My Friend?

Love in the time of Corona

(in the manner of Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 the Lot)

Does he unburden to me all his woes?
 Does she sparkle when I enter the room?

Does he drape me with light?
 Does she air-kiss my cheek?

Does his tail wag when I speak?
 Does she bellow at my dry-spell bucket?

Does he phone me when I'm down?
 Does she praise me when I'm up?

Does he answer my plea, 'God save us!'
 Does she answer my cry, 'Jesus Christ!'

Does he call me through the eyes of my children?
 Does she whisper through the eyes of my mother?

Does he tend my wounds and cleanse me?
 Does she show me the righteous way?

Does he speak to me through silence?
 Does she tell me as in dreams?

Does he forgive my cowardly lies?
 Does she live the power of truth?

Does he teach with fiery back-burn?
 Does she comfort a long drought survivor?

Does he grant me another man's thoughts?
 Does she grant me the thoughts of a woman?

Does he give me a meaning to life?
 Does she give me a meaning to death?

My Friend beckons through his tinnitus of nothing, the
 cool wafting of leaves.
 My Friend raises her cupped hands cloyed by the sweaty
 smell of compost.

Peter Burton, Queensland Regional Meeting



QSA Notes

Support and assistance to enable people living with disabilities join KCD programs

BY FLEUR BAYLEY | QSA'S CAMBODIA PROJECT MANAGER



Home visits in Kandal Province to consult with people living with disabilities (Source: KCD)

In June 2020, one of QSA's project partners, Khmer Community Development (KCD) launched an innovative project to learn more about the situation of people in their target area in Kandal Province who are living with disabilities. The aim was to improve their quality of life, motivate them to participate actively in social events, and encourage them to join KCD projects. The project, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and

Trade (DFAT) and QSA is working to improve the health, wellbeing and livelihood opportunities for everyone in the community, but KCD is aware that people with disabilities are often not represented.

There is a high prevalence of physical disabilities in Cambodia, a legacy of years of war and injuries caused by the landmines left behind. While landmine injuries have been reduced significantly due to clearance programs, high levels

of disability continue, more likely today a result of traffic and workplace accidents.

With little or no infrastructure or government support, people living with disabilities face severe challenges in their daily lives. Rehabilitation services are still limited in both the city and countryside, especially services that address the needs of children and women with disabilities.

A recent survey found 60 per cent



PPCIL and KCD team members visit people with disabilities in their homes (Source: KCD)

live under the country's poverty line, and the same percentage of disabled children are unable to attend school.

With 80 per cent of the population living in rural areas, the challenges facing disabled people are exacerbated by poor services and demanding home environments (think houses on stilts) and few mobility and other aids. Most depend entirely on their families, and without basic mobility aids, many do not have an opportunity to leave the house.

A recent survey of people living with a disability found most people faced psychological distress due to several factors, such as social exclusion, stigma and discrimination, as well as family conflict and lack of employment opportunities and access to education. Having worked with local authorities to identify people with disabilities in their target communities, KCD collaborated with Phnom Penh Center for Independent Living (PPCIL) to advise and assist people with disabilities and

help raise their voice to local decision-makers.

KCD and PPCIL met with people in their homes to assess their situation concerning education, mobility, social participation, health and employment challenges faced. They also wanted to evaluate their psychological situation and provide counselling and motivation. The PPCIL team members were in wheelchairs and had to climb stairs and ladders to meet some of the people in their homes. This enabled them to make a connection by sharing their personal experiences.

Some of the findings:

Low levels of education – 15 people assessed; only 3 had any schooling.

Mobility problems – there were two people with paralysis who had not left the house for more than twenty years.

Socially isolated – due to mobility problems, 80% were unable to participate in social events.

Poor health – most had poor health and were unable to access health care.

High unemployment – 75% were unemployed and had no income to support themselves.

A number of the people with disabilities required mobility aids, a total of seven wheelchairs, one set of crutches and one cane, all of which were provided by PPCIL. The team also identified modifications needed for home surroundings. For instance, they advised a lady with paralysis to have a room downstairs so it would be easier for her to go out after receiving the wheelchair.

Counselling was also a vital feature of the program, to help people build their self-confidence and motivate them to participate in social activities.

At the end of this work, KCD developed a set of practical plans to help overcome the challenges identified in education, employment, social participation and health, and to encourage people with disabilities to get involved with KCD projects.

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

Find us on Facebook for more photos and stories: facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia.

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ACFID
MEMBER



Australia's Indigenous Heritage

Report on Forum

DAVID PURNELL | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING

Background

There have been ongoing examples of Indigenous heritage sites being damaged or disturbed by development, urbanisation and adverse use of land. This has occurred sometimes as a result of deliberate government policies, sometimes by insensitive and ignorant intrusion by corporations and councils, and sometimes by accident. There is a strong sense of exploitation and despair among First People for the loss of significant sites and disruption of cultural practices. Indigenous heritage is a vital part of Australia's heritage and needs to be valued more fully.

The Committee on Racial Equality (CORE), based with Canberra Quakers, joined with the Quaker national First Nations Peoples Concerns Committee (FNPCC) to host a Forum on-line for about two hours on Thursday 15 October 2020. The Forum was attended by around 70 people from across Australia, including people from government and NGO agencies. The Forum was facilitated by David Purnell from the CORE group.

(Note - Professor Dr Jakelin Troy (Ngarigu Woman from Snowy Mountains, Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research at University of Sydney) was invited to speak but unable to attend).

The *Welcome to Country* was provided by Shane Mortimer (Ngambri Elder Mingku), and this was followed by a video of the Juukan Gorge traditional owners showing the destruction from the Rio Tinto blast of the Aboriginal site..

Notes on Speakers' Contributions

Dave Johnston (ANU Archaeologist, from Queensland Indigenous background, Founder of Indigenous Australian Archaeologists Association).

What happened in WA is a tragedy, but it's nothing new, especially as all the structures enabling Aboriginal voices to be heard have been 'dumbed-down' or removed and not replaced. Government is not in synch with how Australians in general feel about Aboriginal heritage – it's something for everyone to have pride in. Maintaining heritage sites – tangible and intangible – through people, symbols, traditions, landscapes, locations, customary law and current practices all have importance and value.

Guidelines to heritage ethics and legislation are being ignored at all levels of government. The Commonwealth Government needs to take responsibility – for some time it has been devolving decisions/responsibility to the states. Respectful heritage law and management reform is needed. Australia is a signatory to international agreements which are not being enacted

in domestic law. Indigenous heritage should be understood and appreciated by everyone.

There is a lot of pressure on the Government, around the COVID recovery, to be a good citizen and reflect how we want to be and live as Australians. This can provide opportunities to become more aware of Aboriginal issues, including heritage destruction – not just sites, but Aboriginal ways of life which are tied to our culture. Non-Indigenous lawyers and archeologists have to ask themselves if they have been complicit with government and corporate destruction of heritage. More Indigenous people in these roles will make a difference. We need to ask about the role of the Minerals Council of Australia and the Northern Hub development program – we need to work together.

The some 7,000 artefacts held in storage by Rio Tinto should be included in agreements with Aboriginal owners. Whether or not the items are being truly protected is another question. There are some 700 applications for heritage

protection under the CW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act (1984). This backlog is finally being dealt with, in part because of what happened. The federal government has often indicated that it will work with the WA government to 'lift its game' on heritage protection, but it hasn't happened.

We are a lucky country, but at a fork in the road. COVID is making us stop and think - we have a moral obligation to listen to Indigenous people about protecting the earth. We need to work together.

Shane Mortimer (Ngambri Elder Mingku, Canberra, who is campaigning with Canberra residents to preserve the Ainslie volcanic site where an ancient petroglyph has been found).

Mt Ainslie's composition of outcropping and boulders is unique in the world. The petroglyph on the site has been identified as authentic, rare and requiring protection. The site itself is also the last remnant of the original flora and fauna. Aboriginal practices,

such as spearing kangaroo and farming of yams are part of the landscape's history – spear tips are abundant on the site.

While Australia has not signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous People (one of four countries which hasn't signed), it does recognise allodial title. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article II defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. Australia ratified this treaty in 1948, and yet inflicted such crimes on Aboriginal people. Australia's Welfare Ordinance 1953 (NT) included arrangements for 'wardship' of incompetent (Aboriginal) persons which resulted in a loss of connection to land and removal of children.

In Australia, we need peaceful reform. The crown doesn't have title to land which remains with the traditional owners. The Australian Parliament doesn't ethnically represent the people of Australia, women are also disenfranchised. There is a need for enormous reform. The government structures we have are inherited from Britain and no longer serve the Australian people. We need a more deliberative process with greater diversity of participation. Perhaps a circle of elders, one male one female, for each language group for final decision making – removing the need for national, state and local governments.

There is no 'us' and 'them'. This heritage is yours and my heritage, it is the world's oldest heritage. We need to get this information out both domestically and internationally.

Pastor Ray Minniecon (Aboriginal pastor in Sydney, with connections to the Kabi Kabi and Gurang-Gurang nations and Ambrym Island).

What happened is nothing less than the complete destruction of Aboriginal heritage – it happens to our knowledge and philosophy on a daily basis.

James Cook quote:

From what I have said of the Natives of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquillity which is not disturb'd by the Inequality of Condition: The Earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life, they covet not Magnificent Houses, Household-stuff &c., they live in a warm and fine Climate and enjoy a very wholesome Air. ... In short they seem'd to set no Value upon any thing we gave them, nor would they ever part with any thing of their own for any one article we could offer them; this in my opinion argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessaries of Life and that they have no superfluities.

The western market economy is a closed system based on notions of scarcity and money exchange. The Aboriginal open economy takes pride in the sharing and giving of resources to others, and in cultivating the food which is provided by the land and sea. The Aboriginal open economy will never be accepted by the western economy which is based on accumulation and the belief that there is a scarcity of what we need to live full lives. Indigenous people, their knowledge and perceptions are treated badly and without respect in this closed system. Concepts of time and space are also different and tend to disadvantage Aboriginal people – 'smashing' their knowledge and creating ongoing destruction of Aboriginal heritage and knowledge – as people they aren't valued.

Australia has a constitution written by and for white men. Aboriginal people should not be recognized in the constitution, rather it (the constitution) should be removed, thereby also removing the crown. The two-party

system needs to be removed and a Charter of Rights developed. It should be a constitution of the people – other countries had developed one and it's time for us to do the same. We the People.

Dr Muhamad Hassan Ahmad (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, International Islamic University Malaysia, and has a long association with the ANU).

How can such destruction happen even though we have protection laws at both the domestic and international levels? Legal permission to destroy heritage sites is procurable through the existing laws.

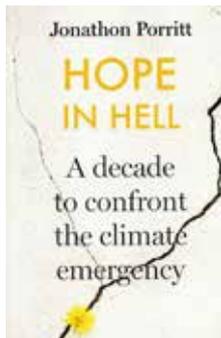
Power imbalances between parties in a contract or other agreement can create a degree of coercion and prevent Aboriginal parties from enjoying/using their legally available rights under federal or state law. There can be conflicts of interest between the corporation, the archeologists and the Indigenous people.

Cultural heritage destruction equals cultural terrorism. No one is talking about possible restoration or compensation – who would make such determinations? It's not just an issue of Indigenous heritage, there must also be political will.

Ministers need the mindset to protect cultural heritage. (Note – he used a Powerpoint presentation provided a great deal of details, including suggestions for a way forward in decisions).

The Forum continued with a series of questions put together from participants. It ended with thanks to the speakers and a challenge to all Australians to make known their support for the Aboriginal voices that are speaking out about the heritage legislation and protocols. The CORE and FNPCC committees will do what they can to carry forward the concerns raised.

AF



Hope in Hell – A decade to confront the climate emergency

BY JONATHON PORRITT

Published by William Collins, London in 2019
pp.238 ISBN 978-0-00-8355-69-2

This book is written by Jonathon Porritt, an activist, and is principally a call to action. It contains enough background information on the climate emergency to cause alarm, then asks why there is not more motivation to act. Above all, it is concerned with hope.

Porritt offers this definition of hope from the US author Rebecca Solnit:

Hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable, an alternative to the certainty of both optimists and pessimists. Optimists think all will be fine without our involvement, pessimists take the opposite position; both excuse themselves from acting. It's the belief that what we do matters, even though how and when it may matter, who and what it may impact, are not things we can know beforehand.

Porritt sees hope in the growing activism of the young, and in surveys which show that a growing number of people want more action on climate change (although a CBS poll in the USA in 2019 showed that up to a quarter of citizens still thought climate change could be a hoax). More businesses (especially the insurance industry) are aware of risks associated with climate change, as are investors. There is also hope in the falling costs of

renewable energy.

But attitudes are not being translated into sufficient action. Porritt points out that the last five years 'have seen the election of arch-denialist Donald Trump, the election in Brazil of Jair Bolsonaro..., the re-election of the incorrigibly pro-coal Scott Morrison in Australia, the wilful ambivalence of Justin Trudeau in Canada (signing up to a Climate Emergency one day, and signing off on a multi-billion oil pipeline the next day), and the tragic loss of the UK as a consistent climate leader with the EU.' Global emissions are not falling. According to the 2018 Special Report of the International Panel on Climate Change, in order to keep to a temperature rise of 1.5°C global carbon emissions have to peak by the end of 2020, and reduce by half by 2030.

In the chapter on sea level rises, Porritt tells us 'We should be preparing for a sea-level rise of at least 1 metre by 2100, probably 2 metres and possibly 3 metres.' So how are we to maintain hope?

Porritt looks at other campaigns which began as apparently hopeless and went on to success, particularly the campaign against slavery and the campaign for votes for women. The original promoters of these campaigns were regarded as fools or extremists, and went on to be heroes. Porritt gives a wonderful quote from one of the earliest campaigners against slavery, William Lloyd Garrison back in 1831:

I do not wish to think or to speak, or to write, with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on

fire to give a moderate alarm. Tell the mother to gradually extricate her baby from the fire into which it has fallen. But urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest – I will not equivocate – I will not excuse – I will not retreat a single inch – and I will be heard.

Today's climate activists will sympathise with these sentiments!

Porritt goes on to point out that in some ways the above campaigns were unlike the current campaign to save the climate. Legislation abolished the slave trade. Legislation enacted votes for women. The campaigns had an end point. But there is no end point for action on the climate. What is needed is a change of attitude to the environment. This is a moral and spiritual challenge, not just a technical one. In a section titled 'Spiritual Truths' Porritt says:

'The climate crisis goes right to the heart of who we are, and demands of us a response that cannot be entirely met by confronting the science, or committing to political and campaigning action. In many ways, the climate crisis is a spiritual crisis, laying bare the cumulative consequences of allowing ourselves to have become so completely disconnected from each other, from the world around us and from our basic responsibility for all those who come after us.'

The moral issues are ones which Quakers are well aware of. There is the issue of peace. Porritt rejects militaristic imagery in the context of the climate emergency. 'We are not

'under attack' from climate change; it's not the CO₂ or the methane that's putting our civilisation at risk, but rather the political system (and the military-industrial complex behind it) that continues to promote aggressive, carbon-intensive economic growth – whatever the consequences. From that perspective, any serious attempt to address today's Climate Emergency must include an explicit condemnation of militarism (and of the arms trade in particular), and a concerted effort to reduce military expenditure, year on year, for the foreseeable future.' Then there is the issue of equality: 'We already have ample evidence that the Climate Emergency acts of 'an amplifier' of social inequality, disproportionately affecting the poorest and most vulnerable in society. It's simply impossible to imagine humankind successfully navigating

the decades of radical decarbonisation ahead of us without addressing the deep, structural inequalities that blight the lives of so many billions of people today.'

On the issue of simplicity, Porritt quotes from Pope Frances' encyclical (*Laudato si'*: On Care for Our common Home):

When people become self-centred and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. It becomes almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality.

On the subject of integrity, Porritt has a chapter entitled 'Tell the Truth'. Climate activists have long been described as extremists. Politicians like to talk about moderation and compromise. But Porritt feels that the time for sugar-coating the truth has

passed:

Much of what needs to be done needs to be done in the next decade. Indeed, we need to halve emissions of greenhouse gases during this decade if we're to stay below 1.5°C threshold by the end of the century – I keep coming back to that one all-important scientific conclusion to help dispel any false hope that anything less ambitious might still be sufficient. What that means in practical terms is that we need to cut emissions by 7.6 per cent every year throughout the coming decade.

The book begins with a quote from Dante: '...leave Hell. And again behold the stars.'

Do you remember seeing the stars during the COVID lockdown? It is an image to hold onto.

RAE LITTING

New South Wales Meeting

BEING ANIMAL, EATING ANIMALS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

philosopher Val Plumwood⁶, a great bushwoman who, in 1985, was taken by a crocodile and survived. Her reflections on her experiences led her to understand that we are 'part of the feast in a great chain of reciprocity.' She was then, and remained till her death, a vegetarian. She wrote, 'This is not because I think predation itself is demonic and impure, but because I object to the reduction of animal lives in factory farming systems that treat them as living meat.'⁷

In particular we WEIRD ones may avoid the idea of dying. I have been fortunate. I have known since my father died of polio, before I turned two, that death can come at any moment, and that one day it will come, ready or not. I have come to relish the preciousness and precariousness of life. It spices my life with gratitude.

When I die I would like my corpse to be pyrolysed into charcoal. Pyrolysis converts biomass into charcoal and gases by applying high temperatures (c.450°C) in the absence of oxygen. Like natural gas, the gases can be used

as an energy source. It's much more environmentally sound than cremation. So pyrolyse my corpse, but only if my family feel OK about this. Since there will no longer be an 'I', their feelings take precedence over my preference.

When wood is pyrolysed, it changes into a shiny black (carbonised) shrunken recognisable version of itself, good e.g. for xylophone levers. I wonder, will my pyrolysed body resemble a shrunken, shiny black version of myself? Once pyrolysis is complete and the chamber has cooled down, I would like my daughter or my son to break the charcoal into chunks and for those who have come together for mourning and celebration, to take some to put in their garden.

All this would be done, of course, with an awareness of the *sacredness* of these transformations.

We are temporary dynamic living systems arising from other living systems and providing raw materials for yet other living systems. I will have some form of being in people's memories

however variable and subjective they may be; in people's responses to what I have written, in every molecule that was once part of me and is now part of something else, blessed be. Whatever else I may be, if anything, is not mine to know. I trust in the ultimate goodness of it all.

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3 Dalrymple, L. and Hilliard, G. 2020 *The Ethical Omnivore*. Murdoch Books

4 Dalrymple & Hilliard p115-6.

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The Australian Friend

The Australian Friend is published online at AustralianFriend.org four times a year, in March, June, September and December.

Contributions

Contributions (articles, poems and other items) are welcome as an email attachment to CAustFriend@Quakersaustralia.info. Please ensure that images are sent as separate attachments, and not embedded in word files. We prefer images in jpg format, and a resolution of at least 300 dpi.

Contribution deadlines

Contributions should arrive no later than one month before the publication date:

- 1 February for the March edition
- 1 May for the June edition
- 1 August for the September edition
- 1 November for the December edition.

Subscriptions

The Australian Friend is available free of charge online at AustralianFriend.org. *The Australian Friend* is also available by post at no charge to members of Australian Yearly Meeting.

Libraries, other organisations and individuals not associated with Quakers can subscribe to receive *The Australian Friend* by post by contacting: CAustFriend@Quakersaustralia.info. The cost is \$40.00 per year for addresses in Australia and \$50 per year for addresses overseas.

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Mailing list CAustFriend@Quakersaustralia.info

Layout Sheelagh Wegman, Hobart TAS

Printing and distribution National Mailing and Marketing, Canberra

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