

The Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Australia Inc.

DOCUMENTS

in

ADVANCE

Yearly Meeting 2023
Held online from 1-9 July 2023

With Preparatory and Information Sessions held via Zoom during May and June 2023

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
Welcome to Yearly Meeting 2023	4
General information for Yearly Meeting	5
YM23 Acronyms, Terms and Definitions	5
Australia Yearly Meeting appointments	7
AYM Officers	7
AYM Committees and Working Groups	8
Australia Yearly Meeting Representatives	10
Associated bodies (Not appointed by Australia Yearly Meeting)	10
Reports from AYM Officers	12
AYM Finance Committee Report to Yearly Meeting 2023	12
AYM Archivist's Report to Yearly Meeting 2023	14
Reports from AYM committees, Working Groups, Associated Bodies and AYM Representatives	16
The Australian Friend Committee	16
Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery Committee: Friends in Stitches	16
Backhouse Lecture Committee	17
Child Protection Committee	18
Children & Junior Young Friends Committee	19
Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group	19
First Nations Peoples Concerns Committee	22
Friends Online Recognised Meeting	23
Handbook Revision Committee	23
Information Technology Committee	24
Integrity in Public Office Project	26
Meeting for Learning working group	27
Peace & Social Justice Fund Committee	29
Publications Committee	29
QSA and AYM Relationship Working Group	30
Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee	31
Quaker World Connections Committee	33
Rainbow Friends and Allies Meeting	34
The Sanctuary Management Committee	35
Thanksgiving Fund Committee	36
Transition Implementation Working Group	38
Yearly Meeting Organising Committee	40
AYM Representatives Reports	42
ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change) Report	42
NCCA Ecumenical Report	42
Reports from Associated Bodies	44
Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing Report	44
Friends Peace Teams – Asia West Pacific Report	44
The Friends' School, Hobart	46
Quaker Service Australia (QSA)	47
Silver Wattle Quaker Centre	49
Appendix 1: Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group	50
Appendix 2: Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group – Draft Action Plan	62
Appendix 3: Handbook Revision Committee-Proposed Handbook Revisions for YM23	65
Appendix 4: Minutes of Standing Committee of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia, held via Zoom 21 January 2023, 12pm AEDT	70

MINUTES	70
SC1.23.1: Opening Worship and acknowledgment of Country	70
SC1.23.2: AYM Nominations Committee Report to Standing Committee	71
SC1.23.3: Handbook Revision Committee Report to Standing Committee	72
SC1.23.4: Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee Report to Standing Committee	72
SC1.23.5: Update from the Transition Implementation Working Group	72
SC1.23.6: Proposal for the Appointment of a Part-time Administrative Assistant for YM23	72
SC1.23.7: Child Protection & Other Safety Concerns Working Group Report to Standing Committee	73
SC1.23.8: Backhouse Lecture Committee Report to Standing Committee	73
SC1.23.9: Future Standing Committee Meetings	73
SC1.23.10 Items for Noting	74

Appendix 5: Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia, Inc., held Online via Zoom 3pm AEDT 22 January 2023

	75
AGM23.1: Acknowledgement of Country and Opening Reading	75
AGM23.2: Minutes of previous AGM	76
AGM23.3: Report from AYM Presiding Clerk	76
AGM23.4: Report from AYM Secretary	77
AGM23.5: AYM Treasurer's Report to the Annual General Meeting 2023	78
AGM23.6: Report on activities of AYM Committees	78
AGM23.7: 2023 Statement of Membership for 12 months ending on 30 November 2022	79
AGM23.8: Regional Meeting Annual Reports	79
AGM23.9: Appointments	79
Appendix 1:	82
2023 Statement of Membership for 12 months ending on 30 November 2022	82
Appendix 2: Regional Meeting Annual Reports	84
Appendix 3: Hopes for 2023	97

Welcome to Yearly Meeting 2023



*As July approaches, we see the early winter blossoming of wattle, bringing a burst of golden light and lifting spirits.
Photo by David Johnson*

Each year Friends gather for our national Yearly Meeting. Here we make new friends, renew friendships, worship together, share ideas, seek new Light and find ways to travel together over the coming year. Yearly Meeting will be accessible to Friends all around Australia as we gather online.

These *Documents in Advance* (DIA) give you the information you need to participate in formal sessions at Yearly Meeting in July and the preparatory and information sessions in May-June.

Find out more about Yearly Meeting 2023 by going to our Quakers Australia website here: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/yearly-meeting-2023>

Preparatory and Information Sessions in May-June

The timetable is evolving, so keep up to date, click on the link and click through to May [HERE](#).

The **Preparatory Sessions** will consider items that will be brought to a July formal session for decision. These sessions are based on DIA reports with a Part B. To learn more, go to the YM23 Business pages [HERE](#).

There will be **Information Sessions** about the work of our committees, working groups and associated bodies. For many of these sessions there will be a DIA report (with no Part B).

Yearly Meeting 2023 Saturday 1st – Sunday 9th July

Yearly Meeting consists of two consecutive long weekends (Sat-Mon and Fri-Sun) with one or two formal sessions each day. The timetable is evolving, so keep up to date, click on the link and click through to July [HERE](#).

We begin on Saturday 1st July with mid-morning Meeting for Worship. Be sure to join the first relaxed “Welcome to All” session that follows. Here you will meet the YM23 Clerking Team and find out how to get to sessions and how to get help when you need it. Highlights of the first formal session are our Welcome to Country and the State of the Society Address. After a break, learn about Home Groups, take part in the first Social Mingle session, experience an evening Epilogue and drop in on a late Convivial Hour.

On Sunday 2nd July, join Early Worship or Meeting for Worship, and participate in Friendly School on the theme “Integrity, Voice and Right Relationship”. There is another formal session including the Summary of Epistles, Home Groups begin, and the evening finishes with an Epilogue and Convivial Hour.

In the middle three days take the opportunity to be active outdoors and to rest! Check the timetable for sessions you are interested in.

A highlight on Tuesday 4th July is the Backhouse Lecture with Jon Watts, a film producer, song writer and multimedia artist in the United States. Jon is well known for his QuakerSpeak videos. Invite your family and friends to watch the Backhouse lecture.

Formal Sessions, Preparatory Sessions and the Business Process

We encourage you come to the formal sessions and the preparatory sessions with heart and mind prepared.

Please read this message from our Presiding Clerk outlining the information, spiritual preparation and practicalities of online business sessions [HERE](#).

To find out more about the business process, see “YM23 Business Processes Explained” [HERE](#).

Register now for Yearly Meeting 2023

If you have registered for YM23, thank you! Registering helps the Yearly Meeting Organising Committee plan well and create a rich, spirit-led, exciting Yearly Meeting for all.

If you have not registered yet, **please register now!** The form is simple. Please go [HERE](#) to register.

I have a question - who do I contact?

Frequently asked questions are answered here:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/yearly-meeting-2023/help-desk>

For Friends who are organising a session at Yearly Meeting, here are some contacts:

Friendly School:	David Evans	ddeevans1@gmail.com
Home Groups:	Kerstin Reimers	kerstin7reimers@gmail.com
Prep & Info Sessions:	David Tehr	davidtehr@gmail.com
Share & Tell:	Em Chandler	emchandler6@gmail.com
Yearly Meeting Organising Committee:		cymorganising@quakersaustralia.info

Looking forward to seeing you at Yearly Meeting 2023,

Vidya and Clinton de Young

Co-Convenors

Yearly Meeting Organising Committee

General information for Yearly Meeting

YM23 Acronyms, Terms and Definitions

AF: The *Australian Friend*, the journal of Australia Yearly Meeting, is published online and in print in March, June, September and December.

AFFH: Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing, a national group interested in healing, whose members are Friends, but which is a separately incorporated body.

AVP: Alternatives to Violence Project, begun by Friends, is now a separate organisation.

AYM: AYM is generally used as the abbreviated name of Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated.

AYM Committees and Working Groups: A list of all AYM Committees and Working Groups, with the names of all Committee members, is printed in *Documents in Advance*, and updated in *Documents in Retrospect*, and at <http://www.quakersaustralia.info/> in the Members section.

BL: James Backhouse Lecture. This is an annual lecture, which aims to bring fresh insights into truth, often with reference to the needs and aspirations of Australian Quakerism. It is usually presented at the time of Yearly Meeting, and is named after an English Quaker who travelled extensively in Australia from 1832 to 1837.

DAQB: The Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography includes Testimonies to the Grace of God in the lives of many Australian Friends. The web page for Australian Quaker Biographies provides online access to all DAQB entries, together with biographies of prominent Quakers from around the world.

FNPCC: The First Nations Peoples Concerns Committee, formerly called the Indigenous Concerns Committee.

Formal Sessions of Yearly Meeting: The Presiding Clerk conducts the Formal Sessions according to the usual Quaker business method. The Presiding Clerk can grant permission for those who are not AYM Members to attend and fully participate in YM sessions, on the recommendation in advance of the Elders of the appropriate Meeting.

FPT: Friends Peace Teams.

The Friends' School: The Friends' School, Hobart, is the only Quaker school in Australia.

FWCC: Friends World Committee for Consultation is a worldwide body comprised of affiliated Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups. It meets periodically to promote links between the different Quaker traditions. Australia Yearly Meeting is part of the Asia-West Pacific Section of FWCC.

Handbook of Quaker Practice and Procedure in Australia: The *Handbook* sets out the guidelines within which Meetings normally operate within Australia. The *Handbook* is continually revised in line with YM decisions. The current 7th edition was published in 2020, and is available on <http://www.quakersaustralia.info/> (listed under Publications).

JYFs: Junior Young Friends are aged 12 to 17 years.

Meeting for Learning: a one-year program that begins and ends with a retreat week, usually held in September-October.

Ministry and Oversight: Sometimes known as M & O, or Elders & Overseers, or Ministry & Care. These Local or Regional Meeting committees, either separately or combined, are responsible for the spiritual and pastoral care of members.

NCCA: National Council of Churches in Australia, of which AYM is a member.

Pastoral Care Committee: This committee is set up for the period of Yearly Meeting and consists of Friends nominated by their Regional Meeting for the purpose of assisting people at Yearly Meeting.

Penn Friends: Penn Friends (after William Penn) are 'written correspondence friendships' between older Friends and children (often now by email), who may live in another Meeting. **QA:** Quakers Australia.

QPLC: The Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee, based in Canberra, lobbies government, provides a space for peace and social justice discussions, and posts on our website 'Action Alerts', 'Watching Briefs' and Discussion Papers on current issues for Friends.

QSA: Quaker Service Australia, the development aid agency, a company limited by guarantee, is based at Unit 14/43-53 Bridge Rd Stanmore NSW 2048.

QWCC: Quaker World Connections Committee, is a national committee of Australia Yearly Meeting, which supports Quakers in the Asia West Pacific Area (AWPS) and also links with the world-wide Quaker community through Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and beyond.

RM: Regional Meetings in Australia are Canberra and Region Quakers (CRQ), New South Wales (NSWRM), Queensland (QRM), South Australia Northern Territory (SANTRM), Tasmania (TRM), Victoria (VRM), and West Australia (WARM). These organisational bodies of the Society are individually incorporated associations. Regional Meetings are responsible for matters of membership and business within their area, as set out in the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*.

The Sanctuary: The Sanctuary is the name of a house and grounds in Sydney that was part of the Lemberg Bequest to Australia Yearly Meeting. The property is behind the Wahroonga Meeting House, and has been leased as a residence.

SC: Standing Committee, a body with two representatives from each Regional Meeting, and from Young Friends to conduct business on matters which must be addressed before the next Yearly Meeting.

SWQC or Silver Wattle: Silver Wattle Quaker Centre is a centre in Australia for spiritual development and learning about Quaker faith, based at Silver Wattle, 1063 Lake Road, Bungendore, New South Wales. See <https://www.silverwattle.org.au/>

TIWG: The Transition Implementation Working Group (TIWG) is a small, fixed term working group set up in 2022 and tasked with developing role descriptions for the new Quakers Australia Office team and continuing to support the new configuration until Yearly Meeting 2025.

YFs: Young Friends are 18 – 30-ish year-olds who may be Members or Attenders.

YM: The words ‘Yearly Meeting’ (YM) are used to describe the annual meeting of Australian Friends.

Australia Yearly Meeting appointments

Please note:

- Appointments are as known at 1 March 2023.
- This list is updated on the Members Page of <https://www.quakersaustralia.info> through the year.
- All appointments are to the end of the Yearly Meeting in the listed year.
- The AYM Clerk and AYM Secretary are ex officio on all AYM committees except Nominations and Thanksgiving Fund.
- Email addresses are not case-sensitive.

AYM Officers

Role	Names	Term ends	Email
AYM Presiding Clerk	Bruce Henry, VRM	2025	Clerk@quakersaustralia.info
AYM Secretary	Jacque Schultze, NSWRM	2023	Secretary@quakersaustralia.info
AYM Treasurer		vacant	Treasurer@quakersaustralia.info
AYM Membership Secretary		vacant	membership@quakersaustralia.info
AYM Website Coordinator	Roger Sawkins, QRM	2023	web@quakersaustralia.info
AYM Archivist	Saadia Thomson, QRM	2024	archivist@quakersaustralia.info
AYM Public Officer	David Purnell, CRQ	Ongoing	Private email

AYM Committees and Working Groups

Committee	Names	Term ends	Email *
<i>The Australian Friend</i> Committee	Margaret Clark (CRQ), 2024; Rae Litting (NSWRM); Sue Parritt (VRM) 2025; David Swain (NSWRM).	various	CAustFriend@quakersaustralia.info
Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery Project Committee (Friends in Stitches)	Co-Conveners: Tessa Spratt (VRM); Sally O'Wheel (TRM); & Margaret Bywater (TRM)	2025	CStitches@quakersaustralia.info
RM correspondents	Nancy Tingey, CRQ; Lisa Wriley, NSWRM; Saadia Thomson, Gillian Risdale, QRM; Robin Sinclair, SANTRM; Sally O'Wheel, Margaret Bywater, TRM; Tessa Spratt, VRM; Beth Harcourt, WARM <i>stc</i>	various	
AYM Presiding Clerk's Support Committee, VRM	Catherine Heywood, Dale Hess, Sieneke Martin, Alan Clayton, Bev Polzin	2025	CClerksSupport@quakersaustralia.info
AYM Secretary's Advisory Committee, NSWRM	Helen Gould, Jackie Perkins, Wies Schuiringa, Jennifer Burrell, David Cooper, Mary Pollard	2023	CSecretaryAdvisory@quakersaustralia.info
Backhouse Lecture Committee (6-year appointments)	Tracy Bourne, CRQ (2026); Evan Gallagher (2027); Taisoo Kim Watson, QRM (2027); Kerry O'Regan, SANTRM (2023)	various	CBackhouse@quakersaustralia.info
Child Protection Committee	Ronis Chapman, Lorraine Thomson (CRQ)	2023	CChildProtection@quakersaustralia.info
CP Contact Friends	Greg Parkhurst (2024) CRQ; Alison Irving, (2024) NSWRM; John Beattie (2023), Helen Webb (2024), QRM; Gilian McCarthy & Yarrow Goodley (2024) SANTRM; Jess Dundas (2026), Ron Frey, (2024) TRM; Kyrstie Crane (2024), Maxine Cooper, VRM (2023); Lesli Grant (2023) & Bronwyn English (2024) WARM	various	
Children & JYF Committee	Di Bretherton, VRM (2024), Convener; Restina Nininahazwe, SANTRM (2023), Jenny Turton (2024), Justine Shelton, VRM (2025)	various	CChildrenJYF@quakersaustralia.info
RM Correspondents	Raina Emerson, CRQ; Sarah Davies (2023), NSWRM; Helen Webb, QRM; Yarrow Goodley, SANTRM; Ruth Raward, TRM (2023); Di Bretherton, VRM; C&JYF Support Committee: Gina Price, WARM	various	
Children & JYF Co-Coordinator			CJYFCoordinator@quakersaustralia.info
Climate Crisis & Species Extinction Working Group	Peri Coleman (SANTRM), David Shorthouse (CRQ), David King (QRM), Gerry Fahey (VRM), Elizabeth PO' (WARM).	2023	CSpeciesAndClimate@quakersaustralia.info
RM Correspondents	Kay de Vogel, CRQ (2023); Lindsay Vieth, QRM (2024) Yarrow Goodley, SANTRM (2023), Janice Blakeney, TRM (2023), John Gare, VRM (2023); Amanda Hamilton-Holloway, WARM <i>stc</i>	various	
Finance Committee	Ray Brindle, VRM (2024); Roger Sawkins, QRM (2025) Carol Thornton, CRQ (2024); Robin Walpole, TRM (2024)	various	CFinance@quakersaustralia.info
First Nations Peoples Concerns Committee, VRM	Chris Hughes and Sharee Harper, VRM, Co-Conveners	2024	CFirstNations@quakersaustralia.info
RM correspondents	Anne Felton, CRQ (2023); Elspeth Hull, NSWRM (2022); Sitara Gare, QRM; Harald Ehrman, SANTRM; Katherine Purnell (2024), TRM; Clare O'Leary, WARM; Gedda Forte (CORE), Pia Reiersen (QSA)	various	
Handbook Revision Committee	Julie Walpole, TRM; Michael Corbett, QRM; Ron Martin, VRM	2025	CHandbook@quakersaustralia.info
RM Liaison Friends	Michael Searle, Vidya, CRQ (2024); Liz Field, NSWRM (2025); Roger Sawkins, QRM; David Evans, SANTRM; Josh Crane (2023), Judy Still, VRM (2025); WARM, <i>vacant</i>	various	

Information Technology Committee	Convener: Daniel Buckmaster, NSWRM (2026); Michael Searle, CRQ (2023); Jacque Schultze, NSWRM (2023); Roger Sawkins, QRM (2023); Garry Duncan (2025) NSWRM; Julie Walpole (2025), NSWRM	various	CTechnology@quakersaustralia.info
Nominations Committee	Convener: Bev Polzin VRM, (2025); Wilma Davidson, CRQ (2024); Liz Field, NSWRM (2023); <i>vacant</i> , QRM; Jo Jordan, SANTRM (2024); Felicity Rose, TRM (2025); Allan Knight, WARM (2024)	various	CNominations@quakersaustralia.info
Peace & Social Justice Fund Committee, CRQ	Convener: Wilma Davidson, Lorraine Thomson, Harold Wilkinson	2025	CPSJ@quakersaustralia.info
Publications Committee	Co-Conveners: Margaret Bywater, TRM; Sue Headley, TRM, (2025). Garry Duncan, NSWRM (2024); Judith Pembleton, QRM (2024); Jenny Stock, SANTRM	various	CPublications@quakersaustralia.info
QSA and AYM Relationship Working Group	David Purnell (CRQ), Duncan Frewin (QRM)	2023	
Quaker Learning Australia		tba	CQLA@quakersaustralia.info
QLA Meeting for Learning facilitators	Fiona Gardner, Catherine Heywood (VRM); Jenny Spinks (CRQ)	ongoing	
Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee (QPLC), CRQ	Convener: Harold Wilkinson, Margaret Bearlin, Ronis Chapman, Margaret Clark, Ronis Chapman, Gareth Knapman, David Purnell, Shobha Varkey	2025	CQPLC@quakersaustralia.info
RM Correspondents	Greg Parkhurst, CRQ (2025); David Swain NSWRM; Jude Pembleton, QRM (2024); Peri Coleman, SANTRM; Sally McGushin, TRM (2024); Beverley Polzin, VRM; Ruth Watson, WARM.	various	
Quaker World Connections Committee (QWCC) RM Representatives (For 4-year appointments)	Convener: Sue Ennis, VRM, (2023); Jonathan Benyei, CRQ (2025); Paula Paananen, NSWRM (2024); Liz Terry, QRM (2024); Marie-Joelle Nininahazwe, SANTRM (2025); Katherine Purnell, TRM (2026); Sharon Matthews WARM (2023) Ex officio: Adrian Glamorgan, FWCC- AWPS Secretary (2025); Aletia Dundas, FWCC-AWPS Representative to QUNC-New York (2024)	various	CQWCC@quakersaustralia.info
Safe Quaker Community Committee		tba	CSafeQuaker@quakersaustralia.info
RM Contact Friends	Jonathan Benyei (2025), CRQ; Steve Alexander, NSWRM (2023); Valerie Joy (2023), David King (2024), QRM; Matthew Lykos, Elizabeth Magarey, SANTRM; Maggi Storr (2025), Jenny Seaton (2023), TRM; Chris Hughes, Susan Nelson, VRM; <i>vacant</i> , WARM	various	
The Sanctuary Management Committee, NSWRM	Convener: Mavis Barnard (2023); Jacque Schultze (2025), Bill Brennan	various	CSanctuary@quakersaustralia.info
Thanksgiving Fund Committee, SANTRM	David Barry, Topsy Evans, Lee Harradine, Kate Alessia	2025	CThanksgiving@quakersaustralia.info
Yearly Meeting Organising Committee	Co-Conveners: Vidya, CRQ (2024) and Clinton de Young, WARM) (2024). Em Chandler, VRM (2024); David Tehr, WARM (2025). Jo Jordan and Harald Ehmann (SANTRM) joining as part of the YM24 Host Committee.	various	cymorganising@quakersaustralia.info

Australia Yearly Meeting Representatives

Role	Names	Term ends
Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting 2023	Ann Zubrick, WARM	2023
Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN)	David Purnell, CRQ	2023
Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC)	Gerry Fahey, VRM	2024
Friends Peace Teams, Global Coordinating Team	Valerie Joy, QRM	
Independent & Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN)	Margaret Clark, CRQ	2024
NCCA Church Leaders	Presiding Clerk	2025
NCCA Assembly members	Presiding Clerk	2025
	David Purnell, CRQ	2023
NCCA Faith and Unity Commission	Janet Duke, VRM	2023
NCCA Safe Churches Network	vacant	
Silver Wattle Quaker Centre	AYM Nominee: Duncan Frewin, QRM	2023

Associated bodies (Not appointed by Australia Yearly Meeting)

Role	Names	
Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing (AFFH)	Elsbeth Hull (NSWRM), Convener; Heather Herbert, CRQ; Barbara Kearney, NSWRM; Maggi Storr, TRM; Kaye Wright, VRM; Lesli Grant, WARM. Home of Healing Working Group: David O'Halloran, Maggi Storr	elsbeth102@bigpond.com
AFFH Charitable Trust	Trustees: Alison McConnell Imbriotis (Convener), TRM; Jackie Perkins, NSWRM	affhct@gmail.com
Friends Peace Teams	AWP Regional Group: Pia Reiersen, Taisoo Kim Watson, Valerie Joy, Adrian Glamorgan, Jane Drexler, Australia; Kins Aparece Philippines; Nanik, Petrus; Ratih Selly and Sint, Indonesia, JungJoo Korea; Nadine Hoover, Gay Howard, Tom Martin, Janet Anderson, Deb Wood, Debbie Wood, Fenna Mandolang, Mark Hoover, Cassie Cammann USA. Global Coordinating Group: Pia Reiersen, Valerie Joy, and Clerks of Associated Yearly Meetings and Conveners of all Working Groups.	
The Friends' School Board of Governors	Craig Stephens, Presiding Member; Mary Beadle, Deputy Presiding Member and TRM nominee; David Edmiston, Deputy Presiding Member and TRM nominee; Natalia Urosevic, Board nominee; Jen Newton, TRM nominee; Tom Dundas, TRM nominee; Sam Ibbott, Board nominee; Lindsay May, Board nominee; Sarah Sealy, Board nominee; Bruce Henry, Presiding Clerk AYM, ex-officio member; Nelson File, Principal, ex-officio member.	
The Friends School Quaker Values Committee	Tracy Bourne, (Co-Convener), CRQ; Liz Field, NSWRM; Christine Venner-Westaway, QRM; Peter Webb, SANTRM; Mary Beadle, David Edmiston, Tom Dundas, Jen Newton, TRM; Oliver Lovell, VRM; Allan Knight, WARM; Bruce Henry, VRM (AYM Presiding Clerk); Nelson File, TRM (Principal, ex officio)	
FWCC AWPS	Adrian Glamorgan, AWPS Secretary, 2025	adrian@fwccawps.org
QSA Company, Management Committee	Therese Douglas (Co-convener); Rae Litting (Co-convener); Dan Ong (Treasurer); Garry Duncan (Public Officer); Mary Jane Hogan; Laurel Doel; Pia Reiersen (till December 2022); Aletia Dundas (from February 2023)	convenor@qsa.org.au
Other QSA Company members:	Rae Litting (NSWRM); Jo Jordan (SANTRM); Peter Jones (TRM); Lesli Grant (WARM). Vacant: (CRQ) and (QRM). Ex-Officio: AYM Presiding Clerk, AYM Secretary Executive Administrator: Pia Reiersen	Administration@qsa.org.au

Silver Wattle Quaker Centre Ltd (SWQC)	SWQC Board: David Johnson (QRM); Jonathan Benyei (CRQ); Sheila Keane (NSWRM); John Baker (NSWRM); Ex officio: SWQC Director, Brydget Barker-Hudson (QRM)	sheila.keane@silverwattle.org.au
Silver Wattle Quaker Centre (SWQC) Advisory Committee	Alan Clayton (VRM), David Johnson (QRM), Jane Sloane (SANTRM), Duncan Frewin (QRM, AYM Nominee)	
Kangaroo Valley Friends Properties Pty Ltd (known as Werona)	Anne-Maree Johnston (Secretary)	anmajo@bigpond.com

Reports from AYM Officers

AYM Finance Committee Report to Yearly Meeting 2023

The twelve-month period on which we are reporting has truly been our 'annus horribilis'. In order to put it into context it is necessary to go back into some history of the last couple of years.

At Yearly Meeting 2021 Jane Drexler replaced Roger Sawkins as AYM Treasurer. There was a handover period of about twelve months.

At Standing Committee in September 2021, the Finance Committee was asked to prepare a report on the provisions in the Handbook relating to the Thanksgiving Fund in view of the substantial bequest the Fund had received in the previous year. Because of the handover to Jane, the draft of our report was not available until April 2022. At that stage the Thanksgiving Fund Committee made substantial comments on the draft and it also became clear there were differences of interpretation of the September 2021 Standing Committee minute which needed to be resolved.

Jane's work and other delays meant that two joint meetings between the Committees to clarify the situation were not held until September 2022.

During the second of the joint meetings an incident occurred which caused Jane to subsequently resign as AYM Treasurer. Whilst she agreed to finalise the Audited Accounts for the year ended 30 September 2022, that left the Finance Committee to take over the Treasurer's responsibilities.

Our Committee spent a considerable amount of time trying to resolve the incident issue, having discussions with the Presiding Clerk and two Regional Meeting Safe Quaker Community Committee representatives, but our approaches were unsuccessful. Whilst the two SQCC representatives produced a report with some suggestions, the report did not address our major issue and clearly served another purpose of which we were unaware. However, we noted that the report did make recommendations in relation to the outstanding requests of Standing Committee. We hope those matters will be resolved urgently as they affect our ongoing consideration of AYM's finances.

Whilst all of this was going on, the Finance Committee was also dealing with a number of other issues.

- Firstly, we had discussions with AYM Nominations Committee to provide them with background to the AYM Treasurer's job and to help them in finding a replacement. At the date of this report we have had no indication that they are being successful in that quest. This is causing us, and will cause us in the immediate future, considerable extra work.
- Secondly, in the absence of a replacement AYM Treasurer we obtained approval from the Presiding Clerk, and subsequently from Standing Committee, that our Committee could act as 'Treasurer' in the interim period. This meant that all 'Treasurer' decisions had to be made as a Committee. We went from two or three Committee meetings a year to meeting weekly for up to two hours at a time.
- Thirdly, with Jane's sudden and unexpected resignation we were faced with a number of changes that needed to be made to bank signatories, investment holdings, government reporting requirements, etc. With no replacement AYM Treasurer in sight, temporary arrangements had to be made and the requirements of the banks and other authorities proved to be tedious and complicated.
- Fourthly, with uncertain control over our bank accounts and other financial arrangements, we had to take steps to ensure that AYM's cash flow was protected so that essential bills were paid. The Thanksgiving Fund Committee had approved two very large grants and we were unsure if finance was available to pay them. We therefore placed a restriction on payments of grants from AYM's various Concern Funds to ensure that there was sufficient money to pay the basic requirements. A Thanksgiving Fund grant of \$100,000 was eventually paid in February 2023 and whilst we are able to pay a number of smaller ones in March we are still asking Concern Committees to refer to us before paying large grants.

- Fifthly, Standing Committee in September 2022 agreed to significant changes to the AYM Office arrangements and asked us to look into the question of funding them. We have had some discussions with the Transition Implementation Working Group (TIWG) but are still unclear what the costs will be as the Working Group has not yet finalised all the details of their changes. Given the information at hand, AYM is very likely to need a considerable sum from the bequest if Quakers Australia is to honour the initially proposed contractor fees into the future.
- Sixthly, during Jane's time as AYM Treasurer, decisions were taken to update our investment arrangements and transfer the Quaker Australia accounts to Xero software. Both of these changes have taken time, particularly with the complications from Jane's resignation. The latter is still being bedded down at the date of this report.
- Seventhly, we worked with Jane to conclude the 2021-22 audit and produced an Annual Report for the AYM AGM in January. We answered Treasurer questions both at the AGM and at the associated Standing Committee meeting.
- And finally, considerable Committee time has been taken in dealing with the many questions from Friends requiring information or advice from the 'AYM Treasurer'.

So where do Finance Committee and Treasurer matters stand at the date of this report?

1. Finance Committee has not received assistance in resolving the incident at the joint committee meeting. It appears Committee members have to accept this will not happen.
2. Whilst Nominations Committee is clearly working hard, a new AYM Treasurer has not yet been found.
3. Funding for the new AYM Office arrangements still needs to be determined. Finance Committee has not yet been updated since TIWG's 12 January email, which acknowledged there were still too many uncertainties to quantify the costs. Once these matters are clarified, and (4) below is concluded, our Committee can provide Standing Committee with meaningful funding options.
4. We understand the terms and conditions of the Thanksgiving Fund Handbook entries are to be reviewed by an independent review group, and we see this as urgent.
5. Finalisation of the new software arrangements is nearing completion. The new accountancy advisory/ bookkeeping service is working closely with Finance Committee members to fine-tune the regular bookkeeping support and reporting processes. We expect these to reduce the work of an eventual new AYM Treasurer.
6. Subject to (3), (4) and (5), Finance Committee will be better able to manage AYM's cash flow and can fund future grants from AYM's Concern Funds provided there is discussion with us about any large prospective grants.

We would like to thank Jane Drexler for the extensive work she did as AYM Treasurer, particularly at a time when she was facing severe health problems and grieving the death of her husband. We would also like to thank Steve Smith for taking over as Convenor of our Committee and the work he did in that role. We are sad that neither is involved any longer.

We have no matters for consideration by Yearly Meeting.

At the date of this report the members of the Committee are Rob Walpole (TRM) Temporary Acting Convenor, Roger Sawkins (QRM), Carol Thornton (C&RM), and Ray Brindle (VRM).

NOTE: Friends can find these documents on the AYM Finance Committee's webpage (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Finance>):

- Summarised version of the 2021/22 Accounts and Treasurer's Report to the AGM23
- 2021-22 Audited accounts

Scroll to the bottom of the page to find these documents, and click one of the links to view.

AYM Archivist's Report to Yearly Meeting 2023

PART A: REPORT

2022/23 has been very quiet as compared to 2021/22 which saw a flurry of activity in policy, record keeping guidelines and handbook updates as well as the creation and supply of 10 record keeping and information guides to Regional Meeting Archivists.

Since Yearly Meeting 2022 the following activities have been undertaken:

Since 2021, AYM has been seeking a **new Retention Schedule** for the Regional Meetings and AYM that cover the many changes in recordkeeping across the country as a single source to ensure each meeting (Regional and Australian). The National Schedule project was underway with all State and Federal Archives being involved during 2021-2022 however Queensland paused the process by undertaking a review of the *Public Records Act 2002* during late 2022; other states are considering or now undertaking a review their current record keeping legislation. Until this national project is completed, the recommendation was for AYM to adopt the current *National Archives General Retention of Disposal Schedule*. State Regional Meetings can continue as per general AYM Archivist advice outlined in the AYM Handbook updated in late 2022.

Handbook revision of section: 5.2.7 AYM Archivist - in line with a new Recordkeeping policy, a revision of the section 5.2.7 of the Handbook was required as it had been quite some time since the last review occurred. An updated version reflecting changing needs and practices was approved in late 2022 so that all documents regarding duties and archival processes are consistent and in line with current approved Archival practices.

Outreach - AYM Archivist contributed an article to the ASA Faith Traditions Special Interest Group (FTSIG) online publication called *Blessed Collections* was published in June-December 2022 issue. The article briefly covered the structure and recordkeeping processes of the Society whilst also promoting our unique Australian Quaker Narrative Tapestry project briefly as an example of Storytelling and recording Quaker history through extensive research and artistic interpretation.

A small number of complicated **historical research requests** were received from family history and academic researchers. Each researcher was very grateful for their replies with answers to their questions and directions on how to access other relevant records and/images from other collections outside the Society.

Information on Recognising and Managing **Vicarious Trauma for Archivists** was supplied to all RM Archivists and the AYM Secretary.

AYM renewed annual membership with the Australian Society of Archivists as a passive form of **outreach** to alert users of the ASA website to our presence and collections,

Issues/Analysis

1. AYM Archivist was unable to attend the Faith Traditions Group (FTSIG) at the Annual Conference for the Australian Society of Archivists in 2022 due to technical issues beyond our control. The conference was a hybrid with online participation for the majority of sessions. IT issues beyond the control of attendees saw a number of Special Interest groups miss out on participatory attendance.
2. Whilst continuing to share information on current and/or best practice Record Keeping, Preservation and Conservation, Collection management, and professional development and training opportunities with the Australian Society of Archivists with Regional Archivists, AYM Archivist receives little feedback on the value of this form of communication and education.
3. With the Transition Implementation Working Group (TIWG) looking at implementing new

positions and roles in lieu of the current AYM Secretary role, as AYM Archivist, I believe it is time to review the current AYM Archivist role.

- Is it time to retire the role given many of the current duties seem to be absorbed by the Probity and Media Officers;
 - or does AYM keep the position and significantly change the role description to reflect other duties.
4. An idea for consideration is to retire the current AYM Archivist role as redundant and replace it with an AYM Historian role instead. A volunteer AYM Historian role can be filled by any F/friend who has a passion for the history of the Society, an ability to undertake robust historical research and an ability to write for publication on historical aspects of the Society in Australia.

Saadia Thomson, AYM Archivist

Reports from AYM committees, Working Groups, Associated Bodies and AYM Representatives

- All Committees and Working Groups that have a Part B in their Reports will hold a Preparatory Session.
- Some Committees/Working Groups/ Associated Bodies without a Part B may choose to have an Information Session for Friends prior to Yearly Meeting 2023.
- Find all the Explanatory and Information Sessions listed here:
<https://www.keepandshare.com/calendar12/show.php?i=2974167>



The Australian Friend Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

We have produced four issues of *The Australian Friend* this year, in both the on-line and printed versions. The electronic version has gone on line on the first Monday of the quarter, and the printed version as soon thereafter as the typesetter and printer can produce it. PDF files of the printer version are placed on the AYM website.

Issues/Analysis

- Our committee covers NSWRM, VRM and CRQ, but some input from other RMs in sourcing material would be helpful.
- We have only one member with the experience to mount the publication on line. Someone willing to develop these skills as back-up would ensure continuity.
- The NSWRM members have served on the committee for over 10 years. Although they are willing and able to continue in this role, they accept that some members of the Society may feel the need for change.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Margaret Clark (CRQ), Rae Litting (NSWRM), Sue Parritt (VRM), and David Swain (NSWRM)

Contact: CAustFriend@quakersaustralia.info

Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery Committee: Friends in Stitches

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

- We have a new Co-Convenor, Margaret Bywater, who started January 2023.
- The exhibition in La Trobe, Tasmania, was very successful and viewed by many embroiderers in Northern Tasmania, including stitchers from Launceston.
- The Wahroonga Meeting (NSWRM) exhibition of 10 panels coincided with an Open House weekend and resulted in lots of activity. The sale of FIS merchandise generated some income.
- The Central Coast NSWRM exhibition, was coordinated by Lisa Wriley, and again, generated new interest about the project in this locale.
- Planning and research have begun to create a 'Devonshire Street' Panel, to mark the 120-year anniversary of the Meeting's location on Devonshire Street in Sydney.

- There are plans for a projected exhibition of all panels near Grafton, NSW.
- The 'Dunera Boys' panel, completed in the UK, arrived in Australia in March.
- The 'Kelvin Grove' panel (QRM), is well underway and nearly finished.
- The 'Allowah Grove' panel was sent to Sally Gare (Herzfeld) in WA to complete.
- New stitchers in Tasmania are working on the 'Quakers at Sea' panel. Helen Wells, with Quaker heritage, President Devonport Embroiderers' Guild, is working on the design of a panel about the Wells family.
- Calendars sold and distributed around the land. None sold in WA or VIC but leftovers sent as complimentary copies to small meetings in all states.
- Ellen sent the 'Ballarat' panel back, as she was unable to continue. We are looking for stitchers to complete this.

Issues/Analysis

Now that Covid is largely behind us, we need to travel to WA, Broken Hill and Sydney. We need to enthuse key Friends in these places, run stitching workshops etc.

We have the Quaker historical archive to refer to. Margaret is able to facilitate that. The existing panels may need more information and people designing new panels need information.

Friends work with people with disability as a theme for a panel.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None

Committee members: Co-Conveners: Tessa Spratt, VRM, Sally O'Wheel TRM and Margaret Bywater (TRM). RM Correspondents: Nancy Tingey (CRQ); Lisa Wriley, NSWRM; Saadia Thomson, Gillian Risdale, QRM; Robin Sinclair remains as correspondent, although the original group has laid down their involvement after stitching seven panels, (SANTRM); Sally O'Wheel, Margaret Bywater TRM); Tessa Spratt (VRM); tba, (WARM).

Contact: CStitches@quakersaustralia.info

Backhouse Lecture Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

Backhouse Lecture 2022:

Yarrow Goodley presented an online lecture *Creating hope: Working for justice in catastrophic times* at Yearly Meeting in 2022 with a small audience of 'in-person' f/Friends. Feedback from Friends suggests that this lecture spoke to current concerns about climate change and inclusive community with a creative and compassionate approach.

Backhouse Lecture 2023:

Jon Watts, will be the lecturer for 2023 as a hybrid online and in-person event at the Farrell Centre, Friends School on Tuesday 4 July at 7pm. Jon's lecture is entitled *Fearlessly Faithful: How Stories of Spiritual Courage Can Light Our Path Forward*. It will be a reflection on his experience amongst Friends as a musician, film-maker and blogger over many years.

Backhouse Lecture 2024:

Jackie Leach Scully has accepted an invitation from the Backhouse Lecture committee to present in 2024. Jackie has come from the UK where she was very active among Friends (including presenting the Swarthmore Lecture in 2002) but is now resident in Australia. She proposes a lecture about disability, and what disability, difference and normality mean for Friends in the twenty-first century.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee Members: Convener: Kerry O'Regan, (SANTRM); Tracy Bourne (CRQ), Evan Gallagher (CRQ), Taisoo Kim Watson (QRM)

Contact: CBackhouse@quakersaustralia.info

Child Protection Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

1. We attended most AYM Children and JYF Committee meetings as the wellbeing of our children and JYFs is the central focus of both Committees
2. We provided consultation on child safety for Quaker events involving children and JYFs (e.g., the newly begun JackBox games, the upcoming Easter Family Gathering).
3. Since our last report we have held 3 zoom meetings with the Child Protection Contact Friends (CPCFs) around Australia. These attend to any issues which the CPCFs wish to raise, and we have a focus topic or scenario (e.g., when a Regional Meeting is planning a Christmas event, what might be the role of the CPCF?). These meetings have led to some very lively discussions. The discussions are certainly helpful to our understanding of how child safety is approached in various Regional Meetings, provides us with some feedback on where the Policy and Procedures need clarity or change. We believe the sessions are informative for the CPCFs as they undertake their important roles and that we are building a sense of community around the country between Contact Friends.
4. We aim to provide support to the AYM Secretary and the Child Protection Contact Friends, if needed, when the annual Child Protection audit is due.
5. We are currently redrafting the current Child Protection Policy and Procedures. We are trying to simplify them where possible, so that they are easier to refer to and use. We had hoped to have them ready to send out with DIA, but this has not been possible. A draft will be completed by YM 2023.
6. We discussed within our Committee the potential benefit of an umbrella network of Committees and Friends within AYM (being referred to as *Quaker Life*) concerned with nurturing the wellbeing of all in our Quaker community.

Issues/Analysis

1. Some Regional/Local Meetings have not 'recovered' their community of JYFs and children post-Covid. Understandably, this can make the Child Protection procedures seem irrelevant. The framework is in place so that Friends are in a position to safely welcome families, new or returning, whenever that may occur.
2. We would like to encourage Friends to familiarise themselves with the current [Policy](#). The safety and wellbeing of all, including Children and JYFs, is the responsibility of the whole Quaker community, not just designated Child Protection Contact Friends. We are aware that some Friends may find the Child Protection Policy and Procedures onerous. However, they are one of the important aspects of providing a safe and welcoming community for families, children and JYFs.

Lorraine Thomson and Ronis Chapman will lay their roles as co-conveners down as soon as new conveners are found.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Lorraine Thomson, Ronis Chapman (CRQ)

Contact: CChildProtection@quakersaustralia.info

Children & Junior Young Friends Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Events

The C&JYFs Committee has met regularly through the year in cooperation with the Child Protection Committee.

Role of Coordinator

The Coordinator, Sofia Jones, assisted in planning, implementing, and reporting on the C&JYFs program for Yearly Meeting 2022. She reported that there was not a lot of support offered to run the program and low levels of interest were evident. The pandemic meant that families had been isolated, there had been few in person gatherings and over-exposure to online activities has led to reduced contact between children and JYFs at the national level. Only 7 families with young children and 2 with JYFs registered their children for Yearly Meeting. Sofia also sent out a card to the families of children and JYFs around Australia and assisted with the planning of the Easter Family Gathering at Silver Wattle. She has now completed her term and is laying down her role.

Consultation Project

At the last Yearly Meeting it was decided that the paid worker should focus on a consultation project with families to identify and consider the needs of meetings, families and young people and bring children and JYFs into the heart of the Quaker Community. A new committee took up the role of designing the project and articulating the officer/consultant role. A call for expressions of interest in the position was sent out to Regional Meetings and advertised on Quaker social media. There was not initially any interest in the position but approaches to individuals, and universities, and a second call for expressions of interest, has produced some response. We now hope to complete the project in the second half of this year.

Coming Events

On a positive note, the Easter Family Gathering is fully booked out, with a waiting list, suggesting some resurgence of energy and enthusiasm, at least for in-person events. Planning for Yearly Meeting 2023 is underway and the Children and JYFs Committee is also supporting the online Jackbox Games run by Tina Bell and her son Ryan.

Issues/Analysis

Our initial research on the consultation project suggests that Australian Quakers are not alone in experiencing a depletion of energy and participation by young people after the pandemic, and that similar problems are affecting Quakers in other countries, as well as other religious organisations. It is not just that young people are weary of online events, though this is part of the equation. Psychologists have noted a marked increase in mental health issues, especially in adolescents. For example, the Australian Psychological Society reported a 65% increase in eating disorders, as a consequence of the pandemic. Finding ways to build inclusive faith communities that can support young people is imperative.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Submitted by Committee members: Di Bretherton (VRM), Restina Nininahazwe (SANTRM), Justine Shelton (VRM), Jenny Turton (VRM)

Contact: CChildrenJYF@quakersaustralia.info

Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group (CESE WG) continued its work

and meeting regularly, but met more frequently during 2023.

Minutes of our Meetings were made available to Regional Meeting Correspondents, who have been invaluable in growing our climate conversations. Each of our meetings commenced with a period of sharing, a reading and an acknowledgment of Country. Our period of sharing is an important part of our journey.

Our activities during 2022-2023 included:

1. The Public Statement accepted at Yearly Meeting was circulated amongst Friends and to organisations such as ARRCC, QUNO. It is available on our webpage: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/speciesandclimate>
2. Held a meeting with members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Climate Sprint Team to share experiences preparing a Climate Emergency statement and plan. This consultation occurred in September 2022 and greatly encouraged the CESE WG in its work. The Sprint Team generously agreed to the CESE WG using its plan as a template for an Australia Yearly Meeting Plan in any way we felt appropriate.
3. The CESE WG considered a request from ARRCC for financial support for a half-page advertisement in a major newspaper to share the Open Letter to the Prime Minister signed by over 60 Australian and Pacific signatories from religious denominations and organisations including Bruce Henry our Presiding Clerk. The CESE WG decided to contribute \$2000, and asked Regional Meetings to consider adding to this amount, as well as growing the Earthcare Fund. This support was critical in enabling the Open Letter to be published.
4. Prepared and held an online gathering for Friends to consider progress with the Action Plan being prepared by the Working Group, held in late January 2023. Planning, organisation and technical support for the gathering was greatly assisted by Emily Provance (AYM communications and media support officer). The CESE WG is grateful for Emily's support and inputs from wherever she was located and at the times that were often outside of the usual time of our meetings. Following this gathering we have revised the Overview Statement.
5. Considered, with AYM Secretary, AYM Presiding Clerk and Margaret Clark (QPLC) progress with our draft Action Plan and possible directions for the climate emergency concern for consideration by YM23. Part B of this report contains the CESE WG's recommendations for consideration by Friends. We hope that this will stimulate all Friends Meetings to undertake deep thought and discernment of the direction Friends should take to address this critical ecological crisis.
6. The Working Group has been connected to the work of the Quakers in Asia West Pacific Climate Action Network (part of the Asia West Pacific Section of the FWCC), and the Quaker Global Sustainability Network.
7. Our work continues during the lead-up to YM23. As part of this report, we attach the revised overview statement, with a Background and Reference document (**Appendix 1**). We hope to circulate a draft of Action Statements (**Appendix 2**) at our Preparatory meeting. These can be found on our website here: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/speciesandclimate/plan-yearly-meeting-draft-documents>

Issues/Analysis

We see the need for a shift in our understanding, relationship and engagement with our planet. This is an existential issue and crisis and calls us to explore our deepest held values and beliefs.

The Ecological crisis does not work to Quaker timescales, we are challenged to respond and be present in the world and as well as being responsive and accountable to our Business Meetings and processes.

We do not anticipate that the Action Statements will be complete for YM23 but will require the on-going engagement of Friends and Meetings. We see this Plan as a Living Document.

We remind Friends of our report to YM in 2022, where in part we noted:

We are engaging with the enormity of the task to develop a clear recommendation for AYM regarding appropriate responses to the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction. We experience a tension between the need to support existing actions by Friends and related groups, and the more difficult task of focusing on developing a plan at the systems level. It is a challenge for us to consider how best to support the diversity of actions that individual Friends are involved with.

While we know many Friends are engaged in action and work within Friends and across other groups, our communications are not as effective as they could be. Are our Meetings keeping this concern at their heart or is the burden being placed on those in designated roles (such as the CESEWG)?'

We are still hopeful that we will be joined by a Working group member from Young Friends and a correspondent from Tasmania.

The online gathering on 29 January 2023 was attended by 43 Friends. The Working Group was greatly encouraged by the responses from Friends to the draft material presented and discussion on its contents. The Working Group has tried to ensure that inputs from friends are reflected where possible in the new text.

Friends need to be aware of the possibility that Australia may take on co-hosting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP29) in 2024, most likely in partnership with Pacific Island nations. If this does happen then we will find ourselves called on to support and work with International Friends, such as QUNO and the FWCC.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Do Friends accept and commit to the Action Plan developed by the Working Group?
2. We ask RMs to supply a short, written report on their activities in their Meetings in relation to advocacy on climate and biodiversity mitigation, to the CESE WG by the end of May 2023 to be shared prior to, and tabled for, the Preparatory Session.
3. That YM23 extend the Working Group for 1 (one) year to enable the completion (with RMs) of the draft Action Statements (Appendix 2)
4. That QPLC, in consultation with relevant Quaker groups, conduct two lobbying workshops online during 2023-24 on the topic of climate crisis and species extinction.
5. That relevant AYM finance-related committees to review their guidelines to release funds to support climate activism, education, community building and earth repair actions. Collaboration amongst several funding sources may be a way to encourage funding a greater diversity of actions.
6. That Clearness Meetings are provided as needed for individual Friends who are led to travel among Australian Friends under a specific climate and biodiversity crisis ministry.
7. We ask all Meetings for Business, at AYM, RM, local and committee level to consider the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis, as a standing item on their agendas.

Working Group members: David King, David Shorthouse, Elizabeth PO', Gerry Fahey, Peri Coleman. **Contact:** CSpeciesAndClimate@quakersaustralia.info

First Nations Peoples Concerns Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The Committees activities since AYM 2022 have included the distribution of \$6,250.00 to Original Australians. The Committee agreed to pay an honorarium of \$350 to Murrumu Walbura Yidinji for presenting at the next webinar hosted jointly by the FNPCC and CORE.

The Committee agreed to donate \$2500 towards Dr Noritta Morseu-Diop's wellness centre. for the healing of Original Australians.

The committee agreed to donate \$1000 to Ljudan Michaelis-Thorpe's 13-year-old daughter Orielle to assist with training and other expenses to assist with her very promising sport climber sporting career.

The Committee agreed to donate \$2000 from the FNPCC fund to assist Aunty Rissah and her two companions travel to and from the Tent Embassy to attend a serious of discussion in February 2023

The Committee agreed to donating \$400 from the FNPCC account to assist Auntie Christine Palmer to drive from Port Lincoln to visit a number of communities to talk to parents with children who are in Alice Springs.

The writing of letters to relevant State and Territory Ministers regarding raising minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 years of age to a minimum of 14 years of age.

Chris Hughes presented a short overview of the Yes and No campaigns in relation to the constitutional referendum Voice campaign to Victoria Regional, meeting.

Jackie Perkins laid down her position on QSA. The Committee thanks Jackie for her work and welcomes Pia Reiersen to be the QSA representative on the Committee. John McMahon (VRM) and Sitare Gare (QRM) have laid down their positions on the committee. We thank them for their work on the committee and ask the Regional meetings to seek new representatives to replace them.

Issues/Analysis

The key issue facing Friends is coming into right relationship with Australia's Original Peoples and the Land. This means educating ourselves on the local history before and since colonialisation of the land we live and work on and to build local relationships, where possible with the traditional owners. The Uluru Statement of the Heart has the opportunity to bring people together in developing a new inclusive, sustainable just future for all peoples of Australia. However, factionalism, misinformation, different interpretations around Sovereignty and Treaty and the sequencing of Voice, Treaty and Makarrata are obstacles to achieving this. Deep listening and engagement are required to help us forge a way forward and let the Spirit guide us.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Co-Conveners: Chris Hughes and Sharee Harper (VRM). Correspondents: Harald Ehmann (SANTRM); Ann Felton (CRM); Elspeth Hull (NSWRM); Clare O'Leary (WARM); Katherine Purnell (TRM); Gedda Fortey (CORE); Pia Reiersen (QSA)

Contact: CFirstNations@quakersaustralia.info

Friends Online Recognised Meeting

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

Although under the care of NSW Regional Meeting, we welcome Quakers and attenders from different regions of Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, NSW and the UK. This is the only Quaker meeting some participants attend, while others enjoy both a face-to-face meeting and our online meeting. Weekly attendance is usually twenty to twenty-five people, with some not attending each week. The presence of the Friends Online Recognised Meeting on the Australian Quaker website attracts many people wishing to find out about Quakers. A number have stayed and are now regarded as attenders. We have a number of younger attenders (under fifty years of age) who often attest to how welcome they feel and that they are able to share their insights in a supportive presence.

Last year we reported on a small group of our members and attenders who met to reflect on one person's poetry inspired by attending this meeting. This assisted greatly in "getting to know one another". With support from the Thanksgiving Fund and NSWRM this book of poetry named Journey Companion by our attender Justin Simpson has now been published. There is the possibility of having another small group meeting to again reflect on their own faith journeys.

Issues/Analysis

We continue to have a roster of people to host the meeting. Hosting involves being online around fifteen minutes beforehand to both welcome people as they arrive and also to then settle the group into silence about five minutes before the meeting begins. Our Meeting for Worship lasts for thirty minutes after which there is generally an opportunity for worship sharing, welcoming and information sharing.

Following on, we are invited to join a breakout room for further talk in a smaller group. One breakout room may focus on ministry that has been shared, one is often for newcomers to be able to talk and ask questions about Quakerism, another may be for a specific topic nominated by someone and there is always at least one room just to enjoy fellowship! Many attenders share just how important the breakout sessions are to them and that these are what has developed a sense of community in our online meeting. Some people join initially feeling hesitant but over weeks of attending feel more confident. One of the benefits of this meeting is that those with physical barriers such as distance or disabilities are able to join in fully.

We encourage Quakers and attenders from across Australia to join us one Sunday!

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Submitted by: Therese Douglas, Jan Blakeney and Peter Hillary.

Contact: pmhillery@bigpond.com

Handbook Revision Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

- Most of the revisions agreed at YM22 have been incorporated in the Handbook 7 (revised December 2022) as on the AYM website.
- **Section 4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment** missed being updated. An RM registering Officer brought to our attention the need for inclusion of the

commitment/marriage vows. We propose a further amendment to include those vows. In so doing, we noted some discrepancies and recommend amending them.

- We bring a revised **Flowchart** of the process for revision of the handbook for approval by AYM
- We have revised **Section 5.3.7 Types of committees** as requested by YM22
- Midyear SC agreed that we include an introduction to the **Nominations** process for inclusion in Chapter 1.

Issues/Analysis

The two new members of the committee feel that they are still 'on trainer wheels' in this role. This has meant that our progress is slow and reactive rather than proactive. We are hopeful that another Friend will be found to join this committee.

We are mindful that we have not heavily involved the Liaison Friends during this year.

We note that the changes to the operations of the AYM office will require a new section in the Handbook when the new system is established. We expect that this section may be ready for *Documents in Advance YM2024*.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(See www.quakersaustralia.info/Handbook and **Appendix 3** to *DiA* for proposed wording)

- Proposed revisions to **Section 4.3**. Committed relationships including marriage
- Proposed addition to **Section 5.3.7 Types of committees**
- Proposed additional section **Service to the Meeting (Nominations Process)** in Chapter 1
- Revised **flowchart** of the *Handbook* revision process

Committee members: Michael Corbett (QRM), Ron Martin (VRM), Julie Walpole (TRM)

Contact: CHandbook@quakersaustralia.info

Information Technology Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

Since the last Yearly Meeting, the theme of the IT Committee's activities has been "learning new things". Technology itself feels like it is in a constant flux, especially where it involves the internet. But, too, the Committee itself has had changes in membership, and we are embarking on new projects requiring us to learn new skills.

Changes to Committee membership

In November 2022, Daniel Buckmaster took on the role of Convenor from Roger Sawkins. The Committee thanks Roger for his dedicated work over many years, helping see us through much change and growth. Roger remains a member of the Committee.

Garry Duncan was co-opted onto the Committee in November 2022, with a special interest in helping work on the new membership database (more below). The Committee welcomes his experience and attention to detail.

We note that Julie Walpole, while not a member of the Committee, has now taken on the role of managing our set of official email addresses. Her work is adjacent to ours and she has attended meetings where it is appropriate. The Committee thanks her for taking on this important responsibility.

During 2023, we expect to welcome the new Communications & Publicity Manager person employed by AYM, and as part of that transition, farewell Jacqueline Schultze.

The website

Our main concern remains the two primary websites, one for enquirers and the other for members. Around the time of AYM 2022, we transitioned the members' website to a new hosting provider with the assistance of CMTech, our web development contractor. That transition was happily without incident, and we have since migrated the enquirers' site as well.

We selected VentraIP as a new hosting provider due to it being based in Australia, and having had very positive recommendations. This has allowed us to consolidate our digital assets (domain registration and web hosting) into a single account, close several other accounts (Digital Ocean, TPP Wholesale, and soon Web Central). This has reduced our expenses, and should simplify our work.

Now that we have "lifted and shifted" our hosting service, we are beginning the task of upgrading the version of our CMS (Drupal) that the websites run on. This is a maintenance task that improves our security posture and reduces some risks, but should also give us access to new features and abilities to work with the websites.

New membership database

The Committee's work in replacing Salesforce as our membership database is ongoing.

At the start of October 2022, the Committee met with regional Membership Secretaries to discuss the ways they currently manage records and produce reports for the AGM. The Committee learned that all regions have a slightly different process, and these often involve using a completely local database of memberships, only using Salesforce to check against, and to update when necessary.

The Committee commissioned a report from an Australia and New Zealand based agency, Optimi, on the feasibility of building a system of our own using a low-code platform called Knack. Based on feedback from that report and our experience with the current systems and alternatives, we judged that it would be the best way to proceed with the new database.

We judge that it will prove less complex than either our Drupal CMS or Salesforce. It will be accessible by more than just the small number of Salesforce accounts we are allowed. Michael, Daniel and Garry are undertaking mentoring with Optimi to ensure we use Knack correctly and securely as we undertake this work.

Until now, the AYM Secretary has been an automatic member of the Committee. Once a Communications and Publicity Manager has been hired by AYM, they are planned to become an automatic member of the Committee as well.

This has led to discussion within the Committee, and with TIWG as they manage this transition, about the precise nature of the Committee's responsibilities. While we have had the Secretary as a member, we have been casually involved in helping advise on changes to the content of the websites, but many other communications like social media posts have been managed without our involvement.

These internal discussions have focused on the distinction between content and capabilities. We look forward to working with the new C&PM to support their needs.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Convener: Daniel Buckmaster (NSWRM); Garry Duncan (NSWRM), Roger Sawkins (QRM), Jacque Schultze (NSWRM), Michael Searle (CRQ), Julie Walpole (TRM).

Contact: CTechnology@quakersaustralia.info

Integrity in Public Office Project

PART A: REPORT

The Integrity Project is about Quakers going public with our testimony to integrity. It is a concern we are taking into the public realm, as Quakers have done for centuries. The Project, independent from politicians and other organisations, contributes to the groundswell in Australia for Integrity in Public Office and the establishment of a strong federal Integrity Commission.

This Project was discerned and endorsed as a Quaker concern at the annual gathering, Yearly Meeting, in July 2022.

The two-year Project consists of:

- staying informed, encouraging and supporting proposed legislation to increase integrity in public office by contacting politicians and on social media
- maintaining a public witness by holding a banner at Parliament House in Canberra, with the words "Show Integrity in Public Office".

Achievements/Activities

- Held two events 7-8.30 am holding a Quaker banner and another banner stating *Show integrity in public office* at Parliament House Canberra in the morning on two sitting different weeks in August 2022 and in February 2023
- Quakers from Canberra and Melbourne came to help with the two events
- Organised one Twitter workshop
- Publicising the event to Quakers and others beforehand and afterwards

Practical learnings

- Finding where to protest - i.e., driveway to Parliament House car parks that is on Melbourne Avenue between State and Capital Circle
- Using Google doc to keep track of "to do" items e.g., publicity, planning, email lists, booking accommodation and videography
- Finding which company makes portable women-friendly light-weight banners (EasySigns)
- Deciding we only need 6 Quakers at an event to hold the 3 banners

Issues/Analysis

Parliamentarians are getting used to our witness and responded by waving to us during the second action. Wies' federal MP said that he saw us and knows it is Wies.

Few Friends are active on social media and we decided not to organise a second Twitter workshop.

The actions take preparations but are easy to carry out (apart from inability to stop the rain). We have developed google doc files with the routines and are happy to share these with Friends who are interested to plan actions.

We are learning how to work with a videographer and how long to make the videos and if we have one or several speakers on a video. Quaker activists suggested we make one 2-5-minute video with a few speakers, not separate videos. The reason is people only watch one video of an event. We will try this in September.

There is a lot happening by community-based "integrity" organisations run by experts in this field and we are learning a lot from them.

Doing social media takes time and our Twitter presence has been constant most of the time but not continually. We comment on anything to do with Integrity in society by repeating the words: integrity, accountability, transparency.

The next action is on Thursday 7 September. Get in contact and join us. It's fun and energising.

Submitted by: *Wies Schuiringa (NSWRM)* wies.schuiringa1@gmail.com and *Sue Ennis (VRM)*
Project website: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/concerns/quakers-taking-action/integrity-public-office-project>

Meeting for Learning working group

PART A: REPORT

Introduction

A small group of Meeting for Learning facilitators and previous Quaker Learning Australia (QLA) Committee members met by Zoom and email in August 2022 to consider ways forward for Meeting for Learning, as the QLA Committee was laid down in 2021 and no Regional Meeting (RM) has offered to host the Committee. We picked up the work on this proposal again in January '23.

Summary

We recommend that Meeting for Learning continue in its current form.

We suggest that a new Committee, perhaps called the Meeting for Learning Support Committee, be established.

See Part B for details.

Background

Meeting for Learning is a travelling one-year program running from Spring one year to Spring the following year. The participants attend a week-long retreat at both the beginning and end of the year. A Regional Meeting invites Meeting for Learning to run a program, and the two retreats for that year are held there.

When Meeting for Learning first came into being (1995) it was managed by a Committee based in Victoria Regional Meeting (VRM). When a group in South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting (SANTRM) took over the work in 2008 they offered themselves as a lily pad (rather than an umbrella) which supported further Quaker educational activities as well as the Meeting for Learning program. The Committee was renamed Quaker Learning Australia under Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM).

Over the years the QLA Committee responsibilities have been passed on to groups in other Regional Meetings. During this time Silver Wattle Quaker Centre has become an established base for Quaker education in Australia.

Since 2021 no group in any Regional Meeting has felt led to take on the work of QLA. In its absence, support of the 2022 Meeting for Learning was provided by Sharon Matthews (WARM) and David Barry (SANTRM) sharing administrative and organisational roles. The organisation and support of Meeting for Learning now needs a clearer way forward. Other aspects of the QLA Committee may also need to be considered such as the provision of the Quaker Basics course materials and resource books.

Looking to the Future:

We see that the original intentions for a QLA Committee are now met in different ways. Silver Wattle provides opportunities for Quaker learning, both residential and online. And particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, many opportunities for on-line learning, Worship, interest groups and community deepening have emerged. Some of the "home groups" from AYM 2022 have continued to meet by Zoom, for example. However, we feel there is still a need for a MFL program which travels to interested Regional Meetings. Interest in MFL continues and the facilitators still receive feedback that at least some participants come because the program travels to their State.

We propose the following model for the support of Meeting for Learning only, not for a wider role:

Three strands of Meeting for Learning tasks and role

1. **An Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM) Committee called Meeting for Learning Support Committee links the Meeting for Learning facilitators and the host RM.**
They look after the timeline, advertising the retreat early in the calendar year, and later if needs be.
They handle the financial transactions in conjunction with the AYM office, sending invoices to the retreatants, receiving the invoice from the venue and the travel invoices from the facilitators.
They report to AYM, including bringing to AYM any leading from a RM to host the Meeting for Learning program in the future.
2. **The facilitators plan and lead the retreat week programs and support participants during their year.**
They receive expressions of interest from people who want to participate in Meeting for Learning, and they decide who will be accepted for the coming year.
They update the AYM Committee and the Hosting Group with details about who is coming (including continuing retreatants), if there are any vacancies, and any other matters as needed.
3. **A small group (the Hosting Group), within the RM who has invited Meeting for Learning to come to them, takes on the role of hosting the retreats.** It is up to that RM how they do this. We have a document that lists what the facilitators need from them – the key one being, in consultation with the facilitators, finding the venue! Then liaising with retreatants about meals, accommodation, special needs. They coordinate transport to and from the venue, make sure we have appropriate resources such as whiteboards.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. We recommend that Meeting for Learning continue in its current form.
2. We suggest that a new AYM Committee, perhaps called the Meeting for Learning Support Committee, be established as:
 - a) An “interest” committee of four Friends, from anywhere in Australia
 - b) Main tasks, the administration and oversight of Meeting for Learning, including handling finances, publicity, timelines, liaison with the facilitators and the host Regional Meeting
 - c) Report to AYM.
 - d) To meet as often as the work requires
 - e) Initial nominations perhaps after calling for expressions of interest. There is a wide “alumnus” of previous participants who may be interested.
3. The Host RM and the facilitators would continue as outlined above.
4. We would suggest that the Meeting for Learning Support Committee consider having its own email address. It’s also possible that the Committee may feel led to manage a Meeting for Learning webpage.
5. We suggest that the current Facilitators and David Barry as the SANTRM host RM and Sharon Mathews from WARM continue as a Working Group to support MFL for 2023 in the interim.

Submitted by: David Barry (SANTRM), Fiona Gardner (VRM), Catherine Heywood (VRM), Sharon Mathews (WARM), Brenda Roy (WARM), Jenny Spinks (CRQ).

Peace & Social Justice Fund Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

This committee is under the care of Canberra and Region Quakers.

The current members of the Peace and Social Justice Fund committee, Kay de Vogel, Lorraine Thomson, Harold Wilkinson and Wilma Davidson, had our first meeting on 9 August 2022.

The Peace and Social Justice Fund Committee approved application for funding made by Dale Hess, Rowe Morrow, Alan Clayton and Dorothy Scott, of the amount of AU\$8,260 from the Peace and Social Justice Fund for the language training component of the Barakat Leira (Blessed Leiria) project to assist Afghani peace activists, now refugees, to achieve safety and resettlement in Portugal.

We are currently considering a new application.

Currently the balance in the Fund is \$154,711.31.

Issues/Analysis

Three of us are new to this committee and are guided by the Handbook and advice from the convener of the previous committee. We are still learning about how much is available for us to distribute in a calendar year and this is more of a challenge while there is no AYM Treasurer.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Convener: Wilma Davidson; Kay de Vogel, Lorraine Thomson, Harold Wilkinson.

Contact: CPSJ@quakersaustralia.info

Publications Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The publications committee met via Zoom and telephone links during the year, perhaps not as frequently as we would have wished. We will endeavour to be more active in the future.

In August 2022 the committee held a special Zoom meeting noting the following:

1. As a committee we see our role to act as a support and guide for potential authors, while at the same time endeavouring to ensure that works published in the name of AYM, and including the AYM logo are appropriately prepared for publication, including in matters of design and editing.
2. Jenny Stock is willing to continue updating the pamphlets. The committee welcomes feedback from Friends and meetings with suggestions of pamphlets that need updating, our subjects that Friends would like to see addressed in new pamphlets. <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/publications-0/australian-publications/pamphlets>.

3. We need to be aware of the needs of the diverse groups with in AYM, and hope that a return to Face to Face Yearly Meetings will help improved communication between Friends, and may result in a new impetus to produce potential AYM Quaker publications.

In October 2022, Jude Pembleton laid down her role as Co-Convenor, however she will continue as a valuable resource person for the committee.

The newly minted Co-Convenors Sue Headley and Margaret Bywater met face-to-face in February 2023. Both reside in West Hobart, and are members of Tasmania RM.

The committee continues to welcome ideas, suggestions for new publications, drafts (supported by the author/s own RM). We see our role as responding to and encouraging new publications, or new editions of previously published YM publications.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Co-Convenors: Margaret Bywater (TRM), Sue Headley (TRM); Garry Duncan (NSWRM), Jude Pembleton (QRM), Jenny Stock (SANTRM).

Contact: CPublications@quakersaustralia.info

QSA and AYM Relationship Working Group

PART A: REPORT

BACKGROUND

Yearly Meeting 2022 considered the Working Group Report of the AYM/QSA Relationship, and affirmed the value of QSA as giving practical expression to Friends' work for peace and justice in our region and the world. Owing to the absence of a clear way forward on the recommendation of the Working Group, Yearly Meeting agreed that two members of the QSA Management Committee and two other Friends consider the recommendations of the WG Report and focus on building the relationship in order to ensure good governance and operational management of QSA, ensuring that Australian Friends remain informed of the work of QSA and contribute to the directions of its work.

Those involved in this discernment have been Rae Litting and Mary Jane Hogan from the QSA committee, and Duncan Frewin and David Purnell from AYM. We have shared details of the various meetings held over the last few years about the future of QSA, and the frustrations and tensions over the place of the Linkages Committee whose role was reduced once QSA became registered as a company. We have also looked at the current structure of QSA and in particular the constitution of the Management Committee. We have recognized the need to bring greater connection between AYM and QSA and acknowledge that this may require alterations to the current Constitution of QSA as well as to the role AYM in relation to QSA.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

PROPOSALS

We have come to the view that the following changes would create a better outcome for all concerned:

1. That, to enhance the effectiveness of the oversight of QSA policies and operations, the membership of the QSA Management Committee be increased from seven to nine (including office bearers)
2. That, instead of being hosted by a Regional Meeting (at present NSW), QSA be hosted by

Australia Yearly Meeting. In that situation, the members would be chosen by the Nominations Committee of AYM in consultation with the present Management Committee of QSA and other stakeholders, and members would be selected from anywhere in Australia. The appointments to the Management Committee would then be made by Standing Committee (after feedback from Regional Meetings) and confirmed at the next gathering of AYM.

3. That the current Management Committee and officers of QSA advise the AYM Nominations Committee of the skills and knowledge needed for the effective oversight of QSA as vacancies occur, to assist in the selection of names for appointment.
4. That the Linkages Committee be discontinued, and replaced by regular opportunities for Quakers to interact with QSA through webinars offered by QSA for sharing of information and ideas. In addition to these webinars offered by QSA, any Regional Meeting could ask QSA for a meeting of this kind, and QSA would also use Yearly Meeting gatherings, newsletters and other ongoing communication methods to keep Quakers informed and receive feedback.
5. That appropriate legal advice be sought by AYM and QSA about the implications of these changes for QSA's standing as a company, so that AYM and QSA can have the necessary background to make a decision on changes in the governance arrangements as proposed. (Note – there may be some confusion caused by naming the oversight body 'the Management Committee' rather than 'The Board', and this point might be clarified by legal advice about the requirements expected of a company).

December 2022

Working Group members: David Purnell (CRQ) and Duncan Frewin (QRM)

Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The committee has continued its regular monthly meetings (via zoom). We use briefing papers to raise awareness among Friends and others. All such documents are placed on the AYM website as well as being circulated to RM correspondents and others on our mailing list. *Action Alerts* (for urgent response) have been issued on – National Plan to End Violence against Women, Sri Lanka crisis, and Immigration Detention, National Anti-Corruption Commission; *Watching Briefs* (longer-term analysis and comment) have covered – State Capture, Ukraine, Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty update, and Anti-Protest Laws; and *Flutters* (short summaries) on – post-election government ministry, UN report 'Our Common Agenda', Global Index 2022, and the Death Penalty.

Members of QPLC take part in public action in support of steps on climate change, protection of whistle-blowers, freedom of speech for journalists (e.g., Julian Assange), and refugees. Many Friends joined other webinars organised by other groups on alternative defence options for Australia and on Myanmar. QPLC offered support for the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) to apply to the Peace and Justice Fund for funds to enable publication of its report on the national enquiry into the Australia-US Alliance. The report was presented to Parliament in Canberra in November 2022, along with a major conference on 'Charting our Own Course' conference. We also joined protests at the extravagant expansion of the War Memorial and the embedding of arms manufacturers as sponsors of exhibits and sections. We supported a public gathering against war on 21 September 2022 (the International Day of Peace).

In preparing for the third on-line Yearly Meeting (July 2022), QPLC held a preparatory session in April, involving many Friends from around Australia. This was followed by a Friendly School session at the beginning of YM 22 called 'Caring for Humanity in Interesting Times'. The YM peace session included a wide range of reports from RM correspondents, as well as AVP and the Peace and Justice Fund. A draft statement was prepared for YM to send to the incoming government urging a more consultative and civil approach to public debate in Parliament and beyond. QPLC

also supported YM endorsing plans for public witness by Friends and others on the importance of the Parliament enacting effective Integrity legislation.

QPLC offered an on-line opportunity for Friends from around Australia to link up in a webinar on 30 April 22 to discuss the forthcoming federal election. Locally, the committee has run a series of sessions at the Meeting House on the fourth Sunday of each month on current peace/justice issues.

QPLC has been gravely concerned about the ongoing war in Ukraine. The AYM Presiding Clerk, at our suggestion, signed a joint letter from peace agencies supporting a peaceful settlement. In early April, two QPLC members visited the Russian Embassy and discussed the crisis with the Ambassador. Later in the year a letter was sent to the Australia defence minister opposing participation of troops from Australia in training Ukrainian soldiers.

QPLC has maintained links with various agencies, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (on human rights in particular), the UN Pacific Forum on Human Rights, the Australia Palestine Advocacy Group (APAN), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), and the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC). QPLC is also exploring ways to enhance its peace work and is seeking funds towards employing a peace worker.

QPLC lodged a formal submission to the Government's Defence Strategic Review. This was an opportunity to raise the great concerns of Friends for reversing the arms race, re-affirming the importance of nuclear disarmament, and seeking a re-balance of priorities within the government from defence to diplomacy. It also encouraged the government to carry forward its stated commitment to sign the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty and to recognise the climate emergency as a major factor in foreign policy.

QPLC sent correspondence to the Federal Attorney-General about the refusal of two States to accept a visit from the UN Committee on Torture to see detention facilities. We also supported stronger moves to raise the age of criminal responsibility, and to remove children from adult detention facilities.

IPAN

IPAN's report *A People's Inquiry: Exploring the Case for an Independent and Peaceful Australia: Charting Our Own Course* was publicly launched on 24 November 2022 at Parliament House. The report (<https://ipan.org.au/read-or-order-the-report-of-peoples-inquiry/>) is the result of two years' work and nearly 300 submissions by individuals and organisations across Australia. The report, which was tabled in the Australian Senate in November 2022, received some publication support through the Peace and Social Justice Fund.

Following this, IPAN held a two-day national strategic planning meeting in Melbourne in February 2023, with representatives of all IPAN state/territory groups. Margaret Clark (AYM Representative to IPAN) attended by zoom. Passionate discussions covered a range of topics and campaign ideas. Information about IPAN activities is on the website <https://ipan.org.au>. Friends are encouraged to visit the site and consider joining.

APAN

Friends in Australia have had a longstanding connection with the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN), and have been represented at its national meetings each year. In May 2022, following a request from APAN, QPLC met with Jessica Morrison to discuss Quaker involvement in work for peace in Israel/Palestine. APAN had decided to give greater prominence to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, and QPLC agreed to seek further ways for keeping Friends informed about possible action on this and other issues of human rights and justice for Palestinians. At that meeting, QPLC supported VRM in making space available in the new Melbourne Meeting House for APAN to have its office, and Jessica Morrison now works from there several days a week. Ramallah Quakers continue to be a presence in Palestine/Israel supporting peace workers. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has joined many other organisations including APAN in using the word 'apartheid' in relation to policies of the Israeli government.

The AGM of APAN was held via zoom on 7 November 2022, attended by 60 people including several Quakers. The President for ten years, Bishop George Browning, stepped down amid much acclaim for his tireless work of advocacy on behalf of APAN and the rights of Palestinians. A new president, Nasser Mashini has taken over the role, with Claire Moore (former Senator) as vice-president.

Issues/Analysis

A vital challenge for peacemakers is the continuing militarisation of our world, and the resulting diversion of precious resources needed for meeting the real needs of people and the planet. QPLC welcomes ideas for ongoing action by Australian Quakers to confront this with resolute proposals for reducing tension, encouraging dialogue, build on people-to-people links across borders, and entering the public debate more vigorously.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Committee members: Convener: Harold Wilkinson; Margaret Bearlin, Margaret Clark, Ronis Chapman, Gareth Knapman, David Purnell, Shobha Varkey. Correspondents: Greg Parkhurst, CRQ; David Swain NSWRM; Taisoo Kim Watson, QRM (2024); Peri Coleman, Sally McGushin, TRM (2023); Beverley Polzin, VRM; Ruth Watson, WARM.

Contact: CQPLC@quakersaustralia.info

Quaker World Connections Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

- Two separate Yearly Meeting 2022 sessions were held
- World Quaker Day activities were facilitated in RMs and across QA
- Linked more with Asia West Pacific and Section Secretary's activities.
- Planning to finally bring an Indian Quaker School Principal to Australia to visit Australian Quakers and The Friends School in May/July 2023
- In September 2022 we held a 'dreaming' session to help discern the future for QWCC. Some Quakers have wanted more from being on this committee and the dreaming found that we were enriched by sharing our work and experience with other Quakers.

In 2024 will be the FWCC International Gathering. The focus themes are: Community, Sustainability and Nurturing of the Spirit. People are trying to reach out to get help with the program and IT. Need northern Friends to help with IT and subsidies fares. it is clear AYM will send someone.

Issues/Analysis:

QWCC hopes to reduce administrative burdens and instead build on the creativity, energy, good communication, gifts and fellowship we share.

QWCC will meet less frequently but sub-groups will get things done, utilising QWCC members in a more engaged way.

QWCC committee spent considerable time planning the World Quaker Day. Our evaluation shows that more productive results might be achieved by encouraging RMs to plan and pursue their own initiatives for WQD.

Two initiatives include:

- Regional Meetings to engage in making short informal videos of their meetings to share with the wider Quaker world.

- We are hoping to have Quakers actively engaged in Asia share the important work they are doing.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Now that video conferencing technology can virtually bring AWP to AYM Quakers together we and mindful of the impact of long-distance air travel plus growing costs to YM therefore-

Does AYM wish for an AWP visitor to come each year or less frequently?

2. The next World Plenary of Quakers will be in South Africa from 5-13 August 2024 and also as a hybrid (streamed) event. In-person participation will be very low.

We ask AYM Nominations Committee to discern the name of a Friend to represent Australia Yearly Meeting at this South Africa gathering.

Committee: Representatives: *Convener: Sue Ennis, VRM (2023); Jonathan Benyei, CRM (2025); Sharon Matthews, WARM (2023); Marie-Joelle Nininahazwe, SANTRM (2025); Paula Paananen, NSWRM (2023); Katherine Purnell, TRM (2026); Liz Terry, QRM (2024).*

Ex officio to QWCC: *Adrian Glamorgan, FWCC- AWPS Secretary Harold Wilkinson, FWCC-AWPS Treasurer Aletia Dundas, FWCC-AWPS Representative to QUNC-New York*

Contact: CQWCC@quakersaustralia.info

Rainbow Friends and Allies Meeting

PART A: REPORT

Achievements / Activities

At Yearly Meeting in 2022, Rainbow Friends and Allies held a social lunchtime gathering, an evening Epilogue inviting people to bring their “Pets and Plants” with open sharing, and a Share & Tell on “Gender and Equity” exploring cis and trans gender experiences.

We were invited to attend the Friends Online Recognised Meeting and speak about Equality as part of their series on Testimonies. This was an opportunity for five of us to share different perspectives.

Rainbow Friends provided a statement on gender to the AYM AGM in January to give a broader perspective on the recording of members as female, male or other. Our statement was included as part of the AYM Statement of Membership:

“Rainbow Friends are aware that as of December 2022, Australia Yearly Meeting includes gender diverse people who identify as: female, gender fluid/genderqueer, gender unimportant/gender agnostic, male, non-binary and xenogender”.

In March, we published an article on “Exploring Gender” in the Australian Friend with personal contributions in prose and poetry from eight Rainbow Friends on their gender and gender expression.

In February and March, Rainbow Friends and Allies joined Quaker stalls at LGBTIQ+ events: in Melbourne at Midsumma; in Sydney at the Fair Day as part of the Mardi Gras and World Pride; and in Canberra at the Fair Day as part of FreshOut and World Pride.

During the year we welcome talks and discussion. Sheila Keane led a discussion on “Spiritual Formation”. Adrian Glamorgan, the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Asia West Pacific Secretary, joined us to explore ways to support LGBTIQ+ Friends overseas.

About us

Rainbow Friends and Allies Meeting have been holding a Meeting for Worship on the 4th Sunday of each month, since September 2020. We are recognised as a Meeting for Worship within AYM and have a page on the website.

Our Meeting usually has six to ten Friends at each Meeting for Worship. Friends join us from nearly every Regional Meeting. After worship, we have social time, sometimes with a focused discussion on a topic.

We have a roster of elders, discussion facilitators and zoom tech support. We share the responsibility of providing pastoral care and support for each other within Rainbow Friends.

Issues/Analysis

Our Rainbow Friends and Allies Meeting offers to continue working with Regional Meetings and AYM to raise awareness of the diversity of gender identity and gender expression.

We hope to explore writing and updating Quaker pamphlets with inclusive language.

We continue to be concerned that Regional Meetings are asked to provide the gender of Members as “female”, “male” or “other”. We hope that this will be explored with sensitivity and awareness of the nuances of reporting on a person’s gender. This is a complex issue of visibility, mis-gendering, personal exploration of gender identity, and willingness or not to share about personal gender identity with others. Rainbow Friends and Allies will continue discernment on this issue towards finding a more equitable and inclusive approach

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Submitted by: *Em Chandler (VRM), Evan Gallagher (CRQ), Jess Donaghue (SANTRM), Mark Macleod (TRM), Vidya (CRQ)*

Contact: rainbowsunday@quakerway.org.au

The Sanctuary Management Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The Sanctuary Committee oversees management of the Sanctuary House, a heritage listed house built in 1950 in the Bauhaus style by Rudi and Hanna Lemberg. They were refugees from Nazi Germany in 1933, where they first met Quakers.

The home and surrounding bush garden were bequeathed to Australian Yearly Meeting in 1998 by Hanna Lemberg, along with money which was used to renovate the property.

It has been rented out on the commercial market since 2001, the rent providing income for maintenance and surplus funds can be used by AYM. There was a change in tenancy last year, the old tenants moving out in October 2022. Before the new tenants moved in in November 2022 necessary repairs and maintenance was done.

Regular bush work continues to manage invasive weeds. Pest control management has also been done.

In late January 2023 the NSW Government estimated the value of the property to be \$2,890,000.

Issues/Analysis

In January 2022 the Sanctuary Committee advised Standing Committee that \$20,000 was available to AYM. The Sanctuary Committee were asked to allocate these funds to a national refugee and asylum seeker organisation (reference SC1.22.3 and noted in report DIA 22)

In May and August 2022 \$20,000 was donated to Hope Cooperative in Victoria for Scholarships and student support for refugees through Project Hope.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Mavis Barnard (Convener), Bill Brennan and Jacque Schultze

Contact: CSanctuary@quakersaustralia.info

Thanksgiving Fund Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The general coverage of our activities

The Thanksgiving Fund Committee has been busy. We try to meet monthly by ZOOM on the third Thursday evening of each month. We are very conscious of our responsibility to use Friends' funds with care, and to enable applicants to the Fund to use them in ways in accord with Friends' understandings.

We really appreciate the diligence of some of the Meetings which have ensured that reports on the activities supported are forwarded to us. We hope that this becomes more general, to give applicants the support they need to carry out their project, and to the committee to ensure proper use of Friends' funds.

Since the beginning of this financial year the following applications have been approved for payment (up to March 2023).

1. The Blue Mountains Local Meeting approved an application by Rowe Morrow and Dale Hess for an Afghan Resettlement program to enable 8 Afghan people to resettle in Portugal **\$70,000**
2. Victoria Regional Meeting supported an application for Anne Brown to be part of the Food for the Soul course at Silver Wattle **\$1,845**
3. Melbourne City Local Meeting supported the Hope Cooperative to support a family of 15, some of whom are still in Afghanistan **\$11,000**
4. Queensland Regional Meeting on behalf of Friends Peace Teams to support their peace work in West Papua **\$10,000**
5. West Australia Regional Meeting for Lesli Grant's provision of emergency support for a Burundian pastor **\$750**
6. NSW Regional Meeting supported an application for Gabby Den Holland to be part of the Food for the Soul course at Silver Wattle **\$500**

7. Australia Yearly Meeting requested administrative support for the AYM Secretary
\$31,690
8. Friends Online Meeting on behalf of Justin Simpson to assist in the publication of a book of poems *Journey Companions*
\$3,000
9. Victoria Regional Meeting supported the application for a further phase of the Afghan Refugee Resettlement in Portugal
\$100,000
10. Melbourne City Local Meeting supported the Hope Cooperative to assist a family member of the family (see 3) to escape Afghanistan
\$16,328
11. Victoria Regional Meeting supported an application to conduct Seeds of Peace training workshops in Somalia
\$14,470
12. Wahroonga Meeting supported an application from Lisa Wriley on behalf of the Wellspring Community to support travel of a group of four, including Ruth Harvey, an Aboriginal leader, and Lisa to engage in dialogue with First Nations people and other Australians around the theme of Care for Creation. They plan to travel in September/October this year
\$6,000
13. SANTRM supported an application from Faith Coleman for her to complete her PhD on the environmental state and steps in the restoration of the Coorong
\$2,500

Issues/Analysis

The Review of the Thanksgiving Fund

In July 2022 Standing Committee asked the AYM Finance Committee to undertake a Review of the Thanksgiving Fund. This Review was produced without consultation with the current Thanksgiving Fund Committee, which had been in operation since mid-2021.

This Review was presented to the specially convened meeting of Standing Committee on 26th November 2022. It confined itself to the financial aspects of the work of the Thanksgiving Fund Committee, and recommended 8 items, 6 of which were agreed by the Thanksgiving Fund Committee. Two items were not agreed by the Thanksgiving Fund Committee. They are:

- A levy of 5% of any Bequest in excess of \$100,000 should be given to the AYM Finance Committee, with no indication whether or not this would be retrospective
- A cap of \$50,000 in expenditure above which agreement of Standing Committee would be required.

Both of these proposals would need significant changes to the Fund's entry in the Handbook, which at present provides that all Bequests/Donations which are not made for a specific purpose, should be placed in the Thanksgiving Fund. There is no mention of a cap on payments from the Fund.

In response, the Thanksgiving Fund Committee believes that the work done by both committees is voluntary so there are virtually no administration costs involved in receiving large bequests or donations. If the purpose of the levy is to cover general costs of the Yearly Meeting, that these should be borne by the Members through the Quota system. If it is to provide funds for a temporary situation in the administration of the Society, it should be presented to the Fund Committee as has happened in the past (see the list of payments agreed in Part A).

The second proposal to limit payments by the Thanksgiving Fund Committee to \$50,000 unless an application is made to Standing Committee could have prevented two major projects in the past year. Together they were involved in the successful escape of 30 refugees from Afghanistan

to Portugal. The time frame involved in the first instance was very short - a matter of days and it is unlikely that Standing Committee's agreement and the resultant arrangements could have been achieved in time.

We have heard no suggestion that we have responded to applications irresponsibly.

We are conscious that the mobilisation of large sums at short notice can be difficult for the Finance Committee particularly since the unfortunate resignation of the Treasurer and we are grateful that they were able to provide the funds needed for these projects. We have always advised the Treasurer when funds are needed and tried to cooperate in such matters.

The Thanksgiving Fund Committee has suggested that the two unagreed items should 'lie fallow' for 24 months to enable time for a reasoned decision to be made.

Aftermath of the Review Process

The Review process has caused significant stress to the Members of both Committees. Several members and have felt personally attacked and unable to continue to serve. The Presiding Clerk appointed two Friends independent of both Committees to find a way forward. They interviewed the members of both Committees individually and it was acknowledged that the whole Review process and resultant actions had not been carried out with sensitivity and in accordance with the usual practices of Friends.

We ask that given the unfortunate nature of some of the material generated in this whole process, and the likelihood that if circulated in its present form it could inflame the situation, that it not be circulated.

In these 24 months we expect that the Friends involved will be able to find an effective way forward.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. The Committee asks for approval of our policy of asking the Meeting/group which has supported the Friend's concern to ensure that a report outlining the results of the project reaches the Committee. This should include an acquittal of the funds provided."
2. We ask Yearly Meeting to agree that the two unagreed items in the AYM Finance Committee's Review of the Thanksgiving Fund be set aside for 24 months during which time they can be further considered by both Committees

Committee members: *Convener: David Barry; Kate Alessia, Topsy Evans, Lee Harradine*

Contact: CThanksgiving@quakersaustralia.info

Transition Implementation Working Group

PART A: REPORT

Task: develop role descriptions for the new Office team to replace the AYM Secretary, manage the transition and handover process, support staff.

Background

Our group was appointed in October 2022, and has met frequently. We have carefully reviewed the work of previous working groups looking into the role and workload of the AYM Secretary. We noted a strong focus on both Business and Community, an expectation that several people would make up the newly-imagined national office, and an essential breakdown of tasks into:

- Administration (Yearly Meeting, Standing Committee, AGM)
- Community connections, media and outreach
- Finances (payments, reimbursements, renewal fees)

- Compliance (annual audits, licences, etc)

Throughout our work, we have consulted with our current Secretary, Jacque Schultze. We have also consulted with other key stakeholders: Working Party on the Role and Work of the AYM Secretary, Presiding Clerk, Finance Committee, Selection Committee, IT Committee, AYM Archivist, Handbook Revision Committee, Child Protection Committee and AYM Nominations Committee. Earlier reports from Friends and working groups, together with these consultations have informed our discernment in completing role descriptions for the new office structure.

Our thinking has been driven by a strong concern for: good governance (accountability, authority, avoidance of any conflict of interest); the welfare of staff (workloads, communications, appropriate oversight, pastoral care); and the responsibilities of both employees in a collaborative, non-hierarchical team and Quakers Australia (QA) as their employer. We are using new names for familiar work, to make clear that this is a radical change.

Roles in the new QA Office

There are two part-time paid roles each accountable to the Presiding Clerk and two key unpaid roles each reporting to the Presiding Clerk. There is also the potential for other volunteers to be co-opted to assist short or long term. The Secretary's work has been trimmed and distributed amongst several roles.

- **Coordinator:** paid; an ongoing position; responsible for supporting the internal business operations of QA as an organisation.
- **Communications & Publicity Manager:** paid; a contract position; responsible for QA's website, social media, community connections, outreach and external enquiries (also a newsletter if continued).
- **Staff Oversight & Support:** unpaid; responsible for supervision and welfare of the two staff, able to handle queries and provide support.
- **Probity Adviser:** unpaid; responsible for QA's compliance obligations.

It is expected that the Staff Oversight & Support will meet with the two paid staff at least fortnightly. Effective team communications will be vital for all. There may be an additional volunteer role working with the Treasurer and Finance Committee to handle payments and reimbursements. A QA Office volunteer could scan the backlog of undigitised records, as ready access to many physical files is necessary to answer queries.

The transition process

TIWG has been involved with the Selection Committee in writing contracts of employment and advertisements so that the recruitment process could begin in March. Appointments are expected in May, with the Coordinator starting work on 1 July 2023 and the Communications & Publicity Manager starting on 31 July 2023. We anticipate that the two unpaid positions, Staff Oversight & Support and the Probity Adviser, will have started prior to or around YM23.

Jacque Schultze's term has been extended to the end of September to allow for a thorough handover to all new staff. There will be a two-week, in-person induction with the Coordinator in Jacque's current home office. There are financial implications with overlapping salaries, possible cost of travel and accommodation (depending on location) and expenses relating to removal and setting up a new office. A separate group has been exploring appropriate sources of funding. Jacque will also be retained as a mentor, as needed, at an agreed hourly rate, until YM24 (a cost to be covered by the 2023-24 Budget).

TIWG expects to organise and manage the transition process, working with the Selection Committee and the new staff to create a strong QA Office. We anticipate laying down our service at YM25.

In the meantime, we are holding Information Sessions during March and May/June for Friends to learn more and ask questions. As well as these scheduled Information Sessions, TIWG is willing to provide an online Question & Answer session to any interested group on request. Friends are welcome to look up our web page and/or contact us on CTransition@quakersaustralia.info.

We recommend that all Committee conveners and Regional Meeting clerks and newsletter editors promote these changes widely prior to YM23.

Issues/Analysis

1. **Other office holders / committees:** Restructuring the Office has impacts across a range of responsibilities—as referred to in the report of the AYM Archivist and as raised in consultation with the IT Committee.
2. **Probity:** The Probity Adviser will receive any serious allegations from the Safe Quaker Community Network. This implies that the following may need to be reviewed: the confidential archives policy; the *Handbook* section on reporting Grievances; and the *Safe Quaker Community Policy*, as our current practices involve the AYM Secretary.
3. **Finance:** While our Terms of Reference did not include consideration of the Finance Committee, it is clear that one of our key recommendations (all financial tasks to be devolved to Bookkeeper, Treasurer, and/or Finance Committee, with support), has an impact on Finance Committee business. We recommend that a volunteer be appointed to handle routine payments and invoices (who may or may not be a member of the Finance Committee), and that significant payments be made by the Treasurer or a delegated member of the Finance Committee. We have suggested that the Finance Committee's role become more strategic in focus.
4. **Human Resources review:** We suggest that QA budgets for, and engages, specialists every five years to review our current practices in HR (contracts management), OHS, and risk. This will provide a solid basis from which the Probity Adviser can start; and will facilitate our compliance with legal obligations, both immediately and ongoing.
5. **Handbook:** Since terminology has changed, amendments will need to be made in the *Handbook*, such as all mention of 'Secretary'. We expect to work closely with the Handbook Revision Committee to support them in this, if requested.

PART B: RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

Working Group members: Jonathan Benyei (CRQ), Jennifer Burrell (NSWRM), Kerstin Reimers (TRM)
Contact: CTransition@quakersaustralia.info.

Yearly Meeting Organising Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

Yearly Meeting in 2023 is being organised as an online zoom event from Saturday 1st July to Sunday 9th July. It will include two consecutive long weekends (Sat–Mon and Fri–Sun) with one or two formal sessions each day. The middle days (Tues–Thurs) will be a time for rest, local and outdoor activities, and some online spiritual and community building sessions (Share & Tell and some other information sessions).

Preparatory Sessions will be held in advance from Monday 15th to Sunday 28th May. Information Sessions will be in May and June.

This year the Backhouse Lecture will be hosted by TRM and delivered by Jon Watts from the USA who was the founder of the QuakerSpeak videos; the State of the Society address will be given by Mark Macleod, TRM; and the Summary of Epistles will be presented by Elizabeth PO', WARM. We are inviting offers of Friendly School sessions on the theme "Integrity, Voice and Right Relationship".

Friends from around Australia are involved in organising Yearly Meeting through a range of task groups including: the Children's program, Friendly School, Home Groups and JYF activities. We involve Friends in Zoom Hosting, the Help Desk, Epilogues and being YM23 Elders and Pastoral Carers. In every task group we are seeking to involve experienced Friends, younger Friends and those newer to Quakers.

SANTRM will host Yearly Meeting in 2024 as a hybrid event with both a gathering in Adelaide and online access.

Issues/Analysis

An innovation this year, to enable more informal social interaction and spaces to organise, will be providing additional Zoom breakout rooms so Friends can socialise or work together in small groups.

YM23 registrants are asked for a \$50 contribution if they are able to pay, the same as last year. YM22 was held online and incurred direct costs of nearly \$5,000. These included tech software and licences, the Help Desk phone, catering for the Clerking Team, and flights, accommodation and meals for the Assistant Clerk who travelled to Perth to work closely with the Clerking Team. There are additional costs for the Yearly Meeting Office, whose work is essential in holding Yearly Meeting.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: *Co-Conveners: Vidya (CRQ), Clinton de Young (WARM); Em Chandler (VRM), David Tehr (WARM). Harald Ehmann (SANTRM) and Jo Jordan (SANTRM), as YM24 Host Committee members.*

Contact: CYMorganising@quakersaustralia.info

AYM Representatives Reports

ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change) Report

PART A: REPORT:

I draw Friends attention to the ARRCC Annual Report which in part shows Friends involvement with ARRCC through individual Friends, Yearly Meeting and three of our Regional Meetings and one Local Meeting: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LE6SHr9jL4MVzF1EheAvzx36uTr1hYEy/view>

While Yearly Meeting appoints a Representative, this is not at the request of ARRCC and so I do not sit on any committee or have any involvement with ARRCC in this capacity. My involvement has been in Victoria with the State ARRCC working groups which is connected to my work with our VRM Climate Action Network.

If Friends cannot be involved in more direct ways with ARRCC, either through the many webinars and actions on the website, or through a State based group, they can still give financial support to ARRCC. We have three Regional Meetings doing this: Canberra, SANTRM and VRM, I hope that QRM, TRM and NSWRM can also make this part of their financial commitment to the Earth.

Individual Friends can also give financial support, especially through the monthly giving option as this gives more certainty to ARRCC to carry on their work:

https://www.arrcc.org.au/donate_2023

Gerry Fahey is the AYM Representative to ARRCC.

NCCA Ecumenical Report

NCCA continues to offer church representatives opportunities to meet via zoom and to circulate relevant information and inspirational material. The next meeting of national church leaders will be face-to-face in Sydney, in June, 2023.

Ann Zubrick continues to be a member of the Board of NCCA. She was one of the signatories to an open interfaith letter in February 2023 to parliamentarians in support of the Voice to Parliament and calling for unity across political divides on this issue.

NCCA plans to hold a Forum in Adelaide in June 2024 to mark its 30th Anniversary.

NCCA has also released a resources booklet 'Yes – Our Voice to Parliament' and a pamphlet 'Explainer: A Constitutionally Guaranteed First Nations Voice' that seeks to answer common questions. Further information can be found at <https://www.ncca.org.au/first-nations-resources/resources/item/2991-a-voice-to-parliament>

NCCA President John Gilmore gave strong support to the Yes case for a Voice and added "It is imperative that if there is a Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution through a Referendum later in 2023, there must also be an equally strong commitment to listen and this needs to be expressed now. May our speech not be noisy and our listening, deep"

Care of Creation is an important priority of NCCA, expressing solidarity with The Pacific Council of Churches and bringing people together to consider "effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution" as urged by the United Nations Environmental Assembly. A new Australian Churches Taskforce is being set up, and there will be regular Roundtables to discuss environmental and climate issues.

Act for Peace, the overseas development arm of NCCA has been collecting substantial funds and is channelling them for humanitarian assistance in the Ukraine through Hungarian Interchurch Aid

(HIA). HIA has been working with organisations in the Ukraine to support families with emergency food, cash assistance and other types of assistance. It has also been helping with the needs of Ukrainian refugees in Hungary.

David Purnell and Bruce Henry are members of the NCCA Assembly and Bruce Henry attends Church Leaders' meetings.

We appreciate Ronis Chapman's long service as part of the Safe Churches Network. Ronis has now laid this work down. She questions the need for a Quaker presence on the Network given that Churches and other organisations now have well-developed Child Protection policies and practices, which includes training.

Janet Duke is a member of the Faith and Unity Commission of NCCA and is looking forward to discussing matters of faith face-to-face, after two years of not being able to meet.

We value the work of many other Quakers with churches and other faiths in such organisations as Religions for Peace and Australian Religious Responses for Climate Change

Bruce Henry, Presiding Clerk

Reports from Associated Bodies

Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing Report

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing Meetings continue to be held around the country and online.

The e-newsletter for Healing Prayers is still circulated, but upon request rather than weekly.

One lovely report of local activities follows:

Our Healing group in Friends Eastern Meeting in Melbourne faithfully meet every third Sunday from 12.00 noon till 12.45 pm.

Why on Earth do we do this?

I think it is because we can see there is much healing needed in our world and we want to play a part in the healing process... We want to help.

I feel there is something sacred in bringing forth names in our healing meeting. The bringing forward, the uttering of the names of the people who concern us most, people we sometimes love, can open us up and move us deeply.

We have one member who has been faithfully attending every third Sunday for twenty-five years!

I guess in the end, it is hope which keeps us going. Hope that somehow, we are making a difference. Hope that (in the end) 'all will be well'.

May it be so.

With love and hope, Kaye

Convenor of FFOH Friends Eastern Meeting Melbourne

Committee members: Elspeth Hull, Convener. Lesli Grant (WARM), Maggi Storr (TRM), Kaye Wright (VRM).

AFFH Charitable Trust Trustees: Alison Imbriotis, Jackie Perkins

Contact: elspeth102@bigpond.com

Friends Peace Teams – Asia West Pacific Report

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

Friends Peace Teams is a Spirit-led organization that develops long-term relationships with communities in conflict around the world to work for justice and healing, and to create enduring cultures of peace. AYM is represented by Valerie Joy and Pia Reiersen on the newly established Global Coordinating Team, which contains representatives from each of the five regional groups, plus committee clerks.

The Five Regional Groups are:

- Asia West Pacific (AWP)
- African Great Lakes (AGLI)

- Peacebuilding *en las Americas*
- North America
- Europe (newly established in 2022)

The North Caucasus has been under the care of AWP for since 2014, which beautifully brought forth the Power of Goodness and expanded into Ukraine. Friends gather on the FPT Europe Regional Group to give better attention to the Ukrainians and friends in the North Caucasus where FPT offers psychosocial and trauma healing as they grapple with the pressures of a war. They also include members active in Iraq, Palestine, and Israel. They organised a regional training in Türkiye in December 2022. AWP and Europe peace workers continue to meet monthly and collaborate.

Outside of their attendance to Working Group meetings, AWP organizes training and activities with Europe.

The AWP Working group meets monthly and is clerked by Pia Reiersen (NSWRM), and several AYM members serve on this group- as well as from Aotearoa/NZ. More would be very welcome. Jane Drexler continues as our bookkeeper. Friends can send financial support to Elizabeth J. Drexler, 5/5 Que Court, Riverside, TAS 7250 Australia or transfers to Friends Peace Teams Asia West Pacific Inc., BSB: 032 086 Acct No: 366770 SWIFT Code: WPACAU2S and notify <jane.drexler@hotmail.net.au>.

A Face to Face FPT International meeting is being held in early May in Pennsylvania. Pia Reiersen is representing AYM. Young Friends were strongly encouraged to attend, but none were available. One Australian Young Friend is looking to attend the [2023 Regional Peace and Justice Training](https://friendspeaceteams.org/regional-training-2023-july/) in Tagaytay City, the Philippines from 7-13 July. The link for further enquiries is: <https://friendspeaceteams.org/regional-training-2023-july/>

Others are invited to join this Regional Training, serve as extended volunteers at Peace Place in Central Java, or discuss other opportunities for Young Friends wishing to deepen their knowledge of peace and justice worldwide via FPT.

New Area of Involvement:

Kins, the Asia Coordinator has recently outreached our training to the refugee camps on the Thai-Myanmar border. There is interest amongst these people to attend the Regional Training at Tagaytay the Philippines. The cost for the training is USD 400, + travel to the Philippines. Could individual Friends or Regional Meetings consider raising funds to assist some of these potential peace workers?

The development of our work in **West Papua** is assisted by a grant from the Thanksgiving Fund. Here we work in orphanages with teenagers and young people, many of whom have lost parents in the violent conflict. The peace workers outreach into the forests where children hide in fear and bring them into Sentani, a regional centre. From facing extreme violence all of their lives, the children are learning and practicing peace through regular meditation and involvement with Power of Goodness (POG) training.

Outstanding new work is with the **Peace Libraries** in several places including West Papua, Indonesia, the Philippines and in the other FPT Regions. The coordinators meet regularly on international Zoom meetings, and promote the work of translation into local languages, use of local stories, printing and publishing. This has encouraged the Qld Regional Meeting Librarian to classify part of their collection as a Peace Library with the peace titles listed on Library Thing.

She has also supplied reading lists for consideration as Peace Library titles for children and adult readers to expand collections.

Jeju Is South Korea: Our peace worker Jungjoo has formed a “Community of Practice” with 17 other peace workers, with daily demonstrations against the expanding US Naval Base and other peace, nonviolence spiritual and practical actions.

The ongoing and **deepening relationship between FWCC/AWPS** is a further blessing, where stronger ties are continually being developed between FWCC, FPT, QSA, QUNO, American Friends Service Committee and other Friends’ groups that work globally. QSA’s newly appointed Director is Pia Reiersen, who serves as the clerk of FPT-AWP, further strengthens collaboration. which derives from training in AVP Cultures of Peace and Justice workshop series (CCPJ), Power of Goodness (POG), discernment meetings for all of our workers and interns, and the sharing of power and responsibility through the Global Coordination Team.

Peaceways Journal: For the first time, printed copies of this publication were mailed to all in AYM for whom we had postal addresses. This received very positive feedback and will continue annually. Our website is regularly updated with news of all projects: www.friendspeacetteams.org

Lastly, the AGLI Coordinator has appealed to AWP and to Australian Friends for immediate funds to help feed and accommodate refugees on the **Congo/Rwanda border**. There has been tension here for decades but is now developing over to extreme need and a war. Donations can be made via Friends Peace Teams-Asia West Pacific BSB 032-086; Acc 366 770. Please put AGLI in the description and your name.

Issues/Analysis:

- FPT work is expanding at grassroots levels globally, responding to local needs.
- It is based on deep understandings of peace and justice, which derives from training in “Cultures of Peace” (CCP), “Power of Goodness” (POG), Discernment meetings for all of our peace workers and interns and the Global Coordination.
- Our funding in Australia relies on appeals to individual Friends and to Quaker Peace and Social Justice funding bodies.
- Young Friends could consider volunteering with FPT or attending International Training, which is also available via Zoom. Learning from our workers in our Regions would bring a great depth of life and possibly career experience.
- Friends of all ages are welcome to join with our programs.
- Regional Meeting Libraries and Silver Wattle, could consult with QRM Librarians re designating part of their collections as Peace Libraries.
- Support for International Peace Libraries via regular Zoom meetings is encouraged.
- Regional Meetings plan to include worshipful online connections with FPT-AWP to hold discussions on any aspects of our work as listed above.

AWP Regional Group: Pia Reiersen, Taisoo Kim Watson, Valerie Joy, Adrian Glamorgan, Jane Drexler, Australia; Kins Aparece Philippines; Nanik, Petrus; Ratih Selly and Sint, Indonesia, Jungjoo Korea; Nadine Hoover, Gay Howard, Tom Martin, Janet Anderson, Deb Wood, Debbie Wood, Fenna Mandolang, Mark Hoover, Cassie Cammann USA.

Global Coordinating Group: Pia Reiersen, Valerie Joy, and Clerks of Associated Yearly Meetings and Conveners of all Working Groups.

Contact: valuable1@optusnet.com.au

The Friends’ School, Hobart

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

The Friends’ School started its 137th School year of educating children in the manner of Friends schools on 1 February 2023 with 1310 students enrolled. This is significantly up from last year’s

student enrolment numbers. Of those 1310 students, 212 are new to The Friends' School. The School is hopeful that the pandemic and the public health directives surrounding it are behind us. In 2022, Covid-19 had a significant impact upon the health of our community, with students and staff impacted by periods of time away from School. Luckily, due to the widespread uptake of the vaccine, there were no serious illnesses resulting from the high infection rate that the School experienced.

Both the teaching and co-curricular programs remain centred on combining the Australian curriculum and the School's *Purpose and Concerns* in a thoughtful manner. Each Year group has a weekly Gathering (Meeting for Worship) . The School continues to focus on the development and implementation of its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) . Rodney Dillion, a Palawa elder, spoke with all Year 10, 11 & 12 students at the biannual Peter Underwood Peace and Justice Lecture on the Voice to Parliament referendum. In preparation for his lecture, the students viewed episode 2 of the recent SBS program titled "The Australian Wars" which focuses on the atrocities committed in Tasmania during the colonial period.

The redevelopment projects on the Commercial Road campus are complete resulting in 9 new classroom spaces, break out rooms and additional office spaces for staff and students to enjoy. The renovated WN Oats building will be officially opened on 23 March 2023. The Revell Sports Centre, completed in April 2022, has been a welcome addition to the School's infrastructure.

In 2024, a significant re-organisation of student Year groupings will be implemented. Years 9-12 will convene on the Commercial Road campus and Early Learning to Year 8 will meet on the Argyle Street campus. Extensive plans are underway to make the changes as smooth as possible.

The Board is in the midst of seeking a new Principal to succeed Nelson File who completes his tenure at The Friends' School in January 2024. As soon as a suitable successor is hired, the School will share this information with Friends' and the wider School community. As a note, Australian visa regulations have changed dramatically since Nelson File was first hired in 2012. The current available visa would only allow for a two-year period of employment in Australia (renewable only once) if a suitable international Quaker candidate was found.

Issues/Analysis:

To appoint a new Principal for The Friends' School in 2023 to commence in January 2024.

Report prepared by: Nelson File, Principal

The Friends' School Board of Governors: Craig Stephens – Presiding Member; Mary Beadle, Deputy Presiding Member and TRM nominee; David Edmiston, Deputy Presiding Member and TRM nominee; Natalia Urosevic, Board nominee; Jen Newton, TRM nominee; Tom Dundas, TRM nominee; Sam Ibbott, Board nominee; Lindsay May, Board nominee; Sarah Sealy, Board nominee; Bruce Henry – Presiding Clerk AYM, ex-officio member; Nelson File, Principal, ex-officio member.

Quaker Service Australia (QSA)

PART A: REPORT

QSA worked with partners in four regions, supporting fifteen development projects in Uganda, India, The Philippines, Zimbabwe and Cambodia, and First Nations and Refugee and Asylum projects in Australia. This work included:

- a new peace project in Cambodia reducing conflict and strengthening collaboration in ethnically diverse communities with Khmer language skills for 70 disadvantaged Vietnamese children;
- 359 Ugandan farmers confidently applying new organic farming skills to improve banana agronomy, soil fertility and water conservation for climate-adaption and food security;

- Three projects in Tamil Nadu, India, providing training to 2,174 people enabling greater environmental awareness, changes to agricultural practices and encouragement of more traditional food crops and animals more suited to local situations.
- Two projects forming links in First Nations communities leading to a business plan for native plant nursery in Queensland and workshops to assist communities in drawing up project success indicators that are more respectful and reflection of Indigenous sense of place and country.

4,566 people participated directly in the international projects this year, including 847 children and young people.

QSA allocated AUD 561,875 to international projects in the year ending in September 2022, with AUD 176,813 funded from QSA supporter funds, and AUD385,062 facilitated by Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) Funding.

Individual supporters have remained strong and faithful in funding projects, along with great support from the Quaker Shop in Adelaide, The Friends' School and the wider Quaker community. Bequests make a big difference in being able to fund new project initiatives and live out the Quaker testimonies by allowing timely action to support communities in need.

QSA was engaging in and sharing about its work with other Quaker initiatives such as the Australia Yearly Meeting First Nation Peoples Concerns Committee and the joint meeting with FWCC-AWP and FPT AWP. QSA staff also continue to engage actively with the wider sector through engagement with Australian Cooperation for International Development (ACFID) and with the Church Agency Network.

This year we farewelled two people who've been with QSA for a total of 46 years! John Dundas has been our Finance officer since 1999, working as a volunteer. To say that John has been dedicated and reliable does not seem to reflect deeply enough the time and energy he has given to QSA.

Jackie Perkins has been the Executive Administrator since QSA moved to Sydney from Hobart in 1999 and full time in that role since 2004. Jackie has been the face and heart of QSA and led QSA through the transformation of QSA into a company. As she resigned from the position people in the sector as well as within the Quaker community could testify to her significant contribution and impact – which has positively affected partners and communities alike.

Pia Reiersen joined QSA as the new Executive Administrator in January (2023) with experience from other non-governmental organisations, including Act for Peace.

Issues/Analysis:

As COVID-19 continued to impact countries worldwide, QSA supported partners as they adapted projects to deal with the pandemic's ongoing health, economic and social effects. As health-related restrictions eased, most project activities returned to the "new normal". However, with limited resources, many project participants face extraordinary hardships as the pandemic's economic impact continues to affect the most vulnerable families. Partners continue to look for new and innovative ways to support the communities.

QSA recognises the importance of communicating about its work and organised two e-learning events in the last year. However, we recognise that communicating effectively about its work with the wider community is a continuing challenge, as highlighted in the AYM review of QSA in 2021. This is amongst the issues being addressed by a small committee of participation from members of AYM and QSA.

QSA is planning an information session in May focusing on seeing our projects through the lens of equality, and hope that many will join us for this session.

QSA will continue to look for ways to have life-changing impact. Your support and engagement with QSA are so vital to enable our important work to continue with our project partners.

Submitted by: *Therese Douglas, QSA Convenor*

QSA Company, Management Committee members: *Therese Douglas (Co-convenor); Rae Litting (Co-convenor); Dan Ong (Treasurer); Garry Duncan (Public Officer); Mary Jane Hogan; Laurel Doel; Pia Reiersen (till December 2022); Aletia Dundas (from February 2023)*

Other QSA Company members: *Rae Litting (NSWRM); Jo Jordan (SANTRM); Peter Jones (TRM); Lesli Grant (WARM). Vacant: (CRQ) and (QRM). Ex-Officio: AYM Presiding Clerk, AYM Secretary*
Contact: convenor@qsa.org.au

Silver Wattle Quaker Centre

PART A: REPORT

Silver Wattle is going well. We host many groups, including Buddhist and Anglican retreats, Men's groups, Aboriginal women's writers, seasonal Garden & Landcare weeks, and the Easter Family Gathering. Business has recovered from Covid times. Finances are sound with a small annual surplus, though we would appreciate gifts and bequests to build the endowment. Infrastructure investment continues to be upgraded: interior painting, new carpets, move to LED lighting, machinery shed to house farm equipment and vehicles.

Our Centre Co-ordinator Brydget Barker-Hudson completes her 2-year term on 23/3/23, and leaves knowing the Centre is in much better shape than when she started during the Covid pandemic. Guests continue to report having had a wonderful experience at Silver Wattle. Emily Chapman-Searle and Yarrow Goodley are the new Centre Co-ordinators.

The Elders continue to offer SWEEP programs, with several open to Elders from RMs. The Elders retreat in February 2023 was a highlight. Programs have been well supported. The first year-long spiritual nurture program Food for the Soul attracted 8 participants and is having a profound effect on both the leaders and the participants. The garden continues to produce wonderful fruit and vegetables. Revegetation continues and a significant grant will assist our weed control efforts. We are bringing First Peoples into our programs as leaders and elders, and to advise on land management.

Silver Wattle is both a place and spiritual community, and we have welcomed new members as Board and Committee members, volunteers and contract staff.

Issues/Analysis:

We see several issues at stake for Quakers and for Australia, and are deeply considering ways Silver Wattle needs to change, and how it might contribute more broadly:

1. Quaker faith and practice – how do we contribute to developing Quaker spirituality and skills, to becoming a place for training in contemplative practices. Weekend, week-long and yearlong course will continue.
2. Climate crisis – planning for serious environmental change and making Silver Wattle more resilient, and helping prepare individuals and communities for coping non-violently with social change.
3. Decolonising minds and practices--will require our attitudes to move from exploiting the land to deep reverence for it, and infuse our work with the Spirit of the Land as Teacher and Elder.

Submitted by: *SWQC Board: John Baker (NSWRM); Jonathan Benyei (CRQ), Treasurer; David Johnson (QRM); Ann Zubrick (WARM).*

Appendix 1: Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group

Background and References to Action Plan

The Urgency of This Moment

Friends have a long tradition of respecting science-based knowledge and incorporating it into rigorous discernment to inform our faith and action.

For over a century, but with increasing urgency, scientists have been reporting on the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. We are aware that today we are faced with approaching tipping points or “abrupt climate change” -- after which it becomes difficult to predict or adapt to environmental changes. As this Plan was being drafted, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that no more fossil fuels (gas, oil and coal) should be extracted from the earth and that we must commit to achieving the reductions necessary to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

For too long, successive Australian governments have argued that we cannot make a difference in global efforts to tackle the climate crisis. In truth, however, Australia always had a significant contribution to make in the global energy transition, through reducing our export of fossil fuels and by accelerating adoption of solar and wind power for electricity production.

It is now time for Australian Quakers to heed the many calls by scientists for urgent and active change by us both as individual citizens and our governments and adopt new practices that may require difficult personal decisions, including letting go of past habits and practices.

In Australia, our unique fauna and flora and internationally recognised natural communities are also under great pressure and in poor condition, as the Australian State of the Environment report summarised in its recent report (2022) thus:

- Australia’s environment is generally deteriorating;
- Climate change threatens every ecosystem;
- Indigenous knowledge and management are helping deliver on-ground change;
- Environmental management isn’t well coordinated;
- Environmental decline and destruction are harming our well-being.

The Human Cost and Deep Inequity of the Climate Crisis

Many people around the world are already experiencing an unlivable situation. Floods, cyclones, droughts and fires have left their impact across regions and many countries, often on those less able to cope with already considerable starvation and disease burdens. The resulting forced movement and migration of peoples has been poorly responded to, challenging us to find new ways to welcome climate refugees as well as assisting developing nations to address the causes of climate change and poverty.

And these effects are not being felt equally, even within Australia. We have experienced the effects of climate change in our lifetimes and across the Australian continent: extreme fires and floods destroying homes and habitats, depleted natural and agricultural landscapes, eroding and salinising soils and lowered productivity. First Nations people are often subjected to the harshest conditions and the least relief. Extreme weather can be deadly for communities without access to basic utilities or housing, and adequate medical care.

Australia Yearly Meeting's commitment to addressing climate emergency and species extinction grows directly from our testimonies of Community; Earthcare; Equality; Integrity; Peace and Simplicity. We strive for a society where all people can live full lives without fearing for their health and safety. We seek to live in right-relationship with each other and the ‘more than human

world' (*To Learn a New Song: A Quaker Contribution Towards Real Reconciliation with the Earth and its Peoples*, Brindle, 2000).

The Human and the More than Human World and the Need for Responsibility

Just as we are the species currently destroying the planet's life support system, we are the species capable of undoing that damage.

As humans, we take responsibility for the global climate crisis.

We, as Quakers, resolve to help mend what has been hurt. We must prepare to be both en- Spirited and practical. (*Creating hope: Working for justice in catastrophic times*, Goodley, 2022).

Australia Yearly Meeting's Role

Although Australian Friends are relatively few in number, our reputation for advocacy based on ethical and moral principles and our historical support for peace, social justice and indigenous concerns give Quakers authority in public forums. We must not hesitate to exercise that voice.

In doing so we must ask ourselves whether we have heeded our 2008 Quaker Earthcare Statement, our 2019 Quaker Earthcare Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Epistle, and our Advices and Queries Nos. 44-47?

Attachments to this Appendix

1. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2008 Quaker Earthcare Statement.
2. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2019 Quaker Earthcare Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Epistle (which includes copies of Advices and Queries 44-47).
3. Minute establishing the AYM Earthcare Action Committee (YM08.61).
4. Minute establishing the AYM Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group (YM21.31) and Terms of Reference.
5. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2022 Public Statement (YM22.36).
6. A single page with abstracts of Backhouse Lectures, including those by Susannah Brindle, Rowe Morrow, and Yarrow Goodley.

1. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2008 Quaker Earthcare Statement

The produce of the Earth is a gift from our gracious Creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the Earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age. - John Woolman (1720-1772)



We find delight in the grace of creation, and are humbled by the richness of its gifts. Our very existence depends upon sustaining our intimate relationships within nature. Yet much has been harmed or lost forever through our lack of reverence, our ignorance, denial, waste and ill-considered action. We have set ourselves against the Spirit.

We have ignored our interconnectedness with all other living things, weakened our own well-being, and we have diminished the opportunity for fair livelihood.

Once our lack of care caused limited damage. Now our thoughtlessness endangers whole ecosystems, and even the entire biosphere, through global warming, pollution, destruction of habitats, and accelerated extinction of species. We also acknowledge that wars, poverty and overconsumption are part of this spiral of destruction.

We seek to transform this culture of domination and exploitation, of false witness and idolatry, and instead develop a culture of caring for the planet, preparing for future generations of living

things and honouring God's gifts. Each of us must now strive to live a just life which values the air, the waters, the soil, living things and the processes sustaining all life.

Given the extent of the crisis and the need for transformative change, despair and fear are likely to arise in us all at some stage. We can be set free in the Spirit to live our lives in radically different ways.

We are called to consider the world as an enspirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes. We seek to mend what has been hurt, and to strengthen our courage to discern and bear witness to this spiritual care for the Earth.

Friends are not alone on this journey. We must listen to the call of creation, recognise and respect the profound knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous peoples and learn from scientific understanding. We will work with those many others already deeply engaged, who make the links between religious belief, lifestyle, social justice and peace.

We commit to the demanding, costly implications of radically changed ways of living. Let us do so out of joy, celebration, reverence and a deep love of life.

Adopted at Yearly Meeting 2008, Melbourne, Australia

2. Australia Yearly Meeting 2019 Quaker Earthcare Epistle on Climate Emergency & Species Extinction

This Epistle arises from Australian Friends' concern about our own –and others' – further response to key environmental crises. We balance the outer urgency of these darkened times with the necessity of inward listening to the Light.

The space between these many words of our Earthcare Epistle is for the silent-soundless-voiceless ones who hold us all in the vast complex matrix of Life. If you find your quiet disturbed by this call for Friends and others to change our language and action, please note the clear need for kindness to self and all others is a soft insistence – we want you to be well in all ways, along with our planet. We are together finding friendship and new ways of being. Friends may find it useful to read this epistle within Meeting in three parts over several weeks, allowing time for the journey: a lament for the world as it has become, a need to reconnect with our source, and practical ways forward.

Friends, in response to concerns about the climate emergency and species extinction, we offer this Quaker Earthcare Committee Epistle as a call to action shared at Australia Yearly Meeting, Hobart 2019.

From Quaker Earthcare Statement (Australia Yearly Meeting 2008)

*We are called to consider the world as an en-Spirited whole,
to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future,
and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes.*

*We seek to mend what has been hurt,
and to strengthen our courage to discern and bear witness to this spiritual care for the Earth.*



Acknowledging the Great Harm [A Lament for the world as it has become]

Decades of warnings about rising global temperatures have not led to sufficient political, community, or personal action, that would reverse the effect of greenhouse gases affecting life on earth. Nor have we acted to halt the major species extinction event. We face great harm.

Through global heating we expect serious diminishment to our predictable planetary climate dynamics; affecting ice caps and glaciers (particularly those feeding five of Asia's most significant rivers); our global conveyor currents, and regional weather patterns. We face acidifying oceans affecting marine life; and rising sea levels that will affect islands, estuaries and coastlines (particularly the islands of Asia and the Pacific. On land these rising temperatures brings shifts to timing and extent of rainfall, heat and seasons.

These geophysical effects of global heating interact in complex ways, disrupting life processes, threatening innumerable species on land and sea, with the prospect of a mass extinction event across the Earth. In Australia this means we face the bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef, further deterioration of the Murray Darling River Basin, loss of snowfields, and dislocation of other bioregions and habitats across the country. This also accelerates species loss.

The climate emergency and loss of biodiversity undermines in complex ways everything from agricultural viability and public health, to social stability, human development, and international peace. Rising greenhouse gases and species extinction remain insufficiently addressed. This lack of action undermines people's trust in political processes.

Global heating exacerbates species extinction. The rapid disappearance of species around the Earth is between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate. More than 27,000 species are threatened with extinction, more than 27% of all assessed species. Australia has more than 1800 plants and animals on the threatened species list, with the highest rate of mammal extinctions in the world. Government promises of no more species extinctions have not been sufficiently guaranteed.

There are some signs of hope found in new technologies, in the 2016 Paris Agreement, broad statements of good intention by some business groups and the cautionary warnings of risk assessors and financial regulators. These have not stopped global heating. The valuable project work of volunteers and crowdfunding is no substitute for system wide intervention.

For all we can find to inspire and keep us hopeful, we acknowledge the painful truth: we are involved in a climate emergency and extinction crisis. In despoiling the earth, we have worked against the Spirit. Friends must listen anew; and more urgently prepare to aid each other and the wider world.



Strengthening our Courage to Discern and Bear Witness *[Reconnecting with Source]*

Our 2008 Australia Yearly Meeting Quaker Earthcare Statement points us towards a better relationship with creation. Friends' Testimonies, and our work with silence, stillness and spiritual discernment encourages us to celebrate:

- Wonder and appreciation for life on Earth;
- Stewardship, that fosters development based on environmental capacity and human need;
- Peace and social justice, including right relationship with Indigenous people;

- Restorative practices that build trust one-to-one, socially, and between nations
- Creativity, ingenuity, and love in our work;
- Informed, inclusive decision making;

Australia Yearly Meeting adopted its Earthcare Statement in 2008. We found “delight in the grace of creation” and warned “we have ignored our interconnectedness with other living things.” As a Society we promised we would “seek to transform this culture of domination and exploitation....and develop a culture of caring for the planet.” We knew then that it would required of us to “commit to the demanding, costly implications of radically changed ways of living.”

Friends are aware of the pressing issue of climate action and accept that concern for the environment needs to underpin all of our decisions and actions both individually and corporate. It is true many Friends support organisations which publicise and promote environmental change. Many Friends also have made dramatic adjustments to their lifestyle as a personal response. But it does not seem to be enough.

Others show the way. In the face of insufficient corporate action and political neglect, we see a multitude of communities around the world declaring a state of climate emergency. Young people in particular are demanding authentic action from decision makers as well as their elders: challenging the overly-accommodating policies towards corporations.

Their school strikes for climate, along with nonviolent groups such as the Extinction Rebellion, remind us of the immediacy of the crisis. They reject half-hearted gestures, unfulfilled promises and wilful neglect. They refresh the world with their calls for greater integrity, simplicity, community representation, and equality of all beings.

We thank the young and not-so-young campaigners for their inspiring leadership. They deserve our respect, and loving, practical support for their concerns. We also draw to the Light the polluters and despoilers. All need the care of the Spirit.

Deepening our Resolve to Mend What Has Been Hurt [*Practical Ways Forward*]

We take our share of responsibility for the global climate crisis. We resolve to mend what has been hurt. We must prepare to be both en-Spirited and practical. We draw again to the ways of Friends, seeking direction from the Inward Light, confident this way we will find the best ways forward to offer service.

Thus, Australia Yearly Meeting:

- 1) *Resolves to more accurately name the environmental crisis* affecting the planet as a climate emergency, crisis, or breakdown, preferring phrases such as global heating over global warming. The mass species extinction occurring is also a threat to life on Earth. Our plain words must communicate the catastrophe honestly and accurately, prompting both love and truth in our hearts;
- 2) *Reminds Friends of the necessity of spiritual discernment based in silence and stillness.* We are more likely to know how best to act when we each:
 - a. hold gratitude for all: our aim is not to frighten people into action, but to draw them to a vision of the Earth which engenders joy, trust and generosity;
 - b. keep open to the Spirit through daily practice, weekly Meeting for Worship, regular attendance at Meetings for Worship for Business, and by testing leadings;
 - c. trust in nonviolent methods and gentle steady speech: this also eases anxiety, despair, doubt, fear, uncertainty, blame, loss, grief, isolation or disorientation, much of which can arise once the extent of the climate emergency and species extinction is understood;
 - d. expect diversity in our individual and organisational responses, while remaining united to reduce climate harm;

- e. meet to study and reflect on the workings of the Spirit and Quaker Ways;
- 3) *Calls on all Friends to collectively support each other to:*
- a. deepen Friends' personal and committee understanding of the material, spiritual and practical dimensions of the climate and extinction crisis;
 - b. listen to and support our younger Friends in their calls to act promptly, mindful not to shoulder them with the full burden of effort, and to encourage them to find hope despite adversity;
 - c. consider changing our individual and Meeting behaviours, including habits of a lifetime, to come to new decisions and practices that contribute to solutions; these may be concerned with shelter, transport, energy, food and other issues of human need, production, trade and consumption;
 - d. experiment together as you address the causes of the crisis, sharing your findings, material and spiritual;
 - e. foster a sense of belonging, appreciation and interdependence in the wider natural world; for example, by the Meeting trying such means as:
 - i. walking country together;
 - ii. engaging with permaculture design principles;
 - iii. applying the science and arts to develop ecological literacy and insight;
 - iv. cultivating community gardening; and
 - v. forging regional and international friendships as a Meeting;
 - f. listen well to the traditional owners of the land on which Friends meet; cultivate meaningful relationship; learn more about the original custodians' ways and language; be prepared to discover what it is to belong to country;
 - g. actively cultivate and learn those skills in which Quakers have a reputation for expertise: building peace, justice, trust, hope, reconciliation, listening to the Spirit and developing the capacity of groups to take strategic nonviolent action; be prepared to teach these skills more widely, as they build community resilience and enable shared security.
- 4) *Recognises that the climate emergency will require much more of Friends as individuals and as a Society.*
- a. In most cases we will need to change the way we live and our expectations. Together we may find ways to switch from fossil fuel consumption, plastic packaging (derived from oil and contributing to overconsumption and species extinction); wasteful transport; and to remove ourselves from fossil fuel investment; participation in destructive agriculture; problematic production, and unnecessary consumption;
 - b. Time is in contention. Our technologies have cut many processes down to microseconds, but in so doing humanity has upturned geological epochs. Living in the Anthropocene requires us to re-evaluate what we can each achieve in a day and a lifetime. The stillness we find in worship allows us to know what is to be done, and what we must be let go;
 - c. Changes may feel like loss: we may sense inconvenience, sadness, grief and pain, or personal injustice. Mutual, communitarian support of each other has the power to console, empower and inspire;
 - d. For those who lapse into despair, loneliness or fatalism, we offer informed hope, bold companionship and cheerful practicality;
- 5) *Recognises that both within and beyond our Meeting the impacts of the climate emergency are being unevenly experienced by people who are poor, and so encourage Friends to:*
- i. specifically address the social justice emergency arising from the environmental crisis;
 - ii. be friends to those marginalised in the community. Their resilience has much to teach us, but climate crisis impacts them in

disproportionate ways, and sometimes when they are without the means to respond. We seek to listen to people who are members of First Nations, or have experience being refugees, or older, or managing disability or sickness, or being homeless, unemployed or experiencing disadvantage in some way, so that they experience the full promise of community;

- iii. bring compassionate attention to those who have not awakened to the need for global healing and trust in the spirit;
 - iv. learn more of the role played by militarism, racism, gender dynamics, social or economic policies, trade agreements, distributional systems, or political and corporate governance frameworks, which may be aggravating the climate and extinction crisis;
- 6) *Asks the Australian Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee, First Nations Committee and associate organisations such as Quaker Service Australia and Silver Wattle Quaker Centre to hold the climate emergency and extinction crisis in their hearts and minds as they undertake their business. Junior Young Friends have in turn asked Australia Yearly Meeting to cater events guided by the ethics of a plant based vegan or vegetarian diet.*
- 7) *Supports and where appropriate, affiliates with coalitions of climate action and species' protection groups. In particular, we ask Friends to support young people's groups as they make their voices heard. This may involve us joining school strikes and similar actions. We must avoid unnecessary busyness, but seek closer connection with transition town, community garden, local bushcare, landcare or species protection groups to apply and learn together what belonging to the land means locally. Australia Yearly Meeting is already affiliated with the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, a multi-faith network committed to action on climate change, especially for religious people who tend to underestimate their carbon footprint.*

If your Regional Meeting has not joined yet, this may be the right time. Friends are encouraged to download a Climate Change Action Kit and apply it together as a Meeting, and create or join a Living the Change session inviting other faith groups. Volunteer groups like the State Emergency Service and the Red Cross provide training for trauma support and referral: Meetings would benefit from a number of their members undertaking training, and considering ways in which the Meeting House may be made available to the wider community in times of disaster. In our work with other groups, we should seek to be models of the change we want to see.

- 8) *Asks the Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk, supported by the Quaker Earthcare Committee, to write to key decision makers, including:*
- a. *the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, State Premiers, and State Opposition leaders, requesting support for the declaration of a climate emergency, and to take appropriate action to quickly phase out fossil fuels and to hasten the introduction of renewable energy power sources, and public transport;*
 - b. *the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Future Fund, and the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia (which represents and develops policy for the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, with members from corporate, industry, retail and public sector funds) asking these bodies to value investment towards biophilic (life affirming) outcomes and divest from fossil fuels and other corporate activities which undermine climate viability;*
- 9) *Asks Regional and Local Meetings to*
- a. *write to, and where appropriate visit, local political parties, state and federal*

- elected members, mayors and shire presidents and corporate leaders to express your Meeting's concern about the immediacy of the climate emergency and threatened species extinction, and the urgent need for action. Seek to establish trust and foster long-term conversations.*
- b. Regard themselves as the most active part of Yearly Meeting action on climate emergency and species extinction;*
 - c. learn and be guided by Quakers' methods of faithful advocacy which has a long history of sustaining campaign movements*
 - d. continue to find ways to reduce energy consumption (through reducing or eliminating fossil fuel use) and increase appropriate energy production (through renewable energy)*
 - e. report to next Australia Yearly Meeting 2020 on their actions on the climate change emergency, and species extinction, and reflections on the way forward.*



If these new directions seem peculiar to a business-as-usual world, they still represent the deepest truths and convictions of Quaker faith and practice – to find spiritual guidance in order to live simply; in peace; with integrity; working justly in community; upholding equality; and respecting earthcare – in a time of climate emergency and species' extinction like none has ever seen.

Quaker Earthcare Committee Hobart 2019

RESOURCES:

- **Friends are invited to refer to the Quaker Statement 2008 in full at <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Earthcare>**
- **The AYM Earthcare Committee 'invitations' comprising sections on Pray, Read, Act and Celebrate are at <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Earthcare/earthcare-invitation-newsletters-0>**

Australian Quaker Advices & Queries are also useful:

44. All life is interrelated. Each individual plant and animal has its own needs, and is important to others. Many species in Australia and worldwide are now extinct and many more are endangered. Do you treat all life with respect, recognizing a particular obligation to those animals we breed and maintain for our own use and enjoyment? In order to secure the survival of all, including ourselves, are you prepared to change your ideas about who

you are in relation to your environment and every living thing in it?

45. Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?

46. The land of Australia is not our possession. We are no more than temporary guardians of it; neither the first nor, probably, the last. In the brief time of European settlement, vast areas of this country have been damaged. Do you try to live in harmony with the land, knowing that you are part of it? Do you protect and husband its water and other resources? Do you look with respect on the claims and rights of others to share in the wealth and freedoms of Australians?

47. We live in a land of unique grandeur and beauty, harsh and majestic, but at the same time fragile. Have you discovered its wonder and mystery, and has this awareness quickened your spiritual insight and helped you to recognise that of God in everyday life? Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing Creation

3. Minute establishing the AYM Earthcare Action Committee (YM08.61).

YM08.61 Earthcare Action Committee

Jane Growns, New South Wales RM, reported on the proposal to establish an Earthcare Action Committee and an interim Earthcare Action Network to implement the Earthcare Statement.

We agree to establish an Earthcare Action Committee under the care of Yearly Meeting. As it has not been possible to form this Committee during Yearly Meeting 2008, we agree to appoint an Interim Earthcare Action Network to undertake preparatory work and, in consultation with AYM Nominations Committee, to bring names for the Earthcare Action Committee to Standing Committee in July 2008.

We appoint the following to act as the Network organizers:

- Jane Growns, New South Wales RM
- Adrian Glamorgan, West Australia RM
- Vidya, Canberra RM
- Jasmine Payget, New South Wales RM

We ask the Network to identify people who have an interest and/or expertise in this area, so that all who wish to be involved can be offered the opportunity.

We ask each Regional and Local Meeting, Young Friends, Quaker Service Australia, Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee and the Indigenous Concerns Committee to appoint Earthcare correspondents.

We ask the Secretary to distribute the Earthcare Statement to Quakers nationally and internationally, to the National Council of Churches in Australia, to the Climate Institute, to church and other faith newspapers, and to Resurgence, Yes! and Utne Reader (<http://www.utne.com/>).

We agree to include a discussion paper developed by the Earthcare Statement Drafting Group in *Documents in Retrospect*

4. Minute establishing the AYM Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group (YM21.31) and Terms of Reference.

YM21.31 Item not agreed upon through the YM21 Business Process – Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group

Australia Yearly Meeting agrees to establish a Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group and approves the Terms of Reference as amended at this meeting.

YM appoints the following as members of this Working Group for a term as specified in the Terms of Reference: Peri Coleman (SANTRM), David Shorthouse (CRM), Bea Farquhar (TRM), David King (QRM), Gerry Fahey (VRM), Elizabeth PO' (WARM).

Regional Meetings are reminded to appoint a correspondent to this Working Group. YM recognises that the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group is one expression of Australian Friends' concern for Earthcare. While the manner in which this working group will take forward our Earthcare concerns may differ from the way that the AYM Earthcare Committee took forward this concern, we see it as the right time to lay down the AYM Earthcare Committee.

We ask the AYM Treasurer to make the funds previously budgeted for the Earthcare Committee available to the newly-formed Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group.

TERMS OF REFERENCE
AUSTRALIA YEARLY MEETING WORKING GROUP ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SPECIES
EXTINCTION (EXPERT)
Accepted YM21 July 2021

Title

Australia Yearly Meeting Working Group on Climate Emergency and Species Extinction (Expert) (AYM Climate Emergency and Species Extinction, AYM WG CESE)

Purposes

- To build on the work and spirit-led influences of the Australian Quaker Statement on Earthcare (2008) and the Quaker Earthcare Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Epistle (2019).
- To design, develop and drive a national Australian Friends' action plan on climate emergency and species extinction.
- To work with like-minded groups on the climate emergency and species extinction issue.
- The Working Group should encourage Friends to work with other like-minded groups on the climate emergency and species extinction.
- To discern all matters, relationships and actions through the powerful and fearless grace of the Divine, in keeping with Friends' ways.

Term

These Terms of Reference will be effective from Yearly Meeting in July 2021 and continue until Yearly Meeting 2023, or until terminated by Australia Yearly Meeting.

Membership

Membership of WG AYM CESE will consist of up to eight Members or Attenders of the Religious Society of Friends Australia, as appointed by Australia Yearly Meeting, in close consultation with Regional Meetings clerks/co-clerks, drawing upon the 'expert' knowledge and experience available across our Meetings. It is anticipated that the working group will reflect the diversity of Friends, including the voices of children and Junior Young Friends.

Roles and Responsibilities

The WG AYM CESE is accountable to Australia Yearly Meeting and Standing Committee of AYM for:

- Encouraging and supporting Friends to engage with local, state/territory and national governments and those in Opposition, businesses, community leaders and other local and national influencers on climate emergency and species extinction issues.

- Fostering collaboration with like-minded national groups, both secular and religious, in ways that harness the Quaker experience and leadings.
- Endeavouring to work with First Nations' Peoples whose knowledge of Australia's environment is of importance for understanding how to live in this country.
- Monitoring and engaging on relevant or related work of the Australian Government and other national stakeholders (e.g. corporations and public entities).
- Linking or coordinating with other AYM committees/groups on climate emergency and species extinction issues.
- Linking with: Friends around the world and across the Asia West Pacific region, British and American Friends, as well as the Quaker United Nations Offices.
- Undertaking other relevant work, on behalf of AYM, as discerned by the AYM WG CESE membership.
- Reporting to each mid-year Standing Committee and Yearly Meetings during its two- year term.

Correspondents

All Regional Meetings are asked to appoint a correspondent to the AYM WG CESE working group, serving as a liaison between the AYM CESE and their Regional Meeting.

Engaging non-Members

The WG AYM CESE has the capacity to temporarily co-opt other Friends to contribute its work, in order to give the working group the benefit of specific expertise.

Meetings

Meetings will take place monthly, or more, as determined by the WG AYM CESE, primarily by zoom or other electronic means. During the two-year term they will also:

- host pre-AYM preparatory sessions via zoom, or during residential AYMs; and
- make available representatives to each Standing Committee meeting.

5. Australia Yearly Meeting's 2022 Public Statement (YM22.36).



Public Statement from the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group of Australia Yearly Meeting

Quakers in Australia call for sustained action in all areas of human activity to transform the root causes of environmental destruction and climate change to create a fairer, healthier and more equal society. We continue to be deeply concerned about the slow progress towards climate justice both in Australia and other countries.

Australian Quakers believe we must consider the world as an en-Spirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes. We seek to mend what has been hurt, and to strengthen our courage to discern and bear witness to this spiritual care for the Earth.

We call on the new Australian Government to carefully consider the voice of Australian people who have so clearly expressed similar impatience with Australia's response so far. That voice has heard the authoritative warnings from climate scientists, emergency response leaders and many others with expertise in disaster relief following fire, flood and crop failure. Many Australians understand the existential nature of the climate emergency and the ominous implications of continued decline in our biodiversity and unique natural ecosystems. But others feel threatened and are worried by the changes required of them, in addition to those now suffering enormously from the effects of the climate crisis. They need our love, support and government assistance during the difficult years of transition that lie ahead.

Australian Quakers share the concerns of many people worldwide that yearn for global peace and justice. We endorse the statement by our Quaker representatives at the United Nations who say to the international community: *“Our human existence is dependent on the health of the planet. Yet we exploit nature and human beings for profit over wellbeing, resulting in environmental crises that threaten the survival of our and other species. We can heal these relationships and protect future generations.*

The Earth is our spaceship; its natural resources are limited. Unsustainable and unjust economic approaches are driving environmental crises, including climate change. The “global economy is almost five times the size it was half a century ago and has already been accompanied by the degradation of an estimated 60% of the world’s ecosystems.”

In this part of the world, we must heed the voices of our Pacific Island neighbours and others in the region who are already bearing the burden of rising sea-levels, growing salination of land, and cry out for help. Our neighbours did not cause the climate crisis but are suffering its consequences. As good neighbours we must respond by playing our full part in addressing the causes of climate change and in helping communities mitigate its impacts.

We grieve with those who are so saddened and concerned about the world they currently live in or will inherit that they feel driven to take direct action. We must find ways to hear their voices, and not ignore their cries for help and more urgent action. Quakers recognise the climate emergency is more than physics and chemistry. It is about humanity recognising the value of being guided by the interdependent values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, community and earthcare.

Adopted 9 July 2022 at Yearly Meeting 2022

*Bruce Henry
Presiding Clerk*

6. A single page with abstracts of Backhouse Lectures, including those by Susannah Brindle, Rowe Morrow, and Yarrow Goodley.

While many Backhouse Lectures touch on our relationship in the Earth these three Lectures have a particular focus for us as the Working Group tasked with bringing a plan to Yearly Meeting to meet and work in the ecological crisis we live in.

2022 Lecture - *Creating hope: Working for justice in catastrophic times* presented by Yarrow Goodley looks at the critical issue of climate justice – at how our responses to the climate emergency have the potential for great suffering, as well as great redemption. Video available [here](#).

‘This lecture looks at the critical issue of climate justice, and at how our responses to the climate emergency have the potential for great suffering, as well as great redemption.’

2011 Lecture - *A demanding and uncertain adventure: Exploration of a concern for Earth restoration and how we must live to pass on to our children - and their children, and all living things - an Earth restored* - by Rosemary (Rowe) Morrow

This lecture illuminates the original state of Earth, how humans have affected its environment, and provides theology and sustainable methods for restoring the Earth to health. Follows the author’s personal story of the change in her thinking over the course of her life. Provides examples of Earth restoration projects and the people instrumental in achieving their success.

2000 Lecture - *To Learn a New Song: A Quaker Contribution Towards Real Reconciliation with the Earth and its Peoples* - by Susannah Kay Brindle.

Australian Quakers profess obedience to the leading of the Spirit. But, in a land where what happens to the natural environment mirrors the sufferings of the Aboriginal peoples, Susannah Brindle asks, 'What sort of Spirit? What sort of leadings?'

This lecture is a plea for openness to a more inclusive Spirit than that defined by European cultural traditions and scientific rationalism. Drawing from a Quaker heritage and truly being "present where we are", we become learners rather than teachers. Then we may yet find the love and courage to humble ourselves before the Earth-wisdom of Aboriginal spirituality, to venture beyond our acculturation and to 'learn a new song'—the Earth's song of real reconciliation and true justice."

For more information go here: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/backhouse-lectures>

Appendix 2: Climate Emergency & Species Extinction Working Group – Draft Action Plan

ACTION PLAN - FOR OUR HOME

Australian Quakers respond to climate emergency & species extinction

Call to Action

As people of faith, seekers of the truth, and kin to all life on earth, we must act with urgency to prevent further suffering and destruction of our planet and to repair the damage already evident. We urge everyone involved with AYM to actively undertake this leading and to help halt the destruction of life on this sacred earth.

Background:

Throughout our history, Friends have responded to that of God in every person by working to relieve suffering. Our shared experience of how we have been called to live in the world is expressed in our testimonies. As the climate crisis causes untold suffering, contributes to instability and injustice, and ultimately threatens all life on earth, all our testimonies demand that we act now.

Friends' spiritual and historic commitments in relation to our place upon, and responsibility to care for, the Earth were foundational in our work and we encourage Friends to explore our Society's previous responses, in our first appendix, "Background and Reference Documents".

Our second appendix "Action Statements" provides specific actions within each theme of the Action Plan, that can be taken by individuals, Local and Regional Meetings and Australia Yearly Meeting.

What is this Action Plan?

This action plan is in response to a request from Australia Yearly Meeting to the AYM Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group, that they design, develop and drive a national Australian Friends' action plan to address the climate emergency and species extinction. The plan should build upon AYM's earlier statements: the 2008 Quaker Earthcare Statement, and the YM 2019 Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Epistle. This plan sets out the ways and means for all Australian Friends to carry out that commitment.

As members of the Religious Society of Friends, we witness the truth of our times. In this moment, we recognise we are facing an existential crisis that requires more than individual actions. In the

last few years and across the Australian continent we are experiencing the growing crisis: the catastrophic 2019 fires in eastern Australia, repeated flooding from several La Nina events, the issue of water justice in the Murray-Darling basin and biodiversity loss in many areas including our precious coral ecosystems. And, in our region the effects of sea-level rise are being felt in the Torres Strait islands and neighbouring Pacific island nations. Scientists tell us that what we do in the next decade may well determine the fate of humanity. First Nations peoples and social justice issues are inextricably linked to the climate and biodiversity crises; marginalised and economically disadvantaged communities suffer greater effects than those who are buffered by privilege. Many people already suffer and call us to act. Future generations depend on us to act urgently. Knowing the enormity of this unfolding threat to our existence requires all of us to think, act and respond in new, creative and supportive ways.

Australian Friends' recognition that our world and its occupants are an "enspirited whole" helps us to meet the climate and species extinction emergencies by deeply linking our responses to our lived experiences and our testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and earthcare. We share the concerns of many people worldwide that yearn for global peace and justice. We endorse the statement by our Quaker representatives at the United Nations who say to the international community: "Our human existence is dependent on the health of the planet. Yet we exploit nature and human beings for profit over wellbeing, resulting in environmental crises that threaten the survival of our and other species. We can heal these relationships and protect future generations.

The Earth is our spaceship; its natural resources are limited. Unsustainable and unjust economic approaches are driving environmental crises, including climate change. The "global economy is almost five times the size it was half a century ago and has already been accompanied by the degradation of an estimated 60% of the world's ecosystems."

Proposed Actions

This plan stretches us beyond our past positions and actions, to attend to the long view ahead in our decision making. We will address the overarching and interdependent economic, environmental, social and political systems that drive the climate and species extinction emergencies and their associated injustices. Specifically, we are called upon to apply and expand our work in seven areas, all of which are interrelated and equal:

1. Taking Action
2. Educating & Mentoring
3. Righting our Relationship with the Earth
4. Putting our Finances to Work
5. Mourning Loss & Instilling Hope
6. Repairing Earth
7. Listening to & Support for First Nations Peoples.

1. Taking Action

Australian Quakers will put our beliefs into action through advocacy, direct action, and public witness. Australia Yearly Meeting will regularly speak as a body on specific issues and possible legislation relating to addressing climate change and loss of biodiversity.

AYM will specifically speak out about the fact that the burden of climate change falls disproportionately on poor and minority communities and countries less-developed than Australia. Regional and Local Meetings, worshipping groups and individuals will work together to develop effective voices to be heard by national, state and local governments. We will broaden our collaboration with all Friends' organisations throughout Australia, the Asia/Pacific region and globally. We commit to working with the diversity of religious and secular groups such as the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change and local Councils of Churches, as well as with community groups that are committed to addressing the climate crisis and truth and justice in this world. Friends will also engage in situations where support for direct action is appropriate.

2. Educating & Mentoring

We commit to reaching a shared understanding of the causes and costs of the climate crisis and biodiversity collapse and the urgency of our situation. Ongoing learning about and openness to new and emergent information is our wish for all Australian Quakers. AYM will support those members with particular knowledge of Climate Change and Eco-Justice issues to provide online information, webinars, workshops and travelling ministry. Regional and Local Meeting members will access and activate those resources to increase their awareness of the needs and opportunities to actively respond to the climate catastrophe.

3. Righting our Relationship with the Earth

Right relationship with the earth speaks to our belonging to the land, this earth, wherever we are, and thus our responsibility to and care for the earth. We will reduce our impact on the earth, as individuals and as a community, by such means as making changes to our property and finding ways to use less energy in all aspects of life. We recognise that making significant reduction in carbon emissions and consumption of resources also requires us taking action for systemic change.

4. Putting our Finances to Work

We recognise the effects our collective banking, purchasing and investing choices (particularly in relation to fossil fuel investments either via direct investment or through superannuation) have on climate change and biodiversity loss, and act accordingly. We can effect positive change, perhaps by supporting organisations and individuals who are taking action.

5. Mourning Loss and Instilling Hope

We recognise that bold work at all levels of our Quaker organisation to address this crisis requires spiritual grounding, recognition of ongoing loss and building of resilient communities, both of faith and location, growing and nurturing our connections.

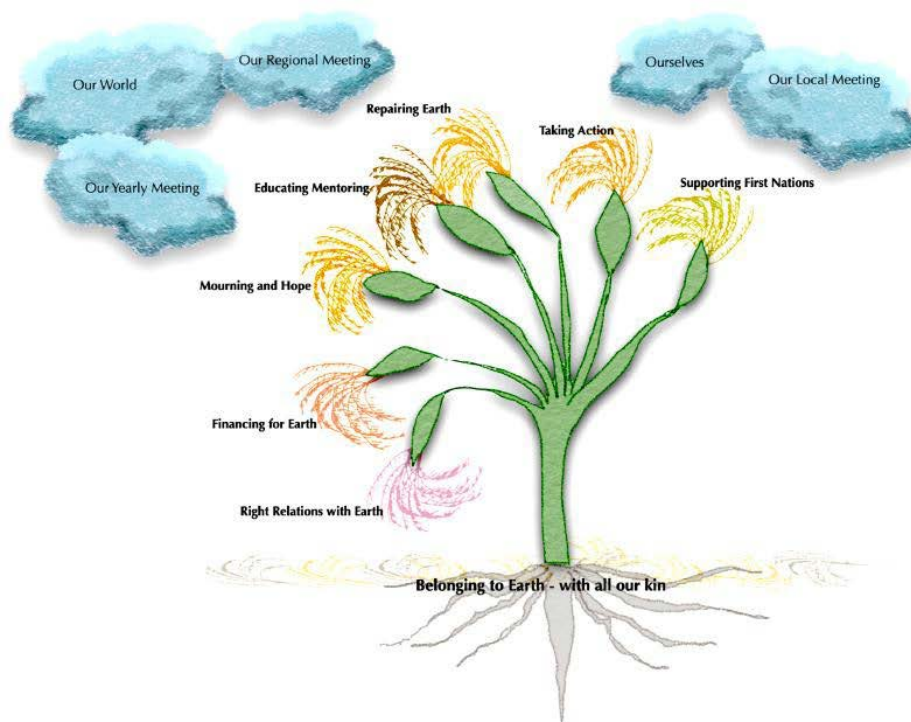
6. Repairing Earth

Those Friends with particular knowledge of environmental restoration, regenerative farming or other skills that contribute to earth repair will provide, and be encouraged to share, online information, webinars, workshops and travelling ministry for all of us. Regional and Local Meetings and their members will commit to making use of those resources to help mitigate the climate emergency and biodiversity loss at the local scale.

7. Listening to & Support for First Nations Peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities are already speaking out about the likely impact of climate change on their communities, but also have a lot to teach us about care for country, sustainable relationships with the planet and those people around us. We need to listen to their wisdom and walk hand in hand with them. First Nations Peoples may teach newcomers much.

[Separate documents recommend resources and activities in each of the seven focus areas, plus references.]



We are called to consider the world as an en-Spirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes.

We seek to mend what has been hurt, and to strengthen our courage to discern and bear witness to this spiritual care for the Earth.

For all we can find to inspire and keep us hopeful, we acknowledge the painful truth: we are involved in a climate emergency and extinction crisis.

In despoiling the earth we have worked against the Spirit. Friends must listen anew; and more urgently prepare to aid each other and the wider world.

- extract from 2008
AYM Earthcare statement

Appendix 3: Handbook Revision Committee- Proposed Handbook Revisions for YM23

1. Proposed revisions to Section 4.3. Committed relationships including marriage

Reasoning: The changes approved at YM22 have not yet been made in the online handbook. Further, we discovered that the revised pamphlet *Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships* no longer includes the words of the usual Quaker Commitment vows. As a result, we have again reviewed the whole section.

1. We recommend that a Guideline be added to 4.3.1 Introduction, that guideline to read: *Friends, in the presence of God and this assembly, I take this my friend ...(name) ... to be my life partner/husband/wife, trusting with divine assistance to be loving and faithful as long as we both on earth shall live* (Traditional Quaker marriage vow)
2. We recommend that the title of each of the subsections be altered to reflect the main heading, as follows:

Existing heading	Recommended heading	Reasons
4.3 Committed relationships, including marriage.	4.3 Committed relationships, including marriage.	
4.3.1 Introduction	4.3.1 Introduction	

4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment	4.3.2 Planning a Celebration of Commitment or wedding	To reflect the expression of equality in the main heading
4.3.3 Affirming and witnessing a marriage or commitment	4.3.3 Affirming and witnessing a Celebration of Commitment or wedding	
4.3.4 Committed relationship difficulties	4.3.4 Committed relationship difficulties	

1. Minor amendments to 4.3.2 Planning a Celebration of Commitment including marriage

Text approved at YM22	Proposed amended text	Reason
<p><u>Paragraph 5</u></p> <p>The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet, <i>Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships</i>, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. The pamphlet is at: https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets . It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee, as well as the Registering Officer will be asked to advise on the chosen wording. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 6</u></p> <p>The Regional Meeting gives permission for the marriage and establishes a Meeting for Worship for that purpose.</p> <p>If the couple wish to register their marriage legally, there are formal procedures to be followed, and the Registering Officer will advise.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 8</u> (final para)</p>	<p>The required permission of the Regional Meeting extends to the wording of the vows. If they are to differ significantly from the example in the pamphlet, <i>Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships</i>, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. The pamphlet is at: https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets .</p> <p>If they are to differ significantly in essence from the traditional Quaker vows, permission is discerned at a Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. It is likely that the Regional Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee, as well as the Registering Officer will be asked to advise on the chosen wording. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.</p> <p>If the Regional Meeting gives permission for the Commitment or marriage to be celebrated under the care of that Meeting, RM then establishes a Meeting for Worship for that purpose.</p> <p>A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding</p>	<p>The pamphlet no longer includes the wording of vows. The pamphlet is referred to elsewhere within this section of the Handbook.</p> <p>To clarify that RM permission is not automatic.</p>

<p>A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment ceremony within one of our Meeting Houses ‘in the manner of Friends’, and could do so as a venue hire. The couple could bring their own celebrant. Each meeting decides if they hire out one of their Meeting Houses for such occasions.</p>	<p>or commitment ceremony within one of our Meeting Houses ‘in the manner of Friends’, and could do so as a venue hire. The couple could bring would arrange their own celebrant. Each meeting decides if they hire out one of their Meeting Houses for such occasions.</p>	
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4.3.3 Affirming and witnessing ...

Current wording	Suggested wording	Reasons
<p><u>Paragraph 3</u></p> <p>A long-standing tradition amongst Friends is the production of a Quaker Marriage Certificate, which states the full names of the couple, the time and place of the ceremony, and details of the marriage or commitment vows they made. All those present are asked to sign, as an acknowledgement of their presence at the ceremony and their loving support of the couple. Suggested wording for such a certificate, including wording for the vows, is available in Appendix E. A Quaker Marriage Certificate is often hand-produced by an artistic friend.</p>	<p>A long-standing tradition amongst Friends is the production of a Quaker Commitment or Marriage Certificate, often hand-produced by an artistic friend. This certificate states the full names of the couple, the time and place of the ceremony, and details of the commitment or marriage vows they made. All those present are asked to sign, as an acknowledgement of their presence at the ceremony and their loving support of the couple. Suggested wording for such a certificate, including wording for the vows, is available on the Australian Quaker Website under Administrative Resources for Regional Meetings, in Appendix E.</p> <p>A Quaker Marriage Certificate is often hand-produced by an artistic friend.</p>	<p>To reflect our Testimony of Equality.</p> <p>Moved here from the end of the paragraph.</p> <p>As above</p> <p>This reference was missed when Appendices were removed in Edition 7</p> <p>This sentence has been moved.</p>

2. Proposed change to Proposed addition to Section 5.3.7 Types of committees

*NB: This section needs to be considered in conjunction with the rest of **Section 5.3.7 Types of Committees**.*

The working of Committees has undergone considerable change with the introduction and use of modern communications technologies. Now a meeting of Friends spread across a huge geographic area is easier to organise.

These technologies also allow some Committees, that once needed to be established in a single location, to be more representative of Friends around Australia. As a result, no Meeting is expected to host the scattered committee. Examples include the Children and JYFs Committee and the *Australian Friend* Committee.

Care is needed to ensure that online meetings continue to seek the guidance of the Spirit as is the case with committees meeting in person.

When a task involves a limited working term (for example the change from a Yearly Meeting Secretary to an AYM Office team) a Working Group may be established, which may include Friends from one location or several.

Other Working Groups arise from a Concern shared by a number of Friends who volunteer their service regarding the Concern.

Recommendations for membership of all of these committees is still discerned by the AYM Nominations Committee, for final consideration by Yearly Meeting.

3. Proposed Proposed additional section Service to the Meeting (Nominations Process) in Chapter 1

Service to the Meeting (Our Nominations Process)

Quakers all share the tasks undertaken in a church by the ministers, pastors and other paid staff. Those who serve the Meeting are not elected by the Membership. Rather a small group of experienced Friends is tasked with matching the needs of the group with the gifts of those in the Meeting. This small group is called the Nominations Committee. They discern and bring forward recommendations of names of Friends to serve the Meeting in particular roles.

The Nominations Committee serves as a filter for all appointments for service to the Friends community. The discernment process undertaken by the Committee includes clarification of the details of the role, worshipful consideration of those in the community who may have gifts and available time to serve the Meeting, and recognition that a Friend may learn what is needed by undertaking the tasks of the role to which they are nominated.

Before bringing names to the Business Meeting, the Committee consults the recommended appointees and ascertains their willingness for their names to go forward to serve the Meeting, if the Meeting so determines.

Nominations Committee does not appoint people, it recommends to the gathered Business Meeting names for appointment, and the Meeting discerns the appropriateness of the names and makes the appointments. It may be that a name is not accepted by the Meeting; Nominations Committee then advises the Friend that they were not appointed and begins further discernment around the particular task.

The full process is variously described in sections **2.3.3, 2.5.4 and 5.3.8.2**

*If this section is accepted by Friends, the Handbook Committee will then proceed to revise **2.3.3, 2.5.4 and 5.3.8.2**. We have yet to determine where within Chapter 1 this section will be placed. The current contents of Chapter 1 are:*

Chapter 1 Quaker beliefs, worship and decision-making processes

[1.1](#) Our beliefs; [1.2](#) Our testimonies; [1.3](#) Our worship; [1.4](#) Meetings for Worship for Business (also known as 'Business Meetings'); [1.5](#) Concerns; [1.6](#) Clearness Meetings; [1.7](#) Threshing Meetings; [1.8](#) Community

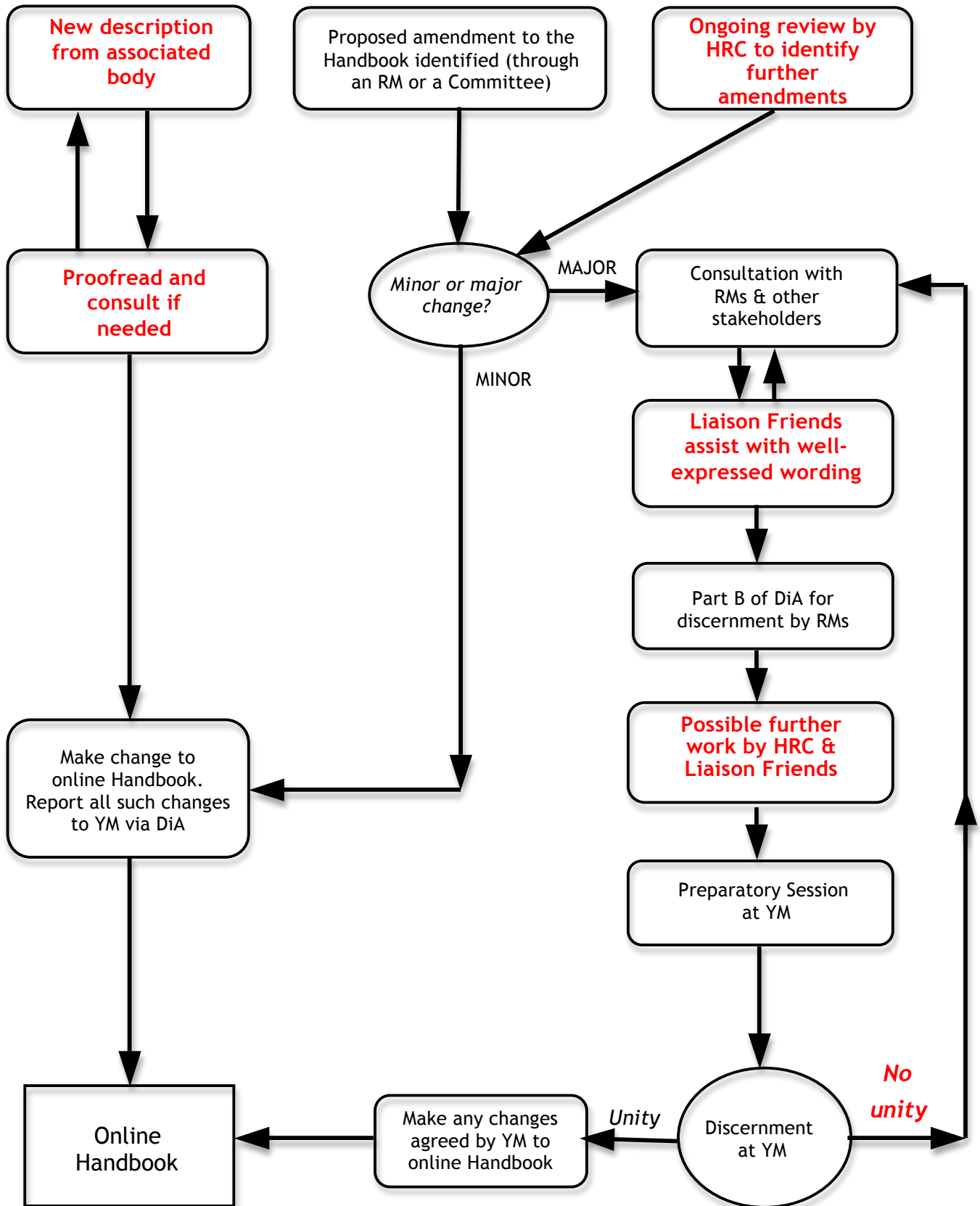
4. Revised flowchart of the Handbook revision process (next page).

NOTE: The items in bold indicate new items in the flowchart (as compared to the previous flowchart).

Handbook Revision Committee

Flowchart of the process of changing an entry in the Handbook

version of 29 October 2021. Layout by Stephen Hodgkin



Appendix 4: Minutes of Standing Committee of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia, held via Zoom 21 January 2023, 12pm AEDT

AYM Officers

AYM Presiding Clerk	Bruce Henry
AYM Treasurer	
AYM Secretary	Jacque Schultze

Standing Committee Representatives

Canberra and Region Quakers)	Susan Rockliff, Jonathan Benyei (Co-Clerks)
New South Wales RM	Wies Schuiringa, Liz Field (Clerking Team members)
Queensland RM	Frances Long (Co-Clerk), Michael Corbett (Assistant Clerk)
South Australia/Northern Territory RM	Jo Jordan (Clerk), Margaret Philp (Assistant Clerk)
Tasmania RM	Robin McLean (Co-Clerk), Felicity Rose
Victoria RM	Sieneke Martin (Clerk), Aileen Britton (Assistant Clerk)
West Australia RM	Brenda Roy, Sharon Matthews (Co-Clerks)

Also Attending

Recording Clerk	Mark Deasey (VRM)
Elder	Kerstin Reimers (TRM)
Zoom Host	Lorraine Thomson (CRQ)
Invited	Jonathan Benyei, Ronis Chapman (<i>Child Protection & Other Safety Concerns Working Group</i>) Jennifer Burrell, Jonathan Benyei (<i>Transition Implementation Working Group</i>) Bev Polzin (<i>Nominations Committee</i>)

MINUTES

SC1.23.1: Opening Worship and acknowledgment of Country

Michael Corbett offered an Acknowledgement of Country.

The Presiding Clerk offered this reading:

But, dear friends, mind the light of God in your consciences,
which will show you all deceit,
dwelling in it, guides out of the many things into one spirit,
which cannot lie, nor deceive.
Those who are guided by it, are one,
who have been made to drink into one spirit;
and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.
For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.
All quarrels, all schisms, all rents are out of the spirit,

for God has tempered the body together,
that there should be no schism in the body,
but all worship him with one consent.
And as the power and life of truth are made manifest,
watch over one another in the discerning.

George Fox, from Epistles to Friends, Epistle 4

Frances Long acknowledged that 21 January 2023 marks the 362nd anniversary of the *Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God called Quakers* which preceded the Peace Testimony.

SC1.23.2: AYM Nominations Committee Report to Standing Committee

Standing Committee receives the following nominations from the Nominations Committee:

Jonathan Benyei (CRQ) Jennifer Burrell (NSWRM) and Kerstin Reimers (TRM) to the Transition Implementation Working Group, already confirmed under the 'Urgent Decision-Making' arrangement on 18 October 2022. The term end date would be 2025.

Daniel Buckmaster (NSWRM) as Convener; Julie Walpole (TRM); Garry Duncan (NSWRM) to join the IT Committee until YM 2025. These Friends will share various aspects of the Information Technology Committee with Roger Sawkins (QRM); Jacque Schultze (NSWRM); Michael Searle (CRQ), whose terms continue until 2023.

Margaret Bywater (TRM) to join Sally O'Wheel (TRM) and Tessa Spratt (VRM) as Co-Conveners of Friends in Stitches until 2025

Clinton De Young and David Tehr to join the Yearly Meeting Organising Committee until YM 2025.

Standing Committee accepts these names and makes these appointments.

We also note that:

- a) Nominations to the Thanksgiving Fund committee were finalised at the September 2022 meeting of Standing Committee, and do not need to be brought forward to this meeting.
- b) Judith Pembleton wishes to lay down the Convenorship of the Publications Committee, and to continue as a member until 2024.
- c) Judith Pembleton wishes to lay down her membership on the Backhouse Lecture Committee. We ask Nominations Committee to seek a replacement for Judith.
- d) AYM Nominations continues to seek a Friend to fill the position of AYM Treasurer.

SC1.23.3: Handbook Revision Committee Report to Standing Committee

Standing Committee approves the concept of adding a section about the Quaker Nominations process to Chapter 1 of the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure in Australia*. We look forward to its appearance in *Documents in Advance 2023*.

We also note that changes to the *Handbook* approved at YM22, have been completed, and have been uploaded to the AYM website here: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/publications-0/handbook-quaker-practice-and-procedure-australia>.

SC1.23.3: Handbook Revision Committee Report to Standing Committee

Standing Committee approves the concept of adding a section about the Quaker Nominations process to Chapter 1 of the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure in Australia*. We look forward to its appearance in *Documents in Advance 2023*.

We also note that changes to the *Handbook* approved at YM22, have been completed, and have been uploaded to the AYM website here: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/publications-0/handbook-quaker-practice-and-procedure-australia> .

SC1.23.4: Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee Report to Standing Committee

QPLC has sought endorsement from Standing Committee to seek funding from appropriate Quaker funds (Jan de Voogd Fund, AYM Thanksgiving Fund, AYM Peace and Social Justice Fund) to employ a part-time peace worker to specifically focus on the engagement with Federal politicians.

We refer QPLC to the procedures outlined in AYM *Handbook of Practice and Procedure in Australia* for employment of personnel (Refer to the entire *Handbook* section: 5.3.5 Finances and employing staff). The *Handbook* stipulates referral to AYM Finance Committee of such a proposal, also including details of position description, duration of proposed contract, and management arrangements.

SC1.23.5: Update from the Transition Implementation Working Group

The Presiding Clerk asked the invited members of the Transition Implementation Working Group to update Standing Committee about the progress of the Working Group.

Standing Committee heard from Jonathan Benyei and Jennifer Burrell of the Transition Implementation Working Group (TIWG) Committee about the process and the progress of the work of the TIWG to date. Its work was to recommend arrangements for the AYM office from mid-2023. The recommendations are for two paid roles and a number of voluntary roles to support and complement them. The recommendations have been considered by an Urgent Decision-Making Meeting and are now in the hands of the Selection Committee (for the two paid roles).

SC1.23.6: Proposal for the Appointment of a Part-time Administrative Assistant for YM23

Standing Committee approves the appointment of a person to a part-time position in the lead up to Yearly Meeting to:

- assist the AYM Secretary with publishing/uploading documents/reports/etc. to the YM23 website
- assist the YM23 Clerking Team with technical advice
- be the point of contact/liaison between the AYM Secretary & YM23 Organising Committee re: YM23 matters.

The position will function from 2nd May to 18th July 2023.

Standing Committee agrees that the person be appointed by the Urgent Decision-making process, using interviews if necessary, and that this person reports to the AYM Secretary. The position will be advertised via the RM Clerks & the AYM Secretary's Newsletter and e-Notices, with applications sent secretary@quakersaustralia.info.

The funding for this position will come from the Yearly Meeting Annual Meeting Fund.

SC1.23.7: Child Protection & Other Safety Concerns Working Group Report to Standing Committee

Standing Committee accepts the draft 'Code of Conduct', and a 'Community Agreement for Online Events' as finalised documents. We note the 'Incident Report Form' was agreed to by Yearly Meeting 2022.

We ask Nominations Committee to work with the Child Protection and Other Safety Issues Working Group to bring at least three names of Friends for approval at a future Urgent Decision-Making or Standing Committee meeting, to participate in a new, time-limited working group to help guide the establishment of a Quaker Life Network. The work of the Quaker Life Network may include the holding of possible on-line and in-person activities.

We note that this working group might include a representative from Silver Wattle Quaker Centre and one of the three original members of the Child Protection & Other Safety Issues Working Group.

Standing Committee accepts that the Child Protection & Other Safety Issues Working Group lay down its work.

We thank the Working Group for all that they have done in this area; and ask that they prepare a final report which can be posted on the AYM website and be circulated to Regional Meetings.

SC1.23.8: Backhouse Lecture Committee Report to Standing Committee

Standing Committee agrees that Jackie Leach Scully, academic and bioethicist, be invited to present the 2024 Backhouse Lecture. Friends can learn more about Jackie Leach Scully in this video from UNSW: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu5TmDSU7NM>.

We note that arrangements for Jon Watts' visit to Australia as Backhouse Lecturer 2023 are progressing. As well as delivering the lecture, Jon will be meeting with Australian Friends, and travelling in ministry. TRM will host Jon for the Lecture, which will be presented at The Friends' School and video recorded.

SC1.23.9: Future Standing Committee Meetings

It was agreed that dates for the Standing Committee Meetings in 2023 will be:

- a) Saturday 17 June at 12pm AEST
- b) Saturday 16 September at 12 pm AEST

These meetings will be online via Zoom.

SC1.23.10 Items for Noting

Standing Committee noted the following reports:

- a) the report from AYM Nominations Committee regarding the difficulties in finding a Friend to fill the position of AYM Treasurer.
- b) the report from the Yearly Meeting Organising Committee concerning the organisation of YM23, with these details:
 1. Yearly Meeting in 2023 is being organised as a zoom event from Saturday 1st July to Sunday 9th July. It will include two consecutive long weekends (Sat–Mon and Fri–Sun) with one or two formal sessions each day, and the middle days with time for rest, local and outdoor activities, and some online spiritual and community building sessions.
 2. Preparatory Sessions and Information Sessions:
 - Preparatory Sessions and Information Sessions will be held in advance with most in the period from **Monday 15th to Sunday 28th May**.
 - We suggest sessions during the week be held on Monday to Thursday at 7:30 pm (AEST) and 5:30 pm (WA), sessions on Saturday be held at 11 am (AEST) and 9 am (WA) and sessions on Sunday be held at 3 pm (AEST) and 1 pm (WA).
 3. Programs:
 - This year the Backhouse Lecture will be hosted by TRM and delivered by Jon Watts from the USA who was the founder of the QuakerSpeak videos.
 - The State of the Society address will be given by Mark Macleod, TRM.
 - The Summary of Epistles will be presented by Elizabeth PO', WARM.
 4. Friendly School:

We will be inviting offers of Friendly School sessions on the theme “Integrity, Voice and Right Relationship”.

The committee has drawn on experience from previous years in identifying organising tasks. While some of these are being managed within the committee, several organising task groups involving Friends from across Australia will become active early next year.
 5. Costs:

The committee estimates that expenses for Yearly Meeting in 2023 will be similar to expenses for Yearly Meeting in 2022, with indexation. This includes the costs of tech software, equipment and licencing, and catering costs for the AYM Clerking Team and Secretary. Please refer to the AYM Budget.
 6. The plan for a threshing session on Yearly Meeting innovations has been postponed for now.
 7. SANTRM has offered to host Yearly Meeting in 2024 as a hybrid event with both an on-ground gathering and zoom access. We accepted this offer with joy. We are aware that SANTRM will need support from Friends around Australia for the technical aspects of this event.
 8. Early in 2023, several task groups will be seeking to involve Friends from across Australia. These include organising Share and Tells, Home Groups and the Zoom roster, and providing training in Zoom hosting skills. We hope to involve experienced Friends, younger Friends and people newer to Quakers.

- c) the report from the Child Protection Committee. The Committee supports the formation of a small, time-limited working group which could be set up to help guide the establishment of a Quaker Life Network, as per recommendation 2 of the Child Protection and Other Safety Concerns Working Group to Standing Committee in September 2022.
- d) the report from the AYM-QSA Relationship Working Group. The Working Group expects that another Report will come to Yearly Meeting 2023.

Appendix 5: Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia, Inc., held Online via Zoom 3pm AEDT 22 January 2023

AYM Officers

Presiding Clerk	Bruce Henry
Past Presiding Clerk	Ann Zubrick
AYM Treasurer	Steve Smith (Convener), Roger Sawkins (Member), AYM Finance Committee
AYM Secretary	Jacque Schultze

Standing Committee Representatives

Canberra and Region Quakers	Susan Rockliff, Jonathan Benyei (Co-Clerks)
New South Wales RM	Wies Schuiringa, Liz Field (Clerking Team members)
Queensland RM	Frances Long (Co-Clerk), Michael Corbett (Assistant Clerk)
South Australia/Northern Territory RM	Jo Jordan (Clerk), Margaret Philp (Assistant Clerk)
Tasmania RM	Robin McLean (Co-Clerk), Felicity Rose
Victoria RM	Sieneke Martin (Clerk), Aileen Britton (Assistant Clerk)
West Australian RM	Sharon Matthews, Brenda Roy (Co-Clerks)
Other: Recording Clerk Elder Tech Assistance	Mark Deasey (VRM) Kerstin Reimers (TRM) Michael Searle (CRQ), Ronis Chapman (CRQ)

MINUTES

AGM23.1: Acknowledgement of Country and Opening Reading

Aileen Britton (VRM), offered an Acknowledgement of Country:

We Quakers of Australia Yearly Meeting, wish to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islanders, The First Nations peoples, of the many lands on which we are meeting today. Perhaps Friends we can name those lands quietly into places where we are.

We acknowledge their forceable dispossession from their traditional lands and the consequent destruction of their culture, way of life, languages, clans and families; the disruption to their custodianship of the land, the loss of ancient voices which infused the landscapes we all live, work and take our enjoyment from.

We acknowledge the prophetic voices arising within First Nations people and engage with Dadirri, a deep listening, to their desires for Voice, Truth telling and Treaty, supporting them in their way forward, recognising within that the Uluru Statement from the Heart, their generous offer forward to all Australians.

We acknowledge their Elders, those past whose ancient voices imbue the land with their history, songlines and cultural knowledge and those present whose voices call for us to come round right way, to a new and lasting two ways relationship.

Jacque Schultze (NSWRM) offered an opening reading:

The word 'testimony' is used by Quakers to describe a witness to the living truth within the human heart as it is acted out in everyday life. It is not a form of words, but a mode of life based on the realisation that there is that of God in everybody, that all human beings are equal, that all life is interconnected. It is affirmative but may lead to action that runs counter to certain practices currently accepted in society at large. Hence a pro-peace stance may become an anti-war protest, and a witness to the sacredness of human life may lead to protests against capital punishment. These testimonies reflect the corporate beliefs of the Society, however much individual Quakers may interpret them differently according to their own light. They are not optional extras, but fruits that grow from the very tree of faith.

Harvey Gillman, 1988, Quaker Faith and Practice 23.12

Dale Hess acknowledged that today, 22 January, marks the second anniversary of the "entry into force"* of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which Australia has not yet signed.

** Entry into Force is a UN term which means that the agreements laid down in a treaty are binding and must therefore be complied with by states which ratify it.*

Our Presiding Clerk asked Friends to express their hopes for 2023 in the Zoom chat. These brief remarks appear in Appendix 3 at the end of the AGM23 Minutes.

AGM23.2: Minutes of previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM held on Saturday 16 January 2022, online via Zoom, were published in the Members Section of the AYM [website](#) (you must be logged in to the website to access this) and in *Documents in Advance 2022*, and included reports of Australia Yearly Meeting activities and membership of Australia Yearly Meeting Committees.

AGM23.3: Report from AYM Presiding Clerk

We accept the Report from the Presiding Clerk; but it is noted that Friends were not at unity in the expression of the factors contributing to Jane Drexler's resignation from the role of AYM Treasurer.

Bruce Henry reported on how the Yearly Meeting, Standing Committee and most AYM Committee Meetings continued to be conducted as online meetings in 2022. Although there are many opportunities to worship online, most Meetings for Worship around Australia have now returned to face-to-face gatherings.

He reported

- on a planned reorganisation of the AYM office, with two paid workers and a number of volunteers to support them and to complement their work.
- that Jane Drexler resigned as Treasurer and he thanked Jane for her devoted service; that Standing Committee affirmed the Finance Committee as they take up a wide range of tasks, including a change of the bookkeeping system to XERO.

We heard that the Clerk appreciates attending meetings of the Friends School Board and the Quaker Values Committee of the Friends School and that the school is searching for a new Principal to replace Nelson File at the end of 2023.

Recommendations arising from discussions between representatives of QSA and AYM will come to Yearly Meeting 2023 through *Documents in Advance*. It was noted that both Jackie Perkins and John Dundas have retired from their respective roles after many years of committed service.

The faithfulness of Friends is seen in the ongoing activity of Committees, and the concerns of many individual Friends.

The Clerk trusts that we can continue to come together with good spirit, to worship, to support each other, to solve problems and to be “patterns and examples... and to walk cheerfully over the world, answering God in everyone”.

AGM23.4: Report from AYM Secretary

We accept the report of the AYM Secretary, Jacque Schultze, which encompasses a review of the work over this past year, in this, her final AGM report as AYM Secretary. The report covered the breadth of work involved in helping AYM continue to serve Australian Friends and reach outward to others. Jacque said that she felt that this had been a timely exercise, given the exciting changes to the Office structure that 2023 may bring.

During the year the Secretary:

- works with our Presiding Clerk, meeting fortnightly via Zoom, and is grateful for his support and wisdom
- works with the Presiding Clerk and various AYM Committees, to prepare and send letters on behalf of AYM on various issues of concern to Friends (i.e., re: National Anti-Corruption Commission, Integrity in Public Office); to write letters of support/ as requested, add the signature of the Clerk to petitions on behalf of AYM, for campaigns by other like-minded organisations, nationally and internationally (i.e., multiple COP27-related campaigns; ARRCC’s Faiths4Climate Justice actions)
- works with the Regional Meetings and RM Officers regarding both regional meeting matters and AYM matters
- prepares/ distributes the monthly AYM Secretary’s Newsletter and e-Notices, updates the online Dictionary of Quaker Biography with entries, maintains a small archive of additional material about deceased Friends, answers queries which come via the AYM website, and communicates with overseas Friends.
- serves ex officio on all AYM Committees (except the Thanksgiving Fund and Nominations Committee). She receives Committee Minutes, corresponds regularly and pays, upon request by the Committee, Committee expenses.
- On some of these committees she has an active role as a member.

We express our appreciation of the committed work of Jacque Schultze over the past 7 years, and her willingness to work beyond July 2023 as new arrangements are put in place.

AGM23.5: AYM Treasurer's Report to the Annual General Meeting 2023

The Treasurer's Report was presented by Steve Smith on behalf of the AYM Finance Committee. He pointed out the serious difficulties the Finance Committee has encountered following the death of a Finance Committee member, Peter Williams, and the resignation of the Treasurer, Jane Drexler, which was in September 2022. Making the necessary changes to bank account signatures and other authorities are some of the challenges the Finance Committee has faced in taking over many of the roles of the Treasurer.

In order to protect AYM's cash flow, the Finance Committee has asked AYM Committees to limit some payments.

The Finance Committee has entered into a new contract with Ethical Investment Advisers P/L, which includes advice on investments.

The Finance Committee has decided to change the bookkeeping and accountancy arrangements from MYOB to Xero.

There has been a substantial decline in the market value of investments over recent months. As a result, there have been no investment earnings to distribute this year.

The General Fund showed a deficit of \$2051 in the last financial year.

The Sanctuary Management Fund now has a balance of \$84,000, and other Funds are also in a healthy position.

The accounts show Net Assets of \$3.8 million.

We accept the report of the Finance Committee acting as AYM Treasurer.

We accept the annual audited accounts for 2021-2022 and record our appreciation of the work of the former Treasurer Jane Drexler and Finance Committee.

We reappoint A.H Jackson and Co as our auditors for the 2022/2023 financial year.

The end dates of those appointed to serve on the Finance Committee. were clarified.

Two appointees to the AYM Finance Committee were approved at Yearly Meeting 2022. They were Carol Thornton (CRQ) who was appointed to YM2024, and Roger Sawkins (QRM) who was appointed to YM2025. These Friends joined Ray Brindle (VRM), appointed to YM2024, Steve Smith (TRM) appointed to YM2024, and Robin Walpole (TRM) appointed to YM2024.

AGM23.6: Report on activities of AYM Committees

We note the AYM List of Appointments 2023.

The Handbook describes the work of AYM Committees as follows:

The corporate activity of Friends is mainly undertaken after consideration in Regional Meeting Business Meetings and by Australia Yearly Meeting Committees, seeking to discern what the Spirit requires and then bringing important issues to the next Yearly Meeting.

Australia Yearly Meeting has 24 committees and working groups, as well as Standing Committee as a committee representing the whole of Australia Yearly Meeting. Members of these Committees are appointed by Yearly Meeting except for the Quaker Service Australia Limited, which is appointed at their AGM and confirmed at Yearly Meeting.

AGM23.7: 2023 Statement of Membership for 12 months ending on 30 November 2022

We note the 2023 Statement of Membership for the Society. (This will appear in Appendix 1 of the AGM Minutes).

AGM23.8: Regional Meeting Annual Reports

We note that most Meetings for Worship now meet face to face or are hybrid meetings. There are many opportunities for Friends to Worship online, although one Friend from Queensland Regional Meeting commented about online worship: *"I can become as quiet internally as when I'm physically in MfW, but my sense of being in community is less intense"*.

Meetings for Worship in regional areas are finding ways to keep in touch and worship together despite the restrictions of COVID and the destabilization caused by floods, especially in northern NSW.

Friends in all Regional Meetings report activities of sharing "that of God" with each other, including discussions led by David Johnson, retreats and group reflections on various texts or topics. Similarly, Meetings are trying to care for their Friends in various ways.

Building Quaker community in the wake of COVID seems a priority for most Regional Meetings. *"Morning tea is back!"* announces Tasmania Regional Meeting. Some Regional Meetings report some healthy childrens' programs, but others show that we have much work to do to make our meetings more attractive and welcoming to families.

We are an ageing community and, although Regional Meetings record a number of new members, we miss our Friends who have died during the year. Nominations Committees are finding it increasingly difficult to fill positions.

Many Meetings and individual Friends are active in various actions related to our Testimonies, on issues of Peace and Social Justice, Indigenous issues, Climate emergency, Asylum seekers and Integrity. CRQ reports on the valued work of the Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee, which informs Friends around Australia and encourages action in a number of areas. A number of Regional Meetings have given financial support to initiatives in these areas. NSW Regional Meeting reports on how the substantial Jan de Voogd Fund is being used to support Quaker concerns.

VRM looks forward to *"celebrating our blessings together"*. Jenny Woodrow, a long-term active attender of QRM, who died during the year, passed on these words: *"Have fun. Be Kind. Laugh"* SANTRM reminds us that *"it is the meetings for worship, the ground of our being, that sustains and gives purpose to our lives"*.

(These reports will appear in Appendix 2 of the AGM Minutes).

AGM23.9: Appointments

The office bearers and committee members on Standing Committee are confirmed:

Office bearers are:

AYM Presiding Clerk
AYM Treasurer

Bruce Henry
Serving as the AYM Treasurer:
AYM Finance Committee members: Steve Smith (Convener),

Standing Committee Representatives are:

Canberra and Region Quakers	Susan Rockliff, Jonathan Benyei
New South Wales RM	Wies Schuiringa, Liz Field
Queensland RM	Frances Long, Michael Corbett
South Australia/ Northern Territory RM	Jo Jordan, Margaret Philp
Tasmania RM	Robin McLean, Felicity Rose
Victoria RM	Sieneke Martin, Aileen Britton
West Australia RM	Sharon Matthews, Brenda Roy

The names of Friends who attended the Annual General Meeting appear below:

	Name	RM	Member or Attender
1	Anne Felton	CRQ	M
2	David Liversidge	CRQ	M
3	David Purnell	CRQ	M
4	Harold Wilkinson	CRQ	M
5	Jonathan Benyei	CRQ	M
6	Lorraine Thomson	CRQ	M
7	Margaret Clark	CRQ	M
8	Michael Searle	CRQ	M
9	Ronis Chapman	CRQ	M
10	Susan Rockliff	CRQ	M
11	Elizabeth Field	NSWRM	M
12	Halcyon Evans	NSWRM	M
13	Heather Saville	NSWRM	M
14	Jacque Schultze	NSWRM	M
15	Jennifer Burrell	NSWRM	M
16	Lorel Thomas	NSWRM	M
17	Mary Pollard	NSWRM	M
18	Nerina Pryor	NSWRM	A
19	Susan Freeman	NSWRM	M
20	Wies Schuiringa	NSWRM	M
21	Stephanie Russo	(Online meeting)	A
22	Beth McCartney	QRM	M
23	Duncan Frewin	QRM	M
24	Frances Long	QRM	M
25	Jess Donaghue	QRM	A
26	Jude Pembleton	QRM	M
27	Michael Corbett	QRM	M
28	Roger Sawkins	QRM	M
29	Taisoo Kim Watson	QRM	M
30	Charles Stevenson	SANTRM	M
31	Elizabeth Magarey	SANTRM	M

32	Geoff Greeves	SANTRM	M
33	Jo Jordan	SANTRM	M
34	Margaret Philp	SANTRM	M
35	Topsy Evans	SANTRM	M
36	Felicity Rose	TRM	M
37	Jan Blakeney	TRM	M
38	Kerstin Reimers	TRM	M
39	Robin McLean	TRM	M
40	Robin Walpole	TRM	M
41	Steve Smith	TRM	A
42	Aileen Britton	VRM	M
43	Bev Polzin	VRM	M
44	Bevianne Fitch	VRM	M
45	Bruce Henry	VRM	M
46	Dale Hess	VRM	M
47	Mark Deasey	VRM	M
48	Maxine Cooper	VRM	M
49	Sieneke Martin	VRM	M
50	Tricia Fitzgerald	VRM	M
51	Ann Zubrick	WARM	M
52	Brenda Roy	WARM	M
53	Clint de Young	WARM	M
54	Ruth Watson	WARM	M
55	Sally Herzfeld	WARM	M
56	Sharon Matthews	WARM	M

Appendix 1: 2023 Statement of Membership for 12 months ending on 30 November 2022

Rainbow Friends are aware that as of December 2022, Australia Yearly Meeting includes gender diverse people who identify as: female, gender fluid/genderqueer, gender unimportant/gender agnostic, male, non-binary, and xenogender.

NOTE: A few Regional Meeting noted they have attenders living in other RMs who attend their online Meeting for Worship. *These numbers have not been noted in the statistical tally for the 2023 AGM.*

Attenders: Adults, children over 18 years & Young Friends, as of 30 November

Children of the Meeting: Children under age 18 years, as of 30 November, who are not Members

Child members: Those children in actual membership of the Meeting, as of 30 November

	Adult Members					+/-	Adult Attenders			+/-	Children of the meeting				+/-	Child Memb.		+/-
	2022				2021		2022	2021	2022			2021	2022	2021				
	F	M	O	Total	Total					M	F	Total						
CRQ	48	33	1*	82	81	+1	79	83	-4	-	-	30	26	+4	0	0	-	
NSW RM	132	70		202	200	+2	162	159	+3	-	-	7	9	-2	0	0	-	
QRM	39	33		72#	71	+1	60	44	+16		2	2	0	+2	0	0	-	
SANT RM **				81**	84**	-3	72	82	-10	-	-	4	4	0	-	0	-	
TRM	85	42		127	127	-	133	115	+18	-	-	38	36	+2	-	0	-	
VRM	91	52		143	146	-3	100	100	-	8	11	19	18	+1	0	1	-1	
WA RM	47	24		71	71	-	63	69	-6	8	3	11	9	+2	0	0	-	
TOTALS	442x	254x	1	778	780	-2	669	652	+18			111	102	+9	0	1	-1	

* = Indicates Other (Identifying as Other), as requested by RM

** = only totals given

= QRM acknowledges disparity in reported figures this year

x = total does not include SANTRM

MEMBERS/ATTENDERS OF OTHER MEETINGS RESIDENT IN YOUR REGIONAL MEETING

RM	From Other Australian RMs					From Overseas				
	W	M	G	B	Total	W	M	G	B	Total
CRQ	9	8	-	-	17	1	1	-	-	2
NSWRM	8	4	-	-	12	4	3	-	-	7
QRM	-	-	-	-	0	2	-	-	-	2
SANTRM	-	-	-	-	1**	-	-	-	-	0
TRM	-	2	-	-	2	4	4	-	-	8
VRM	7	2	-	-	9	2	-	-	-	2

WARM	2	1	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	1
TOTALS	×26	×17	-	-	44	×13	×9			22

** = only totals given

× = total does not include SANTRM

YOUR REGIONAL MEETING MEMBERS LIVING OUTSIDE YOUR RM AREA

RM	Members who attend other Regional Meetings					Members Living Overseas				
	W	M	G	B	Total	W	M	G	B	Total
CRQ	7	4	-	-	11	1	1	-	-	2
NSWRM	-	-	-	-	0	2	1	-	-	3
QRM	4	1	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	1
SANTRM	-	-	-	-	**14	-	-	-	-	**1
TRM	7	3	-	-	10	1	1	-	-	2
VRM	2	2	-	-	4	2	-	-	-	2
WARM	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1
TOTALS	×20	×11	-	-	45	×6	×5	-	-	12

** = only totals given

× = total does not include SANTRM

TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

RM	Transferred from another Australian RM	Transferred from overseas	Transferred to another Australian RM	Transferred Overseas
CRM	-	-	-	-
NSWRM	-	-	-	-
QRM	-	-	-	-
SANTRM	-	-	-	-
TRM	-	-	-	-
VRM	-	-	-	-
WARM	-	-	-	-
TOTALS	0	0	0	0

Meetings/Worshipping Groups in each Regional Meeting

RM	Local Meetings	Total	Recognised Meetings	Totals	Worshipping Groups	Totals
CRQ	(North) Canberra	1	Bega Valley, Wagga Wagga	2	Batemans Bay, Canberra Southside, Goulburn	3
NSWRM	Blue Mountains, Devonshire Street, Hunter Valley, Wahroonga	4	Kiama, Friends Online, Northern Rivers	3	Armidale, Central Coast, Central West, Kyogle, Mid-North Coast, Upper Blue Mountains, Thirroul, Mullumbimby	8
QRM	Brisbane (Kelvin Grove)	1		0	Atherton Tablelands, Darling Downs, Redlands#, Brookfield#, Petrie# #=These worshipping Groups are suburban groups in Brisbane, meeting once a month.	5

					Brookfield was in recess in 2022.	
SANTRM	Adelaide, Eastern Suburbs	2	Alice Springs, Fleurieu	2	Adelaide Hills, Darwin, Southern	3
TRM	Hobart	1	North West Coast	1	Launceston, Kingsborough (not meeting at present), Southern Tasmania (not meeting at present), South Hobart	4
VRM	Melbourne City	1	Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Diamond Valley, Friends Eastern, Geelong, Mornington Peninsula, Northern Suburbs	8	Bairnsdale, Bayside, Gembrook Retreat, Home Worship Fellowship, Youngish Friends	5
WARM	Mt Lawley	1	Fremantle	1	Beverley, Geraldton, South Coast Albany, South Coast Denmark	4
TOTALS		11		17		32

Appendix 2: Regional Meeting Annual Reports

Canberra and Region Quakers

1. The inward life of worship and discernment

If we are to have even a glimpse of the innermost and unspeakable joys of the spirit – if we are to rise above pain and sorrow and bitterness into the pure serenity of heaven within – if we are to “know that He is God” – we must be still ... No clear impressions, either from above or from without, can be received by a mind turbid with excitement and agitated by a crowd of distractions. The stillness needed for the clear shining of light within is incompatible with hurry.
Caroline Stephen (1908)

This year the Meeting has continued its rebuilding journey, as the wider community also adjusts to the presence of COVID variants. At the end of September 2022 there were 82 members of CRQ, 84 attenders and 36 children and JYFs of the Meeting were living in our area, as were 19 members of other RMs and YMs. Twelve of CRQ's members live outside CRQ's area. The Membership Secretary distributes information by email, and maintains the membership records. One Friend was accepted into membership. There were no transfers or deaths of members.

The over-commitment experienced by many in our society extends to some in the Quaker community also. The call for quiet reflection and discernment is sidelined for some Friends by the attention required by work, family and other commitments. Even those in our community who have retired from employment, are challenged to find time for private worship and reflection as they attend to the diverse needs of family, Friends and community.

The Meeting gathered feedback in May from Friends about the provision of online Meetings for Worship. As with many other aspects of our Meeting, the need for additional volunteers to facilitate the online meeting was identified to relieve the reliance on a few. A large flat screen and AV system was donated for the Meeting Room of the North Canberra Meeting, and the auditory experience has improved for people with hearing impairment. This will be tried for 6 months, and reviewed in December 2022.

In-person Meetings for Worship resumed in the region late in 2021, and numbers are starting to build again. Most meetings in North Canberra, both for worship and committee work, offer a hybrid format. A mid-week Meeting for Worship is held for half an hour early every Wednesday morning, currently via Zoom. This attracts a small but faithful group, with some visitors from interstate.

The 9.15 am Sunday meeting in Canberra is in person only. The Southside Meeting meets twice monthly in the Senior Citizens Centre in Tuggeranong. The worshipping group in Wagga Wagga meets monthly, and usually includes lunch and discussion of a passage from “This we can say” in its gatherings. The Ministry Committee, which includes a member in Wagga, continues its monthly learning circle, during which elders discuss writings from Quaker and other faith traditions.

As a result of COVID, the Ministry Committee has maintained contact with worshipping groups beyond North Canberra, inviting in turn a representative of each of the worshipping groups to join online Ministry meetings to report on how the Spirit prospers in these places. Ministry has also organized bi-monthly conversations about topics which impinge on the lives of Friends such as Quaker parenting, and Quakers in the workplace. These sessions are in-person and also online in order to offer this spiritual nourishment to Friends outside Canberra. Ministry initiated a consideration of the nature of vocal ministry, with notes being circulated with the e-notices for the guidance and reflection of Friends.

Beginning in August 2021, Ministry has offered a weekly session at the Meeting House in North Canberra to discuss *Advices & Queries* which will continue until December 2022. The Library Committee has continued to provide spiritual fodder for the Meeting’s nourishment, adding purchased and donated books to the collection at the Turner Meeting House. Friends also belong to spiritual nurture groups, some which have met for years to care for the spiritual wellbeing of members.

CRQ benefits from its close proximity to Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, which opened its weekday online meeting for worship to Friends during the pandemic lockdown. Canberra Friends also volunteer in various capacities at SWQC, helping to develop and sustain this remarkable place in the national Quaker firmament. In these ways, we recognize that the spiritual basis of our community is fundamental to all our activities.

2. The interior functioning of the church community

Quakers bear out the saying that in our communities there is no laity: we jointly carry out the work of leadership. Many Friends are led to offer their gifts to the service of our community. Nevertheless, Nominations Committee has been challenged to find Friends who are able and willing to commit to carrying out the many roles that support our fellowship. We are assisted to stay in touch with activities and events by the weekly e-notices to members and attenders, which are one means by which Friends learn what is happening across CRQ, ‘helping to reach out, to connect and to inform’. A skilled Friend maintains the CRQ website, which is the main way that seekers find the Meeting, and the CRQ page (and sub-pages) on the Yearly Meeting website. This year a statement of inclusion and diversity was adopted by the Meeting and placed on the website, in recognition that many people now research organizations online before coming along in person, to gauge what sort of welcome they will receive.

Friends missed the opportunities to gather in person during the height of the pandemic, and Friends continued to offer pastoral care to each other in all the meetings in our region. The Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee has been actively engaged in supporting Friends in need of assistance during times of illness, and the Wagga Wagga Worshipping Group has an informal OPC committee. The CRQ OPC committee includes a member from Wagga, who brings news of Friends from outside Canberra. Three specifically social events were organised in Canberra, including a walk followed by afternoon tea. Some of the 15 who attended were friends or partners who we wouldn’t otherwise see.

The official register of children and young people in CRQ belies their general absence from our

meetings. Children and young people already spend much of their time online, even more so during the lockdowns, and vaccines were not available for children. This also affected the Children's Meeting in North Canberra. We see that the support and fellowship enjoyed in community is a vital part of keeping young people engaged. At a Yearly Meeting Prep session, we were asked whether we consider the small numbers of children with love or fear?

The House and Grounds Committee of the North Canberra Meeting has been busy with necessary but possibly unremarked maintenance and care for the premises of the meeting at the Turner Meeting House. Examples include the cleaning of the photovoltaic and Ecoheat panels, and trimming of plants to lessen the shading of these. Some maintenance jobs are now allotted to paid professionals, partly because of the age of the members of the committee. The heating and cooling of the Meeting House continues to challenge the Meeting to provide for the comfort of Friends as they worship in a way that is ecologically sustainable. A new cleaner was engaged, and other maintenance was carried out by agreement with the Meeting.

The Goulburn Worshipping Group continues to meet regularly in private homes, and the Southside Meeting in Canberra meets twice monthly in the Senior Citizens Community facility in Tuggeranong. This meeting regularly has six Friends gather, and the meeting is small enough for pastoral care to occur after Meeting for Worship.

OPC & Ministry have regular joint meetings, which enhances communication.

The North Turner Local Meeting has welcomed several young tertiary students in 2022, and a social event was organized to provide the opportunity to get to know them better. One of the younger attenders has been the focus of "This is Your Friend", which continues to introduce seasoned and newer Friends to the Meeting on a bi-monthly basis.

The Treasurer of CRQ presented the Meeting with a financial report which shows the meeting to be meeting its financial commitments, despite the ongoing commitment of the quota and the lessening contributions of Friends. The income from investments has also been affected by interest rates. This has required some reduction in the Meeting's expenditure in the budget for 2022-23. The Meeting agreed that its regular charity collections would be reduced from monthly to bi-monthly. Nevertheless, during the year CRQ donated nearly \$17,500 to charities.

The Turner Meeting House is regularly used by other small businesses, such as after-school child care and yoga, and other groups. Community groups which are too small to carry their own insurance are now asked to sign an insurance waiver.

The Meeting recognizes its duty of care to all members, and upholds the work of the AYM Child Protection and Other Safety Concerns Working Group which produced the draft Code of Conduct and Community Agreement accepted by Yearly Meeting 2022.

3. Living the social testimonies, including within the wider community.

Early in 2022 CRQ was given the opportunity to support the Aboriginal community in marking the 50th anniversary of the Tent Embassy. CRQ provided financial support for the construction of flags commemorating the event, which was used in a march involving the only living founder of the Tent Embassy. Through various channels, Friends are informed about issues directly related to Quaker testimonies. The North Canberra Meeting decided to make the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction the first standing item on its agendas for Meetings for Worship for Business, in order to keep this challenge before Friends. The weekly e-notices remind Friends of the many opportunities to support action in support for Quaker events and others which are aligned with Quaker testimonies. For example, every week for two years the e-Notices have included a section 'Climate Crisis and Species Extinction Corner', faithfully compiled by a Friend. This is a substantial report on the week's news about the environment, together with reviews of recent books and films. One unplanned charity collection which has nevertheless drawn Friends' support, is for Ukrainians affected by the ongoing war and where a known and trusted local contact receives the funds collected, and distributes them to those in need. CRQ hosts the AYM Quaker Peace and

Legislation Committee, which organized a well-attended national online vigil at the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February.

QPLC (AYM Committee hosted by CRQ) continues to meet monthly online and produce flutters, Watching Briefs and Action Alerts which draw Friends' attention to issues requiring Friends' witness and action. Action Alerts (for urgent response) have been issued on National Plan to End Violence against Women, the Sri Lanka crisis, and Immigration Detention; Watching Briefs (longer-term analysis and comment) have covered State Capture, Ukraine, Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty update, and Anti-Protest Laws; and Flutters (short summaries) on post-election government ministry, UN report 'Our Common Agenda', Global Index 2022, and the Death Penalty. Members of QPLC and other Friends also take part in public action in support of steps on climate change, protection of whistle-blowers, freedom of speech for journalists, and refugees. QPLC also supported the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) to apply to the Peace and Justice Fund for funds to enable publication of its report on the national enquiry into the Australia-US Alliance. Friends' increasing familiarity with online meetings has enabled QPLC to offer access to meetings to Friends around Australia. Many Friends also joined webinars organized by other groups on alternative defence options for Australia and on Myanmar.

The Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group has prompted local action, with fortnightly Cafes being held at the Meeting House in North Canberra, to bring information to Friends. The North Canberra Meeting hosted the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) stall at the North Canberra Sustainability Fair held at a church in Hackett in September. This provided an opportunity for Canberra Friends to support a multi-faith event in support of action to address the ecological crises. CRQ has resumed its active representation by the Co-Clerks at meetings of the ACT Council of Churches, which is wrestling with its own challenges of communicating effectively in the digital age. The CRQ website provides one avenue for outreach, with an average of 500 visits per month, mostly from Australia and the USA, followed by China and the UK.

The testimony to community reminds us that our capacity to live in alignment with our Quaker testimonies relies on the nourishment and promptings of our individual spiritual lives, and the communal support of Friends. Together, we seek to be a beacon of hope in our wider community.

Susan Rockliff, Jonathan Benyei Co-Clerks

New South Wales Regional Meeting

October 2021 saw the acceptance of the new structure for Meetings for Worship for Business and with it an experiment in clerking responsibilities. NSW had experienced difficulty in finding a replacement for our RM Clerk who had served in the role for more than four years. The new structure enabled a group of six Friends to assess the tasks traditionally undertaken by the Clerk and allocate them to a clerking team. Other roles proved equally difficult to fill. As a result, Regional Meeting has delegated nominations to the clerking team until September 2023, by which time we hope to have established a 'spiritual accompaniment' or Ministry and Care Committee.

The easing of COVID restrictions has gradually enabled meetings to return to gathering in-person, which has been greatly appreciated. We had become familiar with using zoom so that hybrid meetings continued for some months. Central Coast Meeting overcame the problem by meeting 'semi-outdoors' aided by rugs, cushions and occasionally 'a fire in a bucket'. Mullumbimby, Kyogle and Central West Meetings all gathered in someone's home. Devonshire Street Meeting introduced 'sharing sessions' twice a month which includes a shorter worship time and then breaking up into small groups. Friends Online Recognised Meeting (FORM) has become a valued online community with representatives from most Australian states and elsewhere. Kiama contact continued in this role despite relocating to Western Australia. Meetings for Business were held online, in part to recognise that the clerking team are geographically distanced. Age and increasing frailty were noted by a number of meetings.

A sense of belonging and community was seen as very important in rebuilding following COVID lock down, and several meetings recorded an increase in enquiries about who and what are Quakers. There was one resignation, three new Friends (Annie Gethin, Clayton Dunn and Kerri Dunn) were accepted into membership and one application is pending. The deaths of Geoff Maclean, Jenny Madeline Ible, Gigi Santow and Jean Talbot were recorded.

NSW contribution to the formal proceedings of AYM included presenting the State of the Society and the Summary of the Epistles.

Financial Matters

The September 2021 presentation of NSW RM financial future meant that Wahroonga, Blue Mountains and Devonshire Street Meetings all carefully considered how this would affect them. Blue Mountains continued with renovations of the cottage at Woodford, and considered renting out the studio and installing a warden. Wahroonga concluded that at least for the foreseeable future they were able to manage financially and treasure the quiet and peace of the meeting house and garden. In May Devonshire Street Meeting appointed three friends to examine the future uses of the Meeting House in order to find ways to relieve the current financial and operational stress. This report assessed several options including the sale of the Meeting House and was considered by the September Regional Meeting which established a Working Group to further discern the way forward.

Floods and climate emergency

It would be hard to ignore the impact of floods in New South Wales this year. Lismore, Mullumbimby and Kyogle Meetings were all directly affected, with homes lost and families disrupted. All reported the way in which the sense of community has been essential in helping lives to be put back together and how vital were local organisations.

Mid-North Coast Meeting helped organise a Coffs Harbour Palm Sunday Walk for Peace for the Climate which was attended by two members of the Kyogle Meeting.

Central Coast Meeting supported Lisa Wriley in developing her board game, *HOPE – Help Our Planet Earth*, which Lisa then demonstrated to Armidale Meeting when she visited. Bush care was also mentioned by several meetings.

Social Concerns

As individuals we are active in the world in a variety of ways. The Uluru Statement from the Heart has continued to be considered by many of us and has aided better links being established with local Aboriginal groups. Several Meetings recorded learning circles for First Nations peoples.

Blue Mountains members are variously involved in working with victims of violence, refugees, disabilities, QSA, music and theatre and bush care. The Nancy Shelley Bequest continues to disperse funds for peace work, indigenous activities, Quaker initiatives and refugee concerns. Mullumbimby, Kyogle and Kiama all reported their continued support for refugees.

In preparing its contribution to the annual report FORM asked how has truth prospered in your meeting this year? The responses were many and varied but all reflected the importance of community and support within the online gathering.

In early 2021 Jan de Voogd, a member of Devonshire Street Meeting and a peace activist died and bequeathed the bulk of his estate to NSW Regional Meeting, setting up a fund to provide peace and social justice grants. A committee administers the grant program and brings projects to Regional Meeting for discernment. Fifteen projects have been approved to date, which commits approximately 85% of the bequest.

Together with Sue Ennis from VRM, Wies Schuiringa initiated the *Integrity in Public Office* project that is supported by AYM. It is about Quakers going public, and joining the groundswell asking for

greater integrity in parliaments in Australia. An action was held at parliament in Canberra in August and will be repeated in February 2023. Social media is used to support proposed changes.

A Year in the life of NSW Meetings

The new clerking structure allowed for increased informal contacts with the meetings around NSW, including discussions about their contribution to the NSW annual report. As a result, the 4 local meetings, 2 recognised meetings and 6 worshipping groups provided wonderful details about their experiences this year. Compressing them into just two or three pages of rather dry facts seemed a shame. The proposal is to compile all the reports including photos into a document that can be shared to inspire and enjoy around the state.

Clerking Team

The clerking team for this year has consisted of Jennifer Burrell, Wies Schuiringa, Liz Field, Sheila Keane, Jackie Perkins and Heather Saville.

Queensland Regional Meeting

Though widely separated within the state of Queensland, we are reminded of our connections. Covid restrictions have eased sufficiently so that Friends can plan and take longed-for journeys to visit family members and friends not seen for at least 2 years. So there have been many comings and goings in 2022. Often overseas.

Frances Long, a member of the Clerking team, was absent from February to June due to the illness and death of her father in England, and others ably stepped up to share the clerking roles. The exploration of roles, responsibilities, work of committees, and difficulties in appointing Friends to them, was addressed at a meeting in Brisbane, with others joining on zoom. We realise we are not alone with this challenge.

For Friends on the **Atherton Tablelands**, Meeting for Worship is usually held twice a month on Zoom, with 6 to 12 attending, with hybrid meetings based in Herberton occasionally. The format continued is of shared exploration on a topic concerning Quaker history, worship, ministry and life in the Spirit, followed by 45 minutes of Worship. A Retreat was held in Atherton and attended by 10 people, including a member from Mosman and attenders from Cairns.

David Johnson led the session on ‘Life and Light in Quaker Spirituality’, including the practice of *Lectio divina* and the Quaker understanding of the Light in our conscience and what this means for Testimonies of nonviolence, integrity and equality.

Friends in **Townsville** continue to meet, sometimes informally and we acknowledge their continuing connection. Otherwise, when there have been regional enquiries, often our Correspondence Friend includes direction to the online zoom connection for attendance at the meeting for worship in the Kelvin Grove Meeting House.

The **Darling Downs** Recognised Meeting have found Covid restrictions and geographical distance a challenge to attendance at a meeting for worship which has usually been in private homes. Four new Enquirers have made contact with the group and three of those have since attended Meeting. Two young men have continued to attend. Meetings for the past year have tended to be in Toowoomba as meeting in Warwick is not as easy for those who are either not confident to drive there or who do not have a vehicle.

We continue to have two Brisbane suburban worshipping groups. This year a decision was made to resume advertising the monthly meeting of the **Redlands** worshipping group in the local paper and to continue meeting at a Friend’s home. We were all sad when Mary Grbavac died in December 2021. Mary had been attending the Redlands Worshipping Group as well as at Kelvin Grove when able to. The **Northside** worshipping group in Petrie, on Turrbal land, have a core

number of four Friends who meet in a CWA hall.

Due to flooding and bad weather conditions one Sunday in February in **Brisbane**, the meeting for worship at KGMH was cancelled and it went ahead on zoom. This was reminiscent of meetings in the recent past when Covid was the reason. Then the Kelvin Grove Meeting House was broken into in late August. Some zoom equipment was taken, and a fire extinguisher had been emptied affecting the library. Friends rallied to replace the equipment and do a thorough clean up in time for meeting the following Sunday. The main project of the future of the Meeting House itself is a massive task with which we are progressing. There are 2 main construction proposals, but one very important aim is to make the Meeting House much more accessible to all.

In August several Friends attended the funeral and celebration of the life of one of our long-term attenders and a great contributor to the Brisbane Local Meeting, Jenny Woodrow, and these were words she left for us. Have Fun. Be Kind. Laugh. A simple yet challenging proposal.

The Peace and Social Justice working group have been very active throughout the year beginning with the regular Brisbane peace groups gathering on zoom in January, and continuing with guest speakers and topics on second Sundays of the month.

Of particular concern and involvement this year have been the International Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) Inquiry report, the AUKUS report, Womens International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and the Land Forces Arms Expo in October. The latter was a Festival of Resistance with many Friends involved in the various actions. The links with WILPF, Just Peace, Friends of the Earth (FoE), IPAN, the Brisbane Combined Unions Choir, Queensland Faith Communities Council (QFCC), and Queensland Churches Together (QCT) as well as Quaker groups and causes are highly valued. The First Nations contact with Auntie Jean Phillips in the local community continues, and though we no longer have a Pay the Rent Fund committee, as a Meeting we continue to give finances to First Nations people's projects that come to our attention.

Our two children who regularly attend in Brisbane, and the possibility of others, keeps our children's committee and carers occupied. We all enjoy the Forest and are grateful for our small group of volunteers who regularly work on weeding and other maintenance. Recently we were saddened when a small number of dead Hoop Pines had to be removed. Perhaps it is fitting that The Friends in Stitches group are busy with work on the Arboretum panel.

On **World Quaker Day** in October this year we were able to link with the Osaka meeting in Japan and with Daejon in South Korea. It was a great pleasure to hear from Friends in these places and others on zoom. A local Brisbane attender has skills in filming and was able to give us a short introductory video of our Meeting, the location, and some words from interviewed Friends. Osaka Friends also had a short video of their Meeting. (Links can be provided if interested-contact the QRM Co-Clerks.)

The challenge of using zoom becomes more of a human problem than that of the technology. When asked of her experience of meetings joined on zoom the following Friend shared these comments:

I enjoy seeing and hearing members of the meeting on the screen and being part of the community worshipping together. I find I can become as quiet internally as when I'm physically in MfW, but my sense of being in community is less intense. Participating in person is much better for that reason. And socialising afterwards is more enjoyable.

We continue to regularly welcome visitors, from overseas or interstate, and in our welcome, we recognise that we meet on First Nations Land – that of the Turrbal and Yuggera people in Brisbane – and they are the traditional owners.

Our Regional Meeting, though small in number, while being very active, has also explored spiritual nourishment.

It is always a pleasure to serve while Spirit leads us on.

Frances Long, Co-Clerk

South Australia Northern Territory Regional Meeting

The most striking thing about the past year has been Zoom, the legacy of the Covid pandemic. It has immense advantages for those unable to attend meeting because of health issues, or distance; but as a number of well concerned Friends do not use it, the use of zoom needs more rationality. Upgraded IT facilities at the Girl Guides centre where Eastern Suburbs Local Meeting meets allows for hybrid meetings for worship in person and by ZOOM on the second and fourth Sundays of the month.

Zoom Meetings for Worship are also held weekly by Adelaide Local Meeting. The Regional Meetings for worship for business are also conducted both in person and by ZOOM.

There has been inspiring environmental work. Peri Coleman's Save the Mangroves campaign, Faith Coleman's outstanding work in improving the condition of the Coorong, and Yarrow Goodley's Backhouse Lecture *Creating Hope: Working for Justice in Catastrophic Times*, which alerts us to the urgency of action to save the planet. Friends have published a statement of alarm at the increasing militarism in South Australia, promoted as the Defence State. Concern for housing for First Nations people in Adelaide has resulted in a grant of \$15,000 to Baptist Care SA. Four scholarships were granted to First Nations people to attend the World Indigenous People's Conference on Education. Friends are represented on committees of Churches Together SA and friends took part in the Walk for Peace on Palm Sunday. Representatives of many faiths met at the Meeting House in May to hear about the history of the Meeting House and Quakers in South Australia.

We have realised that Friends are advancing in years and with a declining membership. Adelaide Local Meeting has sustained the death of eight during the past year. The Alice Springs Worshipping Group is now smaller, though they find that interstate visitors the group, as well as occasional visitors from far away Coober Pedy. Heartening are the trickles of enquirers and newcomers at both North Adelaide and the Hills meeting.

The Darwin Worshipping Group meets on the first and third Sunday of each month. There are five regulars. Others stay in touch as best they can – including some in remote locations. The Fluerieu Meeting has rationalised its meeting times and now meets on the second Sunday of the month.

On the third Sundays of the month Eastern Suburbs hold a shared lunch after which matters of interest are discussed and at the North Adelaide Meeting House a discussion group discusses Quaker spirituality. There is a zoom discussion group after meetings for worship on the second Sunday of the month. A pleasing aspect of the Meeting House grounds is the continued care for its garden.

The Quaker Shop continues to provide an amazing amount of finance for QSA (\$80,000) and for the Australian Refugee Association (\$28,000). The Shop is open for six days each week, and there are now over fifty-five volunteer helpers. Keeping such an enterprise running smoothly is a time-consuming and demanding job, the more so because of Covid lockdowns and illnesses.

One cannot overemphasise that it is the meetings for worship, the ground of our being, that sustains and gives purpose to our lives.

Charles Stevenson, Clerk

Tasmania Regional Meeting

When it seemed that finally in 2022 the worst wave of the pandemic was subsiding, Tasmanian Friends started to speak more frequently about 'getting back to normal'. But as the US writer Roxane Gay observed, for many people 'normal' was exactly what they did not want to go back to. While restrictions and protocols had not prevented two years of loss and grief, Tasmania had been significantly safer than other states, but as the borders opened and larger public gatherings

became permissible once again, we were asking ourselves how much of what had been 'normal' could we reinstate - and how much did we want to?

After a shaky start, online meetings were running well and Friends enjoyed the opportunity to gather with those living in other states and occasionally outside Australia. With some technical help, we learned how to make hybrid meetings as inclusive as possible too. But for some Friends the advantages of online participation outweighed the disadvantages and they have found the Zoom meetings an attractive alternative to travelling to the Meeting House or their local meeting. Other Friends, perhaps due to lingering uncertainty about attending in person, or simply because other commitments slipped in to take the place of regular Meeting for Worship, have not come back. We hold them in the Light and continue to look for ways that we can make in-person attendance safe and appealing again. Air purifiers have been installed, ventilation and cleaning procedures have been monitored, and masks and hand sanitisers made available. Pleasingly, the number of Friends who worship in person keeps increasing.

And morning tea is back! Such an apparently minor part of what in-person worship offers, but it is central to the building and maintaining of a community. More than a year without it proved how important it was. Two examples of community-building are the Quaker women's afternoon teas monthly and the Art Wall in the Hobart Meeting House which now has a picture-hanging system. Every two months there is a new display of creative work, mainly by Tasmanian Friends. This year the displays have included embroidery, painting, colouring, patchwork, photography and a piece by an Aboriginal artist who paints in order to heal from her Maralinga experience. The displays are accompanied by a short piece from the artist about the contribution creativity makes to their inner lives.

However, there was no clearer sign of the impact the pandemic was having on our ability to support the community than the announcement by all but two members of the Care Committee that they needed to lay down their service over the 2021-2022 summer. The irony that it was the *Care* Committee that felt unable to continue with the weight of responsibility and expectation did not go unnoticed. But the advice 'Take care of yourself so that you may take care of others' came to mind. Looking at their role description made many Friends ask whether the list of responsibilities needed to be so demanding, and it urged us to prioritise. We were grateful that two Friends volunteered to be Care contacts while the committee took a long break to reassess those priorities. It was suggested that perhaps we did not need a formal Care Committee at all: individual Friends could step up and meet needs as they appeared.

An appealing idea, but because so many people are time-poor, and overloaded with information and calls on whatever 'free time' they might have, it was unlikely to succeed. So, a trimmed down committee with a more manageable set of aims and a new roster system is now back at work. Its success does partly depend on keeping an eye on the rosters and arranging swaps or substitutions when necessary, however, and we urge Friends to do so.

Although it was suggested that perhaps there were too many committees and that Ministry and Care could be combined as they are in other meetings, the Ministry Committee did not feel led to this solution. While the pandemic made the physical and emotional needs of the community unmistakably clear, Ministry felt strongly committed to focusing on serving the spiritual needs of the community. We have returned to the practice of having a nominated Elder at each Meeting for Worship for Business. And spiritual nurture sessions after meeting for worship on the last Sunday of the month and silent retreats on the 3rd Saturday of the month have strengthened the spiritual life of the meeting as we continue to seek new ways forward.

Information sessions about the meaning of membership resulted in three new applications and in November 2022, Ministry held a wonderful 'Know Each Other' weekend with a full program of worship, shared meals, presentations, music and games. Online meetings had shown us new ways of deepening the spiritual life of the meeting by worshipping, listening and speaking together, but what had been harder to achieve was working, eating and playing together. The monthly Women's Afternoon Tea gatherings go some way to meeting that objective and Ministry Committee plans

to build on the success of the 'Know Each Other' weekend gathering with an online Woodbrooke course 'Exploring Quaker Spirituality' in February 2023 and a series of regular 'Slow Saturdays' when Friends will have the time to explore ideas that take them beyond what is possible in the enjoyable but brief exchanges after meeting for worship.

The Nominations Committee has worked to simplify our structures and procedures and has been able to fill most vacancies. Much energy has been spent considering the changes to the Care Committee and Care and Ministry continue to discern new models of care for our Quaker community.

The Children's Committee continues its dedicated work of supporting the spiritual growth of young people in our Meeting, and even a glance at the children's room in the Hobart Meeting House shows how much they have achieved. It is light-filled, colourful and well organised and demonstrates abundantly the love that has gone into providing such a creative space. There are challenges, of course. Meeting the needs of children ranging in age from 2 to 11 means that the emphasis is on community-building rather than formal lesson plans, attendance fluctuates with illness, the weather, sporting and other commitments, and finding enough carers is always top of the list of challenges. But Friends who feel led to working with the children always enter the main meeting for worship with broad smiles on their faces, and would welcome anyone interested in joining them.

In 2023 the Children's Committee plans to update our library holdings of books for young people, and there is a great opportunity for everyone to learn from a weekly display of Aboriginal and First Nations books which Friends can browse through and borrow. During the pandemic there was no formal Library Committee, but once again this time provided an opportunity to rethink longstanding practices and we now have four 'Friends of the Library' who are working on maintaining and promoting the collection. As with the children's room, it's so great to see Friends spending time in the Library, enjoying the comfortable armchairs, which had belonged to Carol and Dougal McLean.

Although we occasionally lament the lack of storage (a concern familiar in many family homes, given our society's acquisition of 'stuff'!) we are blessed with a beautiful and versatile space, but months away from regular attendance at the Hobart Meeting House showed us how important it is to maintain its physical condition. The Building and Maintenance Committee commissioned a dilapidation report and found leaks in the roof, damage to the fascia as a result, and deteriorating brickwork. Prioritising repairs to the roof, it has scheduled the work to be carried out over the next three years. It has also replaced the dishwasher, installed air purifiers and, due to a confusing unidentified number of keys in circulation, will replace locks over summer 2022 - 2023.

The seemingly endless wet weather that tested the Meeting House roof also promoted growth in the garden, and while Friends have been able to enjoy the Peace Garden and the new paved area around the tables and benches - on sunny days - they've sometimes had to push through a healthy crop of weeds to get to it! The Garden Committee has worked hard to keep the garden in shape and looking good and would welcome Friends who feel led to join them. The meeting continues the tradition of cycling down the bike path to the International Peace Forest at Berriedale to plant trees and shrubs in memory of Friends who have died.

Safe Quaker issues are kept in mind by our two Contact Friends with posters displayed in the Meeting House, information in the e-notices and an information session and Tasmania Regional Meeting conducted a safety audit recently in line with the policy requirements. The Child Protection Contact Friends have been active, preparing the child protection audit and interviewing five new child carers. We now have twenty Friends who are fully approved child carers for the Hobart Meeting.

The Peace and Justice Committee have been active in the areas of youth justice reforms, electronic gaming reforms, climate change issues, including connections with The Friends' School students'

Climate Action group and hosting a multi-faith service for Climate Justice in the lead up to COP27. They also support UNHRC and Medicines Sans Frontières.

Quaker Service Australia support continues with the weekly trade table, an afternoon tea and garden fundraising event and participation in the Combined Charities Christmas Shop. And the Meeting recently purchased a new Square Reader to facilitate both small transactions and schedule contributions. This was yet another example of the changes brought about by the pandemic. 'Contactless transactions' had become so common, and even mandatory in many businesses, that when we began to meet in person again, we quickly realised that most people no longer carried cash that they could use to buy jams, calendars or books. This is no longer a problem.

To some extent, the availability of online facilities meant that the development of smaller gatherings had stalled over the past two years, but they are slowly emerging again. Hobart Meeting has a dedicated group of Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing Tasmania which meets monthly to hold in prayer and the Light names that have been brought forward. The North West Coast Recognised Meeting meets every fortnight in Deloraine as a small group and has been focusing on climate action. Launceston Worshipping Group meets weekly and is a small but strong and vibrant group.

It is exciting to share in the energy of Tasmania Regional Meeting as Friends review our past practices, discern which of them can be let slide into history, and which of the emerging possibilities show us new ways forward. We have come to understand that 'getting back to normal' was perhaps a comforting illusion, and that the concept of a 'new normal' that appears in public discourse might not express the dynamic life of the spirit that Quakers have always sought. In December 2021 a special meeting was held "Sharing Our Visions for the Hobart Meeting". A report from that gathering concluded with these words, which express the Light in which each member of this community is held:

"We trust that as we get to know one another more, our work together will be a positive and nourishing experience, restoring us to the joy of 'being Quakers'.

Robin McLean, Mark Macleod, Co-Clerks

Victoria Regional Meeting

In the last annual report Bruce Henry, our Clerk (now our AYM Presiding Clerk), foresaw VRM *"emerging like shy butterflies from the cocoon of lockdown"*. Victorian Quaker butterflies are obviously very shy: many of us are still worried about high Omicron infections and are very careful about going out, meeting others and organising in-person activities.

Our VRM Zoom Meeting for Worship, organised by Dale Hess, continues to provide an option for such Friends, isolated due to distance from Meetings or isolated by choice and medical circumstances.

Our Worshipping Groups (Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Diamond Valley, Geelong, Gembrook, Mornington), Recognised Meetings (Northern Suburbs, Friends Eastern) and Melbourne City Local Meeting have coped with meeting during these difficult times by asking Friends to be vaccinated and wearing masks. Sometimes Friends have met outside as a safety measure. Some meet as hybrid Meetings, with a Zoom connection. Numbers are generally smaller than before Covid. Gippsland and Kilsyth Worshipping Groups have been laid down.

We miss our Friends, who died this year: Anne Walker, Coralie Jenkins, Peter Williams, Beth Bennett (TRM) and Attenders Betty Feith and Julia Meek.

Several Meetings have welcomed visitors and enquirers, especially at the Victoria Quaker Centre, where MCLM has established a Quaker Corner, where visitors can talk with a Friend and have questions answered. Our library provides extensive resources available for all of us.

The Nominations Committee is continuing to find it difficult to find Friends willing to take on the ongoing, necessary work within local, regional and national Meetings.

VRM is considering two applications for membership; has an additional Registering Officer (Lorel Thomas in addition to Tessa Spratt) and is looking forward to a wedding in February 2023 (Oliver Lovell and Holly Eyles).

VRM's three Elders organise meetings of the VRM Pastoral Care Network once a quarter by Zoom (there are no Elders within Local Meetings or Worshipping Groups). These meetings have been attended by representatives of most Meetings and Worshipping Groups and are a good way of keeping in touch and supporting each other. As part of our pastoral care a *Memory Loss Group* has been providing support for Friends dealing with dementia and their carers.

Elders also organised a reflection/nurturing meeting to respond to the AYM Safe Quaker Community queries. VRM has agreed to focus on these queries at the Regional Meeting in April each year, enabling us to report to AYM on these matters.

The VRM budget is approved at our October Regional Meeting and letters asking for schedule contributions are then sent out to Members and Attenders. The Schedule includes a list of AYM and VRM funds to which contributions can be made. The Finance Committee notes that there are fewer Friends making contributions and has asked Friend to contribute as they are able in order to balance our budget. VRM has paid the rent (\$600) to the Victorian Aboriginal Child Agency.

VRM has provided financial assistance to support Friends attending Quaker Learning activities, such as Meeting for Learning and courses at Silver Wattle.

A number of Friends, with particular concerns, endorsed by VRM, have successfully applied to the VRM Peace & Social Justice Network, the Victoria Quaker Fund, the AYM Thanksgiving Fund and the NSW Jan de Voogd Fund. It is exciting to see such Quaker concerns being carried out.

Our Victorian Friends Centre was shown to the public via the "*Open House*" project of the City of Melbourne. Unlike last year, when it was held on Zoom, this year well over 200 visitors took part in tours, conducted by our award-winning architects, and had discussions with volunteer Friends.

There have been two joint Saturdays of discussion at our Centre this spring, covering a number of issues and a series on indigenous concerns. We hope that there will be many more opportunities for Friends to join such events, at the Centre and elsewhere, to share concerns, raise awareness and to build our community.

We look forward to a year of strengthening our community, welcoming enquirers and visitors, supporting Friends with concerns and those going through difficult circumstances and celebrating our blessings together.

Sieneke Martin, Clerk

West Australian Regional Meeting

We took up the role of co-Clerks in November 2021. We were considerably heartened by being given permission by WARM to fail, which has given us courage to persevere! Originally, we expected to be part of a 'clerking team', but this has not fully eventuated – although we feel very supported by individual Friends.

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact how and when we meet. We are mindful that we

are a vulnerable community, and we are grateful that Friends have held the community in a safe, loving space through various measures such as mask wearing, vaccination requirements, social distancing, contact lists, and staying home when unwell.

We sense that Inward Light, peace & joy in wonder in Meeting for Worship is strong in Mt Lawley, Fremantle, and South Coast, although we are sorrowful that Beverley Friends are struggling to meet due to having lost their premises.

We sense that – even in spite of covid-19 restrictions and some caution about coming together in person – spiritual nurture and outreach is also strong. Although the WARM Summer School in January was cancelled due to concerns about safety from infection, eight Perth-based Friends gathered in Mundaring for a winter retreat, in Cunderdin for a bush Retreat, and in late September/ October we were grateful for David and Trish Johnson's visit, and David's kind facilitation of four spiritual sharing sessions.

The hybrid meeting format in WARM's Meeting House in Mt Lawley continues to connect our far-flung Friends with some Friends attending regularly online. We relish how this technological platform has the capacity both to erase the distance between Friends – golden threads of community stretching across Australia -- and make us feel part of a worldwide Quaker family. We have enjoyed visitors from Broome and Kalgoorlie, China, the UK and USA, among others.

YM22 in July saw Ann Zubrick (presiding Clerk), Allan Knight and Robin McLean (TRM, Co-Clerk) use WARM's Meeting house in Mt Lawley. Many Friends were involved with catering, eldering and tech support. Rising out of YM home's groups came opportunities for less formal sharing, and a Zoom meeting for social contact with other Friends across Australia (and the world) on Wednesday evenings.

We share a joyous sense that, on an individual level, the Spirit shines in what we do. We know of individual Friends forming groups for informal spiritual discussions, and there are plans for a mid-week 'drop-in' in Mt Lawley. WARM Friends express the early Friends' commitment of 'what can thou say?' by sharing their faith and political commitment in a number of actions, events and forums. We are grateful for those such as Henry Esbenshade, and Clinton de Young, supporting elderly Friends and printing out emails for those who struggle with technology.

However, matters of Eldership and Pastoral Care still need attention within our RM. We note a number of inactive or vacant committees, and we know from our own experiences that some committees have not met regularly – or at all – this year. We are aware that our experience here mirrors other RMs, and indeed AYM. In saying this, we are also aware that WARM Friends are living in the world with whatever they have within themselves, and that we are all doing our best.

We are concerned about a lack of diversity in our Meetings for Business and seek to hear from more WARM Friends, especially our regional or remote Friends.

We are concerned about the ecological crisis. One thing WARM has chosen to do is to add our response to climate crisis as a standing item in our agenda for Meetings for Worship for Business.

We wonder how best to honour both the things that are necessary for us as a spiritual community and also honour our legal requirements. We need to discern how we work our way through a situation where so many of us don't have the time, health or energy to support the number of committees we have. We ask those who find in Quakers a spiritual home to think about what we are really prepared to do to make this home happen.

It feels as though overall WARM has grown closer as a community. It feels as though we are taking inspiration from the 18th Advice and Query: *"seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another.enter[ing] with*

tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives".

Brenda Roy and Sharon Matthews, Co-Clerks

Appendix 3: Hopes for 2023

Our Presiding Clerk asked Friends to express their hopes for 2023 in the Zoom chat. These brief remarks appear here.

What do Friends hope for this year?

May peace prevail.

I would like there to be a new Child protection policy written and endorsed.

More multiculturalism in all groups to which I belong.

To foster hope in peace and justice matters.

Would love to see more community time together.

Responding to the Light with faithfulness and joy.

Seeking to share and learn from other Friends and to contribute in a supportive way throughout the year.

May all our business meetings be well focussed and harmonious!

I hope that as a Quaker in 2023 I will have the courage to always speak truth to power.

To listen more carefully and attentively.

End war in Ukraine.

Looking forward, I hope to see more of the wider population recognise the need for peaceful resolutions of differences between nations and for myself the realization of a peaceful heart in the midst of global problems.



Hope, Joy and collaboration - in our meetings and our wider worlds.

Wish for peace & love and hope for more involvement of regional and remote Friends in WARM discernments

To live in the Light.

Peace.

To keep the momentum and enthusiasm to work for peace, social justice and integrity in public office.

To be a source of calm for myself in relationship with others and for others who do amazing work promoting peace and justice.

Looking to know Friends better this year through hearing people's thoughts.

Hoping to grow further in the Light.

More opportunity for face-to-face meeting.

I'm already sensing a joyful desire to overcome the obstacles and forge ahead into new ways and new life, but treasuring our opportunities to be together in person.