



Yearly Meeting 2020 of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Greetings to Friends Everywhere

**Here in Australia we think of you all as our Meetings worldwide face this time
of multiple hardships.**

Australian Friends gathered in Spirit this July mid-Winter, called to walk unfamiliar paths with an open heart, courage and curiosity, in our first experiment with an online Yearly Meeting. Presenting novel opportunities in this time of novel coronavirus, we gathered across the country and around the world, in kitchens, loungerooms, studies, dining rooms, meeting houses and outside.

After a 'discomforting' year defined by disastrous droughts, fires and floods, the struggle to contain Covid-19, and a deep recognition of the injustice of systemic and individual privilege, we offered each other comfort as electronic reflections embraced our Yearly Meeting. Whilst much work for this Yearly Meeting has been discerned ahead of our gathering, we ask: *do our virtual meetings allow a place for Spirit to rise?* Friendly School heard from Murray Short (The Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri), who questioned whether we have moved too far towards individual infallibility, away from community discernment.

An 'oceanic' invitation to right past wrongs was extended by Mingku (Shane Mortimer), a Ngambri Elder and traditional owner who reminded us that removal of children from First Nation families continues at a greater rate today than before. He shared a recent discovery of significant First Peoples' artefacts at Mount Ainslie in Canberra, a joy shared by First Nation archaeologist David Johnston, who recounted the open-hearted journey of the Watson family, on the discovery of a [stone axe quarry](#) on their farm near the Silver Wattle Quaker Centre.

Care of the Earth and creation have been at the heart of Quaker witness since our earliest Friends. We must do everything possible to address the causes of the climate emergency we face. If we cannot participate energetically in person, we can nurture and support younger Friends financially, emotionally and spiritually. Our FWCC Asia-West Pacific Section session reinforced our concern to support young people in Australia and overseas. *How are young Friends feeling about the future of the world? What do young Friends ask of the older generations?* Ryan from Canberra Meeting is responding by making a movie about what we can do to save our planet [Now!](#)

In keeping with our Yearly Meeting tradition, we met online for 'Share-and-Tell' sessions, for coffee-time and shared music. There was also dedicated on-line time for children and parents. Our Meeting has been lovingly 'held' by the invisible, tireless work of hosting and technical teams networked throughout Australia, with Elders and pastoral carers adapting to new forms of 'promptings'.

The Backhouse Lecture, delivered by Fiona Gardner, encouraged us to make time to nurture our spiritual practices in all aspects of our daily lives. We were urged to heed the promptings of Love and Truth in our hearts - regardless of how 'strange' they may seem to others, knowing that *"I am a Quaker. My spiritual commitment means that my work is never done. I will live courageously."*