



# Handbook of Quaker Practice and Procedure in Australia

**Seventh edition, 2020**

**The Religious Society  
of Friends (Quakers)  
in Australia**

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Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc.  
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Quakers in Australia acknowledge that we live and worship on the lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, country which gives them physical and spiritual identity and is filled with the spirit presence of their ancestors.

We acknowledge:

- the sovereignty of Australia's First Peoples over the land we inhabit
- that the land was taken from them at devastating cost, with no just resolution
- that this trauma is ongoing and diminishes us all
- that our testimonies call us to be in right relationship with all peoples, the land and our environment.

Therefore, we seek in our daily lives:

- to educate ourselves about the true history and present reality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and uphold their right to self-determination
- to acknowledge within ourselves, and bring into the light, that which contributes to the debilitating effects of racism, insensitivity, lack of awareness and misrepresentation
- to work towards justice and peace, and healing for us all.

(First Nations Peoples Concerns Committee 2017)



The image adopted as the logo for Quakers in Australia represents the Aurora Australis, a natural phenomenon of the southern hemisphere associated with Antarctica, a fragile and magnificent part of the planet.

Australian Quakers consider the Aurora Australis an appropriate logo because of its association with:

- pure light, the centrality of the Light for Quakers
- beauty, a quality that many associate with God or the Spirit within
- nature, a permanent reminder of everyone's responsibility to care for the world
- the colour blue, used by the United Nations
- the ephemeral and intangible, a reminder that language is inadequate to describe God, the truth or the Spirit within.

*Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Seek to live in affection as true Friends in your Meetings, in your families, in all your dealings with others, and in your relationship with outward society. The power of God is not used to compel us to Truth; therefore, let us renounce for ourselves the power of any person over any other and, compelling no-one, seek to lead others to Truth through love. Let us teach by being ourselves teachable.*

(A paraphrase of epistles from the Yearly Meetings of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys held in 1694 and 1695.)

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**Table 1 Acronyms used throughout the handbook**

Acronym	Full
AYM	Australia Yearly Meeting (the organisation)
JYF	Junior Young Friend (aged 12–17)
YF	Young Friend (aged 18 to around 30)
YM	Yearly Meeting (the event, the annual national gathering)

## **Preface**

*Guidelines: Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by; but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.*

(Postscript to an epistle to 'the brethren in the north' issued by a meeting of elders at Balby, 1656)

The latest version of the handbook is online on the website:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/publications-0/handbook-practice-and-procedure>

The online handbook is the authoritative version. It is accessible both in interactive and PDF formats. The PDF may be printed at will. The handbook is available for anyone to read.

The handbook can only be amended after Yearly Meeting discernment, i.e. after a YM Minute. The AYM Secretary is responsible for ensuring the online handbook is updated in both formats as soon as reasonably possible after YM each year. The update date (e.g. 'Updated from YM20') is stated both within the handbook and on the handbook's website location.

## **Purpose**

This handbook is intended primarily for the guidance of Members and Attenders of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia, although it may be of interest to others also.

We emphasise the word 'guidance'. The handbook describes our various current Spirit-led procedures and practices, which have developed over time. The handbook is a living document, as our faith is a living faith. Before implementing innovative practices, Friends are advised to discern that they are in accordance with our spiritual underpinnings.

Our handbook is a necessary resource for anyone appointed to office within the Society, as well as for any Friend.

It provides information about the conduct of worship, decision-making, the nature of Membership of the Society, life milestones as marked within the Society, the relationship between the Society and other organisations, and much more.

The handbook complements other publications such as *this we can say: Australian Quaker life, faith and thought* (2003) and *Advices and Queries* (2008) the aims of which are to explain the faith that leads to the practice and procedures described here. See:

[www.quakersaustralia.info/publications-0/australian-publications](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/publications-0/australian-publications)

### **Outline of content**

Our beliefs, worship and decision-making processes are central to the Society and are described in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 describes our Worship Meetings and Regional Meetings. All Worship Meetings are part of a Regional Meeting and all Regional Meetings are part of Australia Yearly Meeting, the national body.

Chapter 3 describes Membership of the Society and Chapter 4 describes how the Society cares for its members.

Chapter 5 deals with the administration of Australia Yearly Meeting, the national body.

Chapter 6 describes the arrangements for Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering of Friends from all over Australia.

This structure of the handbook, progressing from our spiritual core to the local Meetings and the national Meeting reflects the manner in which the Society works.

### **Definitions and glossary**

Definitions of key words of relevance or specific meaning to Quakers are contained in the glossary, [Appendix A](#). These help explain the meaning of those words in the context of this handbook.

An initial capital letter in words such as Concern, Member, Visitor, Friend and Attender denotes their specific meaning for Quakers. These words are also defined in the glossary.

### **Cross-references and acronyms**

There are cross-references to other relevant parts of the handbook throughout the text. These have been hyperlinked. This should avoid unnecessary repetition.

Please see [Table 1](#) for a list of acronyms frequently used throughout the handbook.



# Chapter 1 Our Quaker principles in action

## 1.1 Our beliefs

*Guidelines: As Friends we commend ourselves to a way of worship which allows God to teach and transform us. We have found corporately that the Spirit, if rightly followed, will lead us into truth, unity and love: all our testimonies grow from this leading.*

(Introduction, *Advices and Queries*, 2008, Australia Yearly Meeting)

For detailed information about our beliefs and history, please see:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.org.au/> and <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/about-us/our-history>

Quakers developed within the Christian tradition, and we feel ourselves guided by the same Spirit that was plainly evident in Jesus. We rely on seeking a direct experience of God, especially by prayerfully listening together.

### **Brief history**

The Quaker movement emerged in northern England in the 1640s, at a time of intense spiritual ferment. Early Quakers were convinced by experience that everyone can become aware of the Inner Light directly, as there is that of God in every person.

### **Today**

This basic mysticism can be strengthened by the inspiration of the Bible and other writings, and by the wisdom of our own and other traditions.

Individual Friends' beliefs differ and are personal. George Fox asked, 'You will say Christ saith this, and the apostles say that, but what canst thou say?' (*Quaker Faith & Practice*, BYM, 19.07).

### **Important Quaker beliefs**

- Friends rely on seeking a direct experience of the Spirit, especially by prayerfully listening together, rather than on the authority of an established church or the authenticity and interpretation of particular words of the Bible.
- There is no fixed, common creed, since a creed may lead either to a pretence of beliefs not yet reached, or to entrapment in dogma that inhibits further spiritual growth. Instead, individual Friends develop their own set of beliefs from personal experience.

- We believe that all of life is sacred and that all people can have direct access to God in worship, without the mediation of an ordained person.
- We follow the concept of the 'priesthood of all believers'. To the extent to which anyone is directly and personally aware of the Spirit, there is encouragement to minister to others in word and deed. Everyone is equal in this responsibility. The consequence is that there is neither hierarchy of religious power, nor any intermediary between God and people, nor over-reliance on second-hand experience.

### **Our practices reflect our beliefs**

Friends combine in a Religious Society as a means of helping each other to live more fully in the awareness of the inner Spirit, or God.

This cooperation provides each person with support and stimulus from various traditions. These include Universalist, Buddhist, Jewish, humanist or non-theist for example, as well as Christ-centred faith.

This is in line with a statement made as early as 1678 by the first Quaker who was a systematic theologian, Robert Barclay. He referred to:

*Heathens, Turks [i.e. Muslims], Jews, and all the several sorts of Christians, men and women of integrity and simplicity of heart, who by the secret touches of this holy light in their souls [are] enlivened and quickened, [are] thereby secretly united to God, and there-through become true members of the catholic [i.e. universal] church.*

*(An apology for the true Christian divinity, Robert Barclay, the Elder)*

### **1.2 Our testimonies**

Quakers are agreed on particular orientations of action, called testimonies, which guide personal and corporate behaviour. Our current testimonies help to identify what Quakers hold precious.

Our Quaker testimonies include:

- Simplicity (a focus on essentials)
- Peace (a striving for harmony)
- Integrity (a truthfulness that brings faith and action together)
- Community

- Equality
- Earthcare

These are all aspects of Love, the Spirit in practice. They describe the relationship of Quakers to the world and are reflected upon in *this we can say, Advices and Queries* and other Quaker writings.

The Society's testimonies unite Friends in Quaker communities around the world, across our various differences.

### **Some examples**

- The testimonies to Simplicity, Community and Equality are evident in the way that Quakers in Australia tend to worship in a circle, facing each other, wherever practicable.
- Similarly, people are encouraged to be mentioned only by given name and family name, without titles.
- Any kind of ostentation is discouraged.
- In a competitive and militaristic world, Friends are especially challenged and inspired by the Peace Testimony. Friends try to practice non-violence in every relationship and to be active in peacemaking.
- Friends do not establish the truth of a statement by swearing oaths on the Bible. Our Testimony to Integrity aims at truth-telling always.

Note that the Society's collective testimonies discussed here are distinct from the personal 'Testimonies to the Grace of God in the lives of deceased Friends' ([4.6.4](#)).

### **1.3 Our worship**

*Guidelines: We are engaged in nothing less than being reunited with the ground of our being, where we find our true, integrated self and our neighbour.*

(Leonce Richards, *this we can say*, 2.9, 2003)

Friends are encouraged to find time privately for daily prayer, meditation or uplifting reading. This nourishes subsequent Meetings for Worship together, which are central to Quaker practice.

Meetings for Worship require no more than two people to be present, though, preferably and usually, there will be several more.

Perhaps the most obvious features of a Quaker gathering are, usually, the plainness of the room; the absence of any human leadership; and the periods of silence, sometimes quite lengthy.

Friends seek a living peace in which to find true fellowship and to give thanks. Such a stilling of the mind is called 'centering down'.

Sometimes a Friend may feel such a sense of centering, of unity with the Spirit, that they feel deeply enriched. They may describe this as a 'gathered Meeting'. If this sense prevails amongst the worshippers present, the Meeting is collectively felt to be a gathered Meeting.

That is, the Meeting is no longer a group of individuals praying or meditating in parallel, but a community of spiritual experience, shown sometimes by the coincidence between what is spoken by someone else and what has been in one's own mind. Everyone takes responsibility for the quality of the worship.

The Meeting is a corporate activity, providing an appropriate occasion to be aware of the shared, mysterious, challenging and loving power permeating and underlying all life.

*And so I find it well to come  
For deeper rest to this still room,  
For here the habit of the soul  
Feels less the outer world's control;  
The strength of mutual purpose pleads  
More earnestly our common needs;  
And from the silence multiplied  
By these still forms on either side,  
The world that time and sense have known  
Falls off and leaves us God alone.*

(from *The Meeting* by John Greenleaf Whittier, written in 1868)

A person may begin the preliminary settling down by a brief self-examination or reflection on past experiences or thankfulness and becoming aware of a sense of communion with fellow-worshippers. Or they may choose to begin by, for example, dwelling on the place of God in their life, their spiritual journey, or on a religious text.

Each Meeting for Worship is different. In due course, someone, anyone, might be moved to minister by speech, prayer or song. Such ministry is valuable when it comes from discerning a true movement of the Spirit rather than the human urge to share or instruct. Ideally, the message is simple, clearly audible and brief, coming from personal experience rather than hearsay. This ministry grows from the silence, enriching the worship and leading in the direction of a gathered Meeting, where all present become united in a spirit of prayerful worship.

Ample time needs to be allowed for reflection on what has been offered in ministry, before anybody else breaks the silence. Subsequent offerings may well be related, but it is not appropriate to rebut or question previous ministry, to be provocative or to refer to individuals. Controversy and discussion are out of place; these are for other specially convened occasions ([1.6](#), [1.7](#), [4.6](#)). Speakers normally speak only once.

However, vocal ministry is not essential. Silent Friends also minister to the life of the Meeting by their calm presence, by their loving thoughts and by their awareness of the needs of the group.

Worship normally lasts about an hour and ends when an Elder, the Clerk or someone else appointed for the purpose indicates the end of worship in the manner used by that particular Meeting, such as by shaking hands with a neighbour.

What follows varies from Meeting to Meeting as we move from worship to community, but can include a welcome to visitors, news of Friends, announcements and opportunities for fellowship.

Apart from regular Meetings for Worship, Friends also hold worshipful gatherings on other occasions, often with a particular theme in mind. This might be to 'hold in the Light' someone who is ill, to consider some great cause, to celebrate a marriage ([4.3](#)) or to conduct a Clearness Meeting ([1.6](#)). Such occasions take a similar form to normal Meetings for Worship, except that the centering down is intentionally focused.

It can be helpful in a meeting for a special purpose if an introduction is given, which explains how the meeting will proceed. Participants will usually feel better able to participate if they know what to expect — especially true when non-Friends are present.

#### **1.4 Meetings for Worship for Business (also known as ‘Business Meetings’)**

*Guidelines: Meetings for Worship for Business are regarded as unhurried occasions of prayerful worship.*

*(Handbook of Practice and Procedure in Australia, 6th edn, 1.4.4, 2011) ([2.3.2](#), [2.4.3](#))*

*Meeting for worship for business is a central part of a Quaker meeting, for it is here that we experience the corporate gift of God: love in action.*

*(Roger Walmsley, this we can say, 2.37, 2003)*

Quakers reach decisions collectively by seeking to reach a spiritually formed decision, or to discern the will of God, in the Meeting for Worship for Business. Meetings for Worship for Business are Meetings for Worship in which we do business. The Meeting is embedded in silent contemplation. Participants listen respectfully, and allow time between spoken contributions.

We describe this corporate spiritual decision-making as being ‘in unity’. We do not vote nor accept the principle of majority rule.

Thus, all Friends present are encouraged to come with ‘hearts and minds prepared’, which means that they are acquainted with all the relevant material facts, and are willing to listen to the Spirit moving in the Meeting, rather than hold to a preconceived outcome.

#### **The Clerk**

In preparing for a Meeting for Worship for Business, the Clerk lists items to be discerned and, if necessary, checks relevant background information, including previous minutes relevant to the item.

An agenda should be forwarded to Friends in good time before the Meeting, so that all may come with hearts and minds prepared.

The Clerk may prepare draft Minutes of Record, normally only for information items which will require no decisions. The Clerk must be careful not to ‘lead’ the Meeting. The Clerk is the Meeting’s servant, and all decisions are made by the gathered Meeting for Worship for Business.

The Clerk's attitude tends to set the desirable pattern of worshipful listening, dealing firmly with anyone speaking too long or irrelevantly, but at the same time keeping a sense of proportion and humour, and trying not to be too brisk.

During any discernment, the Clerk may give any facts or background information to Friends, but tries to avoid expressing any personal view.

Should the Clerk feel a strong leading to contribute, or should the Clerk have a conflict of interest in the matter under consideration, the Clerk steps aside from the clerking table. After leaving the clerking table, the Clerk may participate as an ordinary member of the Meeting.

If the Clerk steps aside, another Friend is asked to clerk and this should be minuted, as should the point at which the Clerk resumes his or her service. Often a Meeting will have a Co-Clerk, or an Assistant Clerk, who will step into the Clerk's role for this purpose.

### **Meeting process**

Our procedure is to begin the Meeting with a period of worshipful silence, to let go of our worldly preoccupations and to become spiritually attuned to the agenda before us. From the silence, we then acknowledge the Aboriginal custodianship of the land on which the Meeting is being held. At times there may be a spiritual reading.

There is no impediment to meeting online for any Meeting for Worship, including for Business.

### **Our Quaker process for decision-making**

All Friends present have a responsibility to uphold the Clerk and to give full consideration to the spiritually-informed decisions before them. At some Meetings, a Friend may serve as an Elder, prayerfully and silently 'holding' the Meeting as it deliberates.

Practices within the Society that foster effective corporate decision-making amount to what is called 'Quaker process'. These practices include the following:

- Those wishing to speak indicate this to the Clerk or Assistant Clerk who then acknowledges their wish to speak.

- Normally people speak only once on any given topic, at least until everyone else who wishes to has spoken. This encourages Friends to listen carefully to each other and to avoid argument or debate.
- It is common to hear another person expressing the view that one is preparing to speak. Quaker practice is not to repeat that view, but either to relinquish one's intention to speak, or indicate agreement with minimal words.
- All voices are heard with empathy to give mutual support in seeking the right outcome, waiting patiently for spiritual discernment of the correct way forward.
- Each individual in the gathering seeks to stand outside the self to contribute to collaboratively reaching a spiritually formed decision. The increasing ability to do this is central to Quaker discipline.
- Decisions are not reached by voting. The Clerk seeks to gain the sense of the Meeting, and to interpret this into suitable wording that becomes the minute of the Meeting on the matter.
- The aim is to reach unity, rather than unanimity, consensus or majority. Sometimes one divergent voice takes the Meeting productively in a new direction.

### **Minutes**

After everyone has had an opportunity to contribute to the discernment of an agenda item, the Clerk suggests a draft minute, which attempts to reflect accurately and succinctly the sense of the Meeting. This draft is amended in accord with contributions from the gathering, until it is acceptable to all there present. The process of clarifying a minute may mean that participants speak again.

Once accepted by the Meeting, the minute then becomes the agreed minute of the Meeting. It does not need confirmation by a subsequent Meeting. Factual corrections, such as spelling corrections, may be made later with the permission of the Meeting. On occasions, a minute requires the inclusion of an extra detail (which is unavailable to the Meeting) for completion. The Meeting may authorise the Clerk to adjust the minute later. The extent of the adjustment is recorded in the minute.

This careful and respectful process will generally lead to unity.

### **Deferring discernment**

It is not helpful for a Meeting to do detailed technical work on a topic. Sometimes consideration of a topic is best served by referring it to a smaller working group to do



detailed work and report back to a future Meeting for Worship for Business with their recommendations.

### **Lack of unity**

There are times when no clear sense of the Meeting can be discerned by the Clerk.

If this is the case, there are a number of ways forward, which include:

- calling for a period of silent worship, after which discernment is resumed
- adjourning the matter to a later session, to allow time for further reflection.

### **Laying an item aside**

Sometimes it is clear that the Meeting is not in accord with the matter. The matter is laid aside and minuted as such.

### **Standing aside and stop in the mind**

Guidelines: *"... not being in unity may tell us that the discernment is not complete."*

(Ben Pink Dandelion, *Living the Quaker Way*, p.18, Quaker Books, London, 2012)

These expressions refer to the infrequent times when the Clerk discerns that the sense of the meeting is very close to unity on an action and a single Friend, or more than one Friend is not able to unite with this course of action. When this occurs, it is important that the Friend be given adequate opportunity to be heard in explaining their reasons for doubt.

In this case the Meeting needs to discern how to proceed and minute the matter:

- The Friend who is 'out of unity' could be invited, or might offer, to unite with a minute, despite their doubts on the course of action.
- If the Friend feels unable to unite with the minute but wishes to stand aside, this is accepted. They may be named in the minute or it may simply be recorded that one or more Friends stood aside.
- The Friend may indicate that they have a 'stop in their mind' about the minute. In this unusual and serious case, unity has not been achieved and discernment on the matter is suspended. The matter can then come back to the Meeting after a period of time, during which the Clerk/s, Elder/s or other appropriate Friend/s may meet with the Friend to seek an acceptable solution, with the aim of attaining the unity of the Meeting.

Throughout this process it is important to give time for silent worship. Friends may well find that leaving time for a decision to arise may lead to a new and creative solution to which Friends can agree.

### **Closing a Meeting for Worship for Business**

Meetings for Worship for Business close with a short period of silent worship.

### **1.5 Concerns**

*Concern* (with an initial capital C) is a Quaker term that has a special usage. It is defined in the glossary.

*Concerns ... have an enduring certainty of rightness as a broad and long-term field of witness, individually or corporately.*

(Helen Bayes, *this we can say*, 2.54, 2003)

A Concern arises from a Friend's sense of a spiritual leading that the Friend undertake some specific task.

To test the validity of this experience, the Friend first lays it before a Meeting, which may be a Clearness Meeting ([1.6](#)), a Meeting of their Oversight Committee ([2.3.6.2](#)) or a local Worship Meeting.

If the Meeting unites with or adopts the Concern, it may be carried forward to their Regional Meeting. The Regional Meeting will need to discern whether or not it unites with the Concern and, if so, whether it is willing and able to provide financial support, a support person or committee.

It may be that spiritual support and encouragement are all that are required or able to be given.

If the Meeting does not support the Concern, it offers support to the Friend to find another way to pursue it, or to find an appropriate way to lay it down.

On occasion, the Concern may be forwarded to Yearly Meeting (Chapter 6) for further support.

It is unusual for the Concerns of individual Friends to be dealt with at a Yearly Meeting, unless endorsed by their Regional Meeting. However, the Presiding Clerk may allow this, after consultation with members of Standing Committee.

Thus, any Concern will become a matter for discernment at a Meeting for Worship for Business. This has proved to be an effective combination of individual initiative with collaborative decision-making, followed by widely supported implementation.

Even if it is decided that a Concern is not appropriate for the Society as a whole to support, the Friend's Local, Regional or Yearly Meeting may well encourage Friends, either as individuals or as a group, to undertake or continue a particular service.

### **1.6 Clearness Meetings**

A Meeting for Clearness is a Meeting for Worship, but focused on a particular topic. The aim is simply to help the person find clarity in their situation, and be more able to move forward — sometimes called the better discernment of God's will.

A Clearness Meeting is most often held to clarify a problem facing a member of the Meeting. It allows personal difficulties or choices to be explored together in a non-judgmental way.

Clearness Meetings are useful in many ways:

- to test a Concern or Leading
- to consider applying for Membership of the Society
- to clarify a matter of weight to be decided at a forthcoming Business Meeting
- for couples contemplating marriage (the traditional use of a Clearness Meeting).

It is an opportunity for deep listening to the member(s) calling such a Meeting. It is not a debate of competing ideas, a discussion of detail, a reaching of conclusions or a conflict resolution forum. No Clearness Meeting should set out to change anybody. It is assumed that everybody has an Inner Teacher who can provide guidance, so that the answers sought are within the person needing clearness.

A Clearness Meeting is most successful when there are deep silences, attentive and prayerful listening, loving clarifying questions, and a powerful discipline of restraint in a non-judgmental and caring environment.

There is no set procedure for arranging a Clearness Meeting. Initially the person seeking clarity about a particular issue (the 'focus person') might approach an Overseer or Elder for help in gathering a few diverse members of the Meeting to come together on a convenient occasion.

No matter how the group is formed, the focus person decides who attends, and may be assisted by another Supportive Friend. One of the group normally plays the role of clerk/facilitator. The others in the Clearness Meeting simply serve as channels of divine guidance in drawing out the focus person's Inner Teacher.

One practical outcome might be the formation of a support group to help the focus person carry forward the matter.

### **1.7 Threshing Meetings**

A Threshing Meeting is a special Meeting for Worship at which a variety of different, and sometimes controversial, opinions can be openly said and heard. A Threshing Meeting is an opportunity to hear a wide range of views. Decisions are not made at a Threshing Meeting.

A Threshing Meeting may be useful when:

- a difference of opinion is causing difficulties for individuals or for the Meeting, or is delaying a necessary decision (please see Chapter 4 for processes for conflict resolution)
- a potentially contentious or controversial issue needs to be thoroughly discussed
- as a preliminary to a decision-making Meeting. In this case, it is hoped that Friends who wish to speak at the Meeting for Worship for Business will attend the Threshing Meeting.

Steps in the process:

- Give good advance notice.
- Include all who have a particular interest in the matter. Make a special effort to ensure that Friends of all opinions will be present.
- Appoint a clerk who is not involved in the issue. It may be helpful if that clerk is an experienced Friend from another Meeting.
- Appoint a notetaker (who may be the clerk, or another Friend) so that there is a record of the key issues discussed, and agreements found. This is especially useful if the

Threshing Meeting precedes a Meeting for Worship for Business. It is also useful for Friends who are unable to be present.

- Send out background papers with factual information, together with guidelines for the Meeting.
- Allow enough time to ensure that all who wish to speak are heard.

Everyone attending needs to be clear about the purpose and conduct of the Meeting. Clerking a Threshing Meeting requires deep listening skills as well as the ability to speak clearly to an issue. Everyone present is respected.

During a Threshing Meeting, Friends speak through the clerk, but may ask to speak more than once and may be allowed to ask questions of other speakers.

### **1.8 Community**

Quakers attach importance to promoting a sense of belonging and mutual caring (*this we can say, Advices and Queries*). More details are given in Chapter 4.

Caring involves communication, which is promoted by several publications: the *AYM Secretary's Newsletter*, the periodical *The Australian Friend* ([5.5.2](#)) and regular Regional Meeting newsletters.

Quakers also participate in online Meetings for Worship (see: [www.quakersaustralia.info/organisation/local-meetings](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/organisation/local-meetings)), courses and discussion groups.

Caring includes spiritual learning and sharing. This is facilitated by a number of courses, e.g. those run by Silver Wattle Quaker Centre ([www.silverwattle.org.au](http://www.silverwattle.org.au)), and Meeting for Learning, an annual program of Quaker Learning Australia (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/QLA>).

Australian Friends are welcomed at international study centres as well, including at Wanganui, Aotearoa/New Zealand ([quaker.org.nz/the-quaker-settlement](http://quaker.org.nz/the-quaker-settlement)), Woodbrooke in Birmingham, England ([www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk)), and at Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania, USA ([pendlehill.org](http://pendlehill.org)).

In addition, there are the publications and international visitations of the Friends World Committee for Consultation ([5.4.6](#)).

Community also grows from sharing the responsibilities of Membership of the Society (Chapter 3), which depends almost entirely on committed volunteers, from the shared tasks of AYM officer holders ([5.2](#)), AYM committees ([5.3](#)), and from participation in Yearly Meetings (Chapter 6).

### **1.9 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 responsible for 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 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 and availability 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](#).

## Chapter 2 Quaker Meetings

### 2.1 Introduction

The Quaker way described in the previous chapter leads to a corporate structure based on local groups of Quakers who come together for Meeting for Worship.

Meetings range in organisational structure and size, and include:

- Informal Worshipping Groups ([2.2.1](#))
- Recognised Meetings ([2.2.2](#))
- Local Meetings ([2.3](#))
- Regional Meetings, which in Australia, generally conform to the geographic boundaries of the state ([2.4](#))
- Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM), which is comprised of the Members of all Regional Meetings.

A newcomer to any Group or Meeting is welcomed and offered information about Quakers.

Each Worshipping Group, Recognised and Local Meeting reports on its progress and needs to the relevant Regional Meeting, and all Regional Meetings to Australia Yearly Meeting. Meetings are listed on the AYM website: [www.quakersaustralia.info/organisation/local-meetings](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/organisation/local-meetings)

Worshipping Groups, Recognised and Local Meetings are all covered by AYM's insurance policies for volunteers and public liability. Copies of the Public Liability Policy are available from the AYM Secretary.

All Worshipping Groups and Meetings are guided by this handbook and all AYM policies, e.g. the *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* and the *Safe Quaker Community Policy*, and the various legal requirements for each state or territory.

### 2.2 Worshipping Groups and Recognised Meetings

#### 2.2.1 Worshipping Groups

A Worshipping Group can form when a few Quakers and other interested people decide to come together to worship from time to time in the manner of Friends.

All Worshipping Groups need to adhere to all AYM Policies, e.g. *Supporting a Safe Quaker Community*. A Worshipping Group is placed under the care of a Local or Regional Meeting and appoints a correspondent.

The Group receives encouragement and support, such as the loan of books, financial support, and occasional visitors, who may be from the Local or Regional Meeting. The correspondent informs the Regional Meeting Clerk and/or Membership Secretary of the names and contact details of people associated with the Group ([3.1](#)). In due course Worshipping Groups may become Recognised Meetings.

### **2.2.2 Recognised Meetings**

A small group of Friends, perhaps already meeting as a Worshipping Group, may, if they wish, apply to the Regional Meeting for recognition. Such Recognised Meetings will be under the care of a Local Meeting or their Regional Meeting.

All Recognised Meetings need to adhere to all AYM Policies, e.g. *Supporting a Safe Quaker Community Policy*. No formal duties are required of a Recognised Meeting, but it will carry out such duties of a Local Meeting as seem appropriate to the group.

The Recognised Meeting will communicate with other Meetings via their appointed correspondent.

The correspondent informs the Regional Meeting Clerk and/or Membership Secretary of the names and contact details of people associated with the Meeting.

If practicable, the Recognised Meeting encourages Friends to attend Meetings for Worship for Business.

## **2.3 Local Meetings**

### **2.3.1 General**

Local Meetings usually hold Meeting for Worship weekly and may be large enough for a wider range of activities, both among Friends and within and beyond their local community. Local Meetings have several office-holders and committees, providing opportunities for a broader Quaker experience and responsibilities.



### 2.3.2 Local Meeting tasks

The primary responsibility of a Local Meeting is to hold regular Meetings for Worship, and regular Meetings for Worship for Business (also known as 'Business Meetings'), which make decisions about activities and responsibilities.

A Local Meeting also takes on additional responsibilities. For example, it:

- provides pastoral support and spiritual nurture for Friends
- nurtures the spiritual life and pastoral care of the Meeting
- arranges for the care of any children attending the Meeting, as outlined in the *Child Protection Policy and Procedures*, and ensures that their register of approved child carers is up to date
- supports all to feel safe, both physically and emotionally, and ensures there is no bullying or harassment within our Quaker Meetings and social activities
- takes appropriate action for the physical safety and maintenance of their meeting place, as outlined in the *Supporting a Safe Quaker Community Policy*
- tests Concerns of Friends ([1.5](#)) as these become known and if testing is requested
- maintains contact with isolated Friends, Recognised Meetings and Worshipping Groups in their area
- prepares an annual report for the Regional Meeting, which is drawn upon in developing the Regional Meeting's annual report
- encourages Friends to attend Regional Meetings for Worship for Business
- collects financial contributions from Friends (see [2.3.5](#))
- appoints office-holders including Clerk, Treasurer, Nominations Committee, and Ministry and Oversight Committee/s in order to facilitate these tasks. Local Meetings may appoint other office-holders and committees, and/or make ad hoc appointments as needed for a limited period.

Other responsibilities which may arise include:

- holding Meetings for Marriage and Commitment, which have been approved by the Regional Meeting
- holding funerals and memorial Meetings, which are reported to the Regional Meeting
- hosting AYM committees as agreed
- owning property.

### **2.3.3 Nominations Committee**

*Guidelines: It is the responsibility of a [Quaker] community to enable its members to discover what their gifts are and to develop and exercise them for the glory of God.*

*(Quaker Faith & Practice, 3.22, 5th edn, 2013)*

The Nominations Committee has the responsibility of discerning and bringing to the Meeting names for service as office-holders or committee members for all, or most, positions within the Meeting, except for its own committee. It therefore carries a major responsibility for the effectiveness and harmony of the Meeting and needs the support of all Friends.

This committee consists of seasoned Friends with sound knowledge of the Meeting, who regularly attend Meeting for Worship. They usually serve for three years, each person's term ending on a declared date. As with all committees, they choose their own convener and, if possible, the Meeting arranges for the overlapping of the terms of office to ensure that the corporate memory continues.

The committee usually meets face to face, but may meet remotely if required. When discerning names for the various positions, the committee considers in a loving spirit the qualities needed for each position. It is important that Nominations Committee meets in a spirit of discerning Friends' gifts and readiness to serve, not to 'fill a vacancy'.

#### **The process**

1. The committee clarifies the role description of the position they are asked to consider.
2. After prayerful consideration, the committee discerns the name of a Friend to serve for a particular role.
3. Next, that Friend is approached to ascertain their willingness for their name to go forward to the Meeting for Worship for Business.
4. If they are willing for their name to go forward, the committee then recommends this name to the Meeting for Worship for Business for its further discernment and decision.
5. It is at the Meeting for Worship for Business that the final decision is made.

Any time a Friend's name is being considered, it is recommended that the Friend being nominated leave the room during the discernment of their name.

All office-holders and committees give service to, and report to, the gathered Meeting for Worship for Business.

It may be that no name occurs to Nominations Committee, or perhaps the Friend, when asked, does not feel led to the service suggested. In such cases, the difficulty in bringing a name forward should be brought before Meeting for Worship for Business. A different way of achieving the same service may be discerned. For example, ad hoc appointments can be made for specific tasks.

The Meeting usually appoints Friends to a role for three years or less, and an end date for each appointment is minuted. Ideally, nominations to a committee are arranged to cater for overlapping terms of office to support the corporate memory. Nominations Committee should keep its own record of appointments and their terms to supplement the Clerk's list.

If Nominations Committee so discerns, a Friend may be asked to serve for an additional period of one to three years after their initial term of service. It is unwise for a Meeting to appoint a Friend for more than six consecutive years of service in any one position. Office-holders should share their expertise, perhaps by mentoring an assistant into the role, perhaps by developing written guidelines and procedures, for the support of future Friends undertaking service in this role.

If an office-holder is unable to complete their term of appointment, Nominations Committee will be asked to bring forward a replacement name.

At times, it may come to the committee's notice that a position has become too burdensome for a Friend or is beyond the Friend's personal ability. The committee can initiate discreet discussions with an Elder or the Ministry and Care and/or Oversight Committee. In these circumstances, the Friend can be encouraged to lay down their service before their original term has finished. The committee may be able to encourage some Friends to take on new or more demanding positions and find support for these Friends to develop the required skills. There may be times when, during its deliberations, the committee may need to consider openly how to balance certain nominations so the whole Meeting is served best.

## **Appointments to Nominations Committee**

The principle is that Nominations Committee does not recommend its own members. There needs to be a definite process, agreed upon by the Meeting, for discerning the names for the Nominations Committee itself. For example:

- by bringing them forward on the floor of a Meeting for Worship for Business
- by bringing them forward by an ad hoc committee, appointed by the Meeting for Worship for Business.

As with all other nominations, these names are brought forward to a Meeting for Worship for Business for acceptance.

An effective Nominations Committee needs loving and proactive support from the whole Meeting.

### **2.3.4 Local Meeting Clerk**

*Guidelines: The Clerk is the servant of the Meeting. 'Remember the onerous task laid upon the clerk and do all you can to assist.'*

*(Quaker Faith & Practice, 3.12 and 3.10, 5th edn, 2013)*

The Local Meeting Clerk, or clerking team, however constituted, has specific responsibilities for the Local Meeting.

The Local Meeting Clerk:

- monitors the practical functioning of the Local Meeting
- liaises closely with other Local Meeting office-holders and committees
- receives and responds to postal mail and emails to the Local Meeting
- responds to enquiries about the Local Meeting or Quakers in general
- prepares the agenda for the Meeting for Worship for Business,
- endeavours, with the assistance of Elders, to conduct the Business Meeting in a spirit of worship
- arranges that all matters are dealt with in a timely manner
- records minutes of the Meeting ([1.4](#))
- distributes the minutes in a timely manner to the Friends within the Local Meeting and to the Regional Meeting Clerk
- follows up on matters decided at the Meeting for Worship for Business

- ensures that announcements are given after Meeting for Worship or at some other suitable time.

Some tasks may be delegated to other Friends.

### **2.3.5 Local Meeting Treasurer**

The Local Meeting Treasurer takes responsibility for the finances of the Local Meeting. The Treasurer may be supported by an Assistant Treasurer, Bookkeeper or Finance Committee.

The Local Meeting Treasurer carries out whichever of the following tasks are appropriate for their Local Meeting, in consultation with the Regional Meeting Treasurer ([2.5.2](#)).

The Local Meeting Treasurer may:

- operate bank accounts, preferably in consultation with the Regional Meeting
- receive monies, make regular payments, as agreed upon by the Meeting, and special payments, as minuted
- provide regular financial reports for the Meeting for Worship for Business
- prepare the annual budget for approval by the Meeting for Worship for Business
- advise the Meeting if the signatories on current or investment accounts need updating
- advise on investing funds that are not required for expected expenses. Meetings are advised to consider sustainable and ethical investments
- arrange for specific professional financial advice, as required.

The annual letter asking for financial contributions from Friends is handled differently in different Regional Meetings.

Local Meeting Treasurers may need to:

- calculate the financial contribution to be requested to cover the needs of the Local Meeting budget. This may, or may not, also need to cover the contribution by the Meeting to the Regional Meeting (which includes the amount requested by AYM)
- send the annual letter asking for financial contributions, in conjunction with the Regional Meeting Treasurer. The letter also mentions special Quaker purposes to which Friends may wish to contribute
- transfer the annual contribution to the Regional Meeting, if required.

If the Local Meeting is incorporated, the Treasurer may be required to be a Member, and will probably have additional tasks, such as:

- arranging for auditing of the accounts
- reporting annually to relevant state or Commonwealth bodies.

### **2.3.6 Local Meeting Ministry and Oversight/Care Committees — general**

Guidelines: *Loving care is not something [we] ‘do’ for others but a process that binds us together.*

(*Quaker Faith & Practice*, 12.01, 5th edn 2013)

Caring for the life of the Meeting has two main aspects:

- caring for the spiritual life of individuals and of the Meeting as a whole
- other aspects of caring for the well-being of Friends.

While all Friends share in the responsibility for the life of the Meeting, there have traditionally been two main committees especially focused on these two functions.

The Ministry Committee, or Elders, have been responsible for the spiritual life of the Meeting, while the Care or Oversight Committee, or Overseers — now often referred to as Pastoral Carers — have been responsible for other ways of nurturing Meeting life.

Current practice varies. Local Meetings may maintain separate Ministry and Oversight Committees, or combine roles and duties. These combined committees, often called a ‘Ministry and Oversight’ or ‘Ministry and Care’, may agree, as a committee, that individual members share all duties of both Elders and Overseers, or that individuals may serve in either capacity according to their gifts. The handbook does not prescribe how these responsibilities are fulfilled by each Meeting. Each Meeting decides how these roles or duties will be fulfilled.

The following sections look at the roles or duties in:

1. nurturing the spiritual life
2. caring for other aspects of the life of the Meeting.

These responsibilities overlap, particularly in their care for children, Enquirers and Attenders, and those Members who may not attend Meeting due to isolation, illness or age. If Ministry and Oversight/Care are separate committees, they will need to cooperate closely.

Either Ministry or Care Committees may be asked to support Safe Quaker Community and Child Protection Contact Friends. It may be helpful for Contact Friends to meet from time to time with the committee that supports them.

Either Ministry or Care Committees may also be asked to discern which Friends should be given financial support to attend Yearly Meeting or other opportunities.

Whether appointing members to separate committees, or to combined Ministry and Oversight/Care Committees, the qualities looked for are very similar: Friends who have empathy and related spiritual gifts, and are also experienced in our traditions.

Very experienced Attenders may occasionally be appointed in eldering roles. Fulfilling the more practical caring roles requires Friends who are familiar with the Local Meeting and the ways of Friends.

It is important that all Quaker events that are under the auspices of a Quaker Meeting are reported to the AYM Secretary ahead of time, both for insurance and child protection reasons. Examples of AYM events include Yearly Meeting itself, the Junior Young Friends camp at Yearly Meeting and, at Easter, Young Friends' activities.

Events held by Regional Meetings, such as retreats and camps, must be referred to the Regional Meeting Child Protection Contact Friends and Regional Meeting Clerk for similar reasons.

#### **2.3.6.1 Nurturing the spiritual life of the Meeting — Eldership/Ministry Committee duties**

The Eldership/Ministry Committee:

- meets regularly in regard to support of the spiritual life of the Meeting
- encourages all Friends to deepen their spiritual life, e.g. by attending gatherings and courses, and by reading Quaker material, as well as other literature on spirituality and social witness (including online resources)
- encourages Friends to find their gifts
- encourages the practice of inner stillness so that all may come to Meeting for Worship with hearts and minds prepared
- ensures that the Meeting for Worship is conducted in accordance with Friends' practice. Elders normally encourage Friends to arrive punctually.
- arranges the closing of the Meeting for Worship, e.g. by shaking or holding hands

- encourages appropriate spoken ministry, and gently advises Friends when their spoken ministry is not appropriate. Such advice is usually given after discernment with the Ministry Committee. In considering inappropriate ministry, having two Elders approach the Friend may offer better care within the situation. In sensitive situations, please refer to section [4.7](#)
- promotes the regular use of *Advices and Queries*, e.g. during Meeting for Worship
- coordinates and/or organises Quaker learning sessions or opportunities, e.g. 'Quaker Basics', and other topics of interest to the spiritual life of the Meeting
- is aware of Friends who may be stressed in their daily life. Provides a deep listening space as required. Refers individual Friends to professional support if relevant
- maintains contact with Isolated Friends, Worshipping Groups and Recognised Meetings in the region.

### **2.3.6.2 Responsibilities in other aspects of Meeting life — Oversight/Care Committee**

The Local Meeting Care/Oversight Committee consists of Friends who are familiar with the Local Meeting and the ways of Friends. This Committee is concerned for the well-being of Friends.

The Oversight/Care Committee:

- ensures that the practicalities of holding Meetings for Worship and other activities in the Meeting House are carried out. These may include opening the premises, welcoming Friends, ensuring refreshments are provided. A roster may be helpful.
- in conjunction with the Ministry Committee, ensures that appropriate arrangements are in place for the spiritual nurture of our children and for their safety when in our company
- encourages and provides information to Attenders who are considering Membership, in conjunction with the Ministry Committee
- coordinates visits to Friends who, due to geographic isolation, illness, age or infirmity, are not able to attend Meeting for Worship
- encourages Quaker learning opportunities, including special gatherings or residential weekends, in conjunction with the Ministry Committee
- assists in maintaining an up-to-date list of Members and Attenders, including contact details
- supports all to feel safe, both physically and emotionally, and works to prevent bullying or harassment
- promotes awareness of the *Safe Quaker Community Policy* and its obligations and



queries within the Meeting

- supports Friends who are married under the care of their Meeting
- encourages community among Friends.

### **2.3.7 Other Local Meeting office-holders and committees**

A Local Meeting may appoint individuals and committees to fulfil any other roles which may be useful, such as **Finance, Hospitality, Outreach and Premises**. If a Local Meeting is incorporated, it will also need a Public Officer (see also [2.5.3](#)).

Most Local Meetings will wish to appoint the following:

**A Children's Committee.** The spiritual development of children is an important part of the Society's responsibilities ([3.6](#)). Arrangements differ between Meetings, depending on the number of children involved and the availability of carers. A guide to planning a program of age-appropriate material is available from the AYM Children and JYF Coordinator ([CJYFCoordinator@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:CJYFCoordinator@quakersaustralia.info)) or from the AYM Children and JYF Committee. Children's Committees should be very familiar with the AYM *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* ([www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies)).

A **Librarian** (perhaps supported by a Library Committee), who organises the free-lending library of Quaker and other material and promotes its resources to Friends.

An **Archivist**, who is responsible for the preservation and accessibility of all Local Meeting archives (usually limited to minutes, agendas and background papers, photographs, financial reports and other significant materials). Some archives may be confidential, and the Archivist is in charge of ensuring the safe-keeping of these. Assistance may be sought from the Regional and Australia Yearly Meeting archivists.

## **2.4. Regional Meetings**

### **2.4.1 General**

#### **2.4.1.1. Regional Meeting Regions**

The seven Regional Meetings that together make up Australia Yearly Meeting are geographically defined. The borders mainly correspond to state and territory borders.

Friends in South Australia and the Northern Territory are one Regional Meeting, SANTRM.

Canberra and Region Quakers' (CRQ) defined area consists of the Australian Capital Territory and that part of New South Wales south of a line drawn from Nowra to Cowra, and thence down the Lachlan River to the Murrumbidgee River, and then to the Victorian border.

NSW Regional Meeting includes Friends in the remainder of NSW.

Each of the other Australian States has a Regional Meeting.

#### **2.4.1.2 Responsibilities/Tasks/Roles of Regional Meetings**

Each Regional Meeting is financially separate and legally incorporated, according to laws of the relevant state or territory. Australia Yearly Meeting is incorporated in the ACT as a separate entity.

The responsibilities of the Regional Meeting office-holders, which include the legal responsibilities associated with their roles (e.g. incorporation, employing staff, owning property) are in addition to their responsibilities in their Local Meeting.

In some Regional Meetings, there are no Local Meetings, and therefore the Regional Meeting office-holders take on these responsibilities.

In other Regional Meetings, there are Local Meetings with their own office-holders. The Regional Meeting office-holders are separate appointments from the Local Meeting office-holders.

Each individual Friend's Membership is of a Regional Meeting. Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM) (Chapter 5) is an affiliation of the Regional Meetings. Therefore, all Regional Meeting Members are members of AYM.

The Regional Meeting:

- establishes and supports Worshipping Groups, Recognised and Local Meetings in the region ([2.2](#), [2.3](#))
- makes an annual financial contribution to Australia Yearly Meeting
- holds Meetings for Worship for Business to deal with issues raised by constituent Worship Meetings and particular matters such as:
  - testing Concerns ([1.5](#))

- issuing public statements ([2.6.1](#))
- Membership of the Society ([3.4](#), [3.5](#))
- marriages and commitment ceremonies ([4.3](#))
- Testimonies to the Grace of God in the life of a deceased Friend ([4.6.4](#))
- may own property such as a Meeting House, and complies with all appropriate legislative and regulatory requirements associated with property ownership
- keeps records of Regional Meeting membership, activities and finances
- issues a regular newsletter, which may be in electronic format ([2.5.3](#))
- maintains a Regional Meeting webpage, as part of the AYM website
- provides minutes for Friends travelling under Concern, on request
- supports any AYM committee ([5.3.7.3](#)) that Yearly Meeting has entrusted to the Regional Meeting, and that the Regional Meeting has agreed to take under its care
- holds an annual general meeting (AGM) as a legally incorporated body, and complies with all appropriate legislative and regulatory requirements associated with incorporation
- ensures that the Regional Meeting Clerk prepares an annual report on the spiritual life of the Regional Meeting and its activities. This report is included in *Documents in Advance* ([6.2.5](#)). RM reports mention (among many other topics) any changes of trusts or accounts. The reports from the seven Regional Meetings form, in part, the basis for 'The State of Society' report delivered at Yearly Meeting.

#### **2.4.2 Properties**

All Meeting for Worship locations are listed on the AYM website. Some of these premises are owned by Meetings.

A Regional or Local Meeting may own property: a Meeting House, a shop (e.g. the Quaker Shop in Adelaide) or a burial site. The office-holders of the Meeting that owns the property carry the legal responsibility for the property's compliance with regulations, its safety, and adequate insurance cover.

Depending on local circumstances, the legal owner of the property can delegate the day-to-day management of the Meeting House or of other property to the Local Meeting that is based there or to a Property or Premises Committee. The day-to-day management usually consists of tasks such as cleaning, ongoing maintenance and ensuring the property meets compliance and safety standards. The Local or Regional Meeting may appoint a committee to carry out such tasks.

Friends are reminded that property security (e.g. key holders and users) may be important for child protection and the provision of a safe environment.

Meetings are encouraged to share their property with the local community, including hiring the Meeting House to compatible organisations.

### **2.4.3 Regional Meetings for Worship for Business**

Please see 1.4 for a general outline of our meetings for church affairs, or Meetings for Worship for Business. The section below focuses on the responsibilities of these meetings at a regional level.

A major function of a Regional Meeting is holding regular Meetings for Worship for Business.

The number and frequency of Business Meetings, how special Business Meetings are arranged, the notice of Meeting that is required, and the quorum of Friends required to be present will vary according to each Regional Meeting's incorporation rules.

It is expected generally that good Quaker practice means that each Regional Meeting will hold no fewer than three Meetings for Worship for Business each year. Many Regional Meetings hold them monthly. Regional Meetings are conducted in the same way as Local Meetings for Worship for Business ([1.4](#)).

Matters considered at Regional Meetings for Worship for Business include Membership, spiritual leadings and Concerns (which may be personal or societal), management of finances, local activities, maintenance of premises, compliance with external bodies (such as the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)) as required, and responding to matters in minutes, Standing Committee or Yearly Meeting *Documents in Advance*.

The agenda may also contain matters that have been discerned and referred by Worship Meetings or by hosted AYM committees within the region, perhaps in preparation for later attention at Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee.

Normally, matters raised by an individual Friend are first discerned by their own Worshipping Group, Recognised or Local Meeting before being placed on the agenda at a Regional Meeting.

Everything concerned with Membership of the Society ([3.4](#), [3.5](#)) is decided by Regional Meetings, unless the Regional Meeting chooses to delegate this to the Local Meeting in a particular case.

Decisions reached at a Meeting for Worship for Business are carefully recorded (see [1.4](#)). Minutes are usually emailed to all Friends within the Regional Meeting (Clerks and correspondents are responsible for making them available to Friends without email) and to the AYM Secretary and other Regional Meeting Clerks. If appropriate, they may be copied to the Presiding Clerk, the AYM Treasurer and/or relevant committees.

The Regional Meeting Archivist ([2.5.3](#)) is responsible for preserving and making accessible Regional Meeting archives, including minutes, agendas and background papers ([2.5.1](#), [5.2.7](#)).

## **2.5 Regional Meeting office-holders and committees**

### **2.5.1 Regional Meeting Clerk**

The Regional Meeting Clerk or Clerking Team is the servant of the Meeting, central to communication within the region, and their responsibilities are similar to the Local Meeting Clerk's (see [2.3.4](#) above). The Clerking Team liaises closely with other Regional Meeting office-holders and the region's Local Meeting Clerks.

Clerks may be required to be Members, as all Regional Meetings are incorporated bodies.

Clerks are responsible for ensuring all decisions of the gathered Meeting for Worship for Business, and all responsibilities listed as the responsibility of the Regional and Local Meeting are carried out (see [2.4.1](#) and [2.3.2](#) above).

The Regional Meeting Clerk is also responsible for the Regional Meeting's annual report, which is based on Local Meeting and committee reports, and which is published each year in *Documents in Advance* ([5.2.3](#)).

An Assistant Clerk is usually appointed to support the Regional Meeting Clerk, if there is no Co-Clerk or Clerking Team.

### **2.5.2 RM treasurers and bank accounts**

The Regional Meeting Treasurer is responsible for the Regional Meeting's finances, and has responsibilities similar to the Local Meeting Treasurer's (see [2.3.5](#)).

Treasurers may be required to be Members, as part of their Regional Meeting's incorporation requirements. Regional Meeting accounts will often be required to be audited annually, and the Regional Meeting Treasurer may be required to meet other statutory requirements.

Much of the Society's income results from an annual written request from Regional Meeting Treasurers to Friends in their Regional Meeting.

The usual process is:

1. The AYM Treasurer informs the Regional Meeting Treasurer of the annual amount required from the Regional Meeting to meet the AYM budgeted expenses. This is based on an average amount per adult Member.

The Regional Meeting Treasurer budgets for (1) the expected annual expenses of the Regional Meeting and (2) the amount required to meet the AYM Treasurer's request.

2. The Regional Meeting Treasurer produces a budget for their Regional Meeting, which will cover both the required AYM support contribution, and the anticipated income and expenditure of the Regional Meeting.
3. Once this is approved by Regional Meeting, the Regional/Local Meeting Treasurer writes to Members (and possibly Attenders), briefly explaining the budget, and inviting individuals to contribute to the financial needs of the Regional Meeting and other Quaker funds. This is sometimes known as the 'schedule letter'.
  - a. When there are Local Meeting Treasurers, the Regional Meeting Treasurer informs the Local Meeting Treasurers of the amount required from the Local Meeting.
  - b. The Local Meeting Treasurer will have budgeted the finances required for the expenses of the Local Meeting, and adds this to the Regional Meeting request (which includes their proportion of the AYM and Regional Meeting amounts). Local Friends are informed of the required amount.

- c. The Local Meeting Treasurer transfers the annual amount to the Regional Meeting Treasurer.

In order to comply with Regional Meeting Incorporation requirements, it is important for Regional Meetings to be aware of bank accounts and investments held by committees and unincorporated meetings within their Region. It is important for all Meetings to be able to access their funds if a treasurer were to become incapacitated.

### **2.5.3 Other Regional Meeting office-holders**

**Regional Meeting Registering Officers.** Each Regional Meeting appoints two or more Registering Officers to oversee marriages according to Friends' usages ([4.3](#)).

The Religious Society of Friends is a religious denomination recognised under the federal *Marriage Act 1961*, so, as the equivalent of a registered minister of religion, a Quaker Registering Officer may register marriages in any state or territory in Australia.

Marriages, births and deaths are registered in the registry office established under state or territory legislation.

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages of the state or territory in which the Registering Officer usually resides is notified of each new appointment. The officer's name is added to the state or territory's list of ministers of religion authorised as celebrants, and the Registering Officer is allotted a registration number.

The relevant registry must be notified in writing when a Registering Officer ceases to hold that position.

More information on marriage procedure and the role of the officiating Registering Officer is to be found in [4.3.1](#).

A Registering Officer is not needed for **commitment ceremonies**, ([4.3.2](#)) **funerals** ([4.6.2](#)) and **Memorial Meetings** ([4.6.3](#)) These can be arranged and conducted by any Friends chosen by the Worshipping Group, Local, Recognised or Regional Meeting. It is usual and useful to have a small ad hoc committee of Friends to help arrange these events, to share the workload, build community and ensure the events are carried out fittingly.

The **Regional Meeting Membership Secretary** maintains an up-to-date contact database of Members and Attenders (including children) within the Regional Meeting, as well as recording transfers of Membership and other details.

A list of Members is normally required under incorporation legislation, and the list may be required to include office-holders and their dates of appointment.

The Regional Meeting Membership list is a sub-set of the AYM membership database. It is used to update the annual AYM Membership statement in *Documents in Advance* ([5.2.3](#)).

The **Regional Meeting Public Officer** is the representative of the Regional Meeting in regard to its legal registration as an incorporated body.

The Public Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Regional Meeting operates within the legal framework of the state or territory. This usually involves each year informing the state's Registrar General of Associations, and the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (ACNC), of the Regional Meeting accounts, changes of executive office-bearers and any alterations to the rules of incorporation.

The AYM Public Officer has similar responsibilities ([5.2.6](#)).

The **Regional Meeting Newsletter Editor** or Co-Editors produce a regular newsletter for distribution within the Regional Meeting. This may be in any format.

The newsletter is a useful source of information on recent and future events, reports of Business Meetings, news of members, changes of address, and articles and spiritual writings by members of the Regional Meeting.

Copies are sent to the Regional Meeting Archivist, to the other Regional Meeting Editors and Librarians and to the AYM Secretary. There is also a legal requirement to deposit a copy of all publications with the relevant state library.

**Children's Committee.** The duties of a Regional Meeting Children's Committee, if appointed, are similar to the Local Meeting Children's Committee (see [2.3.7](#)).



**Librarian.** The duties of a Regional Meeting Librarian, if appointed, are similar to the Local Meeting Librarian's (see [2.3.7](#)). The Regional Meeting Librarian may arrange for Worship Meetings to access library resources.

**Archivist.** The duties of a Regional Meeting Archivist, if appointed, are similar to the Local Meeting Archivist's (see [2.3.7](#)). The Regional Meeting Archivist maintains contact with the Australia Yearly Meeting Archivist ([5.2.7](#)).

A Regional Meeting may appoint individuals and committees to fulfil any other roles that may be useful, such as **Finance, Hospitality, Outreach and Premises**.

#### **2.5.4 Regional Meeting Nominations Committee**

The Regional Meeting Nominations Committee acts in the same way as its counterpart in a Local Meeting ([2.3.3](#)).

Other nominations are:

- two Regional Meeting representatives for Standing Committee ([5.3.8.1](#))
- two Child Protection Contact Friends ([4.2.2](#))
- two Safe Quaker Community Contact Friends ([4.2.3](#))
- one representative for each of the following:
  - the local Council of Churches
  - AYM Nominations Committee ([5.3.8.2](#))
  - Quaker Service Australia (QSA)
  - AYM Quaker World Connections Committee (QWCC) ([5.4.6](#))
  - Quaker Service Australia Linkages Committee (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/QSALinkages>)
  - The Friends' School Quaker Values Committee ([5.4.2](#))
- Website Maintainer
- Membership Secretary
- specific nominations for the duration of Yearly Meeting, including Elders and Pastoral Carers.

An effective Nominations Committee needs loving and proactive support from the whole Regional Meeting.

### 2.5.5 Regional Meeting Elders and Overseers/Carers

A Regional Meeting may have Elders and Overseers, whose duties would be as for those of their Local Meeting equivalents ([2.3.6](#)). A Regional Meeting Ministry and Care Committee is a common pattern, but Regional Meetings differ in their specific arrangements for spiritual and pastoral care.

An effective Ministry and Care Committee has a leadership role in developing the spiritual life of, and caring for, the Meeting.

Examples of such leadership may include:

- organising annual Regional Meeting gatherings
- organising occasional or regular Regional Meeting workshops
- staying in touch with isolated Friends within their Regional Meeting.

It needs loving support from the whole Regional Meeting.

If a Ministry and Care Committee is not appointed at Regional Meeting level, ad hoc appointments can be made for specific tasks.

### 2.6 AYM Publications

Both print and digital publications are produced within our Australian Quaker community: some are requested and approved by Yearly Meeting itself; some are suggested by AYM committees or Regional Meetings; others arise leading from small groups or individual Friends.

Examples include:

- the AYM website, <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/> and our seekers' website: [www.quakersaustralia.org.au](http://www.quakersaustralia.org.au)
- *The Australian Friend*: <https://australianfriend.org/>
- the AYM *Secretary's Newsletter*
- AYM social **media** (see below)
- books which speak for the whole of AYM, such as *this we can say* (2003)
- books, pamphlets that may primarily be relevant to a single Regional Meeting
- The Backhouse Lectures (annual)
- AYM pamphlets
- **this handbook**
- *YM Documents in Advance* and *Documents in Retrospect*

## **Social media**

AYM has two Facebook accounts – one public and one ‘private’ (based on Friends being granted sign-in access). The AYM Facebook accounts are curated by the AYM Secretary.

In addition, AYM committees and Meetings may have their own social media presence.

For guidelines please see: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/social-media-guidelines-0>

## **Role of the AYM Publications Committee**

**The AYM Publications committee is responsible for all publications issued in the name of Australia Yearly Meeting.** Friends who are led to write and share their writing within the wider Australian Quaker community are advised to first seek the advice and discernment of their Regional Meeting. The regional meeting having agreed that the publication is suitable for wider distribution can then send the text to the AYM Publications Committee. The Committee can provide advice and options for editing, layout and publishing and also advise on the use of the AYM logo.

**Further details can be found on the AYM website**, including the following guidelines prepared by the committee:

- Guidelines: submitting material to the AYM Publications Committee for consideration 2019
- Guidelines: our shared responsibility for AYM publications 2019

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Publications>

### **2.6.1 Public statements and media statements**

*Guidelines: Only the Presiding Clerk is authorised to deliver or sign public statements, made via any media, on behalf of the whole Society.*

*(Handbook of Practice and Procedure in Australia, 6th edn, 5.2.2, 2011)*

A media statement is a public statement sent to media outlets.

In signing or delivering a public or media statement, the Presiding Clerk will normally consult with the AYM Secretary, who will usually have received a draft statement from either a Yearly Meeting session, an AYM committee or a Regional Meeting.

At times, a Regional Meeting may decide to issue a public statement or write to a state politician or department to make widely known Friends’ views on an important issue.

The statement or letter, if it relates only to state or local matters, does not need to be reviewed by the AYM Secretary and/or Presiding Clerk. It is a courtesy to send a copy to both the Secretary and Presiding Clerk. Normally, a Regional Meeting does not comment on matters that are specific to another Regional Meeting's region.

If a Regional Meeting wishes to communicate with a Commonwealth politician or agency, they are advised to consult with the AYM Secretary and/or Presiding Clerk, to facilitate a consistent approach.

Copies of all public statements and letters are sent to the AYM Secretary ([5.2.3](#)), who can then respond to any inquiries that arise.

### **2.6.2 Social media**

Posts on social media by an individual, group or committee that are clearly identified as from that individual or group, are not 'public statements'.

In publicly upholding Friends' testimonies, sensitivity should be given to the range of conscience and leadings among us.

## Chapter 3 Membership of the Society

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the Society's membership practices and procedures as they affect Enquirers ([3.2](#)), Attenders ([3.3](#)), Members of the Society ([3.4](#)), children, Junior Young Friends ([3.6](#)) and Young Friends ([3.7](#)). Each of these is automatically a member (note the small 'm' in member) of the respective Worship Meeting and Regional Meeting. This chapter focuses on those formally accepted as Members (capital M) of the Society.

### 3.2 Enquirers

Anyone is welcome to come respectfully to a Meeting for Worship, to share the prayerful silence, and to respond inwardly to the sense of worship and the spoken ministry. People new to Quaker ways are usually offered a pamphlet explaining what to expect, and, after the Meeting for Worship, they are welcome to share time with Friends, seek further reading and note coming activities. Many of the activities of Quaker meetings (as well as Meeting for Worship) are open to Enquirers to attend. Sometimes such an activity can provide an alternate pathway for an Enquirer to find out about Quakers.

### 3.3 Attenders

People who attend Meeting for Worship regularly may be invited by their local Ministry and Care Committee to be on the mailing list for newsletters and/or be shown as Attenders in our membership database, accessible at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/organisation> (requires log-in).

The Meeting may encourage Attenders to apply for Membership, when the Attender feels led to do so. Meetings may conduct activities which are intended to help Attenders to understand the processes by which one can progress to Membership.

Attenders may be very active within the Society, e.g. some hold offices or are appointed to appropriate Local Meeting or Regional Meeting committees. They may also receive a copy of the annual request from the Regional Meeting or Local Meeting Treasurer seeking financial contributions to support the work of the Society.

After obtaining the Clerk's permission, Attenders may be present at any Business Meeting and take part in its deliberations, although some Meetings may exclude them from discussion of Membership or some other matters.

Attenders wishing to participate in Yearly Meeting need to have their participation endorsed by Standing Committee through their Regional Meeting.

If an Attender moves into the area of another Meeting, it is helpful for the original Meeting to arrange contact with the appropriate Worship Meeting or Local Meeting or Regional Meeting.

### **3.4 Members**

Membership of the Society is a recognised outward sign of an inner and spiritual commitment to the way of worship, practice and community within the Society. The experience of many Friends is that spiritual growth is enhanced by the formal acceptance of commitment to the spiritual community and acceptance of the responsibilities involved.

#### **3.4.1 Requirements for Membership**

There is no test of doctrine and no outward observance imposed for Membership.

Members aim to be open to inner spiritual experience, be in harmony with Quaker testimonies, and be willing to share in the responsibilities of the Meeting.

Members usually find joy and spiritual refreshment through frequent participation in Meeting for Worship, which is the basis of the life of the Society.

Members are expected to attend Business Meetings whenever possible, and to support the Society financially and in practical ways, within their abilities.

#### **3.4.2 Preparation for applying for Membership**

Points worth considering before applying for Membership are:

- Have I had substantial experience as an Attender?
- Have I felt an increasing awareness of the spiritual dimension of life?
- Am I well acquainted with our testimonies, our beliefs, our origins and *Advices & Queries* [\(1.1\)](#)?

- Am I willing to test my own individual leadings in Spirit-led discussion and discernment with others?
- Am I comfortable to leave my former religious affiliation or with joint membership of both?

### **3.5 Becoming a Member**

#### **3.5.1 Readiness for Membership**

The Society offers a spiritual home for people who value the close linking of personal belief and daily life.

Among the reasons for joining the Society are:

- belonging and making a formal commitment to our spiritual community
- publicly affirming one's support for our Quaker beliefs and practices
- strengthening the Society's witness.

Occasionally Attenders may have hesitations, for example because they feel unworthy of Quakers, or unable to accept the testimonies in full, or have an ongoing allegiance to another church, or have concerns about long-term commitments or financial expectations.

These hesitations need not be an impediment to Membership. Attenders who feel any hesitation are encouraged to discuss the matter with a seasoned Friend.

#### **3.5.2 Application for Membership**

The Regional Meeting in which the applicant attends Meeting for Worship is responsible for Membership applications. The applicant writes personally to the Regional Meeting Clerk, who will acknowledge their email/letter and bring it to the next Regional Meeting for Worship for Business. Most Regional Meetings then follow a similar procedure to the one described below:

- On receipt of an application, the RM Business Meeting ensures the appointment of at least two Visitors who are experienced Friends.
- The Regional Meeting may take into account suggestions for Visitors from the applicant's own Worship Meeting and/or its Oversight Committee, and preferably choose at least one Visitor already known to the applicant.
- The Visitors make contact with the applicant as soon as practicable and arrange a suitable time and place to meet. Possible matters to discuss are indicated below ([3.5.4](#)).

- The Visitors report back in writing at a gathered Regional Meeting for Worship for Business.

### **3.5.3 Considering the Membership application**

When the Visitors report back to the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business, the applicant is normally asked to leave the room while their application is being considered.

After hearing the report from the Visitors, the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business discerns whether to accept the applicant into Membership.

The Clerk writes a minute accordingly, and the applicant, together with their Worship Meeting, is advised as soon as possible. If the applicant is accepted into Membership, the Membership Secretary amends the membership database.

It is important that any applicant receives the support of Friends. This is especially important if an applicant is deemed not ready for Membership.

Usually a new Member is presented with an appropriate book, suitably inscribed.

Applicants' letters and their Visitors' reports may be archived: this could be done in a confidential process to protect privacy. This material can be helpful in preparing the Testimony to the Grace of God in the Friend's life.

### **3.5.4 Advice for Visitors to applicants for Membership**

#### **3.5.4.1 General**

Visitors are encouraged to prepare for meeting the applicant by reading [Chapter 1](#) and section [3.4](#) of this handbook.

The meeting is conducted in a spirit of worship-sharing. The occasion is an opportunity for in-depth sharing, enabling experiences to be exchanged, leading the applicant to a fuller understanding of Quakerism and the implications of Membership.

Sometimes it is evident that the applicant is not ready for Membership, and the Visitors — or indeed the Meeting for Worship for Business — will indicate this to them, gently and with respect.



### **3.5.4.2 Topics to discuss with applicants**

The discussion with the applicant is expected to be free-flowing and responsive to the applicant's needs. Topics that the Visitors ensure are addressed during the visit include:

- The Society's foundation is Christian. How does this heritage speak to the applicant? Are they open to Light from other sources?
- The testimonies ([1.2](#)) and *Advices and Queries* are central to our lives. How do they speak to the applicant?
- Members have responsibilities that include contributing to the spiritual, practical and financial support of the Meeting. Is this a cause for any hesitation?
- Quakers are not free to make public statements or take public action in the name of other Friends or of the Society without prior agreement by the Regional Meeting.

Visitors may also check the applicant's contact details on our membership database.

### **3.5.4.3 Visitors' report of a Membership visit**

In preparing a report for the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business about the visit, Visitors include information about the applicant's religious and spiritual journey towards the Society, and an assessment of where the applicant stands in relation to our principles and testimonies.

The Visitors would:

1. Check with the applicant that no confidential information is included in the report, and the accuracy of factual information.
2. Complete the report in full, offering the Meeting guidance about the applicant's readiness for Membership.
3. Present the report to the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business.

## **3.6 Children and Junior Young Friends**

Meetings are committed to nurturing the spiritual lives of all children and young people in the Quaker community (aged under 18). 'Children' refers to those aged under 12, and young people of the Meeting aged from 12 to 17 inclusive are known as Junior Young Friends (JYFs). They are all an integral part of the Meeting. Meetings have a responsibility to children and young people to nurture their spiritual life, and to put into practice that our children are 'in the care of the Meeting'.

Meetings are encouraged to hold age-appropriate activities for their children and JYFs, offering them opportunities to develop an understanding of Quaker beliefs and practices (1.1). Such sessions are usually held at the same time as Meeting for Worship and are led by approved Child Carers.

Some Meetings schedule all-age Meetings for Worship. Friends are also welcome to bring children to Quaker Meetings for Worship and to Quaker activities.

Carers for the Children's and Junior Young Friends' Meetings and gatherings are appointed according to the Society's Child Protection Policies and Procedures (4.2.2).

Special programs for children and for JYFs are usually arranged at Yearly Meeting (6.2.2). Families are encouraged to participate in Yearly, Regional and Local Meeting activities in order to develop the young people's sense of being part of the broader Quaker community.

The AYM Children and JYFs Coordinator/s and the AYM Children's and JYF's Committee, organise activities such as a regular newsletter, online all-age Meetings for Worship, and gatherings or camps.

In consultation with their parents, a child or JYF may be listed as a Child of the Meeting and counted in the Statement of Membership submitted to Yearly Meeting (6.2.5). These lists are reviewed regularly by the Regional or Local Meeting.

At the age of 18, a young person is no longer a JYF. They are invited in advance to be listed as an adult Attender in the AYM database of Members and Attenders and may choose to join Young Friends. Their Meeting, or the AYM Children and JYFs Coordinator will provide them with contact details for Young Friends. If they wish to become a Member of the Society, they apply to the Clerk of their Regional Meeting in the normal way (see 3.5).

### **3.7 Young Friends**

For further information on Young Friends (YFs) go to the YFs webpage accessed through: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/YF>

Australian Young Friends began in 1886. We are a welcoming community of people aged 18 years to around 30 years. Our activities are conducted and guided by Quaker principles,

especially our involvement in the areas of refugees, environment, the arts and recognition of First Nations Peoples.

There are usually two regular gatherings of YFs, one in the week before Yearly Meeting and another during Easter. In addition, various activities are held between times. YFs are committed to building and maintaining links within our section of Friends World Committee for Consultation — Australia West Pacific Section (FWCC AWPS) and also the global YFs community. YFs have been autonomous since 1982 and we have our own nominations process to fill positions within the group and on relevant AYM committees. Australia Yearly Meeting gives some financial assistance to YFs, and we also arrange our own fund-raising efforts.

YFs welcome newcomers of all varieties, from those who have grown up in a Quaker family, to those who are simply Quaker curious or attend a Quaker Meeting. Although we're based in Australia, visitors from overseas are always welcome.

### **3.8 Isolated Friends**

Some Members and would-be Attenders are unable to regularly attend Meetings for Worship because they live too far from others or for other reasons (e.g. illness). They are encouraged to attend online Meetings for Worship (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/organisation/local-meetings>), engage with Friends through social media, receive newsletters and participate in other Quaker activities ([1.8](#)), as feasible. The AYM website has many resources for isolated Friends and the AYM Secretary can provide further support.

The Regional Meeting, and especially its Ministry and Care Committee ([2.5.5](#)), has a responsibility for remote Friends who live within their region, offering support and caring for their growth as spiritual seekers and as members of the Society of Friends.

### **3.9 Checking our membership database**

Friends are individually responsible for keeping their personal details up to date by notifying the Membership Secretary of any change in their details. Details can be checked at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/friend-finder> (requires log-in).

It is also advisable for Worship Meetings to check their lists regularly.  
The usual process is:

1. The Ministry and Care Committee, or a designated Friend, checks the list and confirms names and contact details are correct.
2. The Ministry and Care Committee, or the designated Friend, decides which names are no longer associated with their Meeting, and may need to be moved to 'Unassigned' or to another Meeting or Worshipping Group or — in rare circumstances — possibly a process to lapse them may be initiated (which must be confirmed by the Regional Meeting). The Ministry and Care Committee, or the designated Friend, also decides if there are names of Attenders that should be added.
3. The Ministry and Care Committee then contacts those individuals about whom there is a doubt or who should be added. Some Attenders may not wish to be added to the list, and this wish needs to be respected. Some Friends who have not attended Meeting for several years may not be ready to change the Meeting with which they have been affiliated, or to discern if they still consider themselves Friends.  
This checking is sometimes the only contact between the Meeting and the Member or Attender, and the Friend making contact (directly if possible) is conscious of the feelings of the person involved.
4. If there are changes to be made after careful discernment, in conjunction with the individuals concerned:
  - a. If the Friend is an Attender or wishes to be registered as an Attender, their name can be added to the membership database directly by the Membership Secretary.
  - b. If the Friend is a Member, then only a change in their contact details can be given to the Regional Meeting Membership Secretary, and then only with their express permission. Any change in the status of a Member (transfer to another Regional Meeting, lapsing, termination) must be brought to a Regional Meeting for Worship for Business for discernment and decision. The Membership Secretary actions the change according to the Regional Meeting minute.

### **3.10 Transfer of Membership**

Every Member of the Society is recorded as belonging to a particular Regional Meeting, usually that within which the Member lives. When a Member moves only temporarily from the area of one Regional Meeting to live within the area of another, their RM Clerk or Membership Secretary may notify the receiving Regional Meeting, but no formal transfer is needed.

However, if the Member moves permanently to another Regional Meeting area, or overseas, a transfer of Membership is usually initiated by the Member through their original Regional Meeting ([Appendix C](#)).

Members of other Yearly Meetings living permanently in Australia are encouraged to have their Membership transferred to the appropriate Regional Meeting here, and their names included in the contact database.

Please see [4.5](#) for more information about travellers, visitors and sojourners.

### **3.11 End of Membership**

#### **3.11.1 Resignation**

A Member may resign from the Society by writing to the Regional Meeting Clerk.

The Regional Meeting Oversight Committee may explore with the resigning Member the reasons for their decision before the resignation is included in the agenda, if the resigning Member wishes.

The resignation is usually formally accepted at a Business Meeting, and the Clerk confirms the fact in writing, indicating that the Meeting would be open to future contact by the former Member.

#### **3.11.2 Lapsing**

A Membership may be recorded by the Regional Meeting as having lapsed if:

- the Member has had no contact with the Meeting for at least three years
- and**
- the Oversight Committee has had no success in tracing the Member
  - or the Member does not respond to reasonable attempts to contact them
  - or, when asked if they wish to continue to be a Member, their response is negative or ambiguous.

#### **3.11.3 Termination**

On rare occasions, if a Member has brought the Society into disrepute or taken action clearly contrary to Quaker principles and practices, a Regional Meeting may take the initiative in ending the person's Membership. Such a step is to be undertaken only after

prayerful discernment and taking into account the pain likely to be felt by the person concerned.

The Regional Meeting must abide by the relevant parts of the respective Rules of Incorporation of the Regional Meeting and Australia Yearly Meeting ([www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources)) when dealing with such situations, as well as the grievance policies of the Society ([4.8](#)).

## Chapter 4 Caring for one another

### Part 1: Life milestones

#### 4.1 Introduction

The Ministry and/or Oversight Committees ([2.3.6](#), [2.5.5](#)) share the pastoral role in each Meeting, caring generally for all who belong. Particular aspects of caring for one another are arranged in rough chronological order in this section of the handbook.

#### 4.2 Birth

In some Local Meetings, caring begins with the informal recognition of a new child arriving within the family of a member of the Meeting. This might involve a simple acknowledgment, welcoming the newcomer into the community as a 'child of the Meeting'. Parents may be invited to have their child recorded in the membership database.

##### 4.2.1 Spiritual nurture and care of children

For legal reasons, all who are under the age of 18 years and associated with Friends, are included in the category 'children'. Some of our children by right of age are also given the designation Junior Young Friends ([3.6](#)).

The birth of a child is usually a reason for celebration. The Meeting will join the family in welcoming the arrival. Some parents (in consultation with Ministry Committee) devise ceremonies to establish their child as part of the Meeting, others simply bring the child to Meeting with them.

Friends assist the changing family through spiritual and practical initiatives, for example babies may be 'minded' to enable the family to fully participate in worship.

As children grow and mature, the Meeting may provide opportunities for learning about Quakerism and for developing their own spirituality ([2.3.7](#)). This may occur during Meeting time or through other especially arranged events.

Being a small community, we encourage opportunities for our children to develop relationships with other Quakers (children and adults). This may occur through 'gatherings away', Yearly Meeting, family camps and the Penn Friends Program.

Meetings are helped in this by the work of the Children and JYFs Committee ([www.quakersaustralia.info/CJYF](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/CJYF)) and the employment of a Children and JYFs Coordinator.

Through all of this, Quakers recognise that we have a duty of care, morally and legally, to our children (including JYFs). The *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* help us to ensure that this duty is fulfilled. Please see: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies>

### **Penn Friends**

Penn Friends (after William Penn) are ‘written correspondence friendships’ (often now by email) between older Friends and children who often belong to another Meeting. Penn Friendships are established and renewed at the Penn Friends morning/afternoon tea at YM. Such friendships help grow the child’s Quaker knowledge.

### **4.2.2 Protection of children**

We are committed to providing a safe environment for all in our care, especially children. Please see the next section in this chapter, **Caring for one another: support and conflict** ([4.7](#) and [4.8](#)) for further information on caring for adult Friends.

AYM approved the *Child Protection Policy and Procedures*, a document setting out general principles, in 2007 (updated in 2015): <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies>

The policy applies to all activities conducted by Australian Quaker Meetings or groups.

If any activity for children of a Meeting involves other organisations, our child protection procedures operate in conjunction with theirs.

The more detailed version of the policy appropriate to local legal requirements is available from the RM’s designated Child Protection Contact Friend listed on the Society’s website: [www.quakersaustralia.info/ChildProtect](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/ChildProtect)

The policy outlines the responsibilities of a number of roles within AYM related to the care and protection of minors.



### **A. Role of Yearly Meeting Secretary**

The Secretary maintains a centralised register of the names of Approved Child Carers in each Regional Meeting and also oversees the annual audit of child protection practices in Australian Quaker Meetings.

### **B. Role of Yearly Meeting Child Protection Committee**

The Society appoints a Child Protection Committee, the members of which are selected for their expertise in the area of child protection. This committee, with assistance from the AYM Secretary, is responsible for:

- providing support to RM Child Protection Contact Friends in carrying out their roles
- bringing to the attention of the Society the need for changes to the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*
- ensuring that the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures* is up-to-date and consistent with the *Handbook of Quaker Practice and Procedure*
- developing and updating the template for the annual audit of child protection practices conducted by Regional Meetings and organisers of all activities authorised by or under the control of the Society
- reviewing the annual audits of child protection practices and reporting to Standing Committee and/or Yearly Meeting on compliance with the *AYM Child Protection Policy and Procedures*, as well as legal and insurance requirements of all activities authorised by or under the control of the Society.

### **C. Role of RM Child Protection Contact Friend (CPCF)**

A Child Protection Contact Friend is a person appointed by a Regional Meeting to be responsible for child protection matters and to ensure that the Society's child protection procedures conform with the requirements of the relevant jurisdiction. The Contact Friends will each hold a current Working with Children check (or equivalent). Each RM Child Protection Contact Friend is responsible for administering a register of approved Quaker Child Carers and keeping it up to date. Each Contact Friend sends a report to AYM each year through *Documents in Advance*. This report may also be tabled at the RM's AGM.

The main concern of the Child Protection Contact Friend is the protection of children from abuse (physical, sexual and/or emotional) and/or neglect. This is done by ensuring that all activities for those aged 17 and younger are supervised by a **Child Carer** (appointed by the Regional Meeting) with the assistance of either at least one **Helper** or another Carer.

## **Definitions**

A **Child Carer** is someone aged 18 or older, paid or unpaid, who is responsible for taking care of children in any recognised activity of the Society. Carers who are paid need to be suitably qualified, and unpaid volunteers must have been locally active in the Society for at least six months. Child Carers are accredited, as described below.

A **Helper** is a Carer's unpaid assistant, aged 16 or older, and familiar with the *Child Protection Policy and Procedures*. Helpers must be aware that they are subject to the supervision of, and accountable to, the Child Carer.

## **Process of appointing RM Child Carers**

Potential Child Carers are screened carefully by interviewers appointed by the relevant Regional Meeting. Prior to the interview, the applicant writes to their Local Meeting, giving personal details, relevant qualifications for working with children, and details of two referees. For full information on the process and requirements, please see:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/ChildProtect>

The outcome of the interview is communicated to the RM Clerk and to the Child Protection Contact Friend, as well as to the applicant. The names of those Friends accepted by the committee are added to an RM Register of Child Carers. Maintaining this register is the responsibility of the Child Protection Contact Friends. All application papers are archived, using a confidential archives process. It is not essential to maintain a register of Helpers, although it might be useful.

Every state and territory has regulations requiring government registration of child carers (and helpers). These regulations must be complied with as well as the Regional Meeting interview and separate registration process.

### **4.2.3 Safe Quaker Community**

Australian Friends recognise a duty of care for everyone involved with the Society, and an obligation to uphold Quaker traditions and testimonies as durable foundations for treating everyone with dignity and respect. We recognise that we cannot be complacent in this matter by relying on our commitment to integrity and loving, trusting, respectful relationships among our Members and Attenders. AYM has appointed the Safe Quaker Community Committee to support Friends to:

- provide a safe environment for all
- promote sustaining, healthy relationships between people
- provide appropriate support and assistance for persons
- challenge violence, oppression, discrimination and abuse
- express our faith and principles in action
- provide an environment that is conducive to these aims.

Each Regional Meeting appoints two Safe Quaker Community Contact Friends who participate in the AYM Safe Quaker Community Contact Friends network. For further information about Safe Quaker Community is on the Quakers Australia website:

[www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies)

### **4.3 Committed relationships, including marriage**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

Friends recognise the spiritual enrichment possible within an enduring and unselfish relationship, providing mutual support and tenderness. Quakers seek to care for all such relationships within the Meeting, to foster loving and positive lives.

Friends support people who make a long-term and deep commitment of love and support to one another; and the following sections set out how a couple, of whom at least one has significant contact with the Society, may seek support from their Regional Meeting to acknowledge their commitment publicly, either through marriage or a ceremony of commitment.

Also set out are the responsibilities of that Meeting in ensuring the right holding of the ceremony, and the legal requirements when the couple wish to register their marriage. Some of the more detailed requirements including the role of the Registering Officer are set out in below.

Friends regard marriage and commitment as principally of a spiritual nature.

On the other hand, Commonwealth and State legislatures define the secular legal effects of a range of relationships, and each couple needs to assess the legal implications relevant to their relationship.

*For the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests' or magistrates'; for it is God's ordinance, not man's; and therefore Friends cannot*

*consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord's work, and we are but witnesses.*

(George Fox 1669 in *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 16.01)

All couples should understand that there are legal and financial consequences for couples living together, even if there has not been a public declaration through marriage or commitment.

#### **4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment**

Quaker partners wishing to declare their mutual commitment during a special Meeting for Worship write to the appropriate Regional Meeting Clerk to ask that the Meeting agree to recognise the relationship, and agree to a time and a place for a special Meeting for Worship for this purpose. A marriage or commitment celebrated 'in the care of the Meeting' will be supported by that Meeting and its Ministry and Oversight/Care Committee as for any other Quaker Concern.

Sufficient time must be allowed for permission by a Regional Meeting. This would normally be through a scheduled Regional Meeting for Worship for Business, but other arrangements may be made (such as, but not limited to, a Clearness Meeting or special Meeting for Worship for Business) where time constraints require an early decision.

Before agreeing to a couple's request, the Regional Meeting, usually through a Registering Officer, establishes that both partners understand fully the nature of their commitment and that there is no spiritual or legal impediment. A Clearness Meeting could be offered. Regional Meetings throughout Australia treat equally all requests for celebration of marriage or commitment within our Meetings in accordance with Friends' usages, regardless of the sexual orientation or gender of each of the partners.

If the couple wish to register their marriage legally, there are formal procedures to be followed, and the Registering Officer will advise.

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 *Quaker Marriage And Committed Relationships* at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets>, this may be considered at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business before the appointed date. It is likely that the Regional Ministry and

Oversight/Care Committee will be asked to advise, as well as the Registering Officer. All ceremonies are minuted at a subsequent Meeting for Worship for Business.

At YM20, Friends were not in unity on the wording of the following section. The Handbook Revision Committee has prepared a new draft for consideration at YM22. See:

<https://tinyurl.com/46m3rf3j>

A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment within our Meeting House and 'in the manner of Friends'. They write to the appropriate Clerk to ask that the Meeting agree to such a ceremony, and agree to a time and a place. This decision is normally discerned by the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business.

#### **4.3.3 Affirming and witnessing a marriage or commitment**

The Society gladly celebrates a solemn commitment by two persons to be loving and faithful partners to each other throughout their lives. The ceremony is a public Meeting for Worship, and Friends are encouraged to be present to witness this affirmation, to show their acceptance and encouragement of the relationship and to demonstrate that it is under the care of the Meeting — in other words, that their Meeting upholds and supports the couple and their relationship, just as it does any other Quaker Concern.

A pamphlet Quaker Marriage and Committed Relationships is available on the website at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets> and is a useful document, which the couple would find particularly helpful to give, in advance of the ceremony, to non-Quaker friends and family members who will be attending. This pamphlet includes a description of the usual procedure for such a Quaker ceremony.

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.

#### **4.3.4 Marriage and relationship difficulties**

*Guidelines: When ending a relationship entails breaking up a shared home, and especially when children are involved, it is important to consider the feelings of all those affected. Thoughtfulness cannot dissolve irreconcilable differences but loving attention may help to generate creative solutions even in unpromising circumstances.*

*(Quaker Faith & Practice, 22.73, 5th edn, 2013)*

*At YM20, Friends were not in unity on the wording of the following section. The Handbook Revision Committee will prepare alternative wording and submit it for consideration by Friends.*

If a couple find difficulty in maintaining a loving relationship, Friends may be able to help by prayer, listening, Clearness Meetings and practical support.

In offering this help, Friends are sensitive to the feelings of the partners and any children, and ensure that everyone is treated with equal concern and loving care. The Meeting will offer support to all affected, if wished, including personal friends and extended family.

Each situation has to be dealt with on its own merits, without any assumption that a particular solution suits all cases. The support of the Meeting is as important when a couple are struggling with their relationship as it is when the relationship is beginning.

Should there be ongoing difficulties, later sections in Chapter 4, Part 2 may be helpful.

#### **4.4 Other life transitions**

A Quaker Meeting is concerned for the spiritual growth of all its members, upholding them in whatever way seems best throughout their lives, and ensuring that they know about appropriate areas of support available to them. Upholding ill, frail or vulnerable Friends is frequently a major focus of pastoral care. Please see [5.4.3](#) for information on the Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing.

Examples of life transitions include marriage or commitment, birth of a child, change of gender and sexuality, and retirement.

#### **4.5 Care of travellers**

Throughout its history, the Society has derived much spiritual nourishment from intervisitation, either between Meetings or between individual Friends, especially when visits are made to isolated or distant Friends ([3.8](#)). Financial assistance may be available ([5.6.6](#)).

A Friend may have a Concern ([1.5](#)) to undertake Quaker work outside the local area. If this Concern is endorsed by the Yearly Meeting, a Travelling Minute is provided by either the AYM or the RM Clerk. The Travelling Minute states the position of the relevant Clerk, details of the traveller and the traveller's standing in the Quaker community, and the nature of the journey. It gives a succinct account of the work to be undertaken and serves as identification for use in places where the Friend is a stranger. The Clerk of any Meeting being visited usually endorses such a minute with a greeting to the issuing Meeting. At the conclusion of the journeying, the minute is sent to the issuing Meeting for information and for its archives. Preferably a copy is made for the traveller to keep.

Even when Friends are travelling for personal reasons or on private business, they are encouraged to contact other Friends wherever possible. In these circumstances, it is usually appropriate for the Clerk of the traveller's home Local Meeting to issue a Letter of Introduction and Greeting (not to be confused with a Travelling Minute).

Members of Friends' Meetings overseas also travel to Australia, sometimes staying for extended periods, while retaining membership of their home Meeting (referred to as "sojourners" by some YMs). Australian Friends welcome such links to overseas cousins within the global Quaker family.

Such visiting Friends are encouraged to share fully in the life of the local and Australian Quaker community, including at Yearly Meeting.

Regional Meetings may decide to include sojourners in the database of Members and Attenders so they have access to the 'Members only' part of the AYM website and thus to Yearly Meeting attendance information.

Sojourning Friends are recorded in the AYM annual Statement of Membership under the heading of 'Overseas members/ children who live in the RM's area'.

The term 'sojourner' is, at this stage, used by some RMs but not by all. Some RMs also record overseas attenders who are temporarily involved with their Meetings.

Intending travellers are reminded to check the websites of various Yearly Meetings for helpful details about Meetings in Australia and abroad.

## **4.6 End of life**

### **4.6.1 Wills**

Friends are urged to make their wills, and to use professional advice when doing so. This should be done well before there seems any need, to avoid disputes or undesired distribution of their estate. Wills should be reviewed regularly, in times of good health and sound judgment, particularly when personal circumstances change.

Friends are also encouraged to make available information that would be helpful to others at the time of death. A responsible family member or friend may be chosen to hold this information. It will be helpful to give that person the contact details for the Local or Regional Meeting Clerk.

There are very helpful pamphlets on our website. Please see:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets>

Meetings may designate a place where such information can be held in safekeeping for Friends.

Please see [5.6.5](#) for information on making a bequest to the Society and/or Quaker Service Australia.

### **4.6.2 Quaker funerals**

A funeral is about the departure of the body of the deceased, while a Memorial Meeting serves to acknowledge the legacy of the dead person's life, notably the evidence of their spiritual life as shown by their actions in the world.

Both are occasions of tender feelings and of deep reflection on the significance of human existence and the bonds between people, especially within families and a community like



the Religious Society of Friends. During this difficult time, Friends offer support and pastoral care to the families and friends of the deceased.

The conduct of Quaker funerals follows no prescribed pattern. Usually there is a short Meeting for Worship after the manner of Friends, whether at the home, the Meeting House, the crematorium, the funeral home or the graveside.

Whatever the format of the funeral, mourners are usually given a leaflet explaining the conduct of Quaker worship (please see: [www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets)). Meetings may have copies.

Friends are urged to observe simplicity in funeral arrangements and, if relevant, in the choice of gravestones. The Quaker testimonies of equality and simplicity lead us to minimise distinctions in personal status. This continues to be relevant in our memorials of our deceased loved ones.

#### **4.6.3 Memorial Meetings**

A Memorial Meeting may be held at the same time and place as the funeral, or at some other more convenient time. It may be at the Meeting House or elsewhere.

It is helpful at the start of the proceedings for an appointed Friend to give a simple explanation to those assembled of the nature of a Friends' Meeting for Worship and how it will be closed. There are helpful pamphlets at: [www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/publications/australian-publications/pamphlets)

Memorial Meetings are a time for prayer and the upholding of those who mourn, as well as a time to give thanks for the Grace of God in the life of the person who has died.

Music is sometimes played while relatives and friends of the deceased are gathering, but the timing of such music needs to be planned carefully, with the family and friends, so that it does not overwhelm the period of silent worship.

As well as holding Memorial Meetings for deceased Members and regular Attenders of their Local Meeting, Friends occasionally feel it is right to do the same for people who belonged to another Meeting, or were well known to members of the Meeting, or had been associated with the Meeting in the past.

#### **4.6.4 Testimonies to the Grace of God in the lives of our Friends who have died**

*Guidelines: [Our Society] would be an empty shell without the living expression of our faith provided by generations of individual Friends. Our custom of writing testimonies to the grace of God as shown in the lives of Friends provides us with a wealth of material showing ordinary Friends living out their faith from day to day. These testimonies show us that, whatever our circumstances, God can be present with us, and they encourage us each to be faithful to our own calling.*

(From the 'Introduction' to Chapter 18, *Quaker faith and practice online*, Britain Yearly Meeting, 2022)

When Friends learn that a Member or Attender of the Meeting has died, that Meeting initially minutes the death in its next MfWfB. The minute may be brief and factual and is a record of that death.

The Regional Meeting also discerns whether to write a 'Testimony to the Grace of God' in the life of the deceased Friend. If agreed upon, the Meeting needs to ensure that the Friends appointed to write the Testimony fully understand what is involved.

A Testimony is the Meeting's response to the spiritual life of the Friend who has died, often expressed as the 'Grace of God' in that life. It covers such things as: their background, leadings, Concerns, struggles and expressions of their spiritual life. A testimony is succinct – it is neither a chronology nor a eulogy. It requires reflection by the writers to summarise the available information.

When Friends are asked to write a Testimony, they might begin with a factual biography. The Friend may have provided such information to be safely stored by their Meeting. (AYM *Advices and Queries* 31 and 32). This could be added to the entry for that Friend in the *Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography* ([5.5.3](#)) together with other information relevant to the life of the Friend (e.g. an obituary, Curriculum Vitae, mention of writings and publications, a photo). This could be useful to historical researchers.

The Testimony may include:

- date and place of birth and death
- occupation, marriage, children
- date of Membership of the Religious Society of Friends, or length of time in the life of the Meeting

- roles and participation in the life of the Society of Friends and in the wider community
- Concerns and passions.

We are reminded that useful information for the Testimony may arise at the funeral, memorial Meeting or Meeting for thanksgiving.

All of these sources of information may show how the Friend's life revealed their spiritual journey or the Grace of God.

*Those providing information for a Testimony are offered a copy of the completed Testimony before the writers present it to the RM and may request a restriction on access to the information they have provided.*

The completed Testimony is brought to a Regional Meeting for acceptance or modification. When finalised, Testimonies, and supplementary information are offered for inclusion in the *Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography* [DAQB] (see [5.5.3](#)).

Shortened Testimonies to the life of some Friends are heard at Yearly Meeting. Further information about Testimonies may be found on the AYM website under administrative resources for Regional Meetings.

#### **4.6.5 Testimonies at Yearly Meeting**

Each Regional Meeting brings an abridged single testimony or an abridged compilation of testimonies to the Standing Committee prior to Yearly Meeting for possible reading during the opening period of worship at YM sessions. Standing Committee discerns which testimonies will be read at which sessions. The Yearly Meeting timetable is adjusted so that participants are aware of these decisions.

Regional Meetings may be asked to abridge those testimonies to be read aloud, if they are lengthy (abridged to approximately 500 words). Copies of the unabridged testimonies are available at Yearly Meeting, as are all testimonies received by the AYM office during the year.

A special Meeting for Worship for Remembrance is held during Yearly Meeting. The names of all Friends who have died since the previous Yearly Meeting are spoken aloud during this

Meeting, providing an opportunity for reflection on, or ministry about, the grace of God expressed in their lives.

## **Part 2: Support and conflict**

Confidentiality is an important principle underpinning all support and conflict resolution work. Our *Safe Quaker Community Policy* outlines our duty of care to each other (see: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies>).

### **4.7 Support groups, including listening circles, anchor groups and other intentionally supportive groups**

A support group can provide valuable help for anyone with an ongoing challenge for which they desire Friendly support. This includes those with significant roles in Meetings, e.g. the AYM Clerk and AYM Secretary.

Unlike a Clearness Meeting (see [1.6](#)) or a Threshing Meeting ([1.7](#)), which are normally single events, a support group continues as long as the focus person needs it.

The group meets with the person in need of support from time to time for informal discussion of, or deep listening about, current uncertainties and difficulties, to celebrate progress, and for consideration of any practical assistance needed. The group also affirms that the individual is not alone in dealing with their situation.

A support group consists of a few people of discretion, gathered by the person being supported, perhaps after consultation with the Oversight Committee. Members of the group provide patient listening and gentle questioning, and offer encouragement to the focus person. They do not offer advice.

Meetings of the group may occur irregularly, as required. The group reviews its usefulness occasionally.

### **4.8 Resolving conflicts and grievances**

It is important to read our *Safe Quaker Community Policy* in conjunction with this section (see [4.2.3](#) and <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies>).

#### **4.8.1 Natural justice**

We follow the principles of natural justice, which helps to ensure that our procedures are fair and trusted. Natural justice means that everyone involved has:

- adequate information to consider the facts, issues and circumstances fully
- enough time to prepare for any discussion
- the opportunity to participate in the overall process
- assurance that confidential discussions and records of these are kept confidential.

Natural justice is prompt. So any person or Meeting, when asked to support resolution of a conflict:

- acknowledges the request immediately
- starts proceedings as a matter of urgency
- informs the people involved in writing or by another appropriate means at all stages in the process.

#### **4.8.2 Quaker process: our principles**

On occasion, dissension may arise either between members of a Meeting or committee, or between an individual and the broader Quaker community.

Disagreements are part of any community's life together. Conflict itself is to be expected; it is how we deal with conflict which demonstrates our commitment as Friends. Conflict, rightly handled, can be a force for creativity and an opportunity for learning and new growth.

Conflict within the Quaker community needs to be considered in the light of our Quaker testimonies and our responsibilities to other Friends, including Regional and Yearly Meetings.

Quaker principles in dealing with conflict include:

- respecting all persons
- being open to new light
- seeking common ground
- seeking the guidance of the Spirit
- expecting to be led to a way forward.

The principles of natural justice also underpin these efforts to restore our relationships to proper order.

We expect that Quakers experiencing conflict will move towards a solution using all of the resources and processes available to them, and that they will be supported to do so by the commitment of both individuals and the broader community of Friends.

#### **4.8.3 Resource people to support conflict management**

The Quaker community includes many people who, through their commitment to peace, have training, qualifications and experience in facilitation of communication and conflict resolution.

Ministry and Oversight committees should be aware of Friends who are suitably qualified and willing to serve in conflict resolution. Non-Quakers who may be considered include people who are registered with the Australian Government's Attorney General's Department as national accredited mediators, other registered mediators, and AVP-trained facilitators.

#### **4.8.4 Dealing with difficulties, disputes or grievances: outline of our Quaker process**

Friends who are experiencing conflict may themselves initiate a resolution process, or a group of concerned Friends or Elders from the Meeting that is affected by the conflict may suggest that the Quakers in conflict participate in one of the following processes.

It is useful to approach this in a spirit of curiosity and respect for the other person's feelings and views. Preparing for discussion enables the clear expression of views, without blame or criticism.

The goal is to come to a positive acceptance of the situation and/or an agreement about the way forward. Either or both parties may find it helpful to have a support person present, whose role is to listen and to ensure that the discussion remains respectful.

This process is also useful when Friends find themselves in disagreement with a decision from a Meeting for Worship for Business or a committee.

In principle, such disagreement should not occur, because an essential feature of Quaker processes is the attempt to discern God's will together ([1.4](#)) and each Friend is expected

either to accept or, at least, to respect our process of corporate discernment to which the Friend has contributed.

Friends attending a Meeting where they find they are not in unity with the corporate decision may ask the Clerk to be recorded as 'standing aside' from the Minute (please see [1.4](#) for further detail). A serious concern about their lack of unity should be addressed immediately and, until the situation has been settled, the dissenting Friend is expected to respect the process.

**a. Talking with each other**

Friends' first preference is to raise any issues directly with the people with whom there is any difficulty. Ideally, this would be as soon as possible, before thinking and feelings have become entrenched.

Before such a conversation, talking with a support Friend or setting up a Clearness Meeting ([1.6](#)) may be useful to bring insight to deeper matters or individual issues.

**b. Talking with an experienced Friend**

The prayerful exploration of the issue with a wise Friend who is not directly involved can be helpful to either person individually or to both together. Clerks, Elders and Overseers are available for this service and generally experienced in Friends' ways. The Regional Meeting's Safe Quaker Community Contact Friends may be asked to assist. Members of an AYM committee not hosted by a Regional Meeting might consult the AYM Clerk.

**c. Mediation (less structured process)**

People who are in disagreement or experiencing hurt can approach the RM Clerk, the Ministry Committee or Oversight Committee, or seek assistance in identifying resource people who are experienced, acceptable to both parties, and independent of the issue, in order to find a mediator.

After an initial separate conversation with each of those involved, a Meeting for Worship for Mediation is arranged as soon as possible, to which each of the involved people is encouraged to bring a congenial companion or support person.

The format of the Mediation Meeting may follow whatever practice is favoured by the experienced mediator and accepted by the people experiencing conflict. It should be conducted according to our Quaker principles (see [4.8.2](#)).

The outcome sought is a written statement agreed to by everyone present, acknowledging the results of the Meeting and signed by all.

This written statement is a confidential document, and should be archived appropriately, as for other confidential archives.

#### **d. Structured resolution process**

If mediation is not considered suitable, it may be necessary to resort to a more determinative procedure. This process is normally invoked at Regional or Yearly Meeting level.

Once again, the participants meet in a spirit of worship, approaching the matter prayerfully and seeking the guidance of the Spirit. They might begin with separate individual Clearness Meetings ([1.6](#)) to help define the problem.

A Regional Meeting will normally set up a panel of three people, at least one of whom will be a resource person with facilitation and conflict resolution skills.

This panel will be established in consultation with the people involved.

If that group cannot recommend a solution acceptable to all concerned, a second panel of three people may be formed, with the participation of the AYM Clerk, if practicable, but containing no-one belonging to the Regional Meeting concerned.

At any stage, those involved may agree to Mediation or a Clearness Meeting.

When a Friend considers they are not in dispute, but rather are experiencing bullying or other inappropriate behaviour, they should refer to the *Safe Quaker Community Policy* (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies>) and seek support from their Ministry and Care Committee, their Safe Quaker Community Contact Friends, and/or other supportive Friends.

#### **4.8.5 Refusing to be part of the process to resolve the difficulty**

When a person experiencing conflict refuses to be part of resolution processes, they are supported to explore other options that may be more appropriate for them. Because of



the commitment of Quakers to the testimonies, our community life and responsibilities to Regional and Yearly Meetings, it is important that it is clearly understood that **it is not acceptable or desirable that behaviour demonstrating conflict continues**. This means that each Friend is expected to respect other Friends and be responsible for the minimisation of any impacts of their personal dislike or disagreement on their Meeting. Meetings can exert further efforts, including holding the person in the Light, the use of worshipful silence, and bringing to people's attention other possibilities for settling matters. Meetings endeavour to support any victims in the process. Local and other Meetings are encouraged to call on Friends from their own or another Regional Meeting to act as conflict mediators.

Where a matter proves to be intractable, Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee or the Presiding Clerk could consider giving a direction that a structured resolution process must be followed.

There are many written resources on conflict resolution, and Friends are encouraged to consult these.

## Chapter 5 Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM), the national organisation

### 5.1 Introduction

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is a worldwide movement, consisting of autonomous bodies called Yearly Meetings that are found in many countries. Each has its own internal structure and membership. In Australia, Quaker Members belong to Australia Yearly Meeting by virtue of membership of one of the seven constituent Regional Meetings (2.4). Each Friend is also legally a member of the national association called the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated and of the appropriate Regional Meeting association. The rules binding the national association, its office-holders and members are on the website at: [www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources)

As explained in the Preface, the term Yearly Meeting has two meanings. In Australia it refers to:

- an organisational structure, described in this present chapter, called 'Australia Yearly Meeting' or AYM
- the annual national gathering of Quakers, discussed in the next chapter, called 'Yearly Meeting' or YM.

Here the word 'structure' does not imply rigid, prescriptive relationships but a set of flexible, pragmatic arrangements. The legal role of the Australia Yearly Meeting is spelt out in the rules, and the various responsibilities involved are discharged by means of office-holders and AYM committees, as follows.

### 5.2 AYM office-holders

#### 5.2.1 General

The Presiding Clerk (also known as the AYM Clerk) and the Treasurer are office-holders of Australia Yearly Meeting, each appointed by decisions of a YM business session (6.3.2) after recommendation by the AYM Nominations Committee (5.3.8.2).

The Presiding Clerk, Treasurer and Secretary take up duties after the relevant Yearly Meeting. The term for Presiding Clerk and Treasurer is usually three years initially, renewable annually thereafter.

The AYM Secretary, a paid position, is appointed by an Appointments Committee after recommendation by a specially appointed Search Committee. The term for the AYM Secretary is three years, renewable in three-year periods to a maximum of nine years.

Any Member of the Society is eligible for office at any level. Many offices are also open to Attenders.

Appointments are made by gatherings open to all Members of the Society equally and collectively seeking the will of God. Office-holders' terms of office are limited. They exercise no personal authority over others, but rather bear the responsibility to serve the Meeting. The Regional Meetings that comprise Australia Yearly Meeting are significantly autonomous ([2.4](#)).

### **5.2.2 Presiding Clerk**

The AYM Clerk, or Presiding Clerk, clerks the business sessions of the Yearly Meeting (Chapter 6) and of Standing Committee ([5.3.8.1](#)), The relevant email address is: [clerk@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:clerk@quakersaustralia.info)

The clerking process, as described in [1.4](#), is the same for all Meetings for Worship for Business at any level of the Society.

The preparation of Yearly Meeting and Standing Committee minutes involves discerning the leadings of the Spirit in the Meeting's deliberations and ensuring that the concerns of all Regional Meetings have been considered, so that decisions truly reflect the corporate discernment of the Society. This is the process for all Meetings for Worship for Business at any level of the Society ([1.4](#)).

The draft minute is presented to the Meeting, which may reject, accept or modify the draft minute. Once the gathered Yearly Meeting agrees to a minute, it becomes the final minute, subject to clarifying edits, but is not subject to confirmation by a later meeting or process.

The Presiding Clerk is a member of AYM committees ex officio, except for the Thanksgiving Fund Committee and the AYM Nominations Committee ([5.3.8.2](#)). The Clerk is also a member of any other body set up by Yearly Meeting. Presiding Clerks may normally only serve for six consecutive years.

Only the Presiding Clerk is authorised to sign public statements, made via any media, on behalf of the whole Society. This is done in consultation with the AYM Secretary, who normally has received a draft statement from either a YM session, an AYM committee or a Regional Meeting.

The Presiding Clerk represents the Society as a Church Leader on the National Council of Churches in Australia ([5.4.11](#)).

Other responsibilities of the Presiding Clerk are mentioned at various places in this handbook. The Presiding Clerk may delegate specific tasks to individuals or committees after consultation with relevant Friends.

The Presiding Clerk is upheld by a Support Committee appointed by the Presiding Clerk's own Regional Meeting. Also, in the conduct of YM Business sessions, the Presiding Clerk is helped by an Assistant Clerk for the duration of that year's gathering. The Assistant Clerk is appointed by the preceding mid-year Standing Committee ([5.3.8.1](#)), following nomination by the Regional Meeting hosting the Yearly Meeting.

### **5.2.3 AYM Secretary**

The AYM Secretary is the paid executive officer of the Society, providing administrative support for Australia Yearly Meeting. That includes providing information about AYM activities to enquirers both within and outside the Society. The relevant email address is: [secretary@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:secretary@quakersaustralia.info)

The appointment of the Secretary by Yearly Meeting follows the recommendation of a Secretary Search Committee previously appointed by Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee. Their recommendations are made to the Appointments Committee, which makes the appointment. The AYM Clerk signs the contract, and the announcement is made at Yearly Meeting. The appointee works in close consultation with the Presiding Clerk, from an AYM office, which is conveniently located for the Secretary.

The Secretary is upheld by a Support Committee from the Secretary's Regional Meeting. Usually three members of this committee are chosen by the Secretary, and three are recommended to the AYM Nominations Committee by the Secretary's Regional Meeting.

A bookkeeper may be employed part time at the AYM office to reconcile bank statements, and record the financial activities of the AYM Secretary and Treasurer.

The Secretary's position description is in [Appendix F](#). The Secretary is ex officio a member of all AYM committees and on any other body set up by Yearly Meeting, except the Thanksgiving Fund Committee and the Nominations Committee.

The Secretary reports regularly to Standing Committee and Yearly Meeting on tasks performed, issues encountered and ideas for future activities. Beyond this, the Secretary informs Friends of developments within the Society through personal contact, correspondence and the monthly *AYM Secretary's Newsletter*. (Copies of the newsletter are lodged with the Australian National Library.)

### ***Documents in Advance (DiA) and Documents in Retrospect (DiR)***

*Documents in Advance* (See also [6.2.5](#)) consists of reports by AYM office-holders, AYM committees, working groups, associated bodies and Regional Meetings for consideration by the next Yearly Meeting gathering (Chapter 6). Section B of each report points out where a decision is sought from Yearly Meeting.

Regional Meeting reports mention (among many other topics) any changes in trusts or accounts. The Annual Tabular Statement, which is included, shows the current numbers of Members and Attenders in the various Regional Meetings.

*Documents in Advance* also includes the minutes of the previous mid-year Standing Committee, while those of the Standing Committee just prior to Yearly Meeting are recorded in *Documents in Retrospect*.

*Documents in Retrospect* (see also [6.4.1](#)) includes minutes taken at the Yearly Meeting gathering, as well as background papers, a Yearly Meeting photograph, the epistles and other supporting documentation.

Both documents are compiled by the AYM Secretary and are available on the Society's website: [www.quakersaustralia.info](http://www.quakersaustralia.info) (log-in required).

### **5.2.4 AYM Treasurer**

The AYM Treasurer is responsible for overall management of the financial affairs of Australia Yearly Meeting, with the assistance and advice of the AYM Finance Committee. The AYM

Treasurer is appointed by Yearly Meeting for an initial term of three years, with the possibility of additional periods.

The AYM Treasurer is a member of all AYM committees ex officio, except the Nominations Committee, and is supported by a Finance Committee appointed by AYM. The AYM Treasurer reports to Yearly Meeting and Standing Committee.

The AYM Treasurer oversees the AYM bank accounts, investments and properties and ensures that all assets and transactions are properly documented and that AYM fulfils its superannuation and tax obligations. The Treasurer receives and disburses bequests, loans and previously designated funds, as authorised by AYM Committees and Yearly Meeting, and ensures sufficient funds are available for expected expenditure. Some payments may be delegated to the AYM Secretary. The opening or closing of any account requires specific authority from Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee.

The AYM Treasurer prepares a budget each year for a meeting of the Standing Committee ([5.3.8.1](#)), and drafts and arranges the auditing of annual financial accounts for approval at the annual General Meeting of Australia Yearly Meeting, and then forwards them to the Public Officer ([5.2.6](#)).

The AYM Treasurer's duties do not include any involvement with Quaker Service Australia ([5.4.1](#)), which handles its own finances.

If the AYM Treasurer is temporarily unable to act, the Presiding Clerk can appoint a member of the AYM Finance Committee to serve as Acting Treasurer.

### **5.2.5 AYM Auditor**

The AYM Auditor is recommended by the AYM Treasurer. The AYM Finance Committee must be satisfied that the nominee has suitable qualifications (as specified in the Associations Incorporation Act) and experience. The appointment is made by the Association at each Annual General Meeting. The post cannot be held by an office-bearer of Australia Yearly Meeting but the auditor may be a Member if not involved in any way with the accounts.

### **5.2.6 AYM Public Officer**

The AYM Public Officer is appointed by Yearly Meeting on the recommendation of Canberra and Region Quakers, since the appointee must reside in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), where the Association (the legal entity representing the Society) has been registered. The office is held for life, unless the Public Officer moves from the ACT or resigns, or Yearly Meeting considers a change is necessary.

The principal task of the Public Officer is to ensure that annual returns containing the audited accounts and details of changes of office-bearers, as well as any alterations to the Rules of the Association, are submitted to the ACT Registrar-General's Office.

### **5.2.7 AYM Archivist**

The AYM Archivist has responsibility for the general oversight of the records of Australia Yearly Meeting.

All records created by AYM Committees, Working groups, etc. are the records of the Society and as such, form a collection for the National Library of Australia (NLA) donation.

The archivist's role includes advising and assisting the AYM Secretary with the records of the AYM office regarding the legal requirements to retain certain records, and the selection of items for the National Library of Australia.

The Archivist also liaises with the AYM Treasurer concerning financial records.

In addition, the archivist communicates with RM Archivists ([2.5.3](#)) for the same purposes and seeks to promote a wider awareness of the heritage of the Society in Australia. Advice and assistance may be given for exhibitions and publications.

AYM and all Regional Meetings are required to develop and maintain a Records Retention and Disposal Schedule which will identify:

- a. Records for permanent retention, for example: Minutes, Agendas, Background papers, Land titles, Membership registers, important legal records, and other records of historical importance to the Meeting.
- b. Records for temporary retention, for example: financial records are to be kept for a minimum of seven years. All temporary records should be destroyed as part

of a normal administrative process within a two-year maximum period of their due destruction date.

- c. Records which do not need to be preserved by the Society.

All Regional Meetings and AYM committees should ensure the physical safety of their records by protecting against fire, damp/mould, vandalism, theft and insects. Hard paper copy is the preferred storage medium, as electronic storage media is prone to degradation and technological obsolescence.

Confidential records should be carefully identified as such and retained securely; for example Pastoral Care Committee and Nominations Committee Minutes. Access should be restricted to a Clerk and Elder; Clerk and RM Archivist; or Elder and RM Archivist together to ensure record-keeping due diligence and privacy of the records. The Retention Schedule will identify a suitable Restricted Access period in order to retain the privacy of the records.

Friends are reminded to use the standard email addresses *XXXX@quakersaustralia.info* for all communications regarding AYM administrative matters and business.

#### **5.2.8 AYM Website Coordinator**

AYM has two principal websites — [www.quakersaustralia.org.au](http://www.quakersaustralia.org.au) for inquirers and [www.quakersaustralia.info](http://www.quakersaustralia.info) for more in-depth information.

The AYM Website Coordinator is responsible for:

- a. maintaining the technical aspects of the AYM websites to ensure they remain in good condition and function as they should
- b. training and assisting the RM and AYM Committee Web Maintainers, the AYM Secretary and others in updating and extending the websites
- c. liaising with our professional Web Developer where there are alterations or additions needed, which are beyond the Website Coordinator's experience and/or abilities.

The AYM Website Coordinator is not responsible for the content of the websites, which is the responsibility of the various Web Maintainers.

The AYM Website Coordinator is a member of the IT Committee ex officio.



### **5.2.9 AYM Membership Secretary**

The AYM database contains details of Meetings, Members and Attenders (including children), together with other organisations and individuals who may be on our mailing list(s).

The AYM Membership Secretary is responsible for:

- a. maintaining the technical aspects of the database to ensure it runs smoothly
- b. training and assisting the RM Membership Secretaries in the use of the database
- c. liaising with our professional Web Developer where there are alterations or additions needed, which are beyond the Membership Secretary's experience and/or abilities
- d. developing ideas for future expansion of the database and use of the database.

The AYM Membership Secretary is not responsible for the content of the database, which is the responsibility of the Regional Meeting Membership Secretaries.

The AYM Membership Secretary is a member of the IT Committee ex officio.

## **5.3 AYM committees**

### **5.3.1 General**

Each committee has its own page under the organisation tab on the AYM website:

[www.QuakersAustralia.info](http://www.QuakersAustralia.info)

The corporate activity of Friends mainly involves RM Business Meetings and AYM committees seeking to discern what the Spirit requires in regard to a range of issues, and then bringing to the next Yearly Meeting those issues discerned as important. AYM committees are set up, continued, laid down or temporarily suspended through discernment at Yearly Meeting. Standing Committee can be asked for discernment as well, in preparation for decision-making at Yearly Meeting or to confirm aspects of the decision-making that was started at Yearly Meeting.

The proposal for a new committee normally comes through a Regional Meeting, but it is established by a YM Minute. This Minute describes its purpose and composition, and also provides guidelines, if finances or employment of staff are involved. The Minute also states what type of committee it is: representative, expert or hosted by a Regional Meeting.

If the committee is an expert committee, the AYM Nominations Committee will be asked to bring forward names. If a representative or hosted committee, Regional Meetings will be asked to bring forward suitable names for approval by Yearly Meeting.

The terms of reference and the work of established committees should be reviewed periodically by AYM or by a specific working group appointed by AYM. Such revision may be proposed by a committee itself where it notes disjunctures between its stated terms of reference and its practice.

The committee that organises a particular Yearly Meeting is described in Chapter 6, while Chapter 2 discusses Local and Regional Meeting committees.

### **5.3.2 Membership of committees**

Common practice is that the first-named of the appointees calls the first meeting of the committee, at which a continuing convener is selected by the committee.

The Convener advises the AYM Secretary of their name and address, the other committee members' names and the committee's functions, so that the AYM Secretary can advise enquirers. Some of that information is subsequently available in *Documents in Advance*, in *Documents in Retrospect* and in Yearly Meeting & Standing Committee Resources on the Society's website: [www.quakersaustralia.info](http://www.quakersaustralia.info) (login required).

A Friend may indicate a willingness to serve on a particular AYM committee by communicating with its convener or with their representative on the AYM Nominations Committee. A Friend's Regional Meeting may also make a recommendation to the AYM Nominations Committee. The usual discernment process of the Regional Meeting (if a hosted committee) or Standing Committee or Yearly Meeting (if a representative or expert committee) must then take place.

A committee member need not necessarily be located geographically close to other members of the committee. It is common for committees to meet online.

The committee may invite non-members of the committee to attend committee meetings. Such a non-member may be asked to attend informally for a limited period in order to give the committee the benefit of specific expertise.

If a non-member is needed for a longer period, AYM committees, with the exception of the Nominations Committee, have the power to temporarily co-opt further members until the next meeting of the Standing Committee (or Yearly Meeting). If the committee is a hosted committee, the decision to co-opt a member formally is made initially by the host Regional Meeting.

The Presiding Clerk and the AYM Secretary are ex officio members of every AYM committee as is the AYM Treasurer, where appropriate, excepting Nominations and Thanksgiving Fund Committees. Young Friends are invited to nominate a representative to any AYM committee in which they feel led to participate. AYM committees are listed in *Documents in Advance* for Standing Committee and Yearly Meeting, detailing the name of the hosting RM (if hosted), the names of its members, the convener and the duration of the appointment for each member, and other details.

### **5.3.3 Publications from committees**

If an AYM committee decides to issue a new publication, the purpose of the publication and draft overview of the content are discerned by the Regional Meeting in the case of a hosted committee. The Publications Committee reviews the publication prior to publication, and may discern that the proposed publication needs to go to Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee. Final approval for print publications is given by Yearly Meeting.

Please see [2.6](#) for more detail on publications.

### **5.3.4 Laying down of committees**

Where an AYM committee informs Yearly Meeting that it wishes to lay down the Concern, and therefore the committee, Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee will discern whether the Concern can be laid down or addressed in a different way.

If the Concern is not ready to be laid down, the Nominations Committee and/or Regional Meetings may be asked to bring forward names of suitable Friends to serve.

### **5.3.5 Finances and employing staff**

The AYM Secretary and Treasurer administer the funds of each AYM committee. An AYM committee may have an income from fund raising, donations or other sources. Each AYM committee together with the AYM Treasurer discerns whether an annual budget from the

AYM accounts is required for the work of the committee and, if so, the amount needed. The AYM Secretary and Treasurer administer the funds of each AYM committee.

At times an AYM committee may decide to employ a consultant or staff member. AYM aims to be transparent, realistic and fair in its contract management and to meet its obligations as an employer, both legally and ethically, in keeping with our testimonies.

When a committee has sufficient funding to pay for a consultant / staff member for the contracted time, the purpose and details of the position and the contract are agreed upon by the committee, the host Regional Meeting if it is a hosted committee, the AYM Presiding Clerk, the AYM Secretary and the AYM Treasurer. AYM becomes the employer.

Other Friends, or non-Quakers with specific knowledge in contract management, can be consulted.

The committee is responsible for the induction (including documented OH&S requirements) and supervision of the consultant / staff member, and for ensuring that the purpose of the work is carried out. It is the responsibility of the committee to stay within its budget, and if there are changes in its income or expenditure, the AYM Treasurer is contacted for advice.

If an AYM committee seeks a grant from an outside organisation, the application needs to be formally endorsed by the AYM Presiding Clerk, the AYM Secretary, the AYM Treasurer and the host Regional Meeting if it is a hosted committee. AYM is the legal entity on the application. The grant is administered by the committee with reports to AYM, as the accountability for the grant is with AYM.

### **5.3.6 Committee meetings, record keeping and accountability**

The processes for conducting the business of AYM committees are the same as for all Quaker Business Meetings and are described in section [1.4](#).

Committees decide on the best way to fulfil their brief and report to *Documents in Advance* for Yearly Meeting. If discernment or decisions are sought earlier, a report can be provided to mid-year Standing Committee, or directly to Standing Committee.

Each committee determines the frequency of its meetings, the conduct of its business and the keeping of appropriate records. Copies of a committee's meeting minutes are sent as

soon as possible to the AYM Secretary and the Presiding Clerk. If meeting minutes, or portions of them, are confidential, these must be clearly distinguished.

The committee submits a report to the AYM Secretary each year for *Documents in Advance*, and may also report to mid-year Standing Committee as needed or required. The report concludes with a Part B that briefly states the issues that need comment or decision by Standing Committee or Yearly Meeting.

An explicit expression of approval is necessary from the Presiding Clerk in order for a committee to speak or write publicly in the name of the Society or of the committee, unless ongoing approval is given, e.g. the publication of the Backhouse Lecture. In publicly upholding Friends' testimonies, sensitivity should be given to the range of conscience and leadings among us.

### **5.3.7 Types of AYM committees**

#### **5.3.7.1 Representative committees**

These are ongoing AYM committees that have a membership consisting of representatives from each Regional Meeting and, if wished, from Young Friends. The names for the members of these committees are brought forward to the AYM Nominations Committee following discernment by each Regional Meeting. Young Friends appoint their own representative. Final acceptance rests with Yearly Meeting.

Representative committees include: Standing Committee, which represents the whole of Australia Yearly Meeting (including two Friends from every Regional Meeting and two Young Friends); Nominations Committee, Quaker World Connections Committee (QWCC), and the Safe Quaker Community Committee.

#### **5.3.7.2 Expert committees and working groups**

Members of 'expert committees' are appointed for their specialist knowledge and/or willingness to learn 'on the job', in order to undertake ongoing tasks for AYM. They are drawn from across Regional Meetings.

Specialist committees include the Publications Committee, the Backhouse Lecture Committee, the YM Planning Support Committee, the IT Committee, and the Handbook Revision Committee. The names for the members of these committees are brought forward by the AYM Nominations Committee ([5.3.8.2](#)).

AYM can also appoint an expert committee or working group for a specific time-limited task, such as reviewing information technology requirements or the right holding of YM. Such committees report directly to Yearly Meeting or to mid-year Standing Committee. The names for the members of these committees are normally brought forward by AYM Nominations Committee ([5.3.8.2](#)), or may be appointed during Yearly Meeting.

### **5.3.7.3 Hosted committees**

An AYM hosted committee is the result of a Concern ([1.5](#)) presented to Yearly Meeting, usually by members of a particular Regional Meeting. Some hosted committees are ongoing and are hosted by different Regional Meetings at different times. Strengths of hosted committees include the ability to focus on a Concern, and to care for those Friends on the committee.

A Regional Meeting writes a minute of support to host an AYM committee and this minute is accepted by Yearly Meeting. The host Regional Meeting brings forward the names of the committee members through its normal nominations process and, if known, its convener to mid-year Standing Committee or to Yearly Meeting for appointment. The committee may co-opt other members whose names should be submitted to their Regional Meeting for approval and appropriate record-keeping. Replacement or new members are also appointed by mid-year Standing Committee or Yearly Meeting. Correspondents from other Regional Meetings can be appointed, and their task is to keep their own Regional Meeting informed of the work of the committee.

The terms of reference for the committee are initiated by Yearly Meeting, mid-year Standing Committee or by a Regional Meeting. They can be reviewed by mid-year Standing Committee and are subject to endorsement by Yearly Meeting. Recommendations to change the terms of reference can be brought to a Standing Committee or to Yearly Meeting for discernment by the hosted committee or by a Regional Meeting.

The committee reports on its deliberations to Standing Committee as necessary and to Yearly Meeting each year by means of *Documents in Advance* ([5.2.3](#)). The committee is supported by its host Regional Meeting and keeps the Regional Meeting informed about its functioning. The Regional Meeting is responsible for supporting the effective functioning of the committee and wellbeing of members (the committee's processes), but not for their methods of fulfilling its terms of reference (the content of the committee's work), which is

the responsibility of Yearly Meeting. Concerns about the work of the committee can be taken to the convener of the committee, the host RM Clerk or the Presiding Clerk.

If difficulties arise within the hosted committee with process, content of work or function, the best way to discern and decide how to proceed is by open communication between the hosted committee, the host Regional Meeting and AYM. Such matters can be raised by committee members, the host RM or from elsewhere in AYM. Chapter 4 contains details of our dispute resolution process.

Hosted committees are appointed usually for a three-year term and the committee can offer to continue for a second term of three years. If no other Regional Meeting offers to continue the work of the committee, the committee may remain hosted by the Regional Meeting for a further set period. The work of the committee can also be laid down.

Where AYM has established a new committee, which is intended to be hosted, but no Regional Meeting feels led to host it, the Presiding Clerk or delegate may seek another way forward.

Hosted committees include the AYM Secretary's Support Committee, Children & Junior Young Friends Committee, Peace & Social Justice Fund Committee, Presiding Clerk's Support Committee and the Thanksgiving Fund Committee.

#### **5.3.7.4 Other 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 transition 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.

### **5.3.8 Some Specific AYM committees**

A full list of AYM committees with descriptions of their functions is on the website:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/organisation/aym>.

#### **5.3.8.1 Standing Committee (SC)**

Standing Committee is entrusted with responsibility for the ongoing management of AYM through the year. Standing Committee does not deal with matters that are rightly discerned by Yearly Meeting, except in a preliminary way, nor usually does it initiate topics for decision. It cannot overturn any YM decision or amend any YM minute.

Standing Committee carries out its role within the guidelines of the Handbook, including regular consultation with Regional Meetings, and with AYM committees.

Members include the Presiding Clerk, Secretary and Treasurer, ex officio. Also included is the immediate past Presiding Clerk, or, during the last year of the present Clerk's tenure, the Friend appointed as the next Presiding Clerk. In addition, two Friends are appointed by each Regional Meeting, and two Young Friends are invited to join. The usual term is for no more than three consecutive years.

Standing Committee meets at least twice during the year, normally mid-year in January and in July just prior to Yearly Meeting. As with any committee, it may meet online. Standing Committee meetings, whether in person or online, are held as needed to suit the timetable of AYM business through the year. Online Standing Committee meetings are set



up to make possible the most effective participation in, and clerking and recording of, the decision-making.

The travel and accommodation costs for the meetings are paid from AYM funds.

The preparation process for meetings of Standing Committee ensures that Regional Meetings have time to receive adequate information and arrange maximum discernment by as many members/attenders as possible.

It is helpful if RM representatives come prepared to report the views of their Regional Meeting, and also to be open-minded and contribute to the gathered discernment process. RM representatives on Standing Committee are not advocates for their Regional Meeting's views, but are contributors to the Standing Committee, discerning God's will collectively. They should ideally also come prepared to speak briefly on current activities of AYM committees hosted by their Regional Meeting ([5.3.1](#), [5.3.7.3](#)).

**Standing Committee normally does the following tasks:**

- follows up on decisions taken at the previous Yearly Meeting
- takes action on matters that cannot wait for consideration by the next YM gathering
- considers matters referred by Regional Meetings or AYM committees
- approves changes of membership of any AYM committee where necessary
- deals with administrative matters such as the timetabling of YM sessions
- confirms the AYM annual budget of income and expenditure with any necessary amendments.
- may consider The State of the Society report at a meeting in conjunction with the AGM of the Society.

RM representatives report back to their respective Regional Meetings after each Standing Committee Meeting. Since 2006, minutes taken at Standing Committee Meetings have been published in the subsequent *Documents in Advance* or *Documents in Retrospect*.

Further details of Standing Committee are at: [www.quakersaustralia.info/SC](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/SC)

### **Urgent decision-making**

1. Standing Committee can be convened by the Presiding Clerk at 14 days' notice for any extremely urgent and important matter. The quorum is six members from at least three Regional Meetings.
2. If necessary, the Secretary, the Presiding Clerk and one other member of Standing Committee, who should not be involved in the issue requiring decision, together with the AYM Treasurer (if appropriate), are authorised to make decisions together on behalf of the whole Society.

### **5.3.8.2 AYM Nominations Committee**

The AYM Nominations Committee gives prayerful consideration to the various roles required for service. It recommends to Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee the names of people and Regional Meetings thought suitable for various roles within the Society, other than that of the AYM Secretary ([5.2.3](#)). It does not decide on appointments, but helps Yearly Meeting and Standing Committee to do so. Recommendations can be referred back to the committee if a proposal is not acceptable to the gathered Meeting for Worship for Business.

The Nominations Committee includes one experienced Friend appointed by each Regional Meeting, normally for three years. Young Friends are also invited to appoint one representative. There are normally eight members of the committee in total. In appointing their representative, Regional Meetings and Young Friends look for a sound understanding of Quaker ways, particularly in regard to Australia Yearly Meeting, and familiarity with many of the national membership. It is helpful if terms of appointment can be staggered.

It is advisable that committee members are already experienced in the work of their own Regional Meeting Nominations Committee, thereby gaining a good knowledge of local Friends, and are in close touch with their own Regional Meeting Nominations Committee. Committee members are normally expected to be able to attend Yearly Meeting, when the committee meets. A member who cannot attend a particular Yearly Meeting asks their Regional Meeting to arrange a proxy for that occasion. The Nominations Committee, like any other representative committee, also meets online or by telephone when face-to-face meetings are not possible due to geographical distance.

Membership of this AYM committee is recorded by Yearly Meeting. When a vacancy occurs, the appropriate Regional Meeting makes an appointment and informs the AYM Secretary, who brings the new name to Standing Committee for noting.

The committee is responsible for the nomination, to either Standing Committee or Yearly Meeting, of the following office-holders, usually for three years:

- the next Presiding Clerk ([5.2.2](#)), who works alongside the current Presiding Clerk for a year before taking over. (The committee will have discussed the current Clerk's length of service.)
- the AYM Treasurer ([5.2.4](#))
- the AYM Website Coordinator ([5.2.8](#))
- the AYM Membership Secretary ([5.2.9](#))

The Nominations Committee brings forward names for AYM expert committees, including the Publications Committee (See [5.3.3](#) and [2.6](#)); the Backhouse Lecture Committee, preferably with members for six years from a number of Regional Meetings; and makes recommendations for host Regional Meetings for hosted committees. It keeps a list of roles and office-holders.

The Nominations Committee brings forward names for delegates and representatives to other bodies:

- representative(s) to Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting ([5.4.10](#))
- a representative (as proxy for the Presiding Clerk) on the Executive of the National Council of Churches in Australia ([5.4.11](#)), in consultation with the Presiding Clerk
- delegate(s) to the General Meetings of the National Council of Churches in Australia
- representatives to committees, networks or other activities of the National Council of Churches in Australia
- Silver Wattle Quaker Centre Ltd. Advisory Committee representative ([5.4.4](#))
- delegates to Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) gatherings. It is valuable for the Nominations Committee to liaise with the AYM Quaker World Connections Committee (QWCC) in appointing AYM representatives to overseas FWCC events.

In addition, the Nominations Committee will consider names for positions as required for Yearly Meeting itself (e.g. minute-checkers), and any other appointment that Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee asks the Nominations Committee to consider.

If necessary, the committee can make a temporary appointment for any of these offices, operative till the next Yearly Meeting, when final approval can be given.

The Nominations Committee keeps records of appointments and their terms.

The Nominations Committee has to start work well before Yearly Meeting, especially in connection with recommending which Regional Meetings might host particular AYM committees. Such recommendations need ample time for Quakerly consideration by the prospective host Regional Meetings.

The Nominations Committee works throughout the year with the intensity increasing in the lead up to YM. Further work may need to be done during YM, as a result of decisions discerned by the gathered YM sessions.

Conferring may be done online or by email, letter or teleconference. Discussions and minutes are confidential.

The process for the Nominations Committees is outlined in [2.3.3](#).

### **Process**

It is desirable for the Nominations Committee to supply role descriptions drawn up by past and present holders of various offices prior to considering names.

1. A list of AYM positions soon to be filled is sent to all members of the Nominations Committee and to RM Clerks, by the convener or the AYM Secretary.
2. Any Friend may support the Nominations Committee by suggesting names of people whom they believe to be suitable. These may include the names of people from their own or another Regional Meeting, or from Young Friends. Suggestions should be in writing and with reasons, and directed to their RM representative on the committee.
3. The AYM Nominations Committee member approaches any suggested Friend to ascertain their willingness to have their name go forward. This may be after discussion with the RM Nominations Committee or other appropriate group. It is advisable to ensure the RM Nominations Committee and AYM Nominations Committee are not duplicating this discernment.
4. The RM representative on the AYM Nominations Committee, following general agreement, forwards the name with supporting information to the convener.

5. The convener then circulates the material to all committee members for their consideration. If a single name does not emerge for each position, the convener corresponds with committee members to draw up a final list of names in order of preference.
6. The convener checks that the person at the top of the list accepts nomination. If that person is unable to accept, the next on the list is approached.

This whole process is carried out without undue delay, so that those people nominated have time to prepare for their responsibilities.

## **5.4 AYM service and collaboration**

### **5.4.1 Quaker Service Australia**

For information on Quaker Service Australia (QSA), please see: [www.qsa.org.au](http://www.qsa.org.au)

Quaker Service Australia (QSA) is the service and development aid organisation linked with Australia Yearly Meeting and was first constituted by Yearly Meeting in 1959. More about its history can be found in *Friends in Deed* (Saville 2009).

QSA's purpose is to express in a practical way the Concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. QSA works with communities in need in Australia and overseas. To achieve its purpose, QSA works with communities by funding and otherwise supporting projects that enhance food and water security; alleviate poverty; increase environmental sustainability, gender equality and child rights; and support refugees and asylum seekers.

QSA is a non-government, non-profit organisation. It is currently hosted by NSW Regional Meeting and is legally registered in Australia as a company limited by guarantee. In keeping with professional standards and practices, QSA has accreditation from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and undergoes formal review every five years, which makes it eligible to receive DFAT funding. QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and a signatory to its code of conduct. QSA is a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) and is endorsed both as a tax-deductible gift recipient for all donations \$2 and over, and as an income-tax-exempt charity. QSA is exempt from most state-based fund-raising licence requirements by virtue of being part of a religious organisation entitled to conduct marriages.

QSA is governed by a constitution and its members are nominated by the host Regional Meeting, each Regional Meeting and Young Friends, or are ex officio. Nomination is via Quaker process and in accordance with the QSA constitution, and confirmed either by Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee, whichever happens first. The ex officio members are the YM Presiding Clerk and YM Secretary.

The QSA Management Committee comprises between five and seven persons appointed by the host Regional Meeting. This committee fulfils the responsibilities of a company board. The QSA Linkages Committee comprises all other QSA members plus the Convenor of the Management Committee.

QSA is financially independent of Australia Yearly Meeting, and people employed by QSA are not employees of Australia Yearly Meeting.

The company communicates with Australian Quakers including through the QSA website, the Annual Report, a report in Documents in Advance, 'QSA Notes' in the Australian Friend, QSA Newsletters sent to Meetings and individuals, at its session during Yearly Meeting and through all members of QSA.

At its Annual General Meeting, the members of the company appoint its Convenor, Treasurer, Public Officer and Company Secretary.

Further information about the organisation, its methods of working, and the projects it is supporting both overseas and in Australia can be found on its website at:

[www.qsa.org.au](http://www.qsa.org.au)

#### **5.4.2 The Friends' School**

The Friends' School in Hobart was founded in 1887, jointly by Friends there and in London. It has always been coeducational, accepting both residential and day students.

The Friends' School educates around 1300 students from Kindergarten to Year 12. Its students are encouraged to ask questions, to think both independently and cooperatively, and to test ideas against experience and newly received information. All Friends' students are asked to engage in education as a process of exploration and discovery.

Overall responsibility for the school's board governance and structure has rested since 1924 with Australia Yearly Meeting, which receives nominations from the Friends' School

Association (the Association) to appoint a **Board of Governors**. The Association enables the Board of Governors to oversee the governance of the school, and, in turn, the board appoints a principal to be responsible for the implementation of the long-range priorities of the board and the day-to-day operations of the school.

Association membership consists of Quakers who are current or former members of the Board of Governors and current or former members of the Quaker Values Committee, which is a committee of the board.

The Board of Governors appoints the **Quaker Values Committee**, which consists of a Quaker nominee from each Australian Regional Meeting, together with the three nominees from Tasmania Regional Meeting who are members of the Board of Governors, plus the AYM Presiding Clerk and the principal. The Quaker Values Committee is supported by the Quaker Coordinator in the school.

Quaker representation on the board consists of four representatives from Tasmania Regional Meeting, the Australia Yearly Meeting Clerk and the school principal as ex officio members. Quaker board members, together with representatives from each Australian Regional Meeting, support the implementation of Quaker values at the school through the work of the Quaker Values Committee, a committee of the board.

The school was incorporated in 2000 under the Tasmanian *Associations Incorporation Act 1964*.

For more information on The Friends' School, please see: [www.friends.tas.edu.au](http://www.friends.tas.edu.au)

### **5.4.3 Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing**

#### **5.4.3.1 Introduction**

An Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing (AFFH) was established in Melbourne in 1971. There are now Fellowship of Healing groups associated with Meetings throughout Australia. Friends in these groups believe in the power of healing through prayer and by holding people in the Light.

The activities of the fellowship are reported in a newsletter called *Wholeness*, and to Yearly Meeting annually in *Documents in Advance*.

Each year at Yearly Meeting, members of the groups gather in an AGM that is reported in *Documents in Retrospect*. The AGM receives reports and appoints a convenor and the editor of the newsletter.

#### **5.4.3.2 Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing Charitable Trust (AFFHCT)**

This is a purpose charitable Trust which was set up by some members of the Fellowship of Healing in Western Australia in 1986 expressly for the charitable purpose of acquiring and maintaining homes of healing to help people in need of a period of rest and creative renewal, away from the busyness and stress of life, to regain health and wholeness.

The AFFHCT is independent of Australia Yearly Meeting. The Trustees are responsible for enacting the purpose of the Trust as set out in the Trust Deeds. The Trustees of the AFFHCT are appointed or confirmed by the AGM of the Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing.

#### **5.4.4 Silver Wattle Quaker Centre**

For more information on Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, please see: [www.silverwattle.org.au](http://www.silverwattle.org.au)

Silver Wattle Quaker Centre (SWQC) is a place for retreats, learning and healing. SWQC was established in 2011 at a former sheep-grazing property on the western edge of Weereewa (Lake George), 40km from Canberra. This followed a leading to establish a Quaker centre in Australia, three years of discernment (2007–2009), and an 18-month trial period (2010–2011).

The centre is independent of Australia Yearly Meeting and is managed by the Board of Directors of Silver Wattle Quaker Centre Ltd, a company limited by guarantee (ABN 201 467 232 02). The board is advised and supported by committees.

Australia Yearly Meeting appoints a Friend to serve on the Silver Wattle Quaker Centre Ltd Advisory Committee for a term of three years.

#### **5.4.5 Werona**

Werona is an area of land bought in 1969 by Kangaroo Valley Friends Properties Pty Ltd. Shareholders of the company include Regional Meetings, Australia Yearly Meeting, individual Quakers and several non-Quakers. New South Wales Regional Meeting is the majority shareholder. Shareholders elect a management committee at an AGM held in Sydney at the start of each year.



The property consists of 52 hectares of river-front natural bushland, 3.8 km from the village of Kangaroo Valley, south of Sydney. It forms part of a wildlife refuge. Basic accommodation and an area for camping are provided for individuals and small groups to experience personal renewal through contact with the Australian bush.

The property is maintained by volunteers of the Werona Users Group, consisting of Friends and like-minded people. Bookings are made via a volunteer known to the Clerk of New South Wales Regional Meeting.

Public liability is covered by the umbrella insurance policy of Australia Yearly Meeting. Gatherings at Werona adhere to Yearly and Regional Meeting guidelines, including AYM's *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* and *Safe Quaker Community Policy*.

#### **5.4.6 Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)**

For information on FWCC, please see: [fwcc.world](http://fwcc.world)

For information on the AYM FWCC Committee, please see:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/QWCC>

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) was established in 1937 to facilitate loving understanding of diversities among Quakers and to explore common ground spiritually, with God's help; and to enable Friends from different countries to work together to implement our testimonies.

The FWCC brings together representatives of Yearly Meetings from around the globe. The aims are to achieve a world vision of the truths Friends hold in common and to strengthen the global community of Quakers in over 70 countries.

The world office is in London, serving a Central Executive Committee that includes the Clerk and Secretary of each of the regional four sections: Africa, the Americas, Asia and the West Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. The Central Executive Committee publishes *Friends World News* twice a year. FWCC also provides the United Nations Consultative Status for the Quaker United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva.

In the past, the committee organised large world gatherings every three years ('triennials') but now holds such international meetings every 7 to 10 years. Australia Yearly Meeting representatives are appointed at Yearly Meeting on the recommendation

of the AYM Nominations Committee in consultation with the AYM Quaker World Connections Committee (QWCC).

#### **5.4.7 Quaker United Nations Offices**

For more information, please see: [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org).

Friends have an office in New York and another in Geneva that are accredited to the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations as parts of a non-governmental organisation. The staff seek to put forward to various UN committees Friends' views on global matters including human rights, refugees, peace, disarmament, economic issues, emerging crises and conflicts. Both offices provide opportunities and places for diplomats to meet informally and discuss controversial matters 'off the record'.

Administrative responsibility for each office is held by a committee including five Friends from FWCC and one from each of the sections of FWCC. The Asia West Pacific Section (AWPS) appoints a representative to each office's committee. Funding comes from Yearly Meetings and individuals.

Australian Friends holding Quaker United Nations Offices (QUNO) committee membership are ex officio members of the AYM Quaker World Connections Committee (QWCC).

#### **5.4.8 Asia-West Pacific Section (AWPS)**

For more information on FWCC AWPS please see the AWPS website at: [www.fwccawps.org](http://www.fwccawps.org), which includes contact information for affiliated Quaker Meetings, and Quaker stories from around the globe.

All constituent Yearly Meetings of FWCC are autonomous, but they are grouped geographically into sections. The Asia-West Pacific Section (AWPS) was defined in 1985 and consists of the current FWCC representatives from Australia Yearly Meeting, their counterparts from Aotearoa/New Zealand and Japan, from four Yearly Meetings on the Indian subcontinent, plus from smaller Worshipping Groups in other nearby countries.

The AWPS arranges meetings of its FWCC representatives, usually at the world gatherings and at AWPS gatherings in between. Also, it encourages and facilitates intervisitation between Yearly Meetings within the section, and can act as a Regional Meeting for isolated Friends and groups in the area, as regards Membership (Chapter 3) and pastoral care.

The AWPS appoints a representative to both the New York and Geneva Quaker United Nations Office Committees.

Like the FWCC itself, the AWPS depends on financial support from Yearly Meetings and private individuals. Australian contributions can be sent through the AYM Treasurer.

Australia Yearly Meeting makes some provision in its budget to meet reasonable travel expenses of its representatives (but not other Friends) at FWCC or AWPS gatherings.

Australian Friends holding office in FWCC or FWCC AWPS are ex officio members of the AYM Quaker World Connections Committee (QWCC).

FWCC AWPS also arranges regular online Meetings for Worship, where Friends from within the section are able to worship together and to spend time in community with other Friends. Details are available on the AWPS website: [www.fwccawps.org](http://www.fwccawps.org)

#### **5.4.9 Friends' Peace Teams**

For details on Friends Peace Teams, please see: [www.FriendsPeaceTeams.org](http://www.FriendsPeaceTeams.org)

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) is a Spirit-led organisation working around the world to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation. FPT programs build on extensive Quaker experience, combining practical and spiritual aspects of conflict resolution.

Initially Quakers from several North American Yearly Meetings established Friends Peace Teams in 1993. After witnessing the suffering in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they wanted to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict in order to create programs for peace building, healing and reconciliation.

In 2005, Friends offered an Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP) workshop in East Aceh following the Peace Accord that ended a thirty-year war. This led to peace actions and education throughout Indonesia (Aceh to Papua), Australia, Aotearoa/NZ, Philippines, Nepal and Korea. This has led to the Asia West Pacific Initiative in which several Australian Quakers are actively involved. The other two initiatives are the African Great Lakes, and Peacebuilding *en las Américas* (Central and South America).

The Friends Peace Teams Council is the governing body of Friends Peace Teams. It supports these Quaker peace ministries and programs. The membership is comprised of representatives from Quaker Yearly Meetings in North America and Australia, and members-at-large. The council meets via a monthly conference call and an annual gathering in the United States. Committees prepare agenda items and carry out tasks of the council. Committees include Yearly Meeting Representatives, Finance, Communications, Fundraising, Governance and Personnel Committees.

At the 2014 Yearly Meeting, AYM joined the FPT Council and appointed its first representative to the Council. AYM provides some financial support, and Quaker Peace and Social Justice has made several grants on application for the work in Asia-West Pacific.

The Annual Peace Training in Pati, Java, regularly brings together peace workers from countries in Asia, Europe and Africa, where strong peace networks are being established. The bi-annual journal *Peaceways* is an excellent resource for Friends wanting details of the work of FPT.

#### **5.4.10 Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting**

Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting (A/NZYM) and Australia Yearly Meeting maintain contact with each other, notably by sending one or two Friends as representatives to the Yearly Meeting of the other. The representative Friends report back. An Australian Young Friend representative attends A/NZYM YF Easter camp and, in return, a Young Friend from A/NZYM attends Yearly Meeting in Australia and/or an Australian YF gathering ([3.7](#)).

**For more information on Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting, please see: [quakers.nz](http://quakers.nz)**

#### **5.4.11 National Council of Churches in Australia**

For more information on the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), please see: [www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au)

The National Council of Churches in Australia succeeded the Australian Council of Churches (ACC) in 1994. In its turn, the ACC originated in the World Council of Churches, which was established in 1948. Friends have been active in support of an ecumenical witness since then.

Australia Yearly Meeting is a member. The NCCA constitution was changed to enable membership by Friends and by the Churches of Christ as non-creedal churches.

The Presiding Clerk (or a proxy appointed by Yearly Meeting) represents Friends ex officio at gatherings of the Church Leaders, and, with one other appointed Friend, attends the NCCA Assembly, which meets three times a year. Other Friends may be appointed to various Commissions of NCCA and its service arm, Act for Peace. Those appointments and the respective duration of each (usually three years) are decided by Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee. The appointments are normally made after consideration of names brought forward by the AYM Nominations Committee ([5.3.8.2](#)).

The NCCA organises a triennial forum, attended by three Friends appointed by Yearly Meeting (one of whom may be a Young Friend), including the Presiding Clerk ex officio. AYM representatives submit reports for the consideration of Yearly Meeting through *Documents in Advance*.

#### **5.4.12 Other affiliations — AYM and RMs**

In addition to those listed, AYM may choose to collaborate with any other national body. This requires YM or Standing Committee approval. AYM is a member of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), and the Australian Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN). These organisations have their own websites that provide further information about their purpose and activities.

An individual Regional Meeting may appoint representatives to appropriate organisations operating only within its own area or state.

### **5.5 AYM publications**

#### **5.5.1 General**

For detail please see [2.6](#).

Publications are added to the collection of historical Quaker literature in the National Library of Australia in Canberra. (Access to material in the AYM archives requires permission from Australia Yearly Meeting until 30 years from the date of publication, unless the AYM Archivist decides otherwise.)

Quaker books can be purchased:

- *Pauline Books and Media* [www.paulinebooks.com.au](http://www.paulinebooks.com.au) stock a selection of Quaker books, which can be ordered online. Email: [orders.adelaide@paulinebooks.com.au](mailto:orders.adelaide@paulinebooks.com.au)

- Interactive Publications (IP) (<http://www.ipoz.biz/quaker-publications/>) is an online bookshop that carries the Backhouse Lectures from 2008; *Advices and Queries*; and *this we can say: Australian life, faith and thought*. Email: [sales@ipoz.biz](mailto:sales@ipoz.biz) to order. A 30% discount applies for orders of at least 10 copies for Friends' Meetings; inform IP that you are ordering for your Meeting or Worshipping Group.

### 5.5.2 The Australian Friend

*The Australian Friend* (AF) is online at: <http://australianfriend.org>

*The Australian Friend* is the official journal of Australia Yearly Meeting. Its purpose is to keep Friends in touch, to share spiritual insights and practical Concerns, and to stimulate awareness of the wider witness of Quakers in Australia and beyond.

Issues of *The Australian Friend* usually include reports of Yearly Meeting and Standing Committee gatherings and Yearly Meeting epistles. There may be articles on spiritual subjects, life stories, essays on current political and social questions, poems, book reviews, correspondence, photographs and illustrations. Sometimes an edition of the journal focuses on a theme of interest in Australia, or is edited by a guest or group.

Contributions from individual Friends and others are welcome, and may be invited by the editor.

**The Australian Friend Committee structure is changing. Refer to:**

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/AF>

The journal is published online by The Australian Friend Committee, appointed at Yearly Meeting under the care of a Regional Meeting. The editor (or co-editors) comes from that committee itself, or not, as the committee decides. The journal is currently published quarterly.

Members of the Society may request a mailed copy. Australia Yearly Meeting bears the costs of the journal's publication and distribution to Members. It is available to non-Members at no cost online or is mailed by subscription.

Regional Meetings are encouraged to use *The Australian Friend* as a form of outreach to Attenders and Enquirers.

For editorial guidelines and editing support please contact:

[CAustFriend@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:CAustFriend@quakersaustralia.info)

### **5.5.3 Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography**

*The Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography (DAQB)* is the compilation of information about deceased Australian Friends. The entries in the dictionary usually consist of 'Testimonies to the Grace of God in the life of X' ([4.6.4](#)), related RM Minutes of Record, biographical details and other relevant information. The *DAQB* is maintained by the AYM Secretary.

The dictionary arose from work undertaken by William and Marjorie Oats, which led to the publications *Quakers in Australia before 1862: A Biographical Index* and *A Question of Survival: Quakers in Australia in the Nineteenth Century*.

The dictionary is accessible online at: [www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/quaker-biographies](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/quaker-biographies)

In cases where family members have asked for restrictions on access to the entry or part of the entry, researchers may apply for permission to access the material through the AYM Secretary. The AYM Secretary may also have additional documents about a person that are not part of the *DAQB*.

Print versions of the *DAQB* were formerly only held in RM libraries, and in the State Libraries of New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria; the University of Tasmania library; the National Library of Australia; and some overseas libraries. These may still be available. The print versions are no longer updated, since all the information is accessible online.

### **5.5.4 Backhouse Lectures**

The Backhouse Lecture Committee, not the Publications Committee, publishes the text of the lecture presented at each Yearly Meeting. 'Publication' usually includes both a printed version of around 70 pages and a recording (available from the website: [www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/backhouse-lectures](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/backhouse-lectures) ), but the lecture may be separately published in a single format.

## **5.6 AYM finance**

### **5.6.1 Introduction**

*Guidelines: Are you honest and truthful in all you say and do? Do you maintain strict integrity in business transactions and in your dealings with individuals and organisations? Do you use money and information entrusted to you with discretion and responsibility?*

*(Advices and Queries, 40)*

The AYM budget for the General Fund ([5.6.2](#)) for the financial year starting on 1 October is prepared by the AYM Treasurer (the audited accounts are available at Yearly Meeting).

Australia Yearly Meeting's cash assets include the General Fund ([5.6.2](#)) and the various funds managed by committees appointed by Yearly Meeting, e.g., Thanksgiving Fund Committee ([5.6.8](#)) and the Peace & Social Justice Fund Committee ([5.6.7](#)).

In addition, there is a Reserve Fund held for contingencies. Yearly Meeting or Standing Committee transfers amounts to and from it as necessary.

When a committee has sufficient funding to pay for a consultant/staff member for the contracted time, the details of the contract are agreed upon by the committee, the host Regional Meeting, if it is a hosted committee, the AYM Presiding Clerk, the AYM Secretary and the AYM Treasurer. AYM becomes the employer (for more detail, see [5.3.5](#)).

### **5.6.2 General Fund**

The General Fund is the main fund for the work of Australia Yearly Meeting. It receives contributions from Regional Meetings on a quota basis ([2.5.2](#)). The quotas are agreed as part of the budgeting process and are based on the relative memberships of the respective Regional Meetings.

AYM budget proposals for the General Fund include the estimated income and the expenditures on the AYM office and AYM officers, travel on behalf of Australia Yearly Meeting, publication of *The Australian Friend*, and support for FWCC and other Quaker activities.



### **5.6.3 Investments**

AYM funds not required for day-to-day purposes may be invested by the AYM Treasurer and AYM Finance Committee, having consideration for issues such as security, ethical criteria, availability and convenience to the Treasurer for deposits and withdrawals.

Options for investments include deposits with a bank, building society or public company; property, as authorised by Yearly Meeting; and any other form of investment authorised for trust funds by law, and by Yearly Meeting.

### **5.6.4 Property**

Land, buildings, and/or shares may be acquired by the Society by purchase, gift or bequest.

Title deeds of Meeting Houses, burial grounds and trust properties are kept in a safe place known to the AYM Secretary. In 2019 the only property owned by Australia Yearly Meeting is The Sanctuary, a house behind Wahroonga Meeting House in Sydney.

The relevant Regional Meeting is consulted about any proposal by a Local or Recognised Meeting to sell or let on long lease any Meeting House or burial ground, or to relinquish power over them. Provision is made in any tenancy agreement for ending the tenancy at reasonably short notice should Friends need to use the property.

Any Meeting considering dissolution, or an end to its distinct character, needs to consult the Regional Meeting or Yearly Meeting about the disposal of any trust property.

Respect for the traditional ownership of the land by local First Nations Peoples is to be considered as part of any of these decisions.

### **5.6.5 Bequests**

Bequests are an important source of income for carrying on the Society's work. Friends may direct bequests to their Local or Regional Meeting, to AYM funds or to specific AYM committees. Gifts bequeathed simply to 'The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated' go to the AYM Thanksgiving Fund. If it is intended that a Regional or Local Meeting or a specific committee should administer the bequest, the will ([4.6.1](#)) needs to refer to that Meeting or committee by its full name.

The wording of a bequest is best made as simple and general as possible, consistent with the intention of the testator, to allow the Meeting or committee to use the proceeds most effectively.

The following wording is suggested:

'I GIVE the sum of \$..... (or 'my property at .....') to #..... and DECLARE that the receipt of the relevant Secretary, Treasurer or other proper officer shall be sufficient discharge to my Trustee/s.'

# Here insert the full name of the appropriate Meeting or Committee, **after checking it with the AYM Secretary.**

If **property** is bequeathed to the Society, it proves helpful to include a clause allowing its sale, should this be deemed advisable by the Yearly Meeting, beneficiary Meeting or committee. Also, thought should be given to a parallel bequest of funds to maintain the property.

#### **5.6.6 AYM Travel Fund**

The AYM Travel Fund helps cover the travel costs of bringing to Yearly Meeting guests from the Asia-West Pacific Section, the Backhouse lecturer, various AYM representatives, members of mid-year Standing Committee, and certain office-holders.

Money from the Travel Fund may be augmented by grants from the Thanksgiving Fund.

#### **5.6.7 Peace & Social Justice Fund**

Detailed information about the Fund is available at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/PSJF>

The Peace & Social Justice Fund provides financial support to Quaker peace committees and to individual Friends to implement the peace and social justice Concerns of the Society. These include reconciliation, disarmament, non-violent conflict resolution and improving race relations, in addition to other aspects of the Society's work and witness for peace and social justice.

Allocations from the Fund are used mainly to encourage Friends to undertake activities on behalf of the Concerns just mentioned, notably by paying administrative expenses,

equipment, travel costs, publication costs, conference fees and the cost of employment by Australia Yearly Meeting of peace and social justice workers.

This applies to individual Friends, but also to Regional Meetings and AYM projects or AYM committees.

The Fund may also support similar projects, even if not directly connected with Quakers, if sponsored by a Regional Meeting.

Normally it may not be used for ongoing projects that require extended management.

The capital of the Peace & Social Justice Fund is built up mainly by donations from Friends and from bequests ([5.6.5](#)). The committee may also seek to raise money from philanthropic and other sources outside the Society.

### **Administration**

Administration of the fund is through a committee of Friends who are committed to peace and social justice, and knowledgeable about Australia Yearly Meeting. The committee operates in a similar way to the Thanksgiving Fund ([5.6.8](#)), under the care of a host Regional Meeting appointed by Yearly Meeting. It meets at least twice each year.

To encourage patient discernment and measured action in Quaker witness, the Peace & Social Justice Fund Committee normally does not respond to urgent requests for money. If a rapid decision has to be made, a Local or Regional Meeting may decide to provide the requested support itself and then apply for possible reimbursement from the Fund.

Grants from the fund can be made directly by the committee with the following provisions:

- A single grant of more than 10% of the fund's capital requires the agreement of the Presiding Clerk, the AYM Secretary, the AYM Treasurer and one Regional Meeting Clerk or the agreement of Standing Committee.
- Grants of more than 20% of the Fund's capital in one calendar year also require the agreement of the AYM Presiding Clerk, the AYM Secretary, the AYM Treasurer and one Regional Meeting Clerk or the agreement of Standing Committee.

Many other aspects of the operation of the Peace & Social Justice Fund are the same as for the Thanksgiving Fund.

### **5.6.8 Thanksgiving Fund**

The Thanksgiving Fund was established in 1979 to help Friends implement appropriate Concerns. Contributing to the Fund allows Friends and others to give practical expression of their thankfulness on specific occasions, such as births or anniversaries, or to mark the contribution that has been made by the Grace of God in the life of a much-loved Friend.

The Thanksgiving Fund is administered by the Thanksgiving Fund Committee and monies are distributed by the AYM Treasurer on its recommendation.

For details on the Thanksgiving Fund Committee and its purpose and grants, please see:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Thanksgiving>

#### **Purpose of the fund**

Distributions enable Friends to pursue Concerns ([1.5](#)) of the Society, such as education, historical research, publicity, social welfare, spiritual healing, international order, children's issues and such other matters as the Society becomes involved in as a form of work and witness. Outside groups with similar Concerns also may be supported. Typically, payment is made for administrative equipment and expenses, publications and conference costs, and assisting with honoraria and travel costs. The fund will not normally be available for the purchase of land or buildings.

**Fund income** derives partly from bequests ([5.6.5](#)). Bequests of money to Australia Yearly Meeting are normally added to the Thanksgiving Fund's income, unless either the donor specifies otherwise, or alternative arrangements are decided by Yearly Meeting.

Note that the rest of [5.6.8](#) applies equally to the **Peace & Social Justice Fund** ([5.6.7](#)). The Thanksgiving Fund Committee takes into account any conditions or requests associated with a bequest to the fund. Should there be difficulty in meeting such conditions, the committee may ask Yearly Meeting to allocate the funds elsewhere.

**Administration:** The fund is administered by a committee of at least four Friends appointed for three years by Yearly Meeting. No member may be a paid officer of the Society nor serve for more than three consecutive terms. Committee members need a wide knowledge of the Concerns, workings and processes of Australia Yearly Meeting.

The committee is hosted by a Regional Meeting, which, should a vacancy occur on the committee, requests its Nominations Committee to consult with people with relevant expertise and then appoints a successor, to be confirmed later by Standing Committee or Yearly Meeting.

### **Fund distributions**

Allocations are usually made from the income portion of the fund, which is separate from the capital portion. The income portion is made up of interest earnings on the fund and any donations to the fund that are not specifically marked as being for the capital portion.

However, the Committee may in any one year make a single grant of up to 10 per cent of the capital, provided there is agreement by the Presiding Clerk, the AYM Secretary and one Regional Meeting Clerk. Furthermore, the committee may make grants of more than 10 per cent of the capital in any one year, provided Standing Committee agrees.

Normally the committee does not accept multiple submissions by a single entity. Grants from the fund are made by the AYM Treasurer as directed by the committee.

Grant application forms may be downloaded from the Society's website:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Thanksgiving>

The applicant submits to the committee convener a written outline of the proposal and the funds sought, accompanied by a minute of endorsement from a Local Meeting, Regional Meeting, Yearly Meeting, Standing Committee or AYM committee.

Such support would depend on a thorough investigation of the project by the supporter from several points of view, notably that of Friends' testimonies ([1.2](#)), along with a commitment to provide ongoing support if the grant is awarded. A Clearness Meeting might be useful.

Steps in the processing of applications:

1. The applicant submits relevant background material to accompany the application, e.g. biographical notes about the people involved or the proposed publication, well in advance of requiring the funds for the proposal.
2. The committee may interview the applicant and/or ask for more written information about the application for funding.

3. The committee makes a decision as soon as practicable, and not more than four months from the date on which the application was lodged.
4. In some cases, the committee may offer the applicant a grant that is less than the amount requested and/or has conditions attached.
5. The grant recipient submits a written report to the committee on the use of the allocated money at the end of the grant period, or annually (whichever is the sooner).
6. The committee makes an annual report to Yearly Meeting with details of all grants made that year and the income and capital in the fund.

The maintenance of the fund is promoted by reminding Friends on appropriate occasions of its existence and its purpose. Forms for intending donors are available from the AYM website.

## Chapter 6 Yearly Meeting (YM), the annual national gathering

From the Handbook Revision Committee:

Since 2015 Friends around Australia have discerned different ways of holding Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering of Quakers in Australia. This discernment will continue as different models are trialled that vary factors such as location, frequency, length of the gathering, programming, formal decision-making processes, the role and responsibilities of Standing Committee, holding of the AGM and approval of the AYM budget. The Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee laid down its work at YM 2020. The reports of the RHYMC are on the AYM website (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/RightHolding>). As no new definite model for holding Yearly Meeting has been decided upon, Chapter 6 has not been revised. The Chapter contains useful information on some aspects of holding Yearly Meeting. Cross-references have been updated to match the current handbook.

### 6.1 General

In the previous chapter, consideration was given to the first meaning of Yearly Meeting, the organisation of the whole body of Quakers in Australia, denoted by AYM. Now this chapter is about the other meaning, the annual gathering of Australian Quakers, denoted by YM. One purpose of Yearly Meeting is the reaching of decisions on AYM policy and conduct. Other reasons for Yearly Meeting are the enriching of fellowship between Friends, mutual support in spiritual growth and the discussion of current issues.

Yearly Meeting is usually held for seven to eight days in January, and is hosted by each Regional Meeting in rotation. A Summer School ([6.3.4](#)) is held in association with Yearly Meeting.

### 6.2 Before Yearly Meeting

#### 6.2.1 Practical arrangements

The final choice of the host Regional Meeting for Yearly Meeting in a particular year is made by Standing Committee at least two years in advance, and generally follows a rotation around all Regional Meetings. The chosen Regional Meeting then sets up an Arrangements Committee to examine possible venues and the adequacy of associated off-site accommodation, suggest a theme for the Summer School, and estimate costs. For guidance, the AYM Secretary has distributed to all Regional Meetings copies of a CD-ROM that records the experiences of past Yearly Meetings.

It is helpful for the host Regional Meeting to start by establishing several YM committees. These differ from AYM committees ([5.3](#)) in lasting only one year and being

focused solely on organising the next year's gathering. Typically, the YM committees deal with arrangements, the agenda (6.2.4), pastoral care (6.3.1), the checking of minutes and the preparing of an epistle (6.3.6), along with other matters.

An early responsibility of the Arrangements Committee is the listing of tasks to be covered, and the allocation of responsibility for each task. Preliminary ideas are discussed at a Business Meeting of the host Regional Meeting and sent to the AYM Presiding Clerk and the AYM Secretary for comment. The Arrangements Committee establishes liaison with the Backhouse Lecture Committee and the AYM Treasurer.

The host RM Clerk reports to each subsequent meeting of Standing Committee on the Arrangements Committee's progress.

The Arrangements Committee seeks early contact with the local Indigenous community to invite an Elder or other representative to address Yearly Meeting at the opening session and, if they wish, to offer a welcome to country. The committee also constructs a budget of all the likely costs associated with conducting Yearly Meeting at the chosen venue. The cost items are set out in detail in the Members' section of the Society's website: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/> Estimates of such outgoings and of the likely number attending enable calculation of the registration charges for those at Yearly Meeting. This is tendered to a Business Meeting of the host Regional Meeting for approval and for the consideration of possible financial assistance to Friends requiring it.

Standing Committee allocates an amount (e.g. \$10,000 in 2009) to the host Regional Meeting YM Organising Committee, which is available from the AYM Treasurer in the October before Yearly Meeting. This subsidy is to offset some of the initial costs, such as a deposit for the venue, and, more recently, to reduce costs for those attending. It is not expected that the subsidy will be eventually returned to Australia Yearly Meeting. It also pays for the cost of those who are hosted and paid for by Yearly Meeting, among whom are the AYM Presiding Clerk, the AYM Secretary, the FWCCAWPS visitor and the Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting representatives. When plans are clear and approved by Standing Committee, the Arrangements Committee arranges timely publicity through the AYM Secretary, in *The Australian Friend* and by correspondence with RM Clerks.



### **6.2.2 Arrangements for younger Friends**

The importance of caring for younger Friends and spiritually nourishing them cannot be overemphasised ([3.6](#), [3.7](#)). At Yearly Meeting, Friends seek to give their children grounding in what the Society represents.

Junior Young Friends ([3.6](#)), aged between 12 and 17 years, have their own program, formed in consultation between them and the Arrangements Committee. It may include camping, visits to places of interest, and physical activities appropriate to the venue. As well, there are opportunities to discuss issues they care about and to engage with the whole of Yearly Meeting throughout the week, including at the concert, and at the final Meeting for Worship, when they present their epistle.

Children younger than 12 are cared for separately in an appropriate space. Their program may include art, music and games, as well as quieter times for talking and worship.

Friends' concern for a trusting open society is tempered by the duty of care owed to younger members. The Arrangements Committee ensures that leaders and carers working with the younger Friends comply with current child protection legislation and guidelines ([4.2.2](#)). The AYM Committee for Child Protection, in consultation with the AYM insurers, has developed a policy and a procedure for child care during Yearly, Regional and Local Meeting occasions which takes into account state regulations. This document is available on the Society's website: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies>

### **6.2.3 Media coverage**

Media coverage is arranged well ahead of Yearly Meeting. The Arrangements Committee appoints one or two local Friends, and has power to co-opt others, if required during Yearly Meeting, to contact local newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations in order to provide background information. A media conference might be arranged for the beginning of Yearly Meeting, and also interviews with particular Friends, such as the Backhouse lecturer ([6.3.3](#)). Media releases may be issued by the Presiding Clerk, if newsworthy decisions are reached during Yearly Meeting. However, neither reporters nor members of the public are permitted to attend YM sessions.

#### **6.2.4 Agenda**

The agenda is first drafted several months in advance by a YM Agenda Committee consisting of the Presiding Clerk ([5.2.2](#)), the Assistant Clerk (usually the Clerk of the host Regional Meeting) and the AYM Secretary ([5.2.3](#)). In addition, they may co-opt two other Friends.

The agenda allows for presentation of reports from the Presiding Clerk, the AYM Treasurer, the AYM Secretary, the QSA Convener and the Presiding Member of the Board of Governors of The Friends' School. There are also reports from the various AYM committees ([5.3](#)), Regional Meetings ([2.4](#)) and organisations associated with Australia Yearly Meeting, as well as particular statements of Concern. In each case, the report ends with a brief identification of questions for decision by Yearly Meeting, if required.

An agenda item stipulated by the Rules of Incorporation is the AGM of the 'Association', as Australia Yearly Meeting is termed ([www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources)). The AGM must consider the audited annual financial statement of Australia Yearly Meeting, reports of current AYM office-holders and committees, and appointments for the coming year (paragraph 9.2 of the Rules). In practice, these topics are all dealt with during the various YM Business Meetings and reported in *Documents in Advance* ([6.2.5](#)) and *Documents in Retrospect* ([6.4.1](#)).

#### **6.2.5 Documents in Advance**

*Documents in Advance* contains the draft timetable and agenda of Yearly Meeting, along with RM and AYM committee reports ([5.2.3](#), [6.2.5](#)). The booklet is prepared by the AYM Secretary and issued in time for discussion by Regional Meetings at their Meetings for Business in November and December.

#### **6.2.6 Attendance**

All Members of Australia Yearly Meeting are entitled to attend Yearly Meeting and to take part in deliberations there. Each Regional Meeting ensures that it is adequately represented. Members of overseas Yearly Meetings also may attend, once the Presiding Clerk is satisfied as to their Membership. The Clerk may invite a representative of the local Council of Churches, whose attendance has been arranged by the Regional Meeting hosting the Yearly Meeting.

Australian Young Friends not in Membership are welcome to attend when their representatives on Standing Committee have obtained Standing Committee's agreement to their nomination and the Presiding Clerk has invited them.

In addition, Attenders of Regional Meetings are encouraged to participate in Yearly Meeting; the only requirements are a recommendation from the Ministry Committee of the respective Regional Meeting, experience of their RM Business Meetings where possible ([1.4, 2.4.3](#)), and endorsement by Standing Committee prior to Yearly Meeting. (The RM Clerk provides Standing Committee and the Arrangements Committee with a list of such Attenders from an RM area in advance.) In circumstances outside the above requirements, an Attender may seek permission to participate from the Presiding Clerk in consultation with the Standing Committee representatives of the relevant Regional Meeting.

Shortly after Yearly Meeting's opening, the host Regional Meeting displays a list of the names and affiliations of everyone present.

Anyone entitled to attend a YM session is automatically entitled to participate in the discussion. This replaces an earlier custom for an Attender to obtain permission in order to speak.

Regional Meetings ensure that the procedures described above are widely known and try to prepare both non-Members and Members for participation in the Yearly Meeting.

### **6.2.7 Preliminary meeting of Standing Committee**

It is current practice for one of the regular meetings of Standing Committee to be held on the first day of Yearly Meeting. The full range of responsibilities of Standing Committee is explained in 5.3.8.1, but on this occasion its agenda is limited largely to the following items:

- draft agenda of the imminent Yearly Meeting
- time and place of the reading of selected testimonies of recently deceased Australian Friends
- necessary alterations to the timetable already published in *Documents in Advance*
- approval of the non-Members attending
- the bringing forward of names for The Friends' School Board
- arrangements for future gatherings.

The Agenda Committee ([6.2.4](#)) subsequently posts up decisions on these items for the information of everyone at Yearly Meeting.

### **6.3 During Yearly Meeting**

*We did conclude among ourselves to settle a meeting, to see one another's faces, and open our hearts one to another in the Truth of God once a year, as formerly it used to be.*

(Yearly Meeting in London, 1668, in *Quaker Faith & Practice* 6.02, Britain Yearly Meeting, 1995)

#### **6.3.1 The first day**

The first day is a busy time. On arrival, those attending complete their earlier registration, pay any outstanding fees, work out the geography of the premises, find their allocated accommodation and renew acquaintanceships. They also need to confirm their choice of Summer School group ([6.3.4](#)).

For first-timers there is a special meeting to explain the formal and informal aspects of what lies ahead. Ideally each newcomer to Yearly Meeting is linked with an experienced Friend.

For everyone, the first day is for considering the *Documents in Advance*, to assess which parts of the program are of particular importance. The YM program includes several kinds of planned session: Business Sessions, Summer School, Share and Tell group meetings, the open AGM of QSA ([5.4.1](#)) and the Backhouse Lecture ([5.5.4](#) and [6.3.3](#)). There are also opportunities for members of any representative or expert AYM committee ([5.3.7.2](#)) or of an associated body to meet, and for office-holders in the various Regional Meetings to confer with their counterparts. A Meeting for Remembrance is held in memory of all those Friends who have died during the year.

The first day is the time for the preliminary SC meeting ([6.2.7](#)) and the opening session of Yearly Meeting. The latter is the initial Business Meeting and may deal with the following matters:

- welcome to the land by a representative of the local Indigenous group
- welcome by Australian Quakers to Friends from other Yearly Meetings
- consideration of recommendations from the AYM Nominations Committee for YM committees, i.e. the Media Committee, the Minutes-editing Committee and the

Epistle Committee, each serving only for the duration of the Yearly Meeting

- approval of Friends (one or two from each Regional Meeting and from Young Friends) to serve on the YM Pastoral Care Committee, which has the task of caring for those attending Yearly Meeting
- an analysis by a Friend (invited by the host Regional Meeting or the Presiding Clerk) of 'The State of the Society', based on the reports in *Documents in Advance*, particularly those from Regional Meetings. (Sometimes this analysis is delivered at a later session.)

By the end of the first day, the Arrangements Committee will have posted up a list of everyone registered as present at the Yearly Meeting.

### **6.3.2 Business Meetings**

At the core of Yearly Meeting are the Meetings for Worship for Business, where all the matters presented in *Documents in Advance* are considered and appropriate decisions made. There are two kinds of Business Meeting at Yearly Meeting: Preparatory Sessions and Formal Sessions. Procedures at both sorts of meeting have been described earlier ([1.4](#)).

The purpose of Preparatory Sessions is to allow preliminary consideration of certain reports in *Documents in Advance* ([5.2.3](#)). A Preparatory Session raises Friends' awareness of the work behind a report, provides additional relevant information and promotes consideration of the questions raised in Part B of the report. Friends who wish to contribute significantly at a Formal Session later are particularly encouraged to participate in the relevant Preparatory Session.

The Agenda Committee asks experienced Friends to clerk and scribe each Preparatory Session. The clerk ensures that the session includes:

- worship
- presentation of the report
- responses to the report
- clarification of issues
- identification of 'matters for the consideration of Yearly Meeting'.

Later, but preferably on the same day, the clerk prepares a record of the session, listing the 'matters for the consideration of Yearly Meeting'. The clerk's statement is posted on

a noticeboard before the corresponding Formal Session.

At the Formal Session, a Friend presents the record of the Preparatory Session, summarising the clerk's statement and detailing the 'matters for the consideration of Yearly Meeting'. The matter is then open for discernment, under the guidance of the Presiding Clerk ([5.2.2](#)). Friends are encouraged to contribute only from a position of knowledge and preparation. The Formal Session culminates in a recorded minute to be included in *Documents in Retrospect* ([6.4.1](#)).

### **6.3.3 Backhouse Lecture**

The Backhouse Lecture ([5.5.4](#) and [6.3.3](#)) is generally given early in the week. Friends are encouraged to make it known to members of the public and to invite them to attend, since the lecture is an opportunity for outreach throughout the community and can arouse great interest. Printed copies are available for sale at the lecture venue, directly after the lecture.

The lecture is conducted in the manner of Friends, beginning and ending in silence, without applause. A day or two later, a time is set for Friends to meet the lecturer for questions and discussion.

### **6.3.4 Summer School**

Summer School is aimed at deepening the religious experience of the participants. The theme and form are different each year and are chosen well beforehand by the host Regional Meeting, which invites several Friends to lead groups. There may be artwork, physical activity, quiet periods and/or deep discussion. All create opportunities for joyful and unexpected openings.

The school usually begins on the first Sunday, with the groups meeting separately.

### **6.3.5 Share and Tell sessions**

Share and Tell sessions are periods in the YM timetable for individual Friends to share their Concerns or interests with others. Such Friends make a booking with the Arrangements Committee for a discussion time and space and then put up notices inviting others to gather to discuss the stated subject. After the session, the convening Friend or Attender provides a report to the AYM Secretary for the *Documents in Retrospect* ([6.4.1](#)).

### **6.3.6 'Epistle to Friends everywhere'**

The epistles are statements in which Friends try to describe the atmosphere, setting, weighty issues and spiritual climate of a particular Yearly Meeting. During the first YM Business Meeting, an appointed Friend gives a summary of epistles received from other Yearly Meetings around the world.

Later in the YM program, an Epistle Committee presents a draft epistle from the current Yearly Meeting for consideration at a formal session. The final draft is read out, considered and accepted during the last Formal Business Meeting and read again during the closing Meeting for Worship of the Yearly Meeting.

### **6.3.7 Conclusion**

Everyone — Members, Attenders, Young Friends, Junior Young Friends and younger children — comes together at the closing Meeting for Worship on the final day of Yearly Meeting. They hear epistles from the Yearly Meeting, Young Friends, Junior Young Friends and the younger children. These epistles reflect shared experiences, decisions made, friendships renewed and times shared together. These epistles are then forwarded to a range of Yearly Meetings with whom we have some relationship.

## **6.4 After the Yearly Meeting**

### **6.4.1 Documents in Retrospect**

*Documents in Retrospect* matches *Documents in Advance* ([6.2.5](#)) in format, and contains the recent SC and YM minutes, and all the agreed reports of activities during Yearly Meeting, including those of the Share and Tell Sessions, the Summer School, and the various epistles ([6.3.6](#)). It is compiled and issued by the AYM Secretary in the month following Yearly Meeting.

### **6.4.2 Follow-up tasks**

- Each RM Clerk arranges for a Friend to read aloud the YM Epistle at some Meeting of their Regional Meeting.
- RM representatives at Yearly Meeting report back to their Regional Meeting.
- At the earliest RM Business Meeting, the Clerk reports on matters sent by Yearly Meeting for Regional Meetings' attention.
- The YM Arrangements Committee updates the YM Organisers' CD-ROM with a factual report on the whole YM experience and a financial balance sheet. Copies of the revised CD are sent to future Arrangements committees ([6.2.1](#)) and the AYM

Secretary. *The A–Z guide to organising a Yearly Meeting* on the website is then updated.

- The AYM Secretary advises RM clerks and the conveners of AYM committees of pertinent YM minutes.
- The AYM Secretary makes the printed Backhouse Lectures available for sale. *The Australian Friend* reports on Yearly Meeting in its next issue by means of contributions from Friends who attended.
- The AYM Secretary sends the epistles from Australia Yearly Meeting to other Yearly Meetings with whom we have a relationship.
- The Public Officer sends information from the AGM of Australia Yearly Meeting to the ACT Registrar-General concerning the AYM annual accounts and office-holders, as required in paragraph 9.3 of the Rules:

[www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources)



# Appendices

## Appendix A Glossary

*All cross references have been checked prior to publication.*

**Advices & Queries:** recommendations and spiritual guidance for Quakers, resulting from discussions over the years, with thought-provoking questions. *Advices & Queries* represents one aspect of the accumulated wisdom of Friends.

**Affirm:** to attest to a truth by a positive statement, granted legal status in Britain from 1722 and therefore in Australia. An affirmation is an alternative to swearing an oath.

**Aotearoa/New Zealand:** is our preferred term.

**Attender:** someone who attends Meetings for Worship regularly although not a Member of the Society, and who in many cases contributes appreciably to the life and support of a Meeting. Attenders are listed (with their permission) in the contact database.

A non-Quaker who attends only a few times or irregularly may be called an Enquirer.

**Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM):** the national body of Friends in Australia. Australia Yearly Meeting consists of all Friends in the Regional Meetings of Australia and is legally incorporated in the Australian Capital Territory.

**AYM:** see Australia Yearly Meeting

**Backhouse Lecture (BL):** an annual lecture, usually delivered at a Yearly Meeting by an Australian or overseas Friend. Published versions present perspectives on contemporary and Quaker issues in Australia. (The British equivalent is the Swarthmore Lecture.)

**Birthright Friend:** a historical label for Quakers entitled to Membership of the Society on account of their parents' belonging. This category of inherited Membership is no longer granted in Australia.

**Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM):** the body, then known as London Yearly Meeting, to which Australian Quakers belonged until 1964.

**Business Meeting:** see Meeting for Worship for Business.

**Carers:** either the same as Overseers (Pastoral Carers), or, child carers, i.e. people specifically responsible for the safety of children in their charge.

**Centre down:** to use silence to find an inward stillness, a sense of community and freedom from merely intellectual activity; to become open to the leadings of God together.

**Child Membership:** children (under 18) who have formally applied for and been accepted into Membership. Note that in some states and territories, Members under 18 cannot be members of an incorporated association.

**Child of the Meeting:** the attachment of a child to a Meeting of the Society until the age of 18, with the concurrence of the child's parents. The name of such a 'child of the Meeting' is listed among those of Friends in the Membership database.

**Clearness Meeting:** a special gathering of Friends asked to help a person or persons discern the way forward in some matter. The Friends involved may be selected jointly by the person and the Regional Meeting's Overseers ([1.6](#)).

**Clerk:** each Local Meeting, Regional Meeting and the Yearly Meeting has a Clerk or Co-Clerks. The role of a Clerk is to handle correspondence, and prepare for and facilitate Business Meetings. During such a meeting, the Clerk drafts a minute immediately after discussion of any point, summarising the sense of the Meeting, for immediate consideration and amendment by the gathering until there is unity. In short, a Clerk combines the duties of a non-directive chairperson and a secretary.

Subsequently, the Clerk supervises the carrying out of actions arising from the recorded decisions. In addition, the Clerk represents the Meeting in contacts with other people or bodies.

**Concern:** a weighty matter that disturbs the conscience and impels the concerned person or Meeting towards action, i.e. 'the promptings of love and truth in the heart' (London Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings, 1986). A Friend brings the matter to Regional Meeting through their Local Meeting, or relevant Regional Meeting

Committee, preferably after consultation with experienced Friends (possibly by convening a Clearness Committee, see [1.6](#)). This is quite different from ‘concern about’ which implies action by someone else.

- **To test a Concern:** A Meeting may exercise group discernment and decide whether the matter brought before it is a leading or a Concern, and if it is the Concern of the individual Friend or if it should be adopted by the Meeting.
- **To adopt a Concern:** After testing, a Meeting may adopt a Concern, the advancement of which then becomes the business of the Meeting as a whole.

**Correspondent:** a representative of a group of Friends, either a Worshipping Group, Recognised Meeting or Regional Meeting, who provides a link between their group and a Regional Meeting or Yearly Meeting committee. Also, a Friend appointed as the information conduit between a Regional Meeting and an AYM Committee.

**Discernment:** ‘the faculty one uses to distinguish the true movement of the Spirit to speak in Meeting for Worship, from the wholly human urge to share, to instruct, or to straighten people out’ (Loring 1998). Group discernment (of God’s will) is the aim of a Business Meeting or Clearness Meeting, for instance.

**Documents in Advance (DiA):** a compilation of reports by the committees and office-holders, collated for consideration at the next Yearly Meeting.

**Documents in Retrospect (DiR):** a publication issued since 1998 after each Yearly Meeting to record the events and decisions there and at the preceding Standing Committee. It contains reports of the various sessions, current office-holders and committee members, along with a list of people attending the Yearly Meeting.

**Elders:** members of a Ministry Committee ([2.3.6](#) and [2.5.5](#)) whose task it is to nurture the spiritual life of a Meeting and its members. This includes seeing to the right holding of Meetings for Worship.

**Eldering:** the encouragement or respectful guidance of someone by an Elder, to foster Spirit-filled ministry in a Meeting for Worship.

**Enquirer:** a non-Friend who attends Meeting for Worship infrequently and without apparent commitment.

**Epistle:** a letter addressed 'To Friends everywhere' at the end of a special occasion, such as a Yearly Meeting.

**Friendly School:** see Summer School.

**Friends:** the term is used in this handbook to refer both to individuals who have been formally accepted as Members, and to Attenders who have shown commitment to the aims, principles, procedures and welfare of the Religious Society of Friends. See also Member.

**Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC):** the international organisation linking Quakers around the world.

**Gathered Meeting:** a Meeting for Worship once it has reached a depth of stillness that touches each person present and may provide the basis of spoken prayer or other ministry.

**Holding someone in the Light:** supporting someone by prayerful remembrance.

**'In right ordering':** see Right Ordering.

**'In unity':** a phrase used when, during Meeting for Worship for Business, the Clerk senses that the gathering has reached agreement.

**Inner Light:** the central concept of our Quaker ways; the belief in divine truth nourishing the conscience. Conscience by itself is subject to human fallibility, so inner promptings are to be voiced only with humility and tested by sharing with the larger group, e.g. a Clearness Meeting or Meeting for Worship for Business. Other names for the Inner Light are 'the Seed' or 'that of God within' or 'the universal Spirit that creates, sustains and heals'.

**Junior Young Friend (JYF):** a child of the Meeting aged 12–17. See also Child of the Meeting and Young Friend.

**Lay down:** to end the existence of a committee or ad hoc body whose work has ceased, or to end a task to which a Friend was committed.

**Leading:** a tentative feeling of being guided by the Spirit to act in a particular way. If the leading becomes more certain, it becomes a Concern.

**Letter of Introduction and Greeting:** a signed document given to a Friend by the Clerk of the Local or Regional Meeting to facilitate acceptance by Quakers encountered in the course of private travel, and to strengthen the bonds between Friends.

**Light:** the Light is a metaphor now commonly used by Quakers to describe an inner awareness of religious truth and moral values, of the power to act accordingly, and of unity with others. See Inner Light.

**Local Meeting (LM):** a substantial worshipping group involving active Quakers who regularly hold a Meeting for Worship and a Meeting for Worship for Business after the manner of Friends. It is part of a Regional Meeting but responsible for its own local affairs.

**Meeting:** a word with two meanings, either a group of people, or the occasion of their coming together.

**Meeting for Worship:** a time of corporate waiting to sense God's presence and will. It is a basic element of life as a Quaker.

**Meeting for Worship for Business:** a Meeting at which decisions are made corporately by the members of a Meeting in seeking to discern God's will. Sometimes called a 'Business Meeting'.

**Meeting House:** a property in which Friends meet for worship.

**Member:** one of a group such as a Local Meeting, a committee or the Religious Society of Friends. To distinguish between such alternatives, the word needs to be followed by the name of the group and the use of either lower-case 'member' or capital-case 'Member'. The latter is a person formally accepted as a Member by a Regional Meeting. The term 'member of the Meeting' embraces all the Members, Attenders, Young Friends, Junior Young Friends and 'children of the Meeting' within the fellowship of a

particular Local or Recognised Meeting. The word 'Friend' may also be used to mean all those things.

**Membership database:** formerly printed as *Australian Quaker Meetings, Office-holders, Members, Attenders and Children*, this database is now online at:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/friend-finder> The information is provided on a continuing basis by RM Membership Secretaries and by the AYM Secretary, and is collated centrally. The aim is to aid communication within Regional Meetings and throughout Australia Yearly Meeting. The list is not available to the public, either in hard copy or online.

**Memorial Meeting:** a Meeting for Worship after the death of a Member or an Attender closely attached to the Society. Also known as a Meeting for Thanksgiving for the Grace of God in the life of that Friend. The purpose is to celebrate the evidence of God's working in the life of the departed. It may be combined with the funeral.

**Ministry:** the expression of a spiritual insight that the speaker feels impelled to share during a Meeting for Worship.

**Minute:** a summarising written statement at the end of a period of discernment, accepted by all present. It results from an initial tentative draft composed by the Clerk of the Meeting and subsequent discussion until there is unity on the wording.

**Mysticism:** the tradition of an immediate spiritual intuition of truths felt to transcend ordinary understanding, or the pursuit of an integration of the self with ultimate reality. In Quaker terms, it can be 'the awareness of (or belief in) God's presence individually and in the corporate Meeting for Worship, an awareness that results in a changed perception of the world and a willingness to be guided by the Spirit, the Inward Light, the Christ Within' (Abbott 2004).

**New Zealand:** see **Aotearoa/New Zealand**

**Outreach:** activity aimed at enhancing public awareness of the Quaker message. It may take a variety of forms. Outreach is different from proselytising, which seeks to convert others to one's own way.

**Overseer (or Carer, or Pastoral Carer):** a member of the Oversight Committee of a Regional or Local Meeting. The committee is charged with caring for the welfare of all members of the Meeting, i.e. Members of the Society, Young Friends, Attenders, and their families.

**'Paying the rent':** giving a proportion of income to a First Nations Peoples group or charity, in acknowledgment that they remain the custodians of the land we use.

**Policies:** all Quakers and Meetings in Australia are bound by the policies agreed by Australia Yearly Meeting. Policies are accessible from our website:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/policies>

**Prayer:** intimacy with God.

**Proselytising:** attempting to persuade people away from existing denominational attachments. Friends avoid proselytising.

**Quakers [plural]:** The Religious Society of Friends as a community, either Australian (i.e. AYM) or worldwide.

***Quaker Faith and Practice*** is an anthology of Quaker inspirational writings and guidelines published by Britain Yearly Meeting in 2013, and revised from time to time. The equivalent in Australia is the combination of this present handbook and *this we can say: Australian Quaker life, faith and thought*.

**Quaker Service Australia (QSA):** the Quaker aid and development organisation in Australia that works with communities in need to improve their lives by means of projects that are economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable. (See [5.4.1.](#))

**Quaker United Nations Offices (QUNO):** these are offices under the auspices of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, and accredited by the United Nations in Geneva and New York, to foster activities in line with Quaker testimonies. One example is the providing of neutral premises where diplomats can discuss contentious issues informally (see [5.4.7.](#))

**Queries:** part of *Advices & Queries*, being a set of questions for Friends and Meetings to put to themselves periodically, as challenge and inspiration. One or two might be read out early in a Meeting for Worship or other meeting.

**Quota:** a sum asked annually from each Regional Meeting to cover the costs of AYM activities. It is calculated by dividing the costs between the Regional Meetings according to the number of adult Members in each.

**Recognised Meeting:** a group that meets at least monthly to worship in the manner of Friends, and that appoints a correspondent to maintain contact with its Regional Meeting.

**Regional Meeting:** a religious and administrative unit for Australian Quakers, with one Regional Meeting in each region, mostly within state boundaries. Each conducts regular Meetings for Worship for Business, subject to the guidance of Yearly Meeting, as expressed in this handbook, but with significant autonomy.

**Right ordering:** a manner consistent with the accumulated experience, insights and customary practices of the Society.

**Schedule:** the form sent out annually by the RM or LM Treasurer to adult Members and many Attenders (if they wish) in the region for collecting money to meet the RM quota for AYM outgoings and to meet RM costs. The form guides the Treasurer in allocating donations to various aspects of the agreed budget.

**Seasoned Friend:** colloquial description of a Friend of long experience, good reputation and reliable judgment. Alternatively, a 'weighty Friend'.

**Sense of the Meeting:** the outcome of a collective attempt at discerning God's will on an issue, for possible recording as an agreed minute.

**Spirituality:** awareness of the nature and significance of one's inner being, of what lies around and within the material universe and of one's personal relationship to these things.



**Standing aside:** a phrase used to describe the action of a Friend who is not in unity with the discernment of a topic during Meeting for Worship for Business, but nevertheless recognises that the action discerned by other Friends should go forward ([1.4](#)).

**Standing Committee:** effectively the executive committee of the Society. It takes decisions for the whole Religious Society of Friends in Australia between gatherings of the Yearly Meeting. However, major decisions by Standing Committee have to be ratified by the subsequent Yearly Meeting.

Standing Committee consists of certain AYM office-holders, representatives of all Regional Meetings and of Young Friends (see [5.3.8.1](#)).

**Stop in the mind:** an expression used by Friends when they feel unable to approve a proposed course of action.

**Summer (or Winter) School:** a day or days of spiritual exploration through fellowship, discussion and activities relating to themes of interest to Quakers, taking place in conjunction with the holding of Yearly Meeting.

**Tabular Statement:** a table published in *Documents in Advance* prior to Yearly Meeting each year showing the current number of Members in each Regional Meeting, along with the numbers of listed Attenders, Young Friends and children (including Junior Young Friends).

**Testimony:** the word has two meanings in Quaker-speak. First, there are the principles of conduct that characterise Quaker practice, i.e. Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Earthcare. Second, there is a Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of a deceased Friend (statement) drawn up by the relevant Regional Meeting to record the evidence of God's working in the life of a deceased Friend.

***this we can say: Australian Quaker life, faith and thought:*** was published by Australia Yearly Meeting in 2003. It is a compendium of thoughts, poems and artwork by Australian Friends.

**Threshing Meeting:** a meeting held to discuss a controversial issue. Expressions of all points of view are heard but no decision is taken (see [1.7](#)).

**Travelling minute:** the written endorsement a Regional Meeting can give to one of its members, about to travel 'under concern'.

**Under concern:** as a result of an inner compulsion discerned as God's will.

**Visitors:** two or more Friends appointed by a Regional Meeting to meet an applicant for Membership of the Society, to ascertain through discussion and worship whether the applicant is sufficiently familiar with the heritage and testimonies of Quakers and is in reasonable unity with them.

**Weighty Friend:** see Seasoned Friend.

**Winter (or Summer) School:** see Summer School.

**Worship:** humanity's intuitive response to experience of the holy, of some sacred, transcendent and immanent power or being.

**Worship Meeting:** either a Local Meeting, a Recognised Meeting or a Worshipping Group.

**Worshipping Group:** an informal association of Friends and others, too few in number to be a Recognised Meeting, who meet from time to time to worship in the manner of Friends and who maintain contact with their nearest Local Meeting.

**Worship sharing:** the process whereby each member of a sympathetic group speaks from the heart, sharing spiritual experience with the others, usually on an agreed topic. There is no 'head-talk', interruption or discussion.

**YM:** see Yearly Meeting

**Yearly Meeting (YM):** the annual national gathering of Australian Quakers.

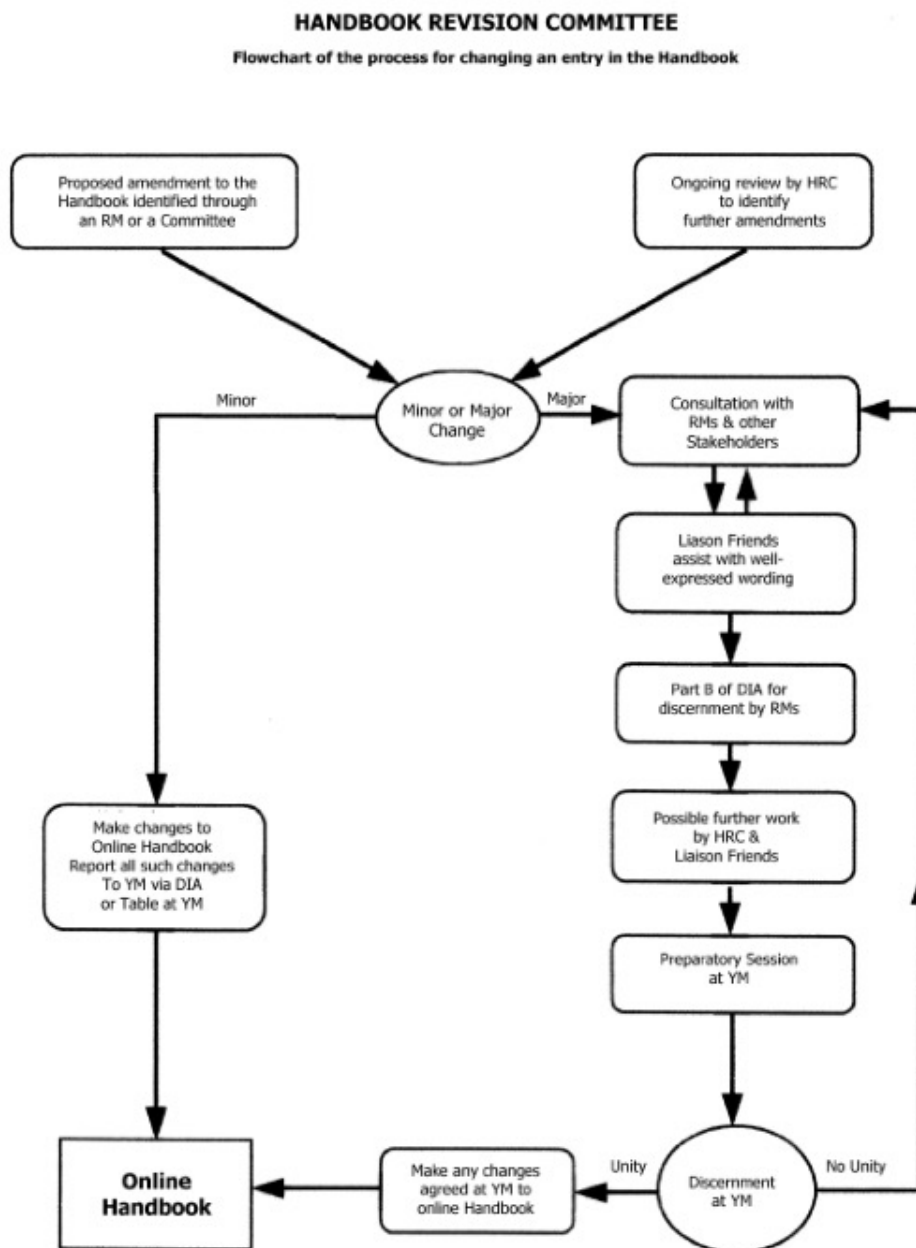
**Young Friend (YF):** a Member or Attender aged from 18 to around 30. See also Child of the Meeting and Junior Young Friend.

## Appendix B Flowchart of the approvals process for handbook revisions

### Amending this Handbook

As our handbook is a living document, it needs to be amended from time to time. These changes are reported in *Documents in Retrospect*, which is published after each Yearly Meeting. There is a visual of this process below.

At the date of preparation for this version of the handbook there is a Handbook Revision Committee who can collate suggestions for changes and make recommendations to Regional Meetings and hence to Yearly Meeting.



### **Appendix C Transfer and acceptance of Membership (form)**

This can be accessed on the website under Administration Resources — Regional Meetings:  
<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources>

Changes to the text are not within the remit of the Handbook Revision Committee.

### **Appendix D Declaration of an intention to celebrate a marriage or committed relationship (form)**

This is currently accessed at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources/regional-meeting-resources>

Changes to the text are not within the remit of the Handbook Revision Committee.

### **Appendix E Typical Quaker certificate of marriage or commitment (form)**

This is currently accessed at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources/regional-meeting-resources>

Changes to the text are not within the remit of the Handbook Revision Committee.

### **Appendix F AYM Secretary's duties**

This is currently accessed at: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/resources/administration-resources/yearly-meeting-standing-committee-resources>

Changes to the text are not within the remit of the Handbook Revision Committee.