

LGBTIQ Catch-Up

Around 17 people met using Zoom over two sessions.

We began with an acknowledgement of country and a period of silence.

Suggestions were given about maintaining confidentiality and safe spaces. Friends were invited to introduce themselves, and to change their online names and pronouns if needed in order to express themselves with integrity. Allies and partners were welcomed.

We discussed the long history of the LGBTIQ catch-up sessions at Yearly Meetings, and previous Quaker committees that have operated at various times with respect to LGBTIQ related affairs. Several people commented on the role the catch-ups had played for them in feeling included.

We then discussed some of the points made in the State of Society address about the fact that Australian Friends do not reflect the very wide variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds in Australian society generally. This led to a discussion of other aspects of inclusiveness in Friends and the possibility of a small group continuing discussions along these lines.

We began a conversation about how gender diversity amongst Quakers could be better represented, in particular by the language we use, in the way we record membership, and increased visibility. This led to a reflection on our individual gender identities and the ways we express them, including the use and absence of pronouns and names. Different understandings of gender were explored – and the “Gender Unicorn” was suggested as a good starting point for people wishing to learn more. People felt comfortable to enquire about unfamiliar words, and the meaning and origin of “cis/cisgender” was discussed. Information about the 700-year-old history of using the word “they” to refer to an individual person, and some of the modern grammatical difficulties people encountered were also shared. We reflected on the changing landscape of gender in our culture and the difficulties and challenges in becoming familiar with new concepts and language.

As a group, we felt the need for more regular catch-ups and further discussion. A second session was organised for planning future activities.

Outcomes of the second session:

1. An Australia wide online LGBTIQ+ (allies welcome) Meeting for Worship on fourth Sundays (in the afternoons).
2. Further discussion about inclusiveness within Friends