

## ROUND 2 RESPONSES

### Handbook Revision Committee

#### Chapter 1, 1.4

#### Proposed entry in the 7th edition of the Handbook

Guidelines: *'There is no such thing as 'blocking' the working of the Spirit within the meeting. It is incumbent upon all members of the meeting to support the decisions of the meeting that have been made in right ordering'* (Roger Walmsley, *this we can say*, 2.37, 2003)

This expression refers 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. In this case the Clerk must 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.

When a Friend has a "stop in their mind".

This expression refers to the infrequent times when it is discerned that the meeting is very close to unity on an action, but a single Friend is unable to unite with the minute. When this occurs, it is important that the Friend be given adequate opportunity to be heard in explaining their reasons for doubt. Other Friends present may then wish to speak. Once this has happened the outcome will be one of the three following options:

- a) Friends realise that further consideration is required either then or at a subsequent meeting; or
- b) The Friend who is not in unity has been heard and has heard responses which enable them to unite with the minute; or very rarely
- c) The Friend still cannot unite with the minute although all others present are in unity with it. In this case, the Clerk may say that that this is the

way forward which Friends want; and offer the dissenting Friend the opportunity to 'stand aside' from the minute, which would either record that there was general unity but that a single Friend could not unite with the minute, or record that Friend xy wished to stand aside from the minute **if they so desire**.

This should only happen very rarely, as unity is a vital aspect of Quaker process, and frequent use of this would undermine the Meeting's confidence in the process and possibly with the Clerk.

*Do Friends agree that the words "if they so desire" be added?*

<b>CRM:</b>	We agree to this addition.
<b>NSWRM:</b>	We support this addition.
<b>QRM:</b>	We agree that the words "if they so desire" be added. We note the repetitions in this section of the Handbook in the current draft as circulated for comment and ask that this to be reviewed
<b>SANTRM:.</b>	We prefer that the originally proposed text be retained
<b>TRM:</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.
<b>VRM:</b>	VRM supports this change.

<b>WARM:</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.
<b>Chapter 4, 4.3:</b> <b>Proposed entry in the 7th edition of the Handbook</b> Some Regional Meetings hold a record of all bank accounts and investments held by Local Meetings and Worshipping Groups within their Regional Meeting <b>for reasons of transparency or as legally required.</b> <i>Do Friends agree to “for reasons of transparency or as legally required” be added?</i>	
<b>CRM</b>	We reaffirm our agreement to the proposed revised version and do not find the additional words from NSW necessary.
<b>NSWRM</b>	We confirm our preference for the additional words.
<b>QRM</b>	QRM supports the inclusion of proposed new sentence in the Handbook of Practice and Procedure on the grounds of full disclosure and transparency. QRM accounts are totally centralised. Existing LMs are numerically very small and may from time to time hold and collect money for out of pocket expenses or to donate to local issues. If accounts/investments exist or likely to in the future, we propose that they be reported and included in our audited accounts if they exceed \$500.00.
<b>SANTRM</b>	We prefer that the originally proposed text be retained.
<b>TRM</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.
<b>VRM</b>	VRM supports retention of the statement “The Regional Meeting should be aware of all accounts and investments held within the Regional Meeting”. We accept the NSW additional wording
<b>WARM</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.
<b>Chapter 4, 4.3.2</b> <b>Proposed entry in the 7th edition of the Handbook</b> A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment within one of our meeting houses and ‘in the manner of Friends’. This request would be a venue hire and each Meeting can decide if they hire out their Meeting House for such occasions. The couple would bring their own celebrant as a Quaker celebrant can only conduct the marriage ceremony for couples who are Quakers or linked to Friends. The couple contact the appropriate Clerk to ask that the meeting agree to such a venue hire, and agree to a time. <i>Do Friends wish for these additions to be included in the proposed Handbook revision?</i>	
<b>CRM</b>	We reaffirm our agreement to the proposed revised version and do not find the additional words from NSW necessary.
<b>NSWRM</b>	We accept the wording but ask for a few more changes, as below, and accept this: A couple who are not Quaker or linked to Friends may wish to celebrate their wedding or commitment within <del>our</del> a meeting house and ‘in the manner of Friends’. This request would be a venue hire and each Meeting can decide if they hire out their Meeting House for such occasions. The couple would bring their own celebrant as a Quaker <del>celebrant</del> <b>registering officer</b> can only <b>legally</b> conduct the marriage ceremony for couples who are Quakers or linked to Friends. The couple contact the appropriate Clerk to ask that the meeting agree to such a venue hire, and agree to a time.
<b>QRM</b>	The addition of the wording “one of our meeting houses” is acceptable. We would not accept a request to be married in the manner of Friends unless the couple was well versed in Quaker values/practice and/or the wedding was conducted under auspices of the RM. We do not wish for our comments re these requests to be added to the Handbook.

<b>SANTRM</b>	We agree that the phrase "one our meeting houses" should be added. We find that the comments by QRM and SANTRM possibly reflect different practices within Regional Meetings. We do not see a need to restrict the freedom of Regional Meetings in deciding what is appropriate for them, we therefore do not support that the proposed additions be included in the Handbook revision.
<b>TRM</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.
<b>VRM</b>	VRM accepts the change but agrees with the concerns of QRM and SANTRM.
<b>WARM</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.
<p><b>Chapter 3, 3.5.3</b>  <b>Proposed entry in the 7th edition of the Handbook</b>  In preparing a report on the visit to be heard at the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business, Visitors are asked to include information about the applicant's religious and spiritual journey towards the Society, and an assessment of where the applicant stands in relation to its principles and Testimonies.  The visitors should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Check the accuracy of all factual information contained in their report with the applicant.</li> <li>2) Complete the report in full, <b>and offer the Meeting guidance to the applicant's readiness for membership.</b></li> <li>3) Present the report to the Regional Meeting for Worship for Business.</li> </ol> <p>If there is hesitation about the applicant's readiness for membership, this can be discussed with the applicant and also with the Elders or M&amp;C. The presentation of the report can be delayed.</p> <p>All RMs agree with the proposal that a recommendation or statement of the person's suitability for membership be included in visitor reports on applicants for membership.  <i>Do Friends wish to include the suggested alternate words "and offer the Meeting guidance to the applicant's readiness for membership" instead of "including a recommendation..."?</i></p>	
<b>CRM</b>	We think the suggested change does not add anything, and its intent is included in the wording as revised for 7th edition.
<b>NSWRM</b>	We agree to the proposed change of wording.
<b>QRM</b>	We prefer, "and offer the Meeting guidance as to the applicant's readiness for membership" instead of "including a recommendation...".
<b>SANTRM</b>	We agree that the phrase "and offer the Meeting guidance to the applicant's readiness for membership" should be added.
<b>TRM</b>	TRM suggested in Round 1 Responses alternative words "and offer the Meeting guidance to the applicant's readiness for membership" instead of "including a recommendation..." <b>Round 1 response stands.</b>
<b>VRM</b>	VRM accepts the Tasmanian wording.
<b>WARM</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.
<p><b>Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is general agreement that the committee should be laid down, having completed its work.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommendation for an ongoing YM Planning ‘Expert’ Committee is supported, as is the idea of local input as needed depending on the venue.</li> <li>• The ‘streamlining’ of the preparatory stages for handling YM business is generally welcomed, with the comment from WARM that we need to be ‘mindful of leaving enough time for hearts and minds to be prepared for business meeting discernments’.</li> <li>• There is general support for ‘Preparatory Sessions’ to focus on items requiring discernment, and for information-sharing webinars to precede YM, although VRM wants some caution to be exercised so as not to preclude the sharing of information and concerns at YM business sessions.</li> <li>• There is general willingness for trying new ways to deal with reports that might be handled outside YM itself, provided that there is not a drift to a hierarchy of discernment.</li> <li>• The tabling of annual reports at the January Standing Committee is accepted as appropriate, as is the delivery of the ‘State of the Society’ address at the AGM in January.</li> </ul>
<b>CRM</b>	<p>We agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the committee should be laid down;</li> <li>(b) an ongoing YM Planning Committee or Working Group be appointed (not necessarily with representatives from each RM) to work with local arrangements committees, with shared responsibilities about roles and processes (to be developed);</li> <li>(c) the handling of business for YM should be streamlined whilst ensuring adequate time for full discernment before and at YM business sessions;</li> <li>(d) Preparatory Sessions should be held prior to the YM gathering to focus on items requiring discernment, to help the effective handling of YM business; we hope this will also reduce the proportion of YM time spent on business and allow more time for the other aspects of YM gatherings (community building and educational activities, as Friends have reported in surveys and consultation among Friends, including by RHYM committee);</li> <li>(e) new ways to deal with reports outside YM itself be considered;</li> <li>(f) the tabling of annual reports could be done at the January Standing Committee meeting and AGM.</li> </ul> <p>We do not support the presentation of the ‘State of the Society’ report at the January Standing Committee meeting, but prefer that it is given at the full YM gathering to provide the opportunity for more Friends to consider wider challenges and perspectives. It would also allow more time for the presenter to consult the annual reports.</p>
<b>NSWRM</b>	<p>We reviewed all the dot points above and see no need to revise our previous discernment.</p>
<b>QRM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. We agree that the Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee now be laid down. [#1]</li> <li>b. The YM Planning Support Committee will continue its work of supporting those who organise each yearly meeting. [#2]</li> <li>c. Streamlining Yearly Meeting Procedures: We commend the committee for the recommendations #3 – 9 in the Report of the Right Holding of YM Committee. We look forward to their implementation.</li> </ul> <p>We continue to support these recommendations and have no further feedback to provide.</p>

<b>SANTRM</b>	<p>We note the invitation from the Yearly Meeting Clerking team for further discernment in regard to the Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee Report.</p> <p>We support the discernments on the Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee Report thus far.</p> <p>We are currently learning and experiencing the new processes for the first time. We hold concerns that we must not weaken our practices of corporate discernment; that we take care not to drift into a hierarchy of discernment and that we must continue to meaningfully share information and concerns at YM business sessions.</p> <p>We also see possibilities for spreading the workload across the year, developing deeper and sustained corporate knowledge and for broadening the involvement of the whole of Australia Yearly Meeting.</p> <p>We feel that we will be better able to meaningfully reflect and discern on the new processes after AYM 2020 has completed.</p>
<b>TRM</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.
<b>VRM</b>	We don't feel able to give the recommendations in the RHYM report any further consideration at this stage, within the time limit called for.
<b>WARM</b>	No additional response; Round 1 response stands.