

Minutes for Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Standing Committee Meeting 17 September 2022, 12pm AEST, held online via ZOOM

AYM Officers

AYM Presiding Clerk	Bruce Henry
AYM Treasurer	Jane Drexler
AYM Secretary	Jacque Schultze

Standing Committee Representatives

Canberra & Region Quakers	Susan Rockliff, Jonathan Benyei (Co-Clerks)
New South Wales RM	Jennifer Burrell (RM Clerking Team), <i>(Apologies: Liz Field, RM Clerking Team)</i>
Queensland RM	Jude Pembleton (RM Clerking Team), Roger Sawkins
South Australia/Northern Territory RM	Charles Stevenson (Clerk), David Barry
Tasmania RM	Robin McLean (Co-Clerk)
Victoria RM	Sieneke Martin (Clerk), Aileen Britton (Assistant Clerk)
West Australia RM	Brenda Roy, Sharon Matthews (Co-Clerks)
Also attending:	
Recording Clerk	Mark Deasey
Elder	Kerstin Reimers
Tech Assistance	Sheila Keane
Invited	Emily Chapman Searle

Standing Committee Minutes

SC9.22.1: Opening Worship and Acknowledgment of Country

Jude Pembleton offered an Acknowledgement of Country, taking inspiration from Silver Wattle Quaker Centre's new Acknowledgement of Country, and borrowing some of their words and concepts to invite Standing Committee members to consider our responsibilities as we acknowledge that whatever lands we meet on, are stolen lands:

The First People of this continent never ceded their lands to the English monarchy and its Commonwealth of Nations.

Australia remains the only Commonwealth country that hasn't signed a treaty with its Indigenous people and we read daily of the ongoing suffering that this brings for Indigenous people.

Let us, with this acknowledgement, commit to working towards a decolonised Australia, whatever may be needed and whatever that may look like.

The Presiding Clerk offered this reading:

The Quaker method for reaching decisions is based on religious conviction. Friends conduct business together in the faith that there is one Divine Spirit, which is accessible to all persons. When Friends wait upon, heed, and follow the Light of Truth within them, its spirit will lead to unity. This faith is the foundation for any corporate decision.

Faith and practice, p129; Pacific YM, USA

SC1.22.2: AYM Treasurer's Budget Report to Standing Committee _with Amended Report and Amended Budget

NOTE: Following the conclusion of SC9.22, our Treasurer sent an amended Budget Report and Budget to the Presiding Clerk, noting there were a few errors in the budget as presented to Standing Committee on 17 September.

The Clerk contacted all Standing Committee members via email, and asked for reconsideration of the amended budget as put forward by our Treasurer. All members replied that they accepted the amended budget.

The Presiding Clerk thanked Standing Committee members for responding to the request to give approval after Standing Committee concluded on Saturday 17 September. The Clerk noted that members were not asked for approval of the **process** of making decisions in this way, by email, and that Standing Committee members may consider whether this issue of process needs to be raised at their Regional Meetings. The Clerk notes that it is hoped that such a process would be used rarely and only for matters that were relatively straightforward.

Amended Treasurer's Report:

1. Introduction

The budget for 2022/2023 aims not to change the Regional Meeting quotas from this year. At a meeting with the Regional Meeting Treasurers, all agreed that they wished to keep quotas relatively constant rather than have large variations year to year. This allows for financial planning. It would mean that the budget cycle may need to be longer than the current one-year cycle.

Because of Covid and less activity including travel, certain of the administrative funds have healthy balances. These balances are made up from regional meeting quotas in past years. Based on the assumptions in the budget, some administrative funds do not need a subsidy or can repay some of the excess balance.

There is a proposal to reorganise the Secretary's role and in fact employ more people, thus increasing costs. It is hard to know how to budget for a situation that is not yet resolved and may take over 12 months to implement. However, all consulted agreed that some attempt needs to be made to begin provisional budgeting.

The budget papers have been discussed with the Finance Committee and Regional Meeting Treasurers, and there is agreement.

As with past budgets, it is necessary to estimate the remaining transactions in the current financial year in order to complete the current year's accounts. These estimates are based on the transactions up to 28 July 2022.

2. Salaries and Fees

The Secretary's salary is increased by the CPI in July each year. The increase is 5.1%. There are also 27 pay fortnights in the year, not the usual 26. In addition, the Superannuation Guarantee Contribution (SGC) has increased from 10% to 10.5% from the beginning of July. Together these result in an increase of approximately \$5,100.

The increase in Workers Compensation is in line with payments over the past years. All insurances are increasing.

Yearly Meeting Office Increase shows a budget amount of \$20,000. This is part of the estimated increased cost in the reorganization of the Secretary's role. No detailed costings have yet been done. The \$20,000 was arrived at by keeping the quotas the same as this current year. The committee has indicated that, if approved, changes will begin in about June/July 2023. This provides some funding for 2022/2023 but does not address funding beyond that.

Total fees to the auditor have increased. As well as a small increase in the audit fee, fees now include the costs of migrating to a new bookkeeping package, Xero. We currently run on a very old version of MYOB that is unsupported and unable to do some of the functions the Society needs. Plus, a single login is the only option. Fees include the conversion costs, technical support for the Treasurer and the monthly licence fee. Because we will be licenced through our auditor, we obtain a 30% discount on the licence fee.

The adviser's fee is not part of the quotas. The Finance Committee and Treasurers agreed that the fee should be offset against investment earnings. This way those funds that are credited with their share of the investment earnings, pay their share of the costs. Regional Meetings are not credited with investment earnings and so should not pay the costs.

3. Office Expenses

The rent reimbursement for the Secretary's home office remains the same. I have not been informed of any change. This could possibly change during the year.

Other expenses have increased in line with inflation expectations. I have not broken down the expenses into detailed line items.

4. Travel

The Yearly Meeting Organizing Committee has said it is not planning for a face-to-face meeting. If this is the case, then the Yearly Meeting Travel Fund needs no subsidy. No subsidy was budgeted for this year.

Young Friends have not travelled this year and have not asked for any funding for next year. The Travel Fund has a balance of \$15,692. **The budget does not propose any additional amount.**

This is based on the following assumptions:

- I have allocated \$5,000 for Standing Committee travel. This would allow limited face-to-face meetings.
- FWCC AWPS has asked for \$4,000 this coming year, and again the following, to help support Friends wishing to travel to the world meeting in South Africa in 2024. They will submit a report to Standing Committee asking for approval.
- I have budgeted \$700 for travel to Aotearoa/New Zealand.
- A Backhouse lecturer from the USA has been approached and a tour around Australia planned.
- AYM contribution to carbon credits remains the same - \$1,125.

The size of the fund means it will be allocated about \$300 in interest earnings.

5. Other Expenses

The Publications Fund has a current balance of \$16,159, but I have been informed there could be further IT expenses before 30 September. Assumptions around expenses for 2022/2023 are:

- This year the Australian Friend's expenses are tracking in the range \$5,500 - \$7,000. I have assumed \$7,000 for next year.
- The Backhouse lecture costs came to \$1,800 this year. I have assumed \$2,500 in line with inflation.
- The IT committee has asked for \$20,000 for upgrades. They did not spend all the money requested this year due to problems with finding the right skilled people.
- Other Publications costs this year have been offset by sales. I have assumed the same for next year.

For the Fund balance to be at zero at the end of the financial year, the subsidy from the general Fund needs to be \$17,000.

Yearly Meeting Subsidy. The Yearly Meeting Fund has a balance of \$12,128 plus \$8,400 in the separate bank account. This gives a balance of \$20,528. This balance is more than enough for a zoom Yearly Meeting in July 2023. In fact, \$10,000 could be withdrawn from the fund to support other work. This is what the budget proposes.

Public Liability Insurance has been increased to \$13,000 from \$8,000. The actual cost this year was \$8,751, which was larger than the originally budgeted amount of \$8,000.

The Children and JYF Fund has a balance of \$26,842. They will probably spend a further \$2,100 this year. If they get no donations from RMs before 30 September, they will have just over \$24,500 at the end of the year.

They are going to be paying approximately \$12,600 to their Coordinators. They may have some other expenses such as a JYF camp but are not sure. An assumption is \$5,000 in total. There is enough in the fund to meet all expenses and still have a surplus.

The Other Expenses have been much as expected and I don't expect them to change much next year.

6. Donations

I have not allocated any increases to the donations to other Quaker organisations in the budget. There were no increases in this current financial year. Standing Committee may wish to review this.

7. Income

The General Fund has 3 sources of income:

- RM Quotas. The largest and detailed in Section 8.
- Investment Income. The annual investment income is not yet available, but I assume it will be similar to this year - \$3,000.
- Other. Very small and assumed to be zero.

8. Quotas

Detailed calculations for the Regional Meeting Quotas are given in a separate table.

A brief explanation on how a quota is arrived at. Quotas are based on the membership averaged over the past 3 years. The membership figures show there has been a drop of 86 in number of

members over the past 5 years. This is a 10% drop. I know attenders also pay towards the quotas. With a drop in members the quota per member increases.

From the budget table, total outgoings or expenses equal \$155,129. As has been assumed, income of \$3,000 will come from investments.

Rm Quotas have been set at \$150,800, the same as last year after the Covid subsidy was rebated. This figure was reached by allocating \$20,000 to the increase in YM Office expenses.

Although the overall quota change is zero, there is slight variation between regional Meetings depending on the change in their member numbers.

Regional Meeting Treasurers are comfortable with this total quota of \$150,800 and the regional split. It gives them continuity and certainty.

9. A Small Deficit

Total Income is estimated to be \$153,800. Total expenses are estimated to be \$155,129. This gives a small deficit of \$1,329.

It is estimated that the General Fund will begin the new financial year with a balance of \$60,902. The small deficit of \$1,329 will reduce the balance to \$59,573. This is still sufficient as a reserve amount to be able to manage any unexpected expenses during the year.

10. Conclusion

This is a budget that aims to keep quotas the same as this year and yet provide some support for the possible changes to the AYM Office.

While some travel may happen, there has been no additional funding for the travel fund. The current balance is considered sufficient.

Several of the administrative funds have healthy balances. The relevant committees did not indicate any change to current spending. The 3 committees asking for additional funding are the IT Committee, the Backhouse Lecture Committee and FWCC AWPS. These requests have been incorporated in the budget, with no extra funding for other administrative funds. This does mean balances will be reduced during the new financial year.

While a small deficit of \$1,329 is estimated on the current figures, The General Fund's current balance is considered sufficient to meet any unexpected expenses.

It is important to acknowledge there may be changes in the Society in the coming year. These changes would increase costs and so have an impact on the 2023/2024 budget.

I would like to thank my Finance Committee – Ray Brindle, Roger Sawkins, Steve Smith, Carol Thornton, Robin Walpole – for their wonderfully constructive support.

Approved Amended Minute:

We note that:

- no change in Regional Meeting Quotas is proposed.
- there are increased costs associated with the secretary's salary of \$5100, due to CPI increases and other factors

- Costs for the Yearly Meeting office is increased by **\$20,000** in anticipation of a reorganisation of the Secretary's role
- the Publications Fund has requested funds to continue the upgrading of the website.
- if Yearly Meeting 2023 is again on-line there will be a surplus of funds in the Yearly Meeting Fund, and the budget proposes that \$10,000 is withdrawn from the fund
- FWCC-AWPS has asked for \$4000 for both this coming year and also the next, to support Friends to travel to the World Meeting of Quakers in South Africa in 2024
- Total Regional Meeting Quotas will remain at \$150,000.
- total outgoings or expenses comes to \$153,679.
- \$3000 is expected from investment income

Standing Committee agrees that an allowance of \$17,000 be made in the Publications Fund subsidy to support the IT Committee's request to continue the website upgrade.

Standing Committee agrees to \$4,000 in 2022/2023 and again in 2023/2024 being granted to FWCC AWPS to help fund Friends connect with the world gathering in South Africa in 2024.

Standing Committee agrees that \$10,000 can be withdrawn from the Yearly Meeting fund.

Standing Committee requests that all committees and working groups, including the Yearly Meeting Organising Committee:

- have a 2-to-3-year plan if it involves any financial commitments from the Society
- should inform the AYM Treasurer when there are decisions being made that involve Yearly Meeting finances.

Standing Committee accepts the amended budget. We note that consideration of item 9.22.6 may influence the Budget.

Amended Budget, approved via email by Standing Committee members, 21-26 September.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Inc.						
Suggested General Fund budget for the year ended 30 September 2023						
Actual	Actual		-----	2021/2022	-----	2022/2023
2019/2020	2020/2021		Actual to	Estimated	Budget	Proposed
			28/07/2022	full year		Budget
\$	\$		\$	\$	\$	\$
		Outgoings				
		Salaries and fees				
56,129.00	59,400	Secretary's Salary	46,884.76	58,510.46	57,850	62,995
5,332.24	5,720	Superannuation	4,707.97	5,932.69	5,800	6,614
728.13	712	Workers Compensation	802.52	802.52	800	850
0.00	4,790	YM Office increase	6,960.00	7,750.00	7,750	20,000
		Adviser Fees	1,180.00	1,180.00	0	0
4,900.00	6,300	Auditors fees	6,600.00	6,600.00	6,500	10,000
67,089.37	76,922		67,135.25	80,776	78,700	100,459
		Office Expenses				
1,242.16	6,702	Office Supplies	1,217.53	1,623	7,860	8,650
3,614.62		Photocopying	2,789.73	3,720		
94.67		Postage	375.73	501		
1,821.80		Telephone	1,256.04	1,675		
195.15		Computer	0.00	0		
0.00		Home Page/Internet	0.00	0		
7,800.00	7,800	Rent	5,850.00	7,800	7,800	7,800
14,768.40	14,502		11,489.03	15,319	15,660	16,450
		Travel				
6,600.00	-100	Yearly Meeting Travel	713.48	713.48	0	0
0.00	0	Young Friends	0.00	0.00	0	0
18,000.00	6,000	Travel Fund	0.00	0.00	0	0
24,600.00	5,900		713.48	713	0	0
		Other expenses				
12,000.00	18,000	Publications Fund subsidy	23,000.00	23,000	23,000	17,000
7,000.00	3,000	Yearly Meeting subsidy	2,500.00	2,500	2,500	-10,000
13,517.44	7,581	Public Liability insurance	8,751.36	8,751	8,000	13,000
0.00	0	Officers' expenses	0.00	0	0	200
541.40	855	Subscriptions	320.70	321	500	500
1,843.00	1,843	NCCA	1,843.00	1,843	1,900	1,900
20,555.00		Committees' expenses	0.00	0	1,000	500
	15,000	C/JYF Subsidy	12,000.00	12,000	12,000	0
45.00	40	Bank & other charges	30.00	50	50	0
55,501.84	46,319		48,445.06	48,465	48,950	23,100
		Donations				
1,700.00	1,900	Silver Wattle	1,900.00	1,900.00	1,900	1,900
2,000.00	2,250	FWCC World	2,250.00	2,250.00	2,250	2,250
4,000.00	4,500	FWCC A/W Pacific	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,500	4,500
3,000.00	3,500	QUNO	3,500.00	3,500.00	3,500	3,500
850.00	935	Woodbrooke	935.00	935.00	935	935
850.00	935	Pendle Hill	935.00	935.00	935	935
1,000.00	1,100	Friends Peace Teams	1,100.00	1,100.00	1,100	1,100
13,400.00	15,120		15,120.00	15,120	15,120	15,120
175,359.61	158,763.00	Total outgo	142,902.82	160,393	158,430	155,129
		Income				
177,600.00	153,700	RM Quotas	153,700.00	153,700	156,000	150,800
2,665.62	5,529	Investment Income	3,000.00	3,000	3,000	3,000
15,000.00	-9,900	Other	-5,000.00	-5,000	-5,000	0
195,265.62	149,329	Total Income	151,700.00	151,700	154,000	153,800
19,906.01	-9,434	Surplus / Deficit	8,797.18	-8,693	-4,430	-1,329
60,902.44	80,808	Balance at beg. of yr	65,029	73,826	65,133.26	60,902
80,808.45	65,029	Balance at end of yr	73,826	65,133	60,902.00	59,573

Australia Yearly Meeting – General Fund – Possible RM Quotas for 2022/2023

	2021/2022	Relative	Required	YM	Return of	Net	Each	Quota
	Quotas	Mem's (a)	Quotas	Travel	Funds	amount	\$1,000	change
	Net Covid							
Canberra	15,600	83	15,500	0	0	15,500	103	-0.6%
New South Wales	38,100	204	38,200	0	0	38,200	253	0.3%
Queensland	13,700	74	13,800	0	0	13,800	92	0.7%
Sth. Aust. & N.T.	17,300	88	16,500	0	0	16,500	109	-4.6%
Tasmania	23,500	130	24,300	0	0	24,300	161	3.4%
Victoria	28,900	154	28,800	0	0	28,800	191	-0.3%
West Australia	13,700	73	13,700	0	0	13,700	91	0.0%
						0		
	150,800	806	150,800	0	0	150,800	1,000	0.0%
<i>(Per adult member)</i>	180		187					4.0%
		(a) Based on the average number of adult members in the previous 3 years						
Gross Quota	156,000		150,800					
Less Covid	5,000		0					
Less YM travel	0		0					
Net	150,800		150,800		0			

SC9.22.3 Backhouse Lecture Committee Report

Standing Committee accepts the recommendation from the Backhouse Lecture Committee that Tim Gee, General Secretary of Friends World Committee of Consultation, be invited to present the 2025 Backhouse Lecture.

We ask the Backhouse Lecture Committee to consider the environmental implications of travel when considering future Backhouse lecturers.

We suggest the Backhouse Lecture Committee ask if Tim Gee's 2025 Backhouse Lecture might be by Zoom or live-streamed, rather than face-to-face.

SC9.22.4: Report from AYM Nominations Committee to Standing Committee

AYM Nominations brought these names to serve on the following Committees / Working Groups:

AYM/QSA Relationship Working Group:

Duncan Frewin and David Purnell.

Search Committee for AYM Secretary:

Bruce Henry (Presiding Clerk), Roger Sawkins (AYM Finance Committee) Trish Johnson (Queensland Regional Meeting), Allan Clayton (Victoria Regional Meeting), Robin McLean (Tasmania Regional Meeting)

AYM YM Organising Committee:

David Tehr, Clinton de Young, both from West Australia Regional Meeting

Thanksgiving Fund Committee

SANTRM has agreed to continue hosting the Thanksgiving Fund for a further three years until September 2025. Members of the current committee are David Barry (Convenor), Lee Harradine, Kate Alessia, Topsy Evans.

Co-Convenor for Friends in Stitches

We bring the name of Tessa Spratt to continue in this position for a further year until September 2023.

We hear that Roger Sawkins wishes to withdraw his name from the AYM Secretary Search Committee.

Standing Committee accepts these names and makes these appointments.

We note that:

- a) We are still seeking Friends to serve as the AYM Membership Secretary
- b) Felicity Rose is now representing Tasmania Regional Meeting, replacing Kerstin Reimers on AYM Nominations Committee
- c) Queensland Regional Meeting has been contacted for a replacement for Emily Walpole, whose term has finished on AYM Nominations Committee.
- d) NCCA Safe Churches Network: We hear that Ronis Chapman wishes to lay down her position on this Network. We ask Ronis to write an account of her long involvement with this committee for Friends.

SC9.22.5: Yearly Meeting Organising Committee Report RE: YM22 Report and YM23 Recommendations

Standing Committee agrees that Yearly Meeting 2023 will be held in the week July 1 - July 9 2023, online.

The Yearly Meeting Organising Committee recommended in its report that the format of YM23 be the same as YM22 with:

- two consecutive long weekends (Sat-Mon and Fri-Sun) each including formal sessions, and
- the middle days having no formal sessions, with time for breaks and some spiritual and community building activities.

Standing Committee accepts the recommendation of the Yearly Meeting Organising Committee that YM2023 will have much the same format as YM2022, as described above.

Standing Committee accepts the proposal for a threshing session on Yearly Meeting innovations to be held in November or early December 2022.

SC9.22.6: Working Party on the Role and Work of the AYM Secretary Report

We receive a report from the Working Party on the Role and Work of the AYM Secretary from July 2023.

We note that the work of the Working Party is now completed.

The report points out the need for extra funding for a reorganised AYM office in the long term. However, some Regional Meetings are finding difficulties in paying their quotas.

The report recommends that the current practice of hiring one AYM Secretary be replaced by a AYM Office with four part-time positions in the following areas:

- *Administration of Yearly Meeting Business and Standing Committee*
- *Community engagement, outreach and media*
- *Compliance, regulations and assistance for the AYM Treasurer*
- *One 'support' person who 'floats' between the positions providing support where needed*

The report also recommends the appointment of three volunteers in the areas of:

- *Australia Quaker Network*, linking Australian Friends and Committees with common interests/concerns to some extent.
- *Ongoing planning of AYM Office*
- *Liaisons*, connecting with international and regional Quaker bodies as well as RMs and AYM Committees.

There are also recommendations for a transition implementation group (which would continue as a AYM Office planning group), for extra funding, and for a bookkeeper to be appointed as soon as possible.

Standing Committee recognises the extraordinary amount of work that has resulted in this report. It is deeply appreciated.

Standing Committee recognises that demands on the AYM Secretary have grown over the recent years and we seek to lighten the load.

We note that the Thanksgiving Fund Committee has made a one-off discretionary grant in response to Standing Committee's application for a Media and Communications position (October 2022 - July 2023), and that that position has now been advertised.

We note the suggestion in Minute SC 7.22.2, that a volunteer be recruited to be administrative assistant to the Secretary for October 2022 - July 2023. We hear that the current Secretary would prefer not to go ahead with this volunteer position now; however in the months before YM23, administrative assistance to the Secretary (voluntary or paid) would be very helpful.

Standing Committee recognises that increased funding for the AYM Office is desirable and notes that an extra amount is allowed in the 2022-2023 budget for this purpose.

Standing Committee accepts the core view expressed through the Working Group's report, that a change in the structure and staffing of the AYM office is needed to respond to our evolving circumstances, and that this could involve a number of both paid and volunteer roles. This would have implications for the total annual budget required to fund costs for the office. We acknowledge that this may lead in the future to an increase to at least \$150,000 per annum for the AYM office, but this estimate may change. We ask the Treasurer and Finance Committee to consider how this additional expenditure may be funded.

We ask Nominations Committees to bring names for a Transition Implementation Working Group, for acceptance through the urgent decision-making process (Handbook 5.3.8.1).

We ask that this group develop detailed role descriptions informed by the roles recommended in the Working Party on the Role and Work of the AYM Secretary's Report, including

determining the number of hours and salary for each position. We are reminded that individuals have diverse gifts, and some flexibility in the role descriptions is needed to take account of such gifts.

We ask the Transition Implementation Working Group to consider the roles of volunteers in the new structure and to report to future Standing Committees or Yearly Meetings on its progress.

We ask the AYM Secretary Search Committee to proceed to seek suitable candidates for the paid positions designed through the work of the Transition Implementation Working Group and confirmed by the urgent decision-making process, with the understanding that some members of the Search Committee may withdraw from this process since the roles have changed.

We accept RECOMMENDATION 4 (see below) from the Working Party's Report, and ask the AYM Treasurer and AYM Finance Committee to arrange the appointment of a bookkeeper on a part-time basis. Initially, this would be funded by the allowance in the budget 2022-2023. After this, the funding would be from the AMY Office budget.

(NOTE: RECOMMENDATION 4: We recommend that a bookkeeper be engaged as soon as is practicable. This will reduce the workload of both the AYM Treasurer and AYM Secretary (after the initial training period). We see that a bookkeeper would be part of the new AYM Office structure, but is a role that could potentially be filled sooner. We recommend that the AYM Officers (Presiding Clerk, Treasurer and Secretary) be empowered to fill this role and that the Treasurer be asked to identify an appropriate source of funding for this role.)

Standing Committee asks that the contract for the current AYM Secretary be extended sufficiently to allow for a transition period.

We ask that the Transition Implementation Working Group report back to Standing Committee and YM as appropriate, as the work of transition continues and further review is required.

SC9.22.7: Future Standing Committee Meetings

The next scheduled Standing Committee will be held on 21 January 2023 via Zoom at 12pm AEST.

We agree to hold a Standing Committee meeting before the end of 2022, to address just the AYM Office issue, should that be necessary.

Standing Committee discussed various options for the timing and format of future Standing Committees.