

# Tasmanian Quaker Newsletter

September 2024

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**Tasmanian Quaker Newsletter**

Tasmania Regional Meeting  
The Religious Society of Friends  
(Quakers) in Australia

The Forth River running strong  
September 2024. See also  
'Weathering the storm' p.4

Photo: Sally O'Wheel

**Contributions:** Copy for TQN should be sent to the editor: [rmtasnews@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:rmtasnews@quakersaustralia.info)

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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. The Aurora Australis is considered an appropriate logo because of its association with:

• pure light, the centrality of the Light for Quakers

• beauty, a quality 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 UN

• the ephemeral and intangible, a reminder that language is inadequate to describe God, the truth or the Spirit within.

## Know one another – Steve Smith: A Smith in Deed

STEVE SMITH, aged 5, came as a £10 Pom to East Hills migrant camp, in the southern outskirts of Sydney. His parents and their five children lived in the Nissan huts for two years. His father was from Hampshire, a metal worker, and his mother was Austrian. She was conscripted by the Nazis to work in the munitions factory but her family bribed the Nazis to get her back to Vienna where she met Steve's father at the end of the war. They had to get special permission to get married because his mother was an enemy-alien. Both Steve's parents were disillusioned with religion by their experiences of war, his father psychologically damaged, something that reverberated through the family. They instilled in Steve a lifelong commitment to pacifism. Steve picked up other values from his parents. Integrity was central and ignorance was THE greatest of sins.

Leaving East Hills at last they moved to a dilapidated shack on an Italian market garden near Liverpool. Here Steve described his childhood life as a 'feral,' roaming the country, catching snakes and lizards and swimming in the lake. Eventually due to his mother and father's hard work they were able to buy a house in Lurnea, a suburb of Liverpool.

Steve liked school and was good at it. From Liverpool Boys High School he won a Commonwealth Scholarship to Sydney University but after only six months he gave it up. That style of learning was not for him. He has continued his education, as his father did, through adult learning: WEA, correspondence courses, community college courses and deep reading. He was a member of several guilds and associations of the arts and crafts community, here and overseas.



Moi cold forming scroll with a flypress imported from India – one of the few places still making this tool.

In the 1970s, during the Vietnam War, he says he had a Road to Damascus experience and started to investigate the Peace churches including Quakers. He read the encyclopaedia entries and library books and eventually found his way to the journal of George Fox. The Society of Friends was the Peace church that he most identified with. At the same time Steve began a lifelong practice of meditation.

At this time he worked at heavy labouring for his best friend's father who owned a fencing business specialising in the making of gates and, at the same time, was busy upgrading



Hot-forged scroll detail with insitu aluminium alloy cast over and around full penetration fusion-welded frame.



Gilded slate for church including Paleo Hebrew lettering.

his metal working skills. The 'Smith' was carried in his DNA! At that time there was a demand for skilled metal workers in historic house and church restorations. The older craftsmen had retired and there was a shortage of tradesmen who could do this specialised work. Steve stepped into this area and made a living. There was plenty of work. By the 80s he was married with three boys and working six days and nights a week to support them all. The children grew up and the marriage ended, sadly.

Steve finally made it to a Quaker Meeting in 2008. He went to Devonshire Street intermittently, as he lived in Tahmoor in the Southern Highlands. He was an isolated Friend. His long meditation practice meant that Quaker worship came to him easily and naturally.

Then came the 2019 summer of east coast fires. The air was smoke filled for six months. Steve's house did not burn but his brother's land was burnt, and all around were burnt out houses, looking as if they had exploded. He made a decision to move to Tasmania.

But by 2020 when Covid hit, all the houses that he might have bought in Hobart were taken off the market and were no longer available.

In the middle of COVID, he arrived on the Spirit where everyone was confined to a cabin. He spent the first two weeks in quarantine in a hotel in Launceston, his campervan placed in secure storage. He was then moved to Glenorchy showgrounds with his campervan and continued in quarantine for a further month. Steve was then allowed to move to

Ross Caravan Park for seven months while his place was being built in Campbelltown.

Steve now attends Meeting for Worship in Launceston. He works freelance, designing metalwork fixtures for churches. This is challenging work, more challenging than reproducing a design which is given to you. He sometimes gets creative blocks which further blows out his work backlog of twelve months. But life in Campbelltown is good. He loves the land, and the community. He has always been a country boy and this feels right. The happiest time in his life was roaming freely

around the bush and the market garden while his parents were at work. Perhaps life in Campbelltown is reminiscent of those days.



Reproduction 1901 era gate centrepiece cast insitu

When I asked Steve about his interest in poetry he wrote:

*The teachers in primary school were inspirational. They started off simple with nursery rhymes, then in stages graduated to simple rhyming poems with a cadence beat. By the time I got to high school I was primed for the difficult works in blank verse. I am now much older than my parents were when I was living under their roof; I am finally able to understand why they insisted so strongly that the arts, including the art of humour, are an antivenom against the poisonous insanity of war.*

Steve was interviewed by Sally O'Wheel

## Food for the soul course

FOR THOSE who are feeling spiritually hungry for 'more', Silver Wattle is once again offering the year-long course, Food for the Soul, from 7th February to 10th December 2025. The application period is open now.

The opening retreat (which will be held at Silver Wattle 7–13 February) is an immersion in community and spiritual practice.

Over the subsequent months, there is an online program of weekly morsels of Soul Food: online materials, released weekly, are generally in the order of one or two readings (say, 5–10 pages each) or a video (typically 10 minutes or so), as well as short pieces for contemplation (e.g. a poem or desert story). Some topics do require more time, for example Pendle Hill pamphlets, which are about 30 pages.

Over the year, the group meets by zoom every three or four weeks for additional input and to stay close as fellow seekers. We ask participants to identify spiritual companions and also to set aside time for regular/daily practice, part of which can be engaging with the online materials.

The online topics are grouped into four 7-week sections (The Inward Life; Spirit in Community; Inward Transformation; and Faithful Living) with 3–4 week breaks between sections. The opportunity to join midweek meetings for worship sharing continues through the year.

The closing retreat (6–10 December) at Silver Wattle is an opportunity to reconnect in person with your fellow participants and to further workshop your 'next steps' coming out of the program.

To ensure it is a good fit, there is an application process which closes 1 October 2024. If you would like to apply or find out more about the program, you can contact: [Sheila.Keane@silverwattle.org.au](mailto:Sheila.Keane@silverwattle.org.au)



## Editorial

QUAKERS HAVE a history of travelling in the ministry, and intervisitation, and, more recently, of travelling for a range of other reasons. Rather than dedicate one issue of *TQN* to the topic of what travel means to our readers, we decided to introduce a regular column, tentatively called 'Travelling in the Spirit', which is conveniently vague. We welcome

contributions that reflect your interpretation of the topic. We would also like to include more recipes, so please send in your favourites. Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy reading about Steve Smith's life and the other articles in this issue. We would like more stories of Friends lives and if you are led, please interview a Friend and write it up for the newsletter.

## News of Friends: Weathering the storm

HELLO SALLY

Mark and I have spoken about our hope that you've been protected by the storms by your immediate topography?

Unfortunately we were not and have just (finally) had power returned after ten days (which also takes out our running water). The return is a relief but the tree fall around us is going to take many more months. I received much heartfelt support at meeting today.

...

Love

Tara

Tara (taraintheforest)

forest dweller · textile maker

Email: [wattleforest@gmail.com](mailto:wattleforest@gmail.com)

*Everyday wear something you have made or mended, eat something you've harvested or prepared, AND tend your shelter.*

## Travelling in the spirit

### Spiritually significant travel: Dawn

DEAR SALLY and Sue. What a wonderful topic and one which I found so relevant to my last 12 months experience.

Last year at this time I was given the unexpected opportunity to make a trip that I never believed could be possible so I went forward with a sense of great gratitude, and also determination that I wanted to leave places having been useful in some way.

1. Walking my body with its approx. 40% Scottish, 40% English 20% northern European genes, over lands walked by ancestors placed me in a timeless spiritual zone.
2. I felt spiritual connection with a Scottish forest restoration at Glencoe and the 'familiar' strangers in their careful choice of a tree which they knew was being bought in the name of my dead brother that would grow for 600 years and be a home for creatures and insects.
3. In England we searched a huge graveyard. We experienced being close to a mighty fir tree suffering from lack of water as it disintegrated into dust with a huge crash, and the concept of time, timelessness and Tithonus, placed me in a

spiritual zone. I finally found the resting place of the bones of my grandfather, grandmother, and her father, all around 1930, facing a beautiful dissenter (nonconformist) chapel.

4. Shared compassion despite language barriers or country origins was a daily occurrence. On a fishing wharf visited entirely by accident, I shared a spiritual moment with a French man having a panic attack. He shared his crisis over HIV with me and he was so grateful and surprised by our meeting at a table at an icecream stall.

5. In the fishing village complete with Roman structures dated 2AD or BC? I again accidentally met a senior academic in his 80s travelling alone, who in the 1980s in Paris, like me had been for a time working on systems theory. We sat and talked and maybe both of us were re-ignited in the relevance of what we worked on long ago. Overall the sense of being Guided, Protected, and led into the mystery of Time and human Compassion and sheer unexpected Joy pervaded this spiritually significant travel.

## Unveiling the peace pole



### International Day of Peace

21 September 2024

It was a small gathering

Friends and neighbours

Jo unveiled the peace pole

It bespoke Esperanto

Sanskrit, Ukrainian and Korean.

Jeff helped with its fabrication

An old codger at the men's shed

Embellished its story

Rotary's project of Peace Pole making

There's 50 in Tasmania

It was just a Pole languishing in the weather

Madeline gave us permission so we took it to be dressed

Oooo! was the comment of the men

'Nice bit of timber!'

The letters were scrolled

A cap was lasercut

September 21 dawned the International Day of Peace.

An Aussie Polak makes a Peace Pole

With its many coats of resin.

'Let it last 100 Years!'

Jo and Jan

## That photo again

With the help of Charles Stevenson, Arthur Clarke, Liz Field and Mary Pollard, we have been able to identify more people in the photo.



## Integrity in Public Office – A Quaker Concern

### Integrity as Understood by Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have long held a commitment to integrity and speaking ‘truth to power’. As Quakers, we believe that integrity is demonstrated when a person is trustworthy, transparent and open about their true motives.

Quakers are agreed on particular orientations of actions, called testimonies, which guide personal and corporate behaviour. One of these testimonies is integrity. As Kenneth Barnes, an Australian Quaker, said in 1972:

*Integrity is a condition in which a person's response to a total situation can be trusted: the opposite of a condition in which he or she would be moved by opportunist or self-seeking impulses.*

From our Australian *Advices and Queries*, two sections speak to this important aspect of our beliefs:

40. *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? Taking oaths implies a double standard of truth; in choosing to affirm instead, be aware of the claim to integrity that you are making.*

41. *If pressure is brought upon you to lower your standard of integrity, are you prepared to resist it? Our responsibilities to God and our neighbour may involve us in taking unpopular stands. Do not let the desire to be sociable, or the fear of seeming peculiar, determine your decisions.*

For Quakers, integrity is outwards, in our personal, societal behaviour, as well as inwards, in spiritual practice. We collectively discern what we are called by God or Spirit to do at this time regarding integrity, peace, equality, fairness, unity, care of people and of the earth.

### A Quaker Concern

Wies Schuringa, a Quaker from NSW, was very concerned about the lack of integrity in federal and state governments in 2021 and the lack of repercussions for politicians when they had obviously shown a lack of integrity.

Wies and Sue Ennis (VRM), met over Zoom during the Covid lockdown and developed the concern to a project which emphasised:

- staying informed, encouraging and supporting proposed legislation to increase integrity in public office by contacting politicians and on social media and
- organising public actions by holding banners at Parliament House with the words ‘Show Integrity in Public Office’.

Wies brought her concern to Yearly Meeting in July 2022 where it was discerned and adopted. Greater integrity, accountability and transparency is what is called for in all political actions, legislation and behaviours. Governments must govern for the public good, not for personal and/or sectarian benefits.

Quakers call for the following actions to enhance integrity in public office:

- grants should be allocated based on merit, not for the purpose of vote-buying
- public donations should be capped and declared in real time
- industry influence in political decision-making should be limited, especially when it does not serve the common good or the environment
- legislation should enforce real consequences for politicians, senior public servants or appointees who demonstrate a lack of integrity and
- the practice of wasting time through personal attacks under ‘parliamentary privilege’ should cease.

The Integrity Project has held five public actions – August 2022, February and September 2023, February and September 2024. These have occurred at Parliament House in Canberra with support from Quakers around Australia, especially Quakers in Canberra.

### My Personal Involvement

I attended the ‘Raising Peace’ Share and Tell session at Yearly Meeting in July 2024 led by Wies. It was inspiring to hear of the work of the Integrity Project and ‘Raising Peace’ – a network of over 30 Australian peace organisations working for peace, including Australian Quakers.

The fifth and last public event was to be held outside the Federal Parliament on the 11th of September 2024, and I expressed my interest to attend and flew to Canberra to be part of the public event. We met with local Quakers on the night of the 10th of September to talk about the next day’s

action, to discuss integrity issues in our federal government and to get to know each other.

By 6.45 am on Thursday 11th September, we were setting up our three large banners on Melbourne Ave leading to the underground car park of federal parliament. This gave us maximum public exposure to all politicians and staff arriving to work, many being driven in Commonwealth cars.

We waved and greeted everyone who drove past on that cold and windy morning. Many waved back and a few even honked their horns in agreement with our signs. We saw politicians of all persuasions and we know that they saw us. It was heartening to think they read our messages about integrity, including the Prime Minister. There were eleven of us taking part in this public witness, staying two hours, which was long enough on a freezing Canberra morning!

We then moved to the front area of Parliament House where we set up our banners again for photos and video interviews. Parliament House is certainly an impressive building and we spent the rest of the day inside, taking a tour of the building and



watching proceedings in both the House of Representatives and Senate question time. Sadly, we were watching some people behaving badly, which did not inspire us that many were acting with dignity or integrity.

It was such a worthwhile experience. I feel inspired and wonder if we should continue the Integrity Project in all of the State Parliaments? Heaven knows we need to shine a strong Light on integrity within our own Tasmanian government!

*Robin McLean, TRM*

*September 2024*



## Run for Palestine

ADEL YOUSIF, and a few of us are helping Adel, are organising this.

You might be interested to know that Adel, a Palestinian, worked for the Quakers in the north of Iraq post 1st gulf war, 1990–91.

He was a field officer, with food production.

He is now a food chemist, lecturer at the university here.

I asked a little detail as you might be interested. His bosses were Barbara Pizkani and Layla Richards in the north of Iraq, Shanyour Valley, between Enbil and Sulaimanyia. The spelling may be dodgy.

*Sally Staley*



# Run for Palestine!

On Saturday the 5th of October Tasmanian Palestine Advocacy Network, the Palestine community and it's supporters will set off for a family-friendly 8.6km run (4.3km walk) for Palestine.

The Run for Palestine (RfP) event route is along the beautiful Tamar River foreshore. Participants in the run will be raising money for the Australian charity Olive Kids, an organisation working to improve the lives of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where attacks on civilian homes, infrastructure, and the imprisonment of children occur daily. The event will also feature music and food for runners and supporters.



5th of October 2024  
From 10:30am to 2:00pm  
Riverbend park in front of the Silo hotel.

Register now!



For information please email:  
runforpalestine.Launceston@gmail.com

Run for Palestine Committee acknowledge the people of the Kanamaluka as the traditional owners of the land upon which we participate, and we pay our respect to Aboriginal Elders; past, present and emerging. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

## Faiths4Climate

THE AUSTRALIAN Religious Response to Climate Change conducted a national day of action on Tuesday 17 September, as part of a multifaith Faiths4Climate Justice Week of Action 14–24 September. Religious leaders and people from Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Anglican, Uniting Church and other faith communities participated.

Cathedrals and over 150 diverse places of worship across Australia unveiled banners with a united message for the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition: Australia needs an historic investment in clean energy to enable an urgent transition away from fossil fuels.

Huge banners were ceremonially blessed at cathedrals in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Newcastle and Brisbane. At each place of worship, faith leaders led the call for a historic investment in renewables, an end to the coal and gas industry cash splash, changes to environment laws and an urgent fossil fuel phase-out.

A [video statement](#) addressing the leaders of both major parties features nine senior faith leaders outlining a list of policies requested by faith communities. Investing in clean energy on an unprecedented scale is key.

Media release [here](#).



Wahroonga Meeting in Sydney with their banner. Unfortunately Tasmania did not participate in this day of action.

Information from Wies Schuiringa, ARRC and Religions for Peace Australia.



In Perth, St Mary's Cathedral was the host. Ken Devereux speaking. Behind him are the Dean of St Mary's Cathedral Fr Sean Fernandez, the Right Reverend Hans Christiansen, Assistant Bishop of Perth (Anglican Archdiocese), the Ven Mujyo Williams from the Perth Zen Centre Jizoan, Jo Valentine (Quaker and former Senator) and Rev Hollis Wilson from the Wesley Uniting Church which also hung up a banner.

## Photos from the Listening in the North workshop

IT LOOKS and sounds like it was a great workshop, but we would love to include more words about the workshop from participants and/or organisers in the next issue! [rmtasclerk@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:rmtasclerk@quakersaustralia.info)



From left front: Angeline, Cliff, Tara, Paul, Neera Odhavji, Jethro Cassidy and Chel.



Meeray and Tara (above).



Photos: Sally O'Wheel.

*I think it may be worth mentioning that Neera and I were blown away with the discovery of a whole new way of listening. I was also inspired to dive more deeply into Palmer's thoughts and have devoured Let Your Life Speak and am halfway through A Hidden Wholeness. These speak deeply to me and without your course and counsel I may never have discovered them.*

*In peace and kindness,  
Jethro*

Maree Rose and Steve (below).