



## Yearly Meeting 2019 Children's Epistle to Friends Everywhere of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

Children's Meeting was small but happy this year, and the children seemed to bond closely with each other, despite their difference in ages. Our meeting focused on five of our testimonies or key concerns this year, Peace, Indigenous Culture, Community, Earthcare and Integrity. The children are particularly knowledgeable about Earthcare issues, with Ellana explaining how things are shifting as a result of climate change, such as icecaps melting, and trees dying through direct logging, or changing local climates. Solomon is particularly concerned about plastic in the ocean, after watching 'Blue Planet' and other documentaries, and has written to Will Hodgman about these concerns, and received a letter in reply. He is now planning to get a group of children together to take further action about ocean plastics. The most difficult issue to understand – but an important one – is integrity, with even our visiting Elders and JYFs struggling a bit to explain this to our young children. We believe it is about being true to yourself, and searching for that inner truth over time, so that you can be your best self in all circumstances. This is not always easy to know when our children are still in the process of working out who they might want to be. We had two excursions with the children. With one we walked all the way to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery to learn more about Palawa cultures (and the floating ice cream boat), and see some amazing artefacts. We also visited the South Hobart tip shop, to learn about the amazing work they are doing in diverting waste from landfill.

One of our aims this week was to be more connected to the rest of Yearly Meeting, through us visiting the adults, not just in all-ages worship, but in Friendly School, through doing microphone duty at a formal session, or simply through coming to afternoon tea. We also invited many people to visit with us, particular those from committees like Peace or Earthcare committees, who could share their particular understanding of these concerns with the children. We think that the children often work much harder to bridge the gap to the seriousness of adult meeting events, and sometimes struggle with the requirements of these. We hope that it is easier and more relaxing for adult friends to join the children's meeting. Would anyone like to share their experience of visiting our meeting this week?

Our favourite times this week were:

- Clancy loved making peace cookies
- Solomon liked making bread, and making it into a long 'baguette'
- Mark David liked making popcorn
- Amos also really enjoyed making biscuits
- Stanley, our youngest attendee, loved the marble machine.
- Liz Shield, a parent, liked reading to the children one morning, and joining us on the excursion, and going to the Penn Friends session.
- Our collective favourite was definitely the swings, and each day was not really complete without a visit to the swings, even if we were dodging the rain to do so.

*From the Children of Yearly Meeting, 2019, Hobart Tasmania*