

Dear Friends

For sometime we have felt that among many Australian Friends there is a growing desire to engage on climate crisis issues together, in fellowship as Friends, based on our Testimonies and practices.

At the same time we believe in the necessity to support one another in whatever form of climate action we take as individuals or as part of families, communities and other organisations or collectives.

We do not see these two forms of engagement as being mutually exclusive and would not expect Friends to feel the need to suspend one activity for the other.

In the days leading to Yearly Meeting 2020, we felt led to write a proposal for a two-year AYM working group on climate crisis and species extinction. We suggested that this small group could engage with Regional and Local Meetings as well as individual Friends about how such active fellowship could be created and what it would do. A slightly revised draft of the proposal is attached to this letter.

At YM20, Friends agreed to the following minute:

*YM20.24 Earthcare Plenary Session-continuation*

*We hear of a suggestion from David Shorthouse, Margaret Clark and Kay de Vogel for the formation of a Yearly Meeting-wide working group on climate emergency and species extinction.*

*We ask concerned Friends in Canberra Regional Meeting, in consultation with Friends around Australia, to develop a proposal to be considered by Regional Meetings in time for discernment by Standing Committee in January 2021.*

Standing Committee (SC) is now meeting in December 2020, and the YM Secretary has asked for all papers by 1 November to allow SC representatives time to prepare.

We are aware that at least one RM is considering hosting the AYM Earthcare Committee beginning in July 2021. We have also heard that individual Friends are exchanging ideas for more structurally innovative approaches about how the Earthcare concern might be continued at a national level.

The shorter timeframe and already active discussions around the possibility of new hosting or other arrangements for the AYM Earthcare Committee has led us to contemplatively pause our work on Minute YM20.24.

As Friends we are reminded to ‘...be careful neither to out-go our guide, nor yet loiter behind [him]; since they that make haste, may miss their way, and they that stays behind, lose their guide’ (William Penn, pronouns updated).

With these words resonating in our hearts, we are sending Friends the attached proposal and ask that it be used in discussions about future directions for Quaker engagement on climate crisis matters based on fellowship as Friends.

We hope that over the next month or so Regional/Local Meetings and Worshipping Groups, as well as other informal groups of Friends can find time for this discussion, sharing with their relevant Standing Committee representative any outcomes or key points. We would be happy to 'zoom' into such discussions as guests.

We are aware that this approach doesn't meet the request of Minute 20:24, to have a proposal considered by Regional Meetings in time for Standing Committee. We believe that the proposal can still contribute to current discussions among Friends. We also recognize that its initial purpose, to establish an AYM working group, may be superseded by the outcomes of those discussions.

Friends, we are in your hands and are happy to hear how this work moves among you.

In Friendship  
Margaret Clark, David Shorthouse and Kay de Vogel  
September 2020