

## A People

What makes Quakers in Australia a people? This is an honest wondering for me. I can't quite put my finger on it. I'm at a disadvantage, of course, because I'm not physically in Australia surrounded by Australian Quakers and engaged in conversations every day. But it's a thing I'm curious about.

I don't question whether you *are* a people. You tell me that you are very clearly. In every Zoom meeting, distinctiveness comes up. You are a specifically Quaker people, distinct from other Australians; and you are a specifically Australian people, distinct from other Quakers. Not better, not worse. It's not that kind of thing. But you are a distinct and unified people.

The land is certainly part of the Australian distinctiveness. The vastness of your nation, historically, has made it necessary to build [strong regional meetings](#). Each region has its own way of doing things, its own network of mutual care, its own activism, its own record-keeping. I don't know if you know how unusual the strength of your regional meetings is. In some places, the community layer between local and yearly meetings has all but collapsed, and it's missed—the attentiveness to individual, local faith communities that's possible there.

Your way of relating to the natural world is unusual, too. [This document](#) is one of my all-time favorites, in which Friends imagine what might come *after* the most acute climate crisis, when people have learned how to live in a different way. There's such hope and yet such awareness in your approach to ecology.

Those are some of the ways I perceive your Australian-ness. And then, of course, there's your Quaker-ness. I've read a lot of your writings about [belief](#) and [action](#) now. My favorite, maybe, is [this series of videos](#), which I've been sharing with other Australians through your [public-facing Facebook page](#). The page has reached about 3,000 people in the last ten weeks. One of the most popular posts was the video, ["Why am I a Quaker?"](#) Your neighbors are curious to hear your stories. They want to know more about this Quaker path you've found.

What do *you* think makes Quakers in Australia a people? What is it that holds you all together? Where are you called to go together next?

*Contributed by Emily Provance  
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