**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) OF
AUSTRALIA YEARLY MEETING**

SAFE QUAKER COMMUNITY POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM) is committed to ensuring a safe, secure, loving and respectful environment for everyone.

The Safe Quaker Community policy is about behaviours and actions which are deemed to be unsafe, harmful or abusive. These behaviours may be bullying or sexual harassment, whether subtle, overt or unintentional.

Anyone in the care of Quaker Meetings may be regarded as having been abused if subjected to any physical act, or threat of such; verbal remark, visual image, or written text, which is inappropriate or unacceptable. This may be overt or subtle and includes behaviours described as sexual harassment, molestation, misconduct or misbehavior.

This policy is applicable to adults and should be read alongside AYM's *Child Protection Policy and Procedures.*

This policy is relevant to all aspects of the life of AYM including Yearly Meeting (the gathered event), all Regional, Recognised Meetings, Local Meetings, Worshipping Groups activities, residential camps, retreats, committees and other activities within the life of Quakers in Australia.

This policy is part of the overall approach within the Society to nurture members and attenders in a caring and safe environment and is additional to the provisions for handling conflict (from AYM Handbook of Practice and Procedure).

This policy does not cover minor incidents of disrespect and interpersonal conflict where people may be offended, have their feelings hurt or become upset. While we acknowledge that these situations are significant to the person affected, existing Quaker processes of discussion, clearness meetings and mediation can contribute to resolve such incidents. It may be helpful to consult an Oversight/ Pastoral Care committee member, an Elder or a trusted Friend about such matters.

2. ORGANISATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

The Religious Society of Friends recognises that it has a duty of care for all people involved in its activities.

AYM and Regional Meetings aim to:

- Provide a safe environment for all
- Promote caring and respectful relationships between people

- Provide appropriate support and assistance
- Create an environment where violence, oppression, discrimination and abuse are not tolerated
- Abide by relevant Federal and State/Territory legislation.

Awareness, forethought, education and preparedness are key elements of preventing abuse and for coping effectively with situations that may arise.

3. PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS

This policy is written in a spirit of trust and openness. Trust is based on sensible precautions and good practice, which in turn foster trustworthy behaviour. It is vital that AYM and each Meeting be prepared to deal promptly with any abusive or unsafe relationship issue that may arise. It is also important that each Meeting and Quaker gathering actively work to maintain a culture where everyone is safe and respected.

3.1 Policy: Adopting the Safe Quaker Community Policy

Each Regional Meeting will determine which Committee has overall responsibility for safety matters, in most cases this may be the Oversight/Pastoral Care Committee. The Committee is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date on the subject, including knowledge of local legislation
- Ensuring compliance with the relevant safety legislation in their State or territory
- Ensuring insurance requirements are being met
- Supporting Safe Quaker Contact Friends (see Appendix 2 for a description of the role)
- Ensuring a list of all AYM Safe Quaker Contact Friends is displayed in the Meeting House and other Quaker gathering places
- Liaising with Local Recognised Meetings and Worshipping Groups and
- Conducting an annual review of the implementation of the *Safe Quaker Community* policy.

Each Meeting should have the policy as an agenda item at a Business Meeting annually reminding Friends that this issue needs to be constantly in our minds. The Queries (Appendix 6) could be used at this time.

Each Meeting should find ways to promote and implement the policy on a regular basis. This could include:

- Annual discussions in appropriate committees – e.g. Oversight/Pastoral Care, Children's committee, JYF/YF committees
- Regular items in the RM newsletter
- Holding an annual awareness session.

3.2 People: Treating Everyone Equally – Living Out the Testimony to Equality

Central to our Testimony to Equality is that we always respond to "*...that of God...*" in everyone.

- Regional Meetings must appoint at least two Safe Quaker Contact Friends and meet the costs of obtaining a "working with children and vulnerable adults" police clearance

- Each new Contact Friend will be expected to undergo an induction and attend a Contact Friend workshop as soon as possible

- Ensure Safe Quaker Contact Friends are ex-officio members of Oversight/Pastoral Care Committees to strengthen the link between their role and pastoral care

- Promote acceptable friendships – it is important that Friends continue to develop and nourish meaningful friendships within their Quaker community

- It is important that each Meeting has members who attend educational sessions on these issues. Consider participating in workshops offered by other churches in your local area. e.g. Uniting Church of Australia, Anglican Church of Australia

- It is also important for the Safe Quaker Contact Friends to attend national Safe Quaker Contact Friends workshops.

3.3 Place: Creating a Safe, Secure and Loving Place

Each Meeting is to display the Safe Quaker Community poster including details of Safe Quaker Contact Friends from around Australia in a prominent place.

In liaison with the Premises Committee, each Quaker premises should be assessed for safety for all people by means of a safety audit. This is usually the responsibility of the premises/building committee.

4. ADDRESSING ABUSE SITUATIONS AND RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT

An issue of abuse requires immediate attention and may arise in any Quaker meeting, committee, workshop or residential gathering.

4.1 Initial Contact

Any person with a complaint may approach a Safe Quaker Contact Friend in their Regional Meeting or a Contact Friend from any other Regional Meeting.

A person with a complaint may also seek out the Clerk, a trusted Friend or someone on the Oversight/Pastoral Care committee.

The person with the complaint should be told that there are Safe Quaker Contact Friends to assist them, however they may choose to ask the person they first confided in to be their support person.

4.2 Dealing with the Complaint

The role of the Safe Quaker Contact Friend is to listen to the person with the complaint and assist them to decide how they wish to proceed. Various options are open for consideration, including assisting the person to deal with the situation themselves, referring the matter to the Oversight/Pastoral Care Committee or other trusted Quaker, seeking outside expertise or referring to an outside agency (e.g. support or advice from other churches, medical attention, counselling, legal advice). If Friends consider the law may have been broken, the Police may need to be contacted.

Options for resolution may include speaking to the person, mediation or using Quaker conflict resolution processes. The aim is to resolve the matter as satisfactorily as possible, and to find ways to aid all persons affected.

Some Meetings may seek the support and experience of another Church or community organisation to assist in the resolution. Meetings are encouraged to establish such co-operative arrangements in advance. It is anticipated that the Safe Quaker Contact Friends have knowledge of resources within their Meeting and may know about suitable community resources. This may include legal and medical counselling and persons especially skilled in abuse issues.

Whatever the nature and apparent severity of the disclosure, all persons involved must be dealt with in a formal manner with sensitivity, support and compassion. Safety must be assured.

4.3 Confidentiality

Assurance should be given that confidentiality will be honoured, subject to legal obligations, the safety of others and the person concerned. Otherwise details will not be shared with others without the voluntary consent of the person with the complaint.

4.4 Reporting

Secure confidential files will be kept by the Safe Quaker Contact Friend. Each Regional Meeting will need to decide their own practice concerning storing documents until the YM policy is finalised. The Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee, in consultation with the Contact Person(s) and person complaining, will decide if an alleged serious incident will be reported to the police. The Committee and Contact Friend will liaise with the AYM Secretary and Presiding Clerk regarding any possible requirement to inform the Meeting's insurer.

4.5 Follow Up

After an issue has been dealt with formally, it may be appropriate for the Safe Quaker Contact Friend/s to continue to monitor the situation by speaking to the people concerned, if they wish for this to happen.

Pastoral care and support should be provided to all who are involved. If there was an alleged incident/s, this could have implications for the health and well-being of the Meeting as a whole. It may be helpful to have someone from outside the local Meeting to support the delivery of pastoral care.

5. ACTIONS FOR AUSTRALIA YEARLY MEETING

The Safe Quaker Community Committee:

- supports and offers national workshops to Safe Quaker Contact Friends around Australia.

- supports the development of resource materials where appropriate and

- reviews and updates the *Safe Quaker Community* policy every three years.

6. REFERENCES CONSULTED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS POLICY

AYM Handbook of Practice and Procedure

Policies and Guidelines from several Australian churches

Britain Yearly Meeting publications

Child Protection Policy and Procedures, AYM 2017

Briggs, F. (2005). *Every School's Worst Nightmare: Child Sexual Abuse*, Paper Presentation, AW Jones Oration, The Elder Hall, The University of Adelaide, March 9th

Guidelines for the Promotion of Respectful Relationships in Australian Quaker Meetings, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc.

Information about the Issue of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse and procedures for dealing with Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse Complaints. A guide and resource manual for New Zealand Quakers, The Religious Society of Friends, Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa / New Zealand, 2009

NCCA Safe as Churches Consultation booklets

Policy Guidelines for Child Protection, West Australian Regional Meeting of the

Policy on Sexual Harassment, Canadian YM Personnel Committee

Quaker Handbook of Faith and Practice, 6th edition

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 16 December 2004

Sample Child Protection Policy & Procedures, EIG - Ansvar Limited, 2004

UK Methodist Church Safe Church policy documents.

APPENDICES

1. DEFINITIONS

2. THE ROLE OF A SAFE QUAKER CONTACT FRIEND (CF)

3. SAFE QUAKER COMMUNITY: RESOLVING CONFLICT

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APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

Abuse is the infliction of harm upon someone that results in them being or feeling unsafe. Neglect is the failure to prevent the infliction of harm. Harm may be physical, spoken, visual or written. Some harm may not be abusive at first, but becomes so, if the abuser continues the behaviour after being asked to stop. Harm can take place in any setting, within families, communities and institutions. It can be perpetrated by people we know, and by strangers; by adults and by children.

Abuse may include:

Bullying which is a form of psychological or physical harassment. A bully uses their relative strength or power to pressure, intimidate or humiliate.

Duty of Care is a moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety and well-being of members, attenders and participants in all Quaker activities.

Harassment is the use of subtle, overt or aggressive pressure or intimidation.

Misuse of power occurs where there is a differential in power or authority. The more powerful person may explicitly or implicitly coerce the less powerful person to consent. The agreement may appear consented to, but this may be invalid where the difference in power has been a factor.

Physical abuse may include the invasion of a person's personal space by unwanted:

- o brushing against the body, touching, exposing intimate body parts, stroking, fondling, pinching, poking, embracing, snuggling, kissing, exposure, penetrative sex and assault.

Protection is the creation and maintenance of a safe community environment including the care and support of those people who have, are currently, or are at risk in the future, of experiencing abuse.

Safe Community is one in which everyone can feel secure and free from abuse, harassment and bullying.

Safe Quaker Contact Friends are Friends appointed by their RM. They listen, support and explore possible courses of action where a person has or is experiencing abuse. A Contact Friend may also assist a person who has had an abuse complaint made against them.

Verbal abuse includes sexual comments, innuendoes, jokes, propositions, insults, threats.

Visual abuse includes the display of sexually explicit or suggestive materials; posters, pictures, art work, films, videos, literature, gestures and unwanted exposure of the body.

Vulnerable Adults include any adults aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is unable to detect or protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

Written Communication which is an inappropriate use of email; text messages and social networking websites can be abusive.

APPENDIX 2

THE ROLE OF A SAFE QUAKER CONTACT FRIEND (CF)

Overview and Purpose of the Role

The Contact Friend's role to support and stand by a person or persons who feel they have been bullied, harassed or feel unsafe within the Quaker community.

A Contact Friend's Role is to:

- listen
- support
- explore options
- conduct awareness sessions
- promote the policy and
- be a resource person for those in the Meeting concerning safe issues.

Personal Attributes

Formal credentials are not required to be a Contact Friend. It may be helpful to have work or personal experience in the helping professions, but it is not essential.

1. Be non-judgemental, sensitive and impartial
2. Maintain confidentiality
3. Possess high level interpersonal communication skills
4. Be approachable, flexible and adaptable.

Contact Friend Responsibilities

1. Actively promote and ensure that the *Safe Quaker Community Policy* is implemented within their Regional Meeting
2. Conduct annual awareness sessions in local and recognised Meetings
3. Use and promote available CF resources e.g. posters, brochures, hand-outs etc.
4. Nurture close relationships with Oversight/Pastoral Care members
5. Liaise with Contact Friends, while preserving confidentiality
6. Ensure organisers of Quaker events consider and implement the policy
7. Be informed about appropriate Quaker conflict resolution processes (Handbook Chapter 4 and Appendix 3) and community and church resources
8. Participate in any CF meeting, national workshop and review of this policy.

Ways a Contact Friend May Assist Someone Who is Feeling Harassed, Bullied or Unsafe:

1. Meet with the person/s and listen attentively
2. Support them to share their experience and ideas they have in order to resolve the problem
3. Explore possible options and outcomes. Assist them to prioritise these actions and support them to follow through with actions they chose

4. If requested, accompany them to speak to either the person concerned, an Elder or a member of a committee such as Oversight/Pastoral Care. The CF does not speak on their behalf but acts as a support person
5. Provide on-going support and follow up and ensure they have support from a person of their choosing
6. Ensure the person complained about also has appropriate support, such as another CF.

APPENDIX 3

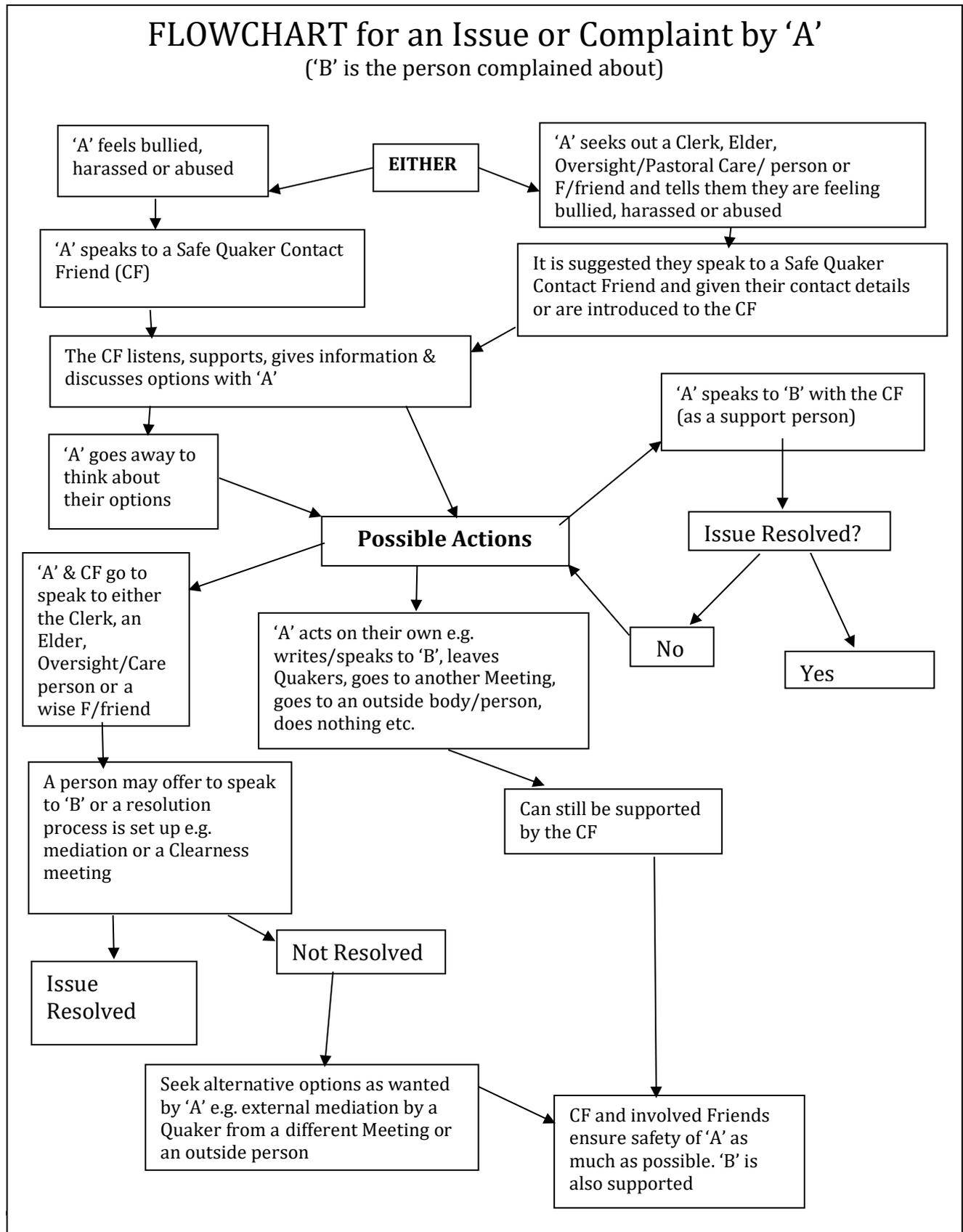**SAFE QUAKER COMMUNITY: RESOLVING CONFLICT**

The *Handbook of Practice and Procedure* contains a section (chapter 4) which gives details of ways in which Friends can help resolve conflicts within the Quaker community.

As the Handbook changes on a regular basis, it is important to seek out the most current version:

https://www.quakersaustralia.info/publications-0/handbook-practice-and-procedure

APPENDIX 4

FLOWCHART FOR RSOLVING CONFLICTS

FLOWCHART for an Issue or Complaint by 'A'
('B' is the person complained about)

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  ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌──────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
  │ 'A' feels bullied,  │◄───────│  EITHER  │───────►│ 'A' seeks out a Clerk, Elder,│
  │ harassed or abused  │        └──────────┘        │ Oversight/Pastoral Care/ person or│
  └─────────────────────┘                            │ F/friend and tells them they are feeling│
            │                                          │ bullied, harassed or abused  │
            ▼                                          └──────────────────────────────┘
  ┌─────────────────────┐                                          │
  │ 'A' speaks to a Safe│                             ┌──────────────────────────────┐
  │ Quaker Contact      │                             │ It is suggested they speak to a Safe Quaker│
  │ Friend (CF)         │                             │ Contact Friend and given their contact details│
  └─────────────────────┘                             │ or are introduced to the CF  │
            │                                          └──────────────────────────────┘
            ▼
  ┌─────────────────────────────┐
  │ The CF listens, supports,   │                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
  │ gives information &          │                    │ 'A' speaks to 'B' with the CF│
  │ discusses options with 'A'  │                    │ (as a support person)    │
  └─────────────────────────────┘                    └──────────────────────────┘
            │                                                      │
            ▼                                                      ▼
  ┌──────────────────┐                              ┌──────────────────────┐
  │ 'A' goes away to │          ┌──────────────┐    │ Issue Resolved?      │
  │ think about      │─────────►│   Possible   │    └──────────────────────┘
  │ their options    │          │   Actions    │          │            │
  └──────────────────┘          └──────────────┘          ▼            ▼
                                  │       │          ┌──────┐      ┌──────┐
  ┌──────────────────┐            │       │          │  No  │      │ Yes  │
  │ 'A' & CF go to   │            ▼       ▼          └──────┘      └──────┘
  │ speak to either  │  ┌──────────────────────────┐
  │ the Clerk, an    │  │ 'A' acts on their own e.g.│
  │ Elder,           │  │ writes/speaks to 'B', leaves│
  │ Oversight/Care   │  │ Quakers, goes to another Meeting,│
  │ person or a      │  │ goes to an outside body/person,│
  │ wise F/friend    │  │ does nothing etc.        │
  └──────────────────┘  └──────────────────────────┘
            │                           │
            ▼                           ▼
  ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
  │ A person may offer│       │ Can still be supported│
  │ to speak to 'B'  │        │ by the CF            │
  │ or a resolution  │        └──────────────────────┘
  │ process is set up │                  │
  │ e.g. mediation or │                  │
  │ a Clearness meeting│                 │
  └──────────────────┘                   │
       │         │                       │
       ▼         ▼                       │
  ┌────────┐ ┌──────────────┐            │
  │ Issue  │ │ Not Resolved │            │
  │Resolved│ └──────────────┘            │
  └────────┘        │                    │
                    ▼                    ▼
       ┌──────────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
       │ Seek alternative options │  │ CF and involved  │
       │ as wanted by 'A' e.g.    │─►│ Friends ensure   │
       │ external mediation by a  │  │ safety of 'A' as │
       │ Quaker from a different  │  │ much as possible.│
       │ Meeting or an outside    │  │ 'B' is also      │
       │ person                   │  │ supported        │
       └──────────────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
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APPENDIX 5

MATRIX OF RESPONSIBILITIES (from the Policy)

RESPONSIBILITIES	AYM	SQC COMMITTEE	RM/ M & O/PC	CF	OTHERS
Committee Meetings		X			
Training:					
Develop/deliver		X			
Attend		X		X	
Safety Audit			X		Premises/Event Organiser
RM Safety Matters			X		
MfWfB Agenda Item of SQC (Annual)			X	X	
Policy Implementation Review (in RM's)			X		
Appoint CF's			X		NC
Credentials of CF's		X	X	X	
Maintain Website		X			
CF Induction		X			
CF Workshop		X		X	
CF Ex-Officio on M & O/PC			X	X	NC
Resources		X	X	X	
Responding to an Incident			X	X	
Following Up After an Incident			X	X	
Recording of an Incident			X	X	
Reporting of Incidents		X	X	X	YM Presiding Clerk, YM Secretary, Police, Insurer
YM Reports		X			
Budget	X	X			

APPENDIX 6

QUERIES FOR AUSTRALIAN QUAKER MEETINGS

Regional Meetings are required to take regular preventive and pro-active steps to ensure the safety of members and attenders, and to be prepared to deal effectively with alleged incidents of abusive or unsafe relationships should they emerge. The following questions are intended to help Meetings assess whether they are preparing themselves. We ask Regional Meeting Clerks to include these questions on the agenda for a Meeting for Worship for Business, at least annually, and that the responses be minuted and copied to the convener of the Safe Quaker Community Committee.

1. How has Regional Meeting adopted and implemented the AYM *Safe Quaker Community Policy*?

2. Which Overseer/Pastoral Carer or another Friend has the Regional Meeting appointed to have particular responsibility to ensure the implementation of this policy?

3. What training have the Regional Meeting Safe Quaker Contact Friends received?

4. What links does Regional Meeting have with local churches or other agencies to supply training or additional expertise as needed?

5. When in the last year has Regional Meeting conducted a session to raise and discuss these issues with all Friends and Attenders, and what were the key outcomes of that session?

6. Where in the Meeting House are posters displayed promoting the Meeting as a Safe Place; do these include name and contact information of the currently appointed Safe Quaker Contact Friends?

7. When in the last year have contact details of the Safe Quaker Contact Friends been published in the Meeting's newsletters?

8. How does Regional Meeting ensure the proper consideration of this policy in planning special events? Does this include situations where Friend's premises are made available for external activities and organisations?

9. Are the worshipping groups and local meetings in the care of your Regional Meeting included in all these matters?