

Summary of key findings of the survey carried of Yearly Meeting 2016

This is a summary of key findings of the survey carried of Yearly Meeting 2016. The Yearly Meeting Support Committee requested the survey as a way of monitoring reactions to the changes of the timing of Yearly Meeting from January to July. The intention is that the survey be repeated each year and the results can be used when the timing of YM is reconsidered. Please let us know if you would like to read a more detailed description of any responses to any specific questions.

The survey was delivered at Yearly Meeting, Hobart in July 2016. It was made available on line (through google forms) and a paper version was also offered. The survey was offered after Yearly Meeting both to those that attended and to other Quakers who had not attended. The survey was left available on line for 3 months after Yearly Meeting.

265 adults attended Yearly meeting

- 117 people filled out the survey.
- 100 of the 117 (85.5%) attended Yearly Meeting and
- 17 (14.5%) did not attend.

Question 1: Do you like having Yearly Meeting in July?

115 respondents

- 62 (53.9%) said Yes,
- 21 (18.3%) said No and
- 36 (31.3%) said 'it depends'.

Question 2: Please comment on Q 1

91 people provided comments.

- From the answers to this question it appears that many factors affect the views of the people who responded regarding the suitability of July as opposed to January for Yearly Meeting.
- Chief amongst them seems to be experience of the climate, and in particular the temperature. Clearly some people are more sensitive to warmth (and the associated concerns of bushfires, gardens etc) and others more sensitive to the cold.
- Given the majority of people said they liked having Yearly Meeting in July, it would appear that some of the concerns regarding the cold venue could be ameliorated by adequate temperature modification.

Question 3: In what ways did the change of time of YM (from January to July) affect you?

108 people answered this question. Several people mentioned multiple effects, some they saw as positive, some as negative

- For example, my children were less involved as it is the middle of the school/uni year. It is MUCH colder
- I feel rushed as the middle of the year is a time off to catch up on work and this means I only have one week to do everything

- I was not available to babysit at time I usually do. (not so good) I did not suffer from heat/burning etc (very good).
- Overall, most people who responded to this question found the change had minimal effect or positive effects. There were also a large number who found the change affected them significantly due to work or other mid-year commitments, including children's schedules.
- One person pointed out that it was difficult to separate the effects of July from the effects of the change to Hobart on regular rotation.

Question 4. Do you like having a non-residential meeting? (as opposed to everyone living at one venue)

Of 112 respondents to this question, 19 (17%) said yes, 36 (32.1%) said no, and 58 (51.8%) said it depends on other factors

Question 5. Please comment on Q4

96 respondents added comments related to Q4.

- 43 of the comments related to the issues of community and connectedness. Respondents noted that at a non residential gathering it was more difficult to spend informal time together, share informal time and to feel like you were part of a gathered community.
- 8 people made 'co-operative' comments that indicated that they would fit in with whatever arrangements were made for Yearly Meeting.

This strong response on the importance of community indicates that this is an important issue for the organisers of YM to consider no matter where and when YM occurs.

Questions 6. The current plan is to have YM in Hobart every 3 years. Do you think this is a good idea

112 people responded to this question.

- 54 said yes,
- 17 said no and
- 3 said "it depends".

Question 7 asked for comments on Question 6

86 people responded to this question.

- 31 responses were related to the extra work that the 3 year rotation would have on Hobart friends.
- 13 people suggested that Friends from other Regional Meetings could take on specific tasks as a way of not overburdening Hobart people.
- 16 people said that Friends school was a suitable location for Yearly Meeting. A number of people said that having access to the school facilities were very valuable for the running of the meeting and number of people mentioned the Farrell Centre specifically.
- 9 people said that Hobart was too cold in July.

- 5 people said the number of stairs was difficult and 3 people said that Hobart was difficult to get to if one was avoiding flying as a sustainability measure.

Question 8: Did you use the Yearly Meeting website during the week of Yearly Meeting?

115 people answered this question. Of these,

- 61 or 53% said yes
- 55 (47.8%) said no.

Question 9: If yes to Q8, what did you use it for?

There were 66 responses. Of particular interest in the answers to this question is that

- 34 people indicated that they used the website for two or more different reasons.
- 36 used it for the timetable and notices,
- 23 for reports and minutes and
- 19 to look at photos.

Question 10. Any comments you would like to make about the usefulness of the website?

There were **75 responses**, a wide variety of comments offered.

- 39 (52%) said it was a great idea. 21 said that it was not their first choice of communication, did not have a device with them or would appreciate training. A number of these 21 responses raised concerns about inclusion – that having a website means some less technical savvy people will be left out.
- Others focused on making suggestions for how it could work better.
- One example of the positive responses:
 - Australian Quakers are getting older (and not attracting many younger adults.) We MUST find ways to streamline and simplify the YM process and this is one such way. It was VERY efficient and well received from ppl I spoke to. It also makes YM more accessible to a wider range of ppl such as those not present.
- Some people were concerned about the effect of technology in general on the sessions. For example:
 - The experiment with having notes written as people were speaking was very disruptive and distracting. When there is something with a screen happening, it is impossible to ignore it - and this distraction keeps Friends from attending to their part of the business, which is to hold the speaker in prayer and deeply, prayerfully consider their words; to hold the clerk in prayer as s/he forms minutes; to prayerfully consider the business at hand; to prayerfully discern the truth God is leading us to act on. I do hope the use of screens during sessions except for presentations doesn't continue.

Question 11. What suggestions, if any, do you have for the timing and locations of Yearly Meeting?

77 respondents made comments about this question.

- 15 had no suggestions and 6 said that mid year Yearly Meeting is acceptable.
- 22 people said they would prefer YM to be at a warmer time of the year, although one person noted that there was a greater sense of community as people sat around and chatted because it was too cold to go outside.
- The miscellaneous comments included a wide range of comments including moving the week of YM around the year, waiting till the 3 year trial is up, being aware of the needs of young people, only planning 2 years ahead and making sure the venue is near a train.

Question 12. Are there any other comments you would like to make about this Yearly Meeting or arrangements for Yearly Meeting in general?

118 people added comments to this question.

- 41 comments were positive and complimentary and included many aspects of Yearly Meeting – from the food, the venue, the help desk and the welcoming given by Tasmanian Friends.
- 15 of the comments are practical suggestions about how to improve arrangements and a number of these noted that there was not enough time in the program for Share and Tell sessions.

Question 13. For those attending in Hobart this year. Have you any comments on the new registration process?

83 responses. Overwhelmingly people were happy with the registration process.

- 75 people gave comments which indicated that they were highly enthusiastic, positive or satisfied. Some of these people had suggestions for improvements, or experienced minor problems. Two people had problems in their registration, which meant they didn't feel it worked particularly well for them.

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