



## **Yearly Meeting 2019 of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Junior Young Friends Epistle**

After the JYFs all arrived and settled in, we embarked on a field trip to the Tasman Peninsula where we met with a local marine biologist, Karen Wilson, to discuss “marine biology things”. On Monday morning, we held a Q&A panel with older Quakers. This included questions such as ‘What led you to Quakerism?’ and ‘Why do we hold Yearly Meeting?’. Afterwards, we had a session with [Joss Brooks discussing the eco city of Auroville](#), where he lives as a gardener. That night, the JYFs attended the annual [Backhouse Lecture, presented by Jason MacLeod](#), about his work in West Papua.

On Tuesday, we headed off to the JYF camp. The trip started with a visit to Port Arthur, an old convict industrial port, where we took various tours around the site to gain an appreciation for its historical context. Afterwards, we arrived at the Blue Lagoon Campsite. Following dinner that night, the JYFs were treated to a “Crate Climbing” exercise by the Blue Lagoon camp staff. We then went to the facility’s recreation room, where we enjoyed music, ping pong, pool and air hockey.

Wednesday morning began with breakfast, followed by meeting for worship. Then, representatives from [Sea Shepherd](#) arrived to conduct a day of activism introductory education. This included a trip to the local beach, where we discussed the effect that microplastics and other seemingly insignificant pieces of rubbish have on animals. After spending an hour searching for litter, we had a firmer understanding of the amount of plastic pollution in the ocean, the importance of reducing the amount of waste you produce, and the importance of recycling.

Afterwards, the whole group returned to the campsite, where Sea Shepherd gave a presentation on the history of their organization’s eco-activism. After the presentation, the representatives facilitated a workshop for the JYFs to form groups to brainstorm simple solutions for environmental issues. The next activity was a bonfire held at Blue Lagoon’s bonfire pit, where we shared music, laughter, and fellowship amongst gathered friends. That night, we watched a Sea Shepherd documentary about [Operation Jeedara](#), a program where the organisation sent one of their ships on a documenting expedition into the Australian Bight. The aim of this was to expose, to the public, the natural wonders of the place and its ecological importance in the world. The program successfully blocked British Petroleum’s installation of an off-shore drilling rig in the area. This proved the power of activism to the JYFs.

That night, the JYFs conducted their camp’s epilogue, where sections of a tourist map from Port Arthur historical site were torn and scattered throughout the main hall. The aim was for the JYFs to find and collect the pieces, and then piece the broken map back together. The last piece was deliberately missing, because the message of the epilogue was for JYFs to reflect on was the importance of being happy with what you have, even in circumstances which do not meet all personal expectations. That night, the JYFs conducted their “Sleepover” (sleep used lightly), where the group took up residence in the common room of Blue Lagoon’s main hall and stayed awake until the wee hours of the next morning, playing games and hanging out in the spirit of the light. The next day involved enjoying the facilities of Blue Lagoon whilst preparing ministry for the JYF-run All Ages Worship on Friday morning.

Upon returning from camp, the JYFs took part in multiple preparatory and formal sessions, including the Earthcare session. The main ideas put forward by the JYFs were their care for the environment and desire to take direct action. The next morning, the JYFs lead Friday morning’s All Ages Worship with ministry focusing on the integrity of Earthcare. Friday evening concluded with a breakout concert series performed by JYFs and other members of yearly meeting to celebrate the gathering of Quakers from around Australia. The *SPICE Girls* performance was a highlight for many JYFs.

After some teary goodbyes on Saturday morning, the JYFs departed from a successful Yearly Meeting.