

# QSAIG: Quaker South Asia Interest Group

Based on a  
Presentation to Groups Fair,  
Britain Yearly Meeting 2021

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# Contents

1. Countries of QSAIG focus
2. What is QSAIG
3. QSAIG purposes
4. What we do
5. Quakers worldwide
6. Quakers in South Asia
7. Quaker meetings in S. Asia
8. Some groups with whom QSAIG has interacted *(see adjacent list)*
  - *Ekta Parishad, India*
  - *JaiJagat 2020-2030*
  - *Tamwed, Tamil Nadu*
  - *Indra Congress*
  - *Action for Bhopal*
  - *Child Labour-Free Bricks Campaign*
  - *Institute of Indian Mother and Child, W. Bengal*
  - *Vikramshila Education Resource Centre, Kolkata*
  - *Nepal Dialogue Forum for Peace and Human Rights, Germany*
  - *Nepal Alternatives to Violence Programme (AVP)*
  - *Bangladesh: Gono Unnayan Prochesta (GUP)*
  - *Myanmar: Scholarships for Street Kids*
  - *Asia-Pacific Region: Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)*
9. Forthcoming activities
10. How you can get involved

# Countries of QSAIG focus



# What is QSAIG?

- A 'Quaker-recognised body' focusing on South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan and neighbouring states)
- Started in the 1990's
- 100+ members and correspondents
- Members have worked in South Asia or are interested in South Asia-related issues

# QSAIG Purposes

To assist in the building of a peaceful, just and sustainable world inspired by our Quaker faith and focusing on the South Asia region by:

- Connecting people and organisations working/interested in South Asia
- Raising awareness about issues in South Asia of interest and concern to Quakers
- Providing a source of Quaker support for peace and development initiatives relating to South Asia

# What we do

- Members and friends take part in various events in the UK on issues and projects relating to South Asia
- We connect with friends and partner organisations overseas
- We meet annually in London, Leeds or Birmingham
- QSAIG website: <https://www.qsaig.co.uk/>
- Produce a newsletter at least once a year

# Quakers Worldwide

- About 377,000 adult Quakers worldwide
  - 49% in Africa
  - 36% in the Americas
  - 9% in Europe and the Middle East.
- The UK (≈ 23,000 adult Quakers) has about three-quarters of the Europe & Middle East total
- In Africa and the Americas, a high proportion are Evangelical Friends

Source: *Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), 2017:*

<http://fwccawps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/fwccworldmap2017.pdf>

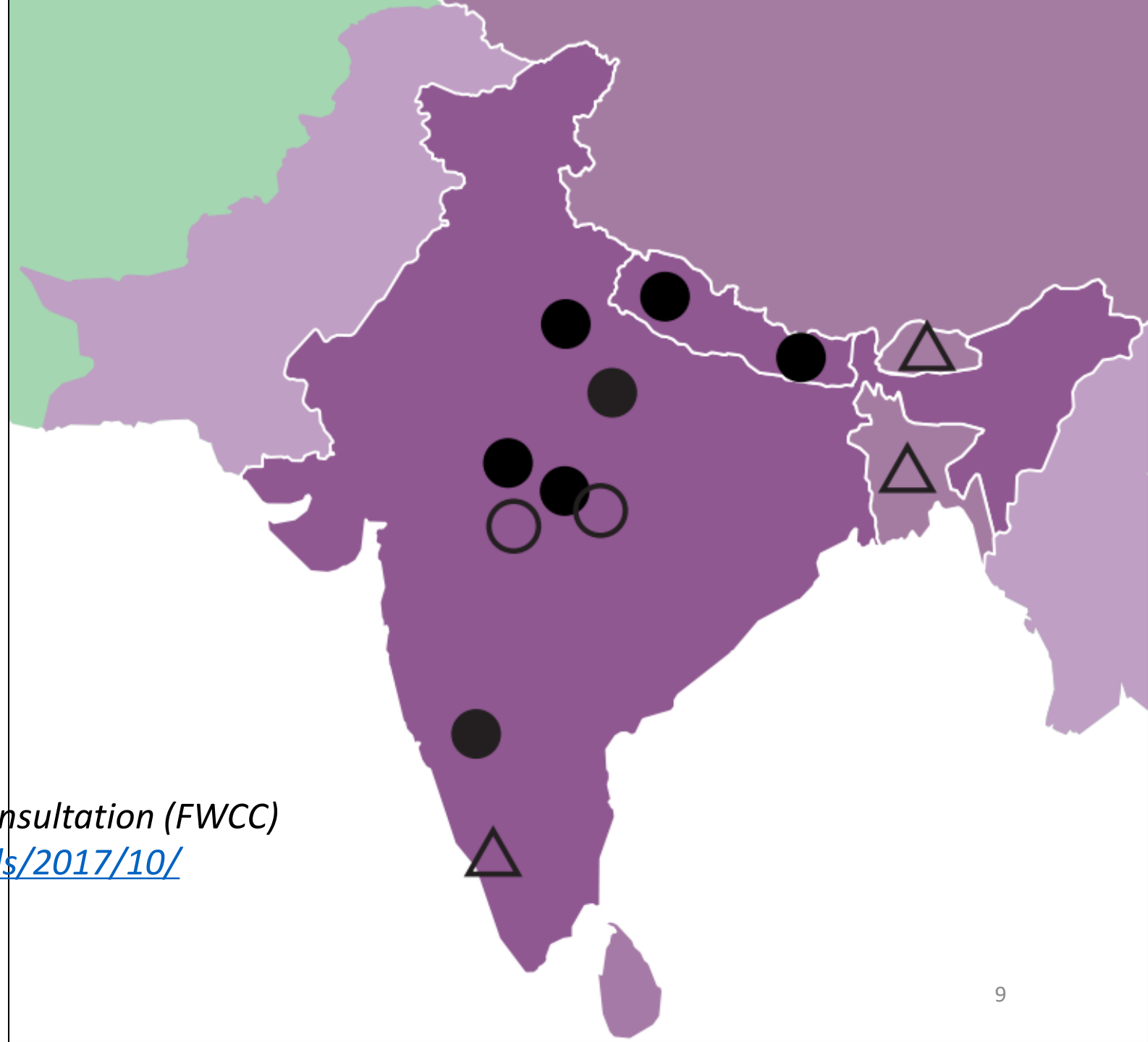
# Quakers in South Asia

## Historical:

- The first Quakers may have visited India around 1657  
(*Source: Marjorie Sykes, Quakers in India, 1980*)
- Following the establishment of the Friends Foreign Mission Association in London in 1868, some Quakers travelled to India as missionaries
- Local meetings began as part of the welfare work (schools, medical help, etc.)
- Mid-India Yearly Meeting formally inaugurated in 1907

# Quaker Meetings in South Asia today

- Yearly Meeting
- Worship Group
- △ Emerging Meetings



Source: Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)  
[http://fwccawps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/  
fwccworldmap2017.pdf](http://fwccawps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/fwccworldmap2017.pdf)

# Quaker Meetings in South Asia

- **India:**

- Bhopal YM
- Bundelkhand YM
- Delhi Quaker Worship Group
- General Conference of Friends in India
- Mahoba YM, Uttar Pradesh
- Mid-India YM, Madhya Pradesh

- **Nepal:**

- Two Evangelical Friends Yearly Meetings

- **Bangladesh and Bhutan:**

- Some Evangelical Friends

# Some Organisations and Individuals with whom QSAIG has interacted in recent years

## India: Ekta Parishad

<https://www.ektaparishad.in/>

- A people's movement dedicated to non-violent action. Aim: to see India's poorest people gain control over livelihood resources, especially land, water, forest
- Activists work towards building community-based governance, local self-reliance, and responsible government
- A federation of approximately 11,000 community-based organizations
- Currently working in 10 States with India's most marginalized communities



# JaiJagat 2020-2030

<https://www.jaijagatinternational.org/>

- The Ekta Parishad launched JaiJagat 2020, a new campaign for poor and marginalized people.
- It proposes global action, as genuine social change requires collective action across groups & countries
- JaiJagat 2020 aims to work with as many organizations as possible at every country and global level
- A key component was a Delhi to Geneva march in support of the four pillars of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). From Oct. 2019 to March 2020 the marchers covered 2,300 miles but had to halt in Armenia due to the Coronavirus crisis
- Now planning its programmes for 2021-2030

# JaiJagat 2020 UK

<https://jaijagat2020.co.uk/>



- Jai Jagat 2020 UK is part of a European network supporting Jai Jagat 2020. It works closely with QSAIG and is recognised as a 'concern' by Stourbridge Quaker Meeting



**TAMWED** associated with the **ISLAND Trust, Nilgiri Hills, South India** [www.tamwed.org](http://www.tamwed.org)

**TAMWED (Tamil Nadu, West Devon)** is a small charity set up by people in Devon and Cornwall with long-established links to communities in South India. Its current partnership is with the ISLAND Trust (<http://islandtrust.org.in/>), an NGO that works with tribal people on health, human rights and other issues in the Nilgiri Hills of South India.

**Indra Congress** and the **Study Hall Foundation (SHEF), Lucknow, India**  
[www.theindracongress.com](http://www.theindracongress.com) <http://www.studyhallfoundation.org/index.php>

Quakers in Tavistock actively support the **Indra Congress** (International Development of Reconciliation through the Arts), a global network of young people, artists and educators using the arts for reconciliation and conflict transformation. Indra groups in the UK and worldwide undertake creative projects on issues such as bullying, racism, inter-communal tension or inter-generational misunderstanding. The Indian partner in the Indra Congress is the **Study Hall Educational Foundation (SHEF)**, a formidable contributor to social justice in India. Established in Lucknow in 1994, its objective is imparting quality education to children.

# Action for Bhopal

[www.actionforbhopal.org](http://www.actionforbhopal.org)

*A Quaker-initiated group working for justice and a clean-up in Bhopal*



Action for Bhopal is a small but growing group, with members in the UK and Germany. It joins other organizations such as the **Bhopal Medical Appeal (UK)** – <https://www.bhopal.org/> and the **International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (USA)** – <https://www.bhopal.net/> in working to ensure that pressure is brought to bear on the responsible corporations.

Action for Bhopal aims to keep Bhopal in the public eye, and encourage the company to make a new start by putting right what its predecessor did in the past as well as adopting 21<sup>st</sup> Century environmental standards for the future.



**Most children work from the age of 10 years and some at the younger age.**

## Child Labour Free Bricks Campaign

- Jon Ellis is a retired primary school teacher from Southampton, UK who has worked in child education in W. Bengal for 25 years. He is married to a Bengali and lives almost half of each year in Kolkata
- With the help of Sister Cyril at Loreto School Sealdah, Kolkata, Jon initiated the brickfield schools programme of Loreto, which runs 60 open air schools at brick kilns near Kolkata.

- Jon helped organize a crowd-fund appeal to support the paid staff of the Child-Labour-Free Bricks campaign
- The campaign is hosted for financial purposes by a small local NGO (Howrah Danesh Sheik Lane Navaday Seva Niketan, or NSN for short), secretary Bimal Paul

**<https://uk.gofundme.com/f/end-child-labour-bricks-in-india>**



**and to find a market for Child Labor Free Bricks is a big job**

## IIMC's Work in West Bengal – Responding to Coronavirus

- IIMC (Institute of Indian Mother and Child) is an NGO providing medical services to poor mothers and children in West Bengal
- IIMC works in North and South 24 Parganas, among the most populated and economically backward districts in West Bengal
- Dr. Abu B. Siddique, a member of QSAIG, is a Consultant to IIMC and Trustee Member of IIMC-UK (<https://www.iimcuk.org/>)



## Supporting the Educational System in West Bengal:

- **Vikramshila Education Resource Society** is based in Kolkata <http://www.vikramshila.org/index.htm> and supports education for children from under-resourced and at-risk sections of society
- It leads initiatives in pedagogy, curriculum development, teacher development programmes, children supplementary learning centres and child protection
- Margaret Waterworth, an education specialist and QSAIG member, has been involved with Vikramshila for over a decade

# Nepal Dialogue Forum for Peace and Human Rights

<http://nepal-dialogforum.org/>

- Birgit Felleisen is co-ordinator of the Nepal Dialogue Forum, a network of German NGOs who support projects in Nepal and work for human rights and peace advocacy at the German Parliament and other German institutions, the EU and sometimes at UN level
- The Forum's main topics are social inclusion, transitional justice (including human rights and impunity), and economic, social and cultural rights with an emphasis on the right to food
- Birgit is a member of Berlin Meeting and her work email is: [koordination@nepal-dialogforum.de](mailto:koordination@nepal-dialogforum.de)

# Nepal Alternatives to Violence Programme (AVP)

<https://www.facebook.com/Alternatives-to-Violence-Program-AVP-Nepal-548791658521597/>

Quakers, through QPSW, have had contacts with AVP Nepal since 2004. It is a voluntary network that runs experiential training workshops where participants can explore alternative ways of dealing with violence/conflict in their personal, family and professional life. The Nepal co-ordinator is Subhash Kattel, [hpdnepal@hotmail.com](mailto:hpdnepal@hotmail.com)

# Bangladesh: Gono Unnayan Prochesta (GUP)

<https://www.gupbd.org/>

- Quakers have had links with GUP ( 'People's Development Efforts') since it began in 1973 after the War of Liberation
- GUP has expanded over the years and currently works in agricultural extension, credit programmes, handicrafts, training programmes and disaster risk management
- In 1982 a Peace Centre was established in Rajoir for training on peace and non-violence and to promote mediation and conflict transformation
- In the 2000's Settle Quaker Meeting helped raise funds to re-build the Peace Centre with donations from over 100 individuals, organisations and trusts, and Quaker Meetings as far afield as Tokyo and Texas.



*GUP Peace Centre, Rajoir, Bangladesh*

# Myanmar: Scholarships for Street Kids

<https://www.s4sk.org.uk>

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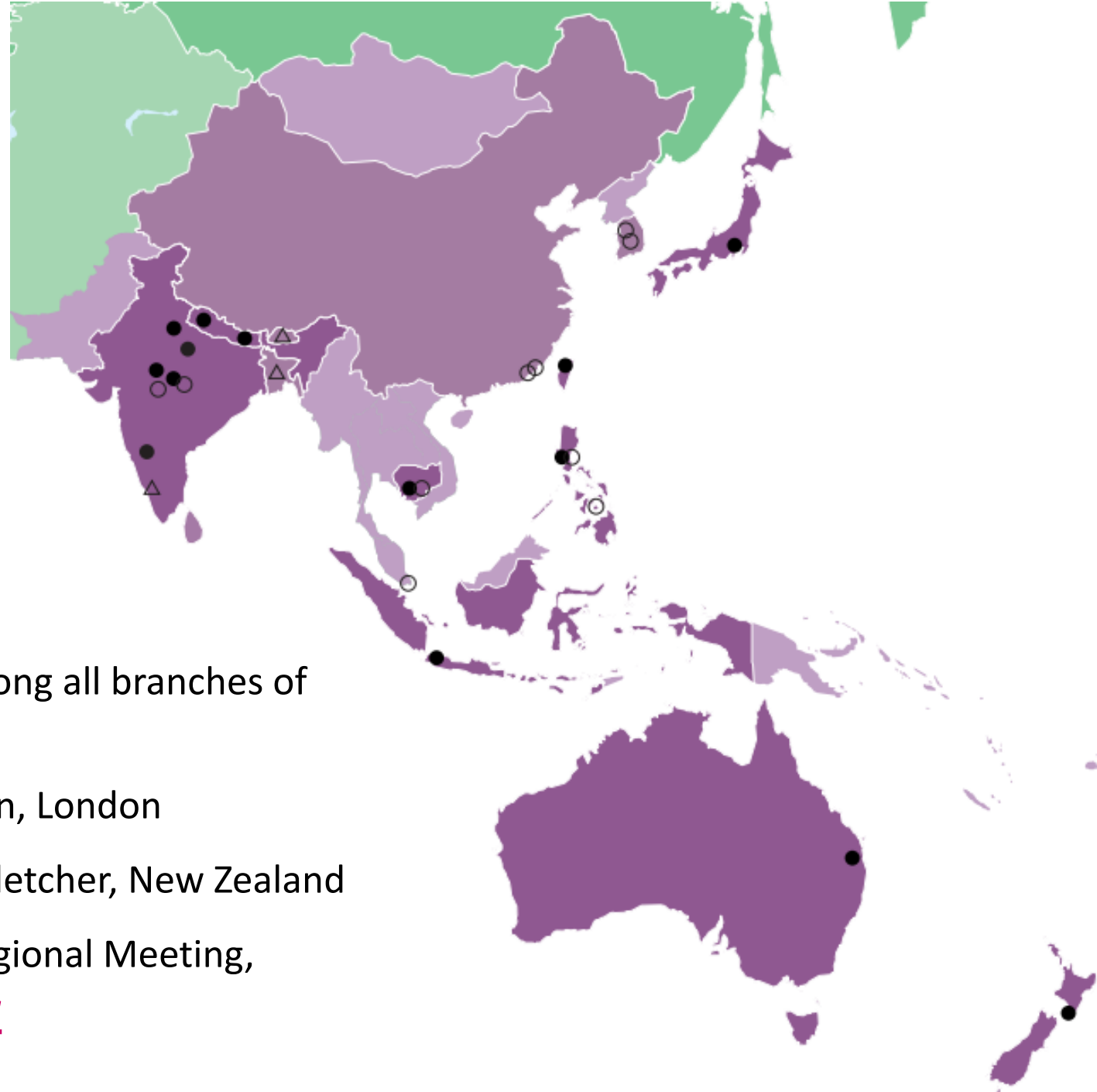
## Hope for Shining Stars (Myanmar NGO)

### S4SK and H4SS – Background:

- In 2007 the first classes for out-of-school children and scholarships provided on the initiative of John McConnell, a British Quaker who was teaching conflict resolution skills in Yangon at the time.
- Scholarships for Street Kids (S4SK) established as a UK charity in 2009
- By 2013 a strong team of local staff and supporters in Myanmar, and Hope for Shining Stars registered as an NGO in 2016
- Most of the children helped are out-of-school and working in full-time jobs from as young as 8 or 9.



# Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) – Asia West Pacific Section



<http://fwccawps.org/>

- FWCC's purpose is to encourage fellowship among all branches of the Religious Society of Friends
- FWCC's World Office is at Friends House, Euston, London
- The Asia West Pacific Section Clerk: Jonathan Fletcher, New Zealand
- AWPS Secretary: Ronis Chapman, Canberra Regional Meeting, Australia – contact: [ronisc@fwccawps.org](mailto:ronisc@fwccawps.org)

# QSAIG Forthcoming Activities

**See events page for our next meeting.**

## How you can get involved

1. Join QSAIG (*see website for details*)
2. Send articles for our newsletter
3. Come to our meetings (on-line or in person)
4. Pass on info about QSAIG to your local meeting

If you would like to chat with our QSAIG members attending the next BYM Groups Fair, we would be pleased to meet you and try to answer any questions.

You can send questions using the Contact Us page on this website.

**Thank You**