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I welcome this opportunity to introduce myself to you and look forward to meeting and interacting with the Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, Friends and wider community. I come to Silver Wattle wishing to progress the development of the Centre enabled through skills and experience from a diverse career and life experiences.



I was born in Bristol, England to a loving family and school which was multi-cultural, ethnic and religious before these 'terms' were invented. I met my husband Paul whilst doing "A" levels at the Technical College and we went on to study for BSc together. Paul and I were married for 50 years and he died very suddenly in mid-2018.

VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) sent us to Papua New Guinea in 1970 to study a malaria induced condition amongst the Kukukuku people in Morobe Province. We never got home to England – Paul went on to a career as a medical entomologist studying malaria vectors and carriers of arboviruses. I was fortunate to work for the Wildlife Section of the Agriculture Department doing a preliminary study of dugongs, developing their Education Unit and then to develop a national programme of dugong research, management and community education. During this time, we developed many international contacts particularly with Japan and Pacific, which has continued thereafter.

We moved to Townsville in 1982, for Paul to study Ross River and Dengue virus transmission. I did some consulting, started a 'career development' business and undertook remedial education with Aboriginal and Islander student. I broadcast on community radio – "Science in Townsville" for 5 years. I never had difficulty finding interesting people to talk with for the program. One such persons was an environmental lawyer who brought a new perspective and I thought "I will follow-up on that, if I ever get a chance".

We moved to Darwin for Paul to join the Health Department and I to the Conservation Commission – firstly to do heritage research and management and then environmental assessment. I then spent 10 happy years developing legislation and managing legal matters for the Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

The NT University (now Charles Darwin Uni) had a Law degree in which I enrolled and graduated in mid 1990s. I was a telephone counsellor for a number of those years and following a mediation course undertook family mediations for Anglicare (Resolve). I completed my legal studies with 6 months in Adelaide living at the Kathleen Lumley post-grad residence – a lovely city and enjoyable time. Having started attending Quaker meetings in Darwin, I appreciated the opportunity of attending Adelaide Central Meeting during this time

Assisting people resolve their own disputes through mediation was far more interesting to me than mainstream 'lawyering'. After leaving DPIF, I was recruited by the NSW Worker's Compensation Commission to assist with their new program of med-arb - mediation followed by arbitration of those cases that did not settle. Commuting from Darwin by road to Sydney and most of NSW sounds crazy, but Paul and I enjoyed this peripatetic lifestyle for 3 years.

We moved back to Townsville where my Mother was becoming frail and started our mediation practice - Medius - Paul having studied mediation and I having taken several more arbitration courses. I joined Tribunals and Panels to extend my experience in primary dispute resolution. One of the most worth-while was being a restorative justice facilitator for the Defence Force programme DART. I continue this work with the Defence Force Ombudsman. The International Finance Corporation asked me to develop the Dispute Resolution Unit of the National Court of Papua New Guinea (2010-2013). The national staff have further developed the Unit, so that all civil cases must now be mediated prior to litigation.

Following my Mother's death in 2005, the small Townsville Quakers group started to meet once a month at various locations then at my house. We benefit from attending the Atherton / Cairns based gatherings and other 'events'. I am an active Rotarian having held Club and District positions and hope to continue this membership in Canberra.

Paul and I had considered becoming the caretakers at the Friend's house in Sydney but it had never been 'the right time'. Although the Director / Co-ordinator's position at Silver Wattle had been advertised several times previously, the email announcing that SWQC seeking a Co-ordinator in late 2020, struck me instantly as what I should be doing. Having never been to the Centre previously, I visited in early December and was generously hosted by Felicity and met many members of the community in person or by Zoom. The Board offered me the Co-ordinator position, which I accepted.

I hope to become a member of the Silver Wattle community before the end of February 2021 and look forward to extending our team and facilitating the development of spiritual and residential courses and retreats consistent with Quaker aims and values. I will continue some dispute resolution assignments, as they can be fitted into other duties. Although, I fear the cold tremendously after 50 years in the tropics, I look forward to the warmth and fellowship which I am sure I will receive, and support of all, in the further development of Silver Wattle.

Brydget-Barker-Hudson
12 January 2021.

