

Queen's Council 2016 Summary

On 1st May 2016 Queens/Vice Queens and representatives from 21 Chapters around Victoria gathered together to hold a "Queen's Council".

The event was held with topics being discussed in the table groups, then a summary of those discussed points was given to the entire room, so that everyone could benefit from the sharing of ideas. Each participant was given a notepad and pens to make notes during the event.

The following is a summary of the discussion points that were raised by the whole group.

Page 2 - "Queen's Council" - discussions relating to the Queen's Council/Queenathon

Page 4 - "Members" - Discussions relating to recruiting and member issues

Page 5 - "Chapter Outings" - Discussions relating to outings and fun ideas to do

Page 7 - "Financial Concerns" - Discussions relating to chapter finances

Page 8 - "Other Discussions" - Other topics discussed

Queen's Council ("Queenathon")

A "Queen's Council" is a meeting of chapter Queens/Vice Queens (or representatives), to discuss issues relating to running a RHS chapter, to share ideas and network with other Queens.

It was suggested that the smaller gatherings often held at the end of a larger event, where all Queens who were present at that event have a small meetup for a more social benefit – should not be called a "Queen's Council" to avoid confusion with the larger stand-alone event. The suggestion was that they should instead be called a "Queen's Gathering" or something similar.

- **Who should run it:**

- It should be shared around, not run by the same person each time
- Should alternate city/country to make travel distance fairer.

- **When it should be:**

- Yearly – So that new Queens can benefit
- Suggested luncheon timing (which could make it possible for a day trip)
- Having it on a set weekend every year, so that other events can be planned around it and everyone will know when it will be held.
- Not near school holidays, not during June/July as some people travel at this time.
- Almost unanimous voting for the 3rd or 4th weekend in May (with no preference for either). Host may choose which weekend to use.

- **Cost/Financial factors:**

- Costs should be kept reasonable to make sure more people can attend.
- Suggestion that the cost should be kept at a fairly consistent amount, so that there wouldn't be very expensive Queen's Councils. (No amount was discussed as being an ideal cost, as venue costs and other expenses will vary - perhaps \$30-\$50?).
- Decorations and other such items should be kept and given to the next host, to prevent unnecessary purchasing of items that could be shared.
- Any additional unused money left over from the event could be donated to charity. Suggestion being that the hosting group decides which charity to donate to.

- **Who is allowed to attend:**

- Queens, Vice Queens and those intending to become a Queen/Vice – As well as acting Queens/Vice Queens and/or a nominated representative if a Queen/Vice Queen is unable to attend.
- (Not discussed, but may be assumed – More than one Vice Queen may be in attendance unless numbers need to be limited)
- A suggestion was made that only (Current) officially registered RHS members should be allowed to attend the Queen's Council. It was discussed that whoever hosts the Queen's Council event can set this requirement, or not, as they choose.

- **Who is allowed to attend (*continued*):**

- A suggestion was made that a discount could be given to officially registered members (who provide their membership number when booking) to encourage/promote registration.
- If an invited Queen/Vice isn't interested in attending – asking why they do not wish to come may help to overcome some issues that may be preventing them from attending (such as transport or other logistical issues)

- **Other Queen's Council Points:**

- Organising “Billet” accommodation (and carpooling) for visiting members would be helpful to avoid accommodation costs.
- A special welcome for “Virgins” (those Queens who have not attended a Queen's Council event previously)
- A guidebook could be created to help the event host find supplies for showbags and other items, as well as specific tips for hosting a Queen's Council Event.
- Event should be easily accessible to public transport.
- Information about the event needs to be available to those who do not have Internet access.
- There was a discussion on the dress code for the Queen's Council (Most attendees were in standard Hatter attire) – One point of view was that attendees should be wearing crowns and Regal attire (as some people felt uncomfortable being dressed up when others weren't). The other point of view was that some attendees would feel uncomfortable with the idea of wearing crowns etc. and wanted to wear their regular Hatter clothing. Result of discussion was that attendees can choose to wear what they wish.

- **Stand-Alone Event or part of a Weekend Convention:**

- Some felt it needs to be a single stand alone event – having it the only thing planned for that weekend.
- Some felt it needs to be part of a weekend event – to make the travel more worthwhile for those who would need to find accommodation in the area to attend.
 - If it is made part of a weekend event:
 - Queen's Council would need to be charged separately to the other components of the event, so that members can choose to only attend the Queen's Council if they wish.
 - An alternate activity (or activity ideas) could be scheduled for the chapter members who accompany their Queen but are unable to attend the Council event. (Alternative event shouldn't be too exciting that would discourage attendance of the Queen's Council)
 - An alternative activity for husbands/partners could also be scheduled, as some members are driven to events by their husbands, who then have nothing to do.

Chapter Members:

- **Getting new members** – *(how to advertise for new members)*
 - Being visible! Wearing your colours
 - Having outings in public rather than members homes
 - Handing out pamphlets or business cards to interested people
 - If someone is interested, rather than having them look the RHS up (and potentially forgetting), ask for their number which you can then pass on to their local chapter.
 - Walk around in Hatting gear, just to be visible
 - Use local newspaper to advertise
 - Try to get the venues you use to promote your group
 - Remember that when you are out in public in your colours you are representing the RHS as well as your chapter, so you should always be polite and helpful.
- **What to do about members who don't wear the colours or hats.**
 - Fines (eg \$2) for not wearing your Colours/Namebadge/Hat
 - Encourage wearing the Colours with pride
 - Hold Craft days to help members make items to wear
 - Have clothing swap/sell days to let Hatters trade clothing and items
 - Complimenting members when they do make an effort to wear colours
 - Encourage members to come to larger events to see other Hatters in their outfits
 - Remind them about the Handbook and what it means to be a Hatter
- **Inactive members** – *(What to do about raising participation levels.)*
 - Communication – Find out why they aren't coming to gatherings
 - Could be because of a lack of a friend to come with or issue with other member.
 - If they stop paying the membership fee, they are no longer a member. Have a discussion and let them know they may rejoin later if they change their mind.
- **Problem members** – *(How to deal with issues resulting from ill-behaved members.)*
 - Deal with issues quickly - they could be preventing other members attending events.
 - Talk to the member to let them know that their attitude is causing conflict.
 - Write a letter to avoid face to face confrontation
 - Sometimes it is better to lose a bad member than to risk losing good members.
 - (Provide links to online resources for providing help in conflict resolution).

Chapter Outings/Events/Fun Ideas:

- Induct new members with a ceremony where they read out the promise
- Dress up as your Royal title
- Hold an annual weekend away
- Birthdays - Members get a birthday card and/or their meal or drinks paid for on their birthday
- "Treasure Hunt" - Could be a good multi-chapter event. Go to a local shopping centre and split members into pairs (best if they are people who don't know each other) and together they need to find landmarks and other points of interest around the shopping centre. Using cryptic clues for the things the members need to find. (May wish to ask centre management for permission!)
- Calendar – Create a fun calendar from photos of the Hatters
- Red Hatter Debutante ball, for those who have never had a deb ball.
- Bra hat making
- Mystery Car trip (carpool and follow in convoy to a mystery location)
- "Fake Wedding" - where you hold a wedding ceremony for fun
- Go on a gameshow like family Feud.
- Celebrate "0" birthdays (60/70/80 etc.)
- "Golduation" for a member turning 80
- School uniform dressup event for a chapter turning 5 (kids go to school at 5)
- Going to the races
- Suggestion box so members can leave suggestions.
- Tour of Sexyland (they will organise tours and showbags)
- Choose a particular day (eg 2nd Friday) as an "international dinner" night, where you go out to dinner at a restaurant that serves food from another country.
- Each member can choose a month (can be their birth month). They are responsible for organising the event for that month. Suggestion for the member to offer 2 or 3 options for the event they wish to host, so that people can discuss the options.
- Monthly/yearly/bi-annual planning days – where all members get together to plan what events will be held over the next months. If doing yearly, can get together every 3/6 months to review the plans. Can make a spreadsheet to give out to all members that lists all events and contact details.
- Have a newsletter for members to have birthdays listed and upcoming events.
- Suggestion to have one weekday a month being a coffee morning and one weekend a month being for a larger whole-day event.
- Christmas gift idea – each person puts 5 items of a particular theme into a box, with a \$20 limit. The boxes are put on a table and everyone gets a random box. The box itself is then reused for the next year. Suggestions for contents could be "something for the bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, something personal, something red".

- **Chapter fun/outing ideas (*Continued*) –**

- Members should RSVP as soon as possible for things that need bookings, and have them make payment straight away.
- “Hatter Chatter” - an informal meetup in a member home for socialising
- Alternate informal home-based gatherings with more up-beat public outings.
- Pick a venue with an interesting name, or work through the alphabet (eg a restaurant starting with “A”, then the next time a cafe starting with “B”)
- Number theme – Choose a venue at a certain street number, eat at a certain time etc.

Comment was made that members should be encouraged to attend the events out of respect for the people who are organising them. Even if the event isn't something they are particularly interested in.

- **Ideas for larger Events –**

- Be mindful of the cost – not all Hatters have the same budgets (or time)
- Splitting events up and charging for each part separately would allow for Hatters with a limited budget to attend some parts of the event
- Communicate with other chapter Queens
- Give plenty of notice
- Give all the information – Cost, timeframe, dresscode, expectations, who is running it
- Delegation – so that it is not just the Queen running it. Form an event planning committee.
- Use your members expertise.
- Pacing – not all Hatters can cope with a lot of activity or a long event.
- Give yourself plenty of time to organise it

Financial Aspects:

- **Chapter dues/fees** – *(Thoughts on charging a fee to be part of the chapter).*
 - Some chapters charge a yearly membership fee. Roughly \$10-\$20 – this is used to cover the expense of registering the chapter, paying insurance and other expenses.
 - Some chapters do things like give \$10 off their Christmas lunch, or use the membership fee to cover drinks at member houses.
 - Some chapters don't charge a yearly membership fee and ask for a gold coin donation at each gathering or run fundraisers through the year to pay for expenses.
 - "Purple Purse" - the name given to the collection of funds held by the Chapter. Members put a gold coin into the purse at each event, and this money goes toward chapter expenses.
- **Fundraising** - *(Ideas to raise extra money for your chapter, or to raise money for charity)*
 - Mystery Auction – Everyone brings a wrapped gift worth \$10 or \$20, in a particular theme. People bid on the mystery package without knowing what is inside it.
 - \$2 raffle – Everyone puts \$2 into a jar and their name goes into a hat. The person who wins gets the prize (an item worth \$2) then buys the prize for next month.
 - Fines (suggested amount \$2) for not wearing namebadge or a hat – fine amounts can go into the "Purple Purse" or be given to charity.
 - Whenever you are out shopping and see a red/purple item cheap, buy it and then keep it in a box to sell to members who want it.
- **Public Liability Insurance** – *(Thoughts on public liability insurance.)*
 - Basically speaking - Public liability insurance covers an organiser if a participant is harmed or injured at the event, due to the negligence of the organiser.
 - Specific Red Hatter insurance available from ARHGA (Association Red Hatted Groups Australia Inc. A committee from Western Australia). Currently this is \$85 and is due by the 1st of June (if you miss the deadline you must wait until next year).
 - An Insurance policy may not be required by a chapter if holding all their events in a restaurant/cafe or other such public venue as those venues will have their own public liability insurance. If holding events at a member home or a location that does not have its own coverage, having insurance could be a good idea to protect yourself should any accidents happen.
 - It is up to each chapter to decide if they want to obtain public liability insurance
 - An indemnity waiver may provide coverage, but may depend on circumstances and you may not be able to have people sign away their rights. Best to check with a lawyer.
 - The cost of Insurance can be part of the membership fees that members pay.
 - RHS registration does not automatically cover you for public liability insurance at all events, but may be required to obtain an insurance policy or to be covered by insurance at official RHS events.

Registration:

- The topic of registrations with the RHS was brought up on a few occasions. We aimed to limit discussions on this topic given that it is a contentious issue for some people, and one that we all know the official/legal answer for ("No pay, no play"). So there seemed to be no good reason to discuss this topic at length.
 - Everyone was reminded that only those who have paid their yearly membership dues to the RHS (A "supporting member") were legally entitled to call themselves Red Hatters and to portray themselves as such (eg by wearing the "colours")
 - The official RHS Handbook states that: *"A woman wishing to play as a Red Hat Society Queen or Member must pay annual Membership dues. Simply put, she must "pay to play."*
 - Some people felt that it is their responsibility to ensure that anyone attending an event (or being part of a chapter) is a supporting member of the RHS. Some people felt that it is up to the individual to ensure they are properly registered and did not want to police the issue by checking registrations on event bookings.
 - The official RHS Handbook states that: *"Queens of The Red Hat Society are asked to ensure that the women who play within her Chapter(s) support the Society through individual Supporting Membership dues"*
 - People were reminded to make sure they familiarise themselves with the Handbook.

Other Discussions:

- There was a discussion on whether a Queen or Vice Queen should be able to be a member of another group – The result of the discussion was that it is up to an individual chapter to make a decision on whether they feel it is appropriate or not for their members (including Queens and Vice Queens) to be part of other chapters.
 - The Official RHS Queen's handbook states that: *"As a Queen or Member, you are eligible to play with as many "open" Chapters as you wish"*.
- Suggestion that Name badges should have the emergency contact information written on the back – the point was brought up that often at events if they aren't wearing a nametag then we may not have any idea of who that person is if there is an accident, and we may not have their emergency contact information on hand – having that on the back of the nametag makes it quickly accessible.
- Suggestion for a nominated "Email Female" - While we know not all Hatters use computers (or other forms of online communication), it would make communication easier if each chapter had someone who is able to receive emails and check the facebook group for any information and updates, as that is a fast and efficient way to give information to all chapters at once.
- There was a discussion on the low attendance of Chapters (21 out of the 75 known Victorian & border chapters). This could be due to a number of reasons, including: timing, the event being newly-rebooted, lack of planning for what carpooling non-queens would do during the event, non-registered Queens feeling they could face hostility, issues arising from previously unsuccessful events. Suggested survey of Queens to ask why they would or would not participate in a Queen's Council event.