

THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL

SECTION SIX

THE AREA DELEGATE



The Duties & Role of the Area Delegate
Primary Duties
Servants, not Senators
Term, Origin, Expenses
The Alternate Delegate
What makes a good Area Delegate?
The Area Delegate Goes to Conference
Preparing for Conference (Suggestions)
Delegate as Communicator
Reporting Back Home on Conference
Personal Views on General Service
What Makes an AA 'Leader'?

THE DUTIES & ROLE OF THE AREA DELEGATE

Because the Area Delegate goes on trips, gets to see National Office and helps make Australia-wide decisions, this has become the golden assignment. Whether this is true or not does not really matter. The picture attracts some very capable AAs and exacts a great deal of work from them.

PRIMARY DUTIES OF THE AREA DELEGATE

The Area Delegate's Job Is a Demanding One

Insofar as the Conference is concerned, the Area Delegate has these primary duties:

1. To attend the Conference meeting in November prepared, in order that he or s/he can vote intelligently. Every Area Delegate, immediately upon election is put on the National Office mailing list to receive all Conference materials, requiring several hours of study. The Delegate attends the Conference meeting bringing to it the problems of the Area that are relevant to AA as a whole. All questions need to be considered and voted upon, not as a representative of a particular Area, however, but as a member of the Conference whose duty it is to act in the best interests of AA as a whole.
2. Following the Conference meeting, an Area Delegate's effectiveness depends on an ability to transmit the world picture to the Area Committee and then inspire them to pass on this information and their own enthusiasm to GSRs, to Groups and to Central Service Offices. If the Area's territory is too broad, the Delegate will be unable to do the job alone. It is possible, however, to give Area Committee members and GSRs the big picture of AA General Services and ask them to share the load.
3. During the Conference trip, chances are the Area Delegate will have gained a better grasp of our Australian National Office services and will now be able to explain the importance of National Office to the continued good health of the movement. Returning home with facts and figures is important, of course, but more so will be the good understanding of a great Fellowship in action.
4. So much for going to - and reporting on - the Conference meeting. While that work is vital, it is not an Area Delegate's entire job.
5. The Delegate must also be prepared to attend all Area and Regional Forums and Assemblies. From these meetings, comes an understanding of the problems in the Area and a greater ability to make suggestions for the Conference agenda.
6. Conventions and other get-togethers held in the Area or Region are also important events for the Area Delegate to attend. These represent additional opportunities to talk to AAs about General Services - those AAs who might never be reached otherwise.
7. Helping the Area Committee obtain the financial support needed by their Area and National Office is part of the Delegate's work.
8. The Delegate takes pains to remind GSRs to tell Groups and individuals about "AA Around Australia" and Conference-Approved books, pamphlets and videos. Unfortunately, many Groups are still not in the habit of providing approved AA literature at meetings, nor offering the pamphlets free or at cost. See M-11: "AA Literature".
9. As the Area's communication link, the Delegate co-operates with National Office on information studies. Area Delegates have done a great job over the years in relaying National Office's questions and problems to their Area Committee members and GSRs. Area Delegates co-operated wonderfully well in the re-editing of this Service Manual.

10. Reminding Area Committee members and GSRs that National Office is an information centre on AA matters is important. Many Groups are in frequent touch with National Office on matters which affect the Group, but there are others who do not yet know what services are available.
11. The Area Delegate provides AA leadership in solving local problems involving AA Traditions (particularly when there is no local Central Office to take the responsibility).
12. Visits to Groups and District meetings in the Area whenever possible will enable the Area Delegate to be continually sensitive to Area needs and reactions. After DCMs and GSRs have reported on Conference actions, the Area Delegate should learn from these DCMs how the Groups have reacted. This reporting is a two-way street, with information moving in both directions.
13. If the Area Committee Chairperson is unable to serve, the Area Delegate assumes this added responsibility. A smoothly running Area Committee is essential to the work of an Area Delegate. If, for any reason, the Area Committee is not functioning as it should, the Area Delegate may take it as his or her responsibility to remedy the situation.
14. As a member of the Area Committee, the Delegate works closely with the other Committee officers, sharing experience throughout the year.
15. The Area Delegate needs to keep the Alternate Delegate fully informed, and to use his or her help wherever possible, so the Alternate can replace the Delegate in an emergency.
16. Late in the third year of the term, the Delegate needs to work with the newly elected Area Delegate - to provide a basic knowledge of Conference procedures and problems.
17. Maintaining communication during the year with National Office is a vital part of the job.

AREA DELEGATES ARE SERVANTS, NOT SENATORS

Assemblies and Delegates alike should remember that Area Delegates are not representative of Areas in the usual political sense. Conference is the collective Conscience of AA Australia as a whole. Area Delegates do not go to the Australian General Service Conference to push for special benefits for their respective Areas. They go primarily to render a service to Australian and to world AA, to ensure that AA continues to function - as a whole.

Certainly, they should bring with them the viewpoints of their own Areas on Australian issues or such local problems as may affect AA as a whole. But Area Delegates are always servants, never senators. Based on a bigger picture gained from sharing with others at Conference, a Delegate may well gain a different understanding of an issue, and should be free to follow his or her conscience in voting. See Concept III on "*Right of Decision*" for a full explanation.

AREA DELEGATE TERM

An Area Delegate serves one term of three years. The Conference is firm in its attitude toward Area Delegate rotation. However, the question has arisen: Can an Area Delegate be re-elected at some future date? The Conference has affirmed the limit of the term of Area Delegate as one three-year period - with the exception of an Alternate Area Delegate who, after filling one year of the Area Delegate's term, may be elected to serve a term of his or her own. The overall limit of attendance at Conference as an Area Delegate is therefore four Conferences.

WHERE SHOULD AN AREA DELEGATE COME FROM ?

Many Areas have adopted their own policy of “rotation” to fend off domination of an Area by one or more heavily populated sections. While no Area Delegate represents a city or Area in the usual political sense, AA often thinks it fairer to move the responsibility around from rural section to city, or from one part of an Area to another. However, no especially eligible AA should be passed over in the interests of geographical rotation.

DELEGATE EXPENSES

Few things cause more controversy in AA than money. An Area Delegate’s expenses are no exception. The Delegate’s expenses to the Conference are covered under the *Cost Equalisation Scheme*. The Delegate’s Area contributes financially toward the Conference expenses through this scheme. The General Service Board pays the balance, but this does not take care of the many incidental expenses encountered by the Area Delegate.

An Area Committee treasury should provide enough funds to meet an Area Delegate’s complete travel expenses. The *Cost Equalisation Scheme* meets the Delegate’s expenses for the Conference in Sydney in November. Certainly, equally important to the effectiveness of an Area Delegate, is that the Area cover whatever costs the Delegate would need to report back to the Area – whether it be one report to an Area Assembly, or, in addition, several reports to the Districts in the Area.

In many cases, the Area recognises the Area Delegate’s importance in this two-way communication between the Group, the Conference and the Trustees - and does put up the money needed. Invariably, this pays off in increased activity, interest and Group support.

ABOUT THE ALTERNATE

The Conference recommends that all Areas have Alternate Area Delegates. The Alternate serves as a valuable assistant to the Area Delegate, often travelling with, or giving reports for the Delegate. Also, in some Areas, the Alternate serves on Public Information, on Treatment & Correctional Facilities sub-committees or in some other special function of the Area Committee.

If it becomes necessary to replace the Area Delegate at the annual meeting of the Australian General Service Conference, this Alternate remains on the National Office mailing list as the Area Delegate until National Office is informed otherwise by the Area Committee.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD AREA DELEGATE?

If you are available - or considering your availability - as a candidate for Area Delegate, ask yourself these questions:

How well did you do as a GSR? As a DCM or Area Committee member? Did you enjoy the responsibilities? Were you active?

Have you discussed the possibility with your family? Will the time be available for the amount of work required?

Are you familiar with this *Service Manual*? With "AA Comes of Age"? And, of course, with the *Twelve Steps*, *Twelve Traditions* and *Twelve Concepts*?

Have you talked with past Area Delegates to get an idea of the time and effort required and the sort of work you will be called on to do?

There is no standard type of Area Delegate. Like all AA members, they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. But there are some characteristics that seem to make for better qualified Area Delegates, as they themselves agree - often several years after their terms when they can more accurately measure the quality of the job they turned in.

It is generally felt that the Area Delegate should have been active in local and Area affairs as a GSR and Area Committee Member. Time should be available - not only for attending the November meeting of Conference, but for all the efforts needed before and after the Conference. A quick glance at the review of duties earlier in this chapter tells all as far as time is concerned.

Some feel that at least six years of continuous sobriety is essential, some say five. In any event, the candidate should have been sober long enough to be considered responsible.

A Delegate should be able to make suggestions and criticisms, too. Experience in chairing a meeting is also valuable. While it is not necessary to be a final authority on all AA matters, it is important to know where to get information. The Delegate should know the Traditions and how they apply to local problems.

Leadership qualities are important, too. Then the Delegate can stimulate action in the Area, and team well with the Area Committee Chairperson in helping the Area to become more service-minded. Open-minded, able to sit down with other Area Delegates to discuss and act on matters affecting AA as a whole - these qualities are essential.

THE AREA DELEGATE GOES TO CONFERENCE

PREPARING FOR THE CONFERENCE

An Area Delegate Offers Practical Suggestions

“Although you may have been involved in AA service for some time, don’t take your knowledge for granted. Do some reviewing as quickly as possible. Read and re-read this Manual, “AA Comes of Age” and “Twelve Concepts for World Service”. Get copies of the full Conference Reports for the past two or three years for further study. Seek out some past Area Delegates to share their experience.

“Start a **Conference file**, because you’ll get lots of letters from the Conference secretary at the National Office, containing background information and requests. Read them thoroughly; make notes on what you’re asked to do; do it. You’ll receive questionnaires: expedite replies. National Office may request material from you: expedite this, too. Promptness is necessary so that, by the time the Conference opens, your material will have been compiled for use in a report, a panel discussion, a workshop, a floor discussion, or a committee action.

“Early on, you’ll receive an important communication. It will ask your Area treasurer to send in a cheque for your Area’s share of the Cost Equalisation Scheme. Be sure this deadline is met. Your transportation and accommodation will be arranged by National Office and paid for out of this Cost Equalisation Scheme. Generally, Areas supply extra allowances also.

“Before you leave for Sydney, make sure your District Committee Members are arranging the times and places of the Conference reports you’ll give on your return.

“Prior to arrival at the Conference, you’ll receive a complete bound ‘Folder’ with prepared reports, rosters, background information, committee assignments, staff reports and other necessary information.

“Aside from what happens on the floor of the Conference, in your committee meetings and workshops, you’ll be enriched by informal conversations with your colleagues and with Trustees and National Office staffers. Many of your Area’s problems and questions can be discussed in this free interchange. At National Office, you may also look through your Area’s correspondence files and address lists, make corrections, take notes and learn. Throughout the Conference, take notes for your later reports to your Area.

“Finally, don’t plan any big social events in Sydney or figure you’ll make a few business calls there. The Conference schedule runs each day from 8:30 am until about 10:30 pm - often later.

“And remember, your views are just as important to the Conference proceedings as anyone else’s. Your voice expresses your informed Area Conscience. Your thoughts and your questions must be shared - loudly and clearly for the benefit of all.”

THE AREA DELEGATE AS COMMUNICATOR

(THE DELEGATE, THE CONFERENCE AND AA AS A WHOLE)

Excerpts From a Conference Talk By a Past Area Delegate and Past Regional Trustee

“You as members of this Conference, must provide two-way communication between National Office and AA everywhere. Conference meetings have been called the ‘vocal representation’ of the Fellowship. Is that what we really mean?”

“Isn’t the practical purpose of this Conference not to represent any particular Area, but rather to act as the influential voice of AA in relation to the Board of Trustees and National Office? To fail in this role of ‘influence’ is to deprive the Fellowship of a true voice in the fulfilment of its Third Legacy obligation”.

“To deprive the Board and staff of your honest opinions, ideas and experiences is to fail in this opportunity to use your contribution when it becomes their (ie the Board’s, etc) final responsibility to make Australian service decisions.”

REPORTING BACK HOME ON THE CONFERENCE

“An Area Delegate’s Job Is Not All Peaches and Cream”

Not by a long shot, say most Area Delegates. There is much work to be done, and there can be many frustrations. Here four AAs tell how they went about improving communications between Groups and Area Committees and National Office while they were Area Delegates. Each gives the highlights of his or her work in making an interesting and challenging report of the Conference to the Groups back home.

“My report to Groups, Districts and Area Assembly consisted of a description of what I saw and heard and felt at the Conference meeting in Sydney. (I also produced copies of my report and made them available).

“In addition, I frequently reported to members, GSRs and Groups by mail. I try to do a bulletin a month, each on one or more subjects. My Conference report gives me all the material I need. No, an Area Delegate’s job is not all peaches and cream and big cigars – it’s also a God-given privilege.”

“If You Attract - You Can’t Miss”

“Make an announcement a month before you give your report; set up dates with District Committee Members. Where Districts are small, have two or three combined. (Refreshments help). Ask to be invited - or invite yourself. Get in somehow! It costs Groups and National Office money to bring in Area Delegates; Groups should see and hear the reports on the Conference.”

“Give as much of your time to the small Group as to the large one. Don’t pass up the opportunity to share with them all. Let them know about the staff at National Office and the service work that they encourage all over the world.”

“Invite Groups to attend special Area meetings with programs of questions and answers about World Services and National Office. Include two or more past Delegates. Hold meetings often - and in different Districts. Remember our key word: attraction. If you attract, you can’t miss.”

“How Not to Win a Popularity Contest”

“As the goodbyes were being said, I already knew what my path should be: not to return home to try to win a popularity contest, but rather to paint the picture the way it was.

“On my return, I travelled some 4,000 km in the first six weeks visiting Groups. I chose my words carefully, never telling anyone that we must do this or that, merely pointing out what other Areas were doing.

“We needed a foundation, I pointed out, from which to pursue a healthy growth. Lack of unity might be diverting us from our primary purpose. Personalities might be replacing Group Conscience.

“Perhaps we were not doing a good job of carrying the message, either. Our Area ranked high in number of alcoholics, yet in AA population we were one of the slowest growing. When people in our own Area reached out for help, the hand of AA was not always there.

“If I was not asked to speak at Group meetings, I asked them to let me speak. I made a point of never talking too long, but I gave literally hundreds of these talks. I talked of service and unity and National Office and Area Assembly until it all overflowed our Area borders.

“What were the results? More new Groups than in any year in our history. The Assembly set up regular monthly dinner meetings, attended by a majority of Groups. The Assembly used “The Australian AA Service Manual” to build a foundation for the Area. A *Treatment & Correctional Facilities Committee*, a *Public Information Committee*, and a *Convention Committee* were formed. The Assembly now supplies free Conference-approved literature to institutions. We put out a monthly bulletin that helps to cut through the barrier of Group isolation. We hold monthly sharing sessions and workshops that help us all. We held our first Area Convention.

“We have grown - and if I were asked to pick out the one part of our activities that contributed most, it would be improved communications.”

“Taped Talk - Effective – Inexpensive”

“In addition to detailed reporting of the material and spirit of the Conference session at our local Convention, copies of my notes were made available to the Area Committee members upon their requests. Fortunately, we were able to make arrangements for my talk to be taped and made available throughout our Area - an inexpensive and effective way of carrying the Conference message in some detail.”

PERSONAL VIEWS ON GENERAL SERVICE THREE PAST AREA DELEGATES REPORT

“How I Became Interested in General Service”

“Often I think back to a very dark day in an alcoholic ward, where, in utter despair and desperation, I asked God to remove only the uncontrollable part of my urge to drink, and to leave the legwork to me. I thought of this as wanting to do my part. Later, after my prayers had been answered, I remembered my commitment to do my part - but I was never quite sure what I had meant. Still later, the Third Legacy of Service opened a new door for me and solved the problem of how I could fulfil the most important contract I'll ever make.”

“My AA experience taught me in varying degrees the meaning of tolerance, patience, love of my fellowman, humility. I began to comprehend that we have a Fellowship. My conception of a Fellowship is a group or society of human beings concerned with each other. To me, this is AA. From then on, it was easy to become interested in General Services.”

“Early in my AA life, I asked myself how I could express my gratitude. The answer was simple: by dedicating my life to AA and its people. I found out that the more I knew about AA the more effectively I could carry the message. The more I know about AA - from the bottom up and the top down, across its scope world-wide - the more I love it. And the more I love it, the better equipped I am to carry the message. I feel that my term as Area Delegate did more to prepare me for the part I have played in AA than any other activity.”

THE MAKING OF AN AREA DELEGATE

Excerpts from an Area Delegate’s Talk on “The World Family of AA”

... During my first eight years in AA, I came to believe (subconsciously, perhaps) that the quality and quantity of AA were being determined by my own particular Group. I believe I considered it a shield that might protect me from any harm that might come to me from outside, and I still had this attitude when I was chosen as my Group’s GSR.

... After finding out who our Area Delegate was, and filing my name with him, I settled back into the comfort, safety and security of my own Group, only to be aroused some weeks later by a call to meet with four other GSRs to elect a DCM. When this meeting elected me, I was dumbfounded and scared. I felt I was being forced into a situation that threatened my comfort and complacency - even my security. But instinctively I began to realise that outside my Group there was a much larger family, of which my Group was a part. I started to read all General Service literature available, particularly “The Australian AA Service Manual”.

... I began to receive phone calls about Group problems. I found myself actually being asked for my opinion. More and more, I recognised the need for practising the *Eleventh Step*.

... One day I presented myself, with sixteen other DCMs to a general Area Assembly. When I was finally selected as the next Area Delegate, never in my life had I been so aware of my inadequacy, my unpreparedness for such responsibility.

... Through prayer, study and great help from the outgoing Area Delegate, I got ready for the November Conference meeting. Months later, in Sydney, after the opening dinner, I received a telegram from my Group, a message of confidence in me and assurance that they were with me in spirit. I knew then that the link between my Group, the Assembly, the Area Delegates, and the whole Fellowship would never be broken.

... It is vitally important for me to remember every moment that the door of AA must always be open to all who have not yet arrived. AA’s world-wide services (of which Area Delegates and District Committee Members and GSRs are vital parts) are the instruments that will keep that door open.

WHAT MAKES AN AA “LEADER”?

From Bill W’s Article in The April 1959 Grapevine

“Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: “Our leaders do not drive by mandate; they lead by example.” In effect, we are saying to them, “Act for us, but don’t boss us.”

“A leader in AA service is therefore a man (or woman) who can personally put principles, plans and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order taker and exercises no judgement of his own - well, he really isn’t a leader at all.”

“Good leadership originates plans, policies and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its services. But in new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.”

“Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has, or can, obtain sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided, of course, that such actions be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.”

“Another qualification for leadership is “give and take”, the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us “all-or-nothing” drunks. Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterised by a series of improving compromises. - We cannot, however, compromise always. Now and then, it is truly necessary to stick flat-footed to one’s conviction about an issue until it is settled. These are situations for keen timing and careful discrimination as to which course to take.”

“Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship.”

See also Concept XII: “Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need”

Figure 4 What makes an AA Leader ~ Bill W