

**THE AUSTRALIAN AA  
SERVICE MANUAL**

**SECTION ELEVEN**

**AA LITERATURE**



**Categories of AA Literature**

**How Literature is Produced**

**AA's 'Intellectual Property'**

**Copyright on AA Literature**

**Acknowledging Copyright**

**Licence to Print**

**International Obligations**

**Registered Trademarks**

**AA Pamphlet Development Flow Chart**

# LITERATURE – AA’S VALUABLE TOOL

AA literature is possibly the most important and valuable tool in all our AA activities, for it contains all the experience and wisdom of those who have gone before us.

Not only does it provide guidelines, good directions and ideas but it ensures our Unity world-wide. As long as we base our AA life and services on the same literature we will remain as one with each other.

## CATEGORIES OF AA LITERATURE

There are **three** categories of AA literature:

1. Conference-approved Literature
2. *AA Grapevine* literature and similar individual sharing - produced by an AA entity and supervised by Group Conscience
3. AA Service Items.

### CATEGORY 1: CONFERENCE - APPROVED LITERATURE

This is that literature which contains our message as it is understood by the Fellowship as a whole - the Message of the *Three Legacies* of *Recovery*, *Unity* and *Service*. It is written for the sole purpose of preserving and carrying our message to the Alcoholic that still suffers or enabling it to be carried.

This Category 1 literature is the one instrument by which we can be sure to remain one Fellowship, with the one Message, throughout the world and into the future, regardless of language and cultural differences. It is that reference point that any alcoholic, wherever he or she may be in the world, can return to and be sure that what is written is the spiritual message of AA, and it can be trusted in every word to be a true guide. The *Seal of Conference Approval* is the Guarantee of that truth and trustworthiness.

### CATEGORY 2: THE *GRAPEVINE* ETC

This category covers any individual sharing of experience, strength and hope that is produced by an AA entity - *under the supervision of the Group Conscience*.

Examples of these are

- “*The Grapevine*” magazine, our international AA magazine and all the material of *The AA Grapevine Inc.*
- Magazines such as *Your Pathfinder*, *The News* and *Reviver*.
- One-off anthologies of best articles from these ‘meetings in print’, eg “*Language of the Heart*”, “*The Home Group*”, “*AA Today*”, “*The Best of Bill*”, “*This is Alcoholics Anonymous Australia*” etc.

These items are given a different form of approval, *not of the text itself*, but for the production and distribution only. The seal of 'Conference-Approval' is not given in these cases since they are individual opinion and not necessarily the opinion of AA as a whole.

One book only has ever moved from this category to category 1 – "As Bill Sees It" -but only after the text, word by word, was thoroughly checked widely by the Fellowship with those parts not universally accepted being eliminated.

"*Language of the Heart*" has not been through this process and is therefore still in the category of being individual experience and opinion, even though it's by our beloved Bill.

## CATEGORY 3: AA SERVICE ITEMS

Included in this category are such things as "AA Guidelines", brochures about National Office, pamphlets explaining local Intergroup/CSO affairs, Meeting Directories, lists of Loners & deaf groups, Regional Forum reports, Literature catalogues and Order Forms, Information on AA produced for the media, periodical bulletins such as "*Box 459*", "*AA Around Australia*" and "*PI Around Australia*", District and Area newsletters, the "*PI Workbook*" and pamphlets such as "*Memo to a Group Treasurer*" and "*The AA Group Secretary*" etc.

These are usually items that are continually up-dated as information changes and experiences are increasingly shared in the Service arena. They are approved by the Board/Conference, where applicable, but only for production and distribution.

Although much care is taken over the wording of these items, the process of the Flow Chart is not employed as this kind of material is changeable, transient and 'up-date-able'.

## NON-AA LITERATURE.

Several books, which are published by outside organisations and therefore are not AA literature, are sometimes seen around AA meetings. Even though they may refer to AA and its program this does not mean they *are* AA literature.

Many members find them useful personally and gain special insights when reading them. However, it should be realised that they do not contain the AA message in its fullness because they are expressions of individual opinion that have had no AA scrutiny or approval.

Every AA member is at liberty to read any literature, of course. For an AA Group, however, to sell, endorse or promote literature from other outside enterprises is not in the best interests of either our *Fifth* or *Sixth Traditions*. Our primary purpose, as a Group, is to carry our Fellowship's message.

# HOW CONFERENCE-APPROVED LITERATURE IS PRODUCED

Because of the vital importance of this body of literature - AA's Treasure Trove - we need always be extremely careful only to deposit within it that which has proven itself to be widely needed and its text and presentation has been thoroughly agreed to by the Fellowship as a whole.

Our revised *Service Manual* describes the procedure which we follow to ensure that

1. a widespread need has first been demonstrated and
2. a wide consultation on, and refinement of, the text, word-by-word, is carried out.

The AA Conference has established a *Flow Chart* (see illustration at the end of this section) which guides us through the necessary steps to ensure that the proposed piece of new literature will contain the true AA Message.

The length of time required by this procedure, possibly two to five years, is a safeguard against carelessness, and only that literature which has passed through this process is eligible for the *Conference Seal of Approval*.

In the case of a pamphlet being produced that could be of value to other countries a recommendation from the World Service Meeting was made that WSM Delegates around the world be included in the consultation and opinion-sharing process. However, literature being produced in Australia is generally relevant only to our own needs, eg the *Australian AA Service Manual*.

The personal stories in the 'Big Book', although written by individuals, are also subjected to this thorough scrutiny and will not be included in the Book unless they have passed through the process of the Conference's Flow Chart.

We can always tell whether an item is "Conference-approved Literature" (CAL) or not by checking on the back cover or inside the front pages. CA literature from our main publisher, *AA World Services*, carries the statement "*This is AA General Service Conference Approved literature*".

CA literature produced by Australia carries this statement as well as the Australian Conference Seal. This is the Circle and Triangle with the letters *AA* inside the triangle and the words *Alcoholics Anonymous Australia* around the inside of the circle. **This seal is used *only* by the Conference - for literature, and not for any other purpose.**



# AA'S 'INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY'

## COPYRIGHT ON AA LITERATURE

In 1938-39 when Bill W and the early Fellowship were producing the 'Big Book', "*Alcoholics Anonymous*", it was so that we could pass on the solution we had found for this dread disease of Alcoholism to sufferers far away in distant places and in distant future years.

Every effort was taken to ensure that the message was exactly as the Fellowship as a whole understood and experienced it. Arguments raged for months over words, phrases and implied meanings until every member was satisfied with the text and the Book was to go to print.

Then followed another quandary. Who was going to **own** the Book and its Message? For whoever **owned** it would **control** it. Everyone agreed with Bill that "... a Society like ours ought to control and publish its own literature." If a publishing company bought the manuscript and published it, that company would have total control over it.

The early members went to extraordinary lengths to raise enough money to publish the 'Big Book' themselves so that we would always have control over our own Message.

And so it is still today that every piece of literature written and produced by AA is also owned and controlled by our Fellowship through its overall Group Conscience, the Conference. Only in this way can we preserve the integrity of our Message and ensure that it is passed on ungarbled to the future generations of suffering alcoholics.

When a piece of written material is created it *automatically* carries a copyright, owned by the creator. This protection is free and automatic from the time the work is first written down.

From the beginning, however, it was realised that this could create problems for our spiritual Fellowship. It could at times embroil us in litigation and court battles to defend our copyright from attacks and to maintain control of our literature - a terrible diversion from our true purpose.

The solution was found in the Trustees of *The Alcoholic Foundation*, the forerunner of the General Service Board. Bill W. and the early members assigned all the rights to the 'Big Book' to these Trustees to hold in trust for our Fellowship. They were also given the responsibility to protect and defend these rights on our behalf while the AA Fellowship itself focused on its primary spiritual purpose.

Today the same arrangement continues. When it is said that AA should not hold copyrights and cannot punish anyone who infringes them, this is quite correct. But it can also be very misleading. The Fellowship as such does not keep its copyrights and therefore would not have to go into court.

Whenever AA in Australia writes a new pamphlet the automatic copyright comes into being and is assigned (ie given) immediately to our General Service Board which is a legal body incorporated under the Company's Act. In this way AA itself does not own the rights but does still maintain control of its literature.

The General Service Board, being the principal administrators of our affairs and separate from the spiritual Fellowship, can and does take legal action in the Courts on our behalf whenever necessary.

The copyrights on all our other items of literature which are for use only in Australia are maintained here by our Board of Trustees. If, however, an item of literature is written and copyrighted here which is seen to be of universal value to AA, the General Service Board in Australia will assign, or give, our own copyrights to AAWS to hold together with the others.

An example of this kind of action is the pamphlet, "*A Newcomer Asks*", which was first written and approved by the AA Conference of the UK. It was a pamphlet of such usefulness to the Fellowship worldwide that the UK Board passed it on to AAWS so we could all use it.

# LICENCE TO PRINT

In order that the whole of AA can use the literature freely AAWS grants a licence to the General Service Office in each country to reprint our literature, but to no one else. Here in Australia our National Office has signed this licensing agreement for each AA title that we print or distribute, but no one else may reproduce any AA literature in any form without first obtaining written licence from the copyright holder.

## ACKNOWLEDGING COPYRIGHT

Many local publications quote from AA literature such as the 'Big Book', the 'Twelve and Twelve', "*The Australian AA Service Manual*", and Conference-Approved pamphlets. When this occurs, please include the proper credit line, in order to ensure that the copyrights of AA literature are protected.

The *AA Preamble* is copyrighted by the *AA Grapevine* (not by *AA World Services*). Beneath it, these words should appear:

***"Reprinted with permission of The AA Grapevine Inc."***

The Steps and Traditions should be followed by these words:

***"Reprinted with permission of AA World Services Inc."***

After a quotation from an AA book or pamphlet, please state:

***"Reprinted from* (name of book or pamphlet, page number) *with permission of AA World Services Inc."***

## INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

Often we hear people say, "Oh, that's only American copyright so we don't have to conform to it here." This is misinformed and quite incorrect.

These AAWS Inc copyrights are quite safe from attack here in Australia because Australia participates in international copyright treaties, eg the Berne Convention. This means that Australian Courts will uphold them too.

And so our literature is thoroughly protected in this country by our General Service Board which is able to take legal action on our behalf and on behalf of AAWS to stop infringements where AA itself cannot.

Our AA literature is possibly our most precious gift. It has come to us from the earliest members as their gift, their legacy to us, and it is our gift to pass on to those suffering alcoholics in generations to come. It is the sum total of our combined experience of suffering and our miraculous solution and we hold it in trust for the future AAs.

Indeed each one of us carries the responsibility to do all we can to protect its integrity.

# REGISTERED TRADEMARKS

Our name in words:

## “Alcoholics Anonymous”

is registered so that it is reserved solely for our Fellowship.

The basic symbol of the circle and triangle is, in fact, a universal symbol that has been used by many societies through the centuries. In this simplest form it does not belong to AA.

When, however, the words of our Three Legacies, Recovery, Unity and Service are included in the design and the letters AA, the symbol refers to our Fellowship.

The General Service Board of AA in Australia, in order to preserve this symbol for our use, has registered it as our legal trademark in the following form:



Any AA service entity is free to use this symbol but it is necessary to always include with it the small trademark registration symbol. This will safeguard our ownership of it.

A further symbol has been registered by the Board for its use in Australia. This also needs the trademark registration symbol ® beside it.



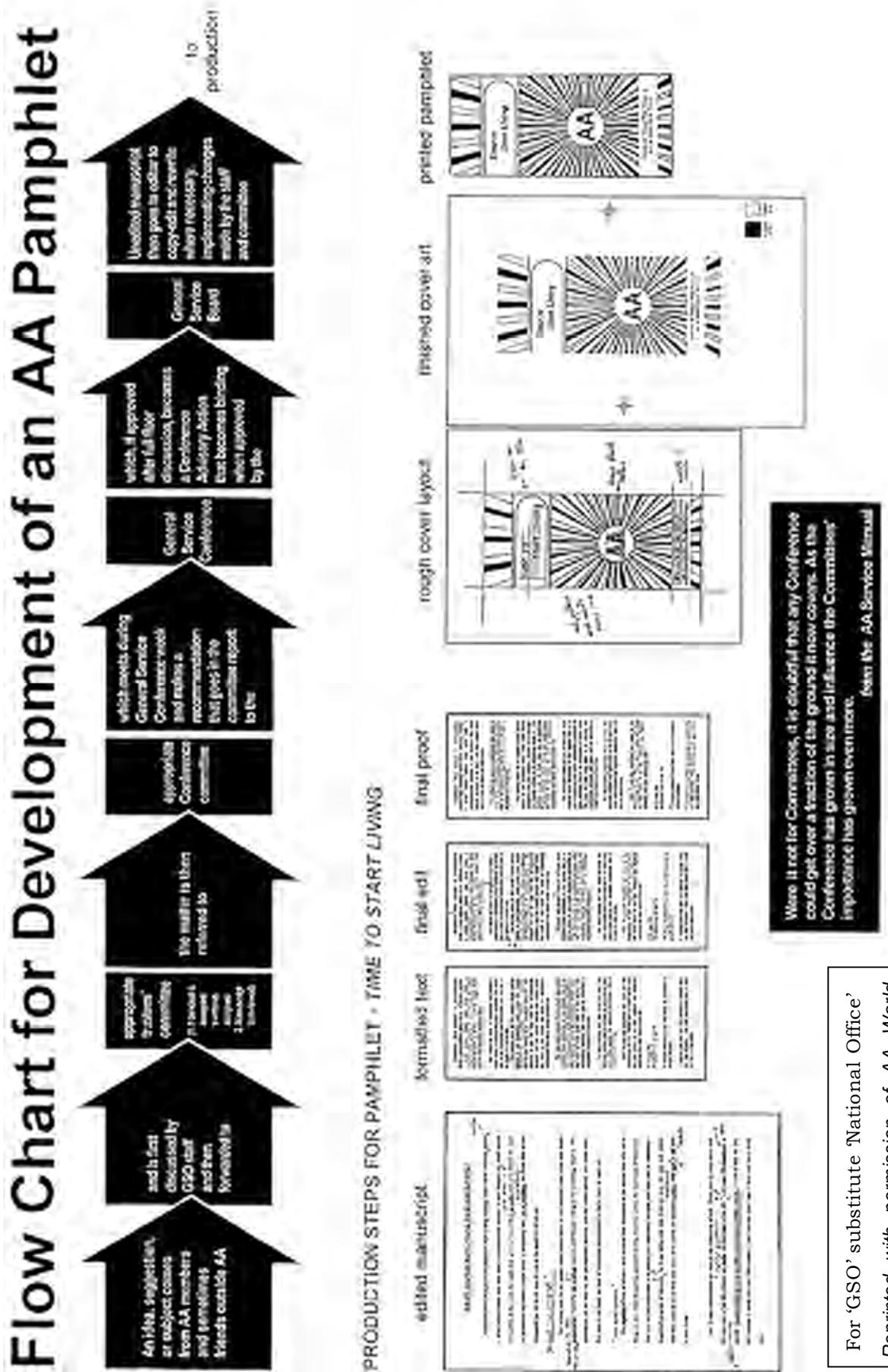
Further information on these symbols can be found in the “[AA Guidelines](#)”, GL-02: “AA Conference-Approved Literature” and GL-20: “Use of AA’s Trademarks and Logos”.

From the “[US/Canada Service Manual](#)” 2002-3: S70:

Use of these marks on goods and services that do not emanate from AA, and have not been approved by AA, both infringes upon and dilutes AA marks, in legal terms. The resulting harm is that the marks and AA itself, since AA is what the marks symbolise, will come to be associated with a variety of products and services that are not part of AA, and are not consistent with AA’s purpose. This will cause the marks to lose their meaning and significance as symbols of Alcoholics Anonymous.

***The General Service Board has asked that when AA logos are used by the Fellowship for its flyers, media releases and events notices, that people respect the symbols and if tempted to embellish or combine logos with other artwork, to question whether the overall effect tends to enhance or ‘deface’. This is especially so for large, formal and international AA events such as Conventions, and for PI meetings, where we would want to present a quality and more ‘AA purist’ standard.***

Figure 8 Flow Chart for Development of an AA Pamphlet



## USE OF NAMES OF COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS OR SERVICES IN AA LITERATURE

Our Sixth Tradition cautions us against endorsing or lending the AA name to other organisations. This has sometimes been taken to mean AA materials should never use commercial names in any of its materials.

However, there are many situations when the use of a commercial name helps us in communicating useful information to members. Examples are the name of a hotel where a convention is being held, and certain computer applications, and electronic communication services and formats.

It is recommended that when the names of commercial products or services are used in AA materials that the following guidelines be observed:

1. We should use commercial names only when it is clearly helping us in our primary purpose of carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic.
2. We should avoid using commercial names in a way that would make a reasonable person presume AA was endorsing a product or implying an affiliation.
3. If there is a clear possibility that the use of a commercial name would be construed as an endorsement or affiliation, the name should be asterisked and the following note should be attached:

*Mention of commercial names in AA materials is for information only and does not imply an endorsement of or recommendation of any product or an affiliation with any organisation.*