

GUIDELINE GL-27

PROCESS FOR CHANGING AA SERVICE DOCUMENTS

This Guideline explains and describes a process recommended for keeping the AA 'service documents' up to date and reliable as working documents. Decisions made by the General Service Conference quite often affect one or more of the AA service documents. These are sometimes referred to as 'constitutional documents' or 'core documents' or 'structural documents'. They are:

- the Memorandum & Articles of Association of the company Alcoholics Anonymous Australia (Limited)
- the Conference Charter
- the *Australian AA Service Manual*
- the Conference Administrative Procedures
- the Composition, Scope and Procedure documents for all the Board and Conference committees
- the "Australian General Service Guidelines".

These documents form a stable framework for operations within the AA Service Structure. In effect and together, they describe the guidelines AA runs by, both traditional and legal. For this reason it is imperative that they be clear and concise, and that they all support each other without contradictions, inaccuracies or confusing statements.

HISTORY

By 2000, there had in general been a lack of attention to the constitutional and structural implications of decisions made by Conference, and Conference decisions had not been taken through to their proper destinations in the service documents. The result was a confusing collection of documents in conflict, that created argument and uncertainty, and was impossible to use as a point of reference in disputes.

A *Constitutional Working Party* representing both Delegates and the Board, was set up by Conference 2002. The work identified areas of conflict, then confirmed the intent of Conference through a series of Advisory Actions, especially regarding the appointment processes for different types of Board members, and the required voting levels for different situations, and then integrated Conference's wishes into the service documents.

The overall intent was to bring all documents up to date, into clear alignment, to provide a process to keep them that way in future (see Section 9 of the "Australian AA Service Manual": "*Document Integration Group*", and to finalise the Australian AA Service Manual for a new edition.

SOURCES OF RECOMMENDED CHANGE

Most changes come through Topics submitted by the Fellowship, the General Service Board or Conference-initiated task forces or working parties. These proposals are submitted to the Conference Agenda Committee by a certain date each year, for which there is a standard form available from General Service Office.

Other potential sources emerge during Conference itself, as recommendations from Conference Committees, amendments and motions without notice or 'floor actions'.

At every level the question needs to be asked: "If this Topic goes through, what, if any, service documents will need to be changed?". To assist this process, the last item on the Agenda Committee's Agenda should ask this question of all Topics moving forward, and where indicated, a Service Document Impact statement should be attached. This should alert the Conference Session Chairperson that a 'special' Topic is going through, that will require a special vote and proper follow up integration.

VOTING PROCEDURES

Only 'registered Conference Members' may vote: Delegates who attend are 'registered'. In other words, you cannot vote if you don't turn up. Similarly, if you are absent from the room, the vote proceeds without you (provided there is a quorum).

Conference has two ways of voting: show of hands; or, ballot by tokens or paper.

For a vote to be valid, two conditions must be met:

		% of all registered Conference Members	If all 34 attend, this means
i)	at least two-thirds of all registered Conference members need to be present; and,	67	a quorum of 23
ii)	at least two-thirds of the quorum must vote either 'for' or 'against'.	44	no more than 7 can abstain

A simple majority of all the registered members of Conference is considered a suggestion to the Board; a two-thirds or more vote or a properly conducted Third Legacy election generally binds the Board.

All votes require a simple majority of all registered Conference Members except in the following circumstances where contentious or potentially divisive matters require more 'substantial unanimity' as sought in the Warranties:

TYPE OF MATTER	Substantial Unanimity (% of all registered Conference Members)
Changes to the <i>Conference Charter</i>	75
Changes to <i>The Australian AA Service Manual & Guidelines</i>	75
Changes to the <i>Conference Administrative Procedures</i>	75
Changes coming from Conference to the Board's <i>Memorandum & Articles of Association</i>	75
A reorganisation of the General Service Board or General Service Office staff	75
Conference challenges to changes made by the Board in its <i>Memorandum & Articles of Association</i>	67
Conference challenges to secondary changes to the <i>Service Manual</i> , even though directly arising from decisions of Conference	67
Conference challenges to changes in Conference Committee <i>Composition, Scope & Procedure</i> Documents	67
Overturning a decision of the Board (eg appointment of a Trustee)	67
To reject a single Regional Trustee candidate proposed jointly by Areas	67
If the outcome of a vote changes the status quo for important matters of policy or procedure, the Chair has the discretion to ask for two-thirds approval.	67

In serious circumstances, Conference may, at its discretion, vote in advance by a simple majority to increase the required level of vote. Conference could even ask for 100% unanimity on a matter.

Minority Voice

After a deciding vote, the Conference Chair asks if there is any 'Minority Voice'. This is an opportunity for **a Conference member who voted against the majority** to make **new** arguments to conference; they cannot repeat the material already put to Conference.

After hearing the Minority Voice, **any Conference member who voted with the majority** can either:

- move to re-vote on the original motion; or,
- prepare a new motion.

If no one who voted in the majority suggests either of these options, the original vote stands and discussion ends.

If one of the options is put forward, the Chair then asks Conference if the 'Sense of Conference' is that there needs to be a re-vote. If a majority do not request a re-vote, the original vote stands.

Floor Actions

Normally the only time Conference considers a Floor Action is when an emergency has arisen. Thus, Floor Actions are usually matters that are either too late to put on the Agenda or arise as a by-product of Committee deliberations.

Floor Actions are subject to the following procedures:

- 1) They are considered as the final item at Conference;
- 2) For each Floor Action, a 'Sense of the Conference' is taken whether to 'entertain the motion';
- 3) If a simple majority of Conference votes (by a show of hands) not to 'entertain the motion', the item is not heard. (If defeated, the matter can be brought back as a Topic the next year);
- 4) Conference takes a 'Sense of the Conference' as to whether the Floor Action is mentioned in the Conference Report.

SECONDARY AND 'INDIRECT' CHANGES

Secondary changes are changes arising as a direct result of decisions of Conference, without which the Conference Advisory Action could not be implemented. Indirect changes to the Service Manual will turn up as errors of fact, which still need to be identified, but which can be changed by General Service Office independently, do not attract a 'DIG response' (action by *Document Integration Group*: refer Section 9: "The General Service Board" in the "Australian AA Service Manual"), and need to be included in future revisions of the Manual.

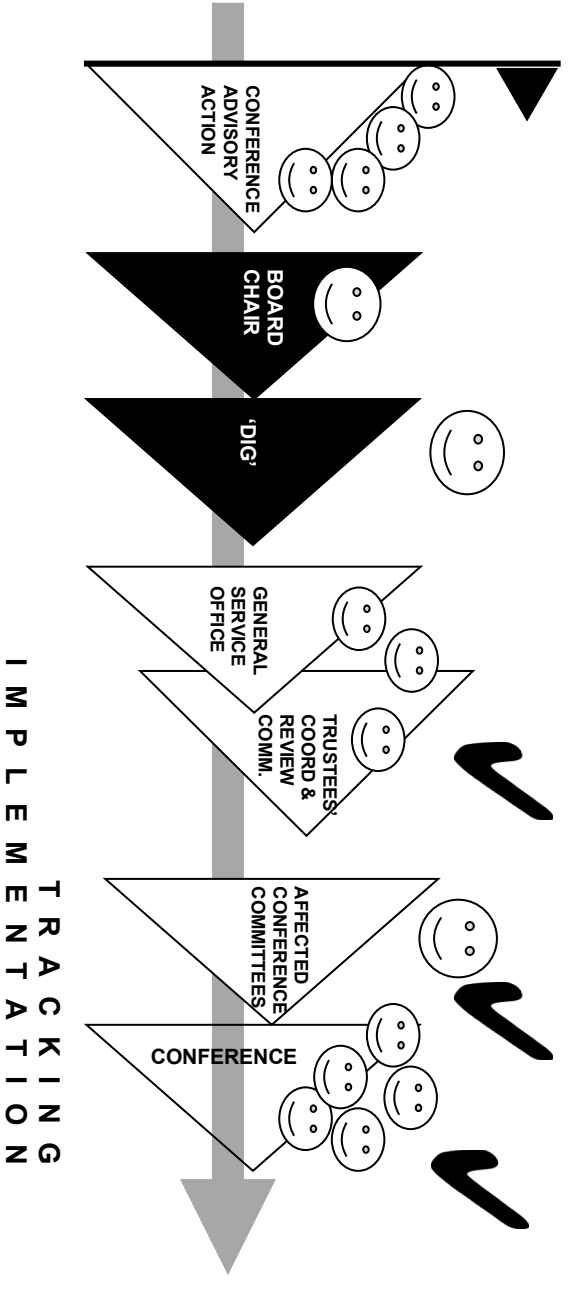
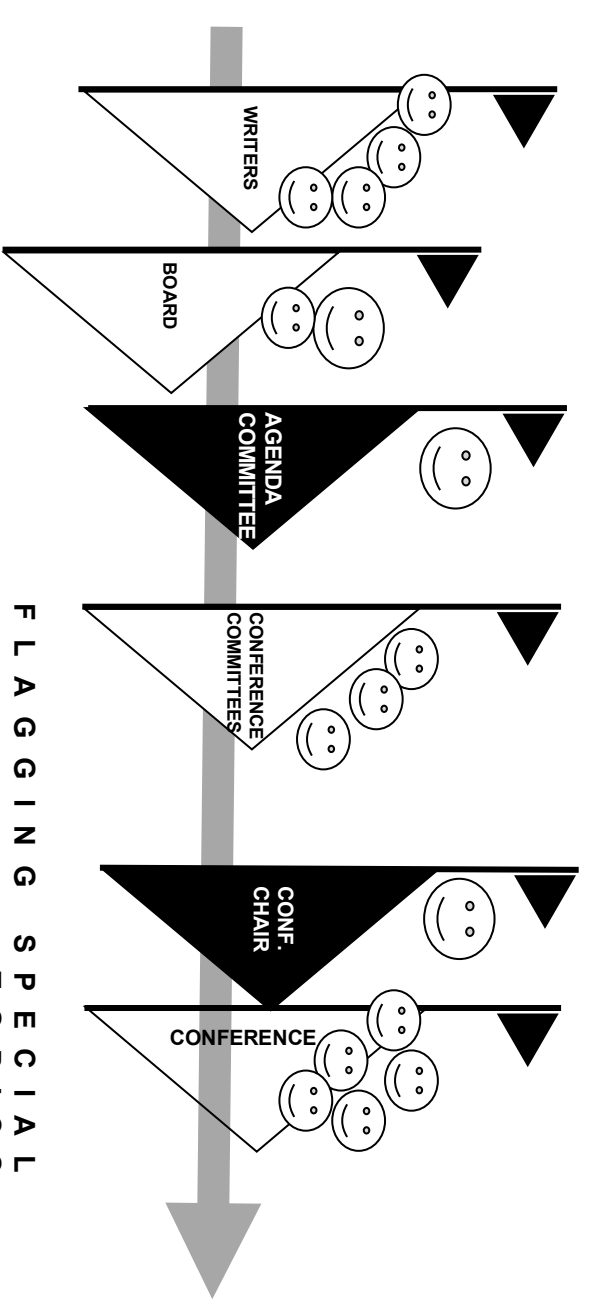
Secondary changes require a 2/3 disapproval of all Conference members.

'Disapproval' means 2/3 vote of all of Conference against a motion, where Conference votes to ratify decisions or appointments made by another body of AA in the area of its responsibility.

Applying the correct voting procedures is finally the responsibility of the Conference session Chairperson.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGES TO SERVICE DOCUMENTS?

The Constitutional Working Party (2002-2004) recommended that the Service Manual be revised every 5 years. In the interim, the version on the web site should be kept current on an annual basis. This would be the natural result of the work of the DIG (Document Integration Group). Every 5 years then, the Report, Charter & Service Manual Committee would review accumulated changes and decide whether a new edition were necessary. In the meantime, the Report Charter & Service Manual Committee would review a Report from DIG or the Board Chair as part of their normal Agenda at Conference.



DOCUMENT INTEGRATION PROCESS

ADVISORY ACTION: Conference

SEARCH: Board Chair

CONFERENCE REPORT: confirms that changes are needed to service documents

RESPONSIBLE: Board Chair +/- DIG:

ANALYSE: Impact Analysis: identifies primary and secondary changes needed to service documents

PLAN: Process identification for each document impacted

DO: Assign tasks

FEEDBACK: from all affected

RENEW: collate final drafts

REVIEW: Board, General Service Office (GSO) Trustees' Coordination & Review Committee

INSERT: NOAA, where necessary

REPORT: to relevant Conference Committees of next Conference

DISAPPROVAL: All Conference 2/3 disapproval (if any) process for secondary changes.