

# THE GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

## THE GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE - THE GSR

When you're a GSR you represent your Group at District and Area levels; thus, you are linking your home Group with AA as a whole. In the first instance, the job provides the means of exchanging information between individual Groups and the General Service Office, but responsibility goes much further than that. You transmit ideas and opinions as well as facts; through you, the group conscience of your Group becomes a part of the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship, as expressed in the Australian General Service Conference (GSC). And like everything else in AA, it works through a series of simple steps:

## GENERAL SERVICES

1. At District meetings you join with GSRs from other Groups. Perhaps you've already worked with a CSO where Groups band together to help alcoholics in your locality; well, your General Service District is the second link in an entirely different chain, which extends much further. Your District is one of several in a General Service Area. With your fellow GSRs you elect a District Committee Member, and the DCMs make up the Area Committee. Now do you just sit back and let your DCM take it from there? No! GSRs stay very much in action in each of the Areas in Australia.
2. You attend Area Assemblies as and when required. At the Election Assembly, along with the other GSRs and the DCMs from the Area, you elect committee office bearers and, every third year, your Area's Conference Delegate.
3. As the GSR is the link between Group and District, and the DCM is the link between District and Area, so the Delegate is the link between Area and Conference. Just as you rely on your Group for help in your personal recovery, so the Groups rely on the General Service Conference (GSC) to maintain the unity and strength of our Fellowship, our obligation to all the alcoholics of today and tomorrow. It's up to you to maintain two-way communication between your Group and the Conference via your DCM and your Delegate. That way you can ensure that your Group's feelings become a part of the consensus of opinion at the GSC each November. In return, you can enable your Group to benefit from that sharing of experience when your Delegate reports back after Conference is over.

## GROUP SERVICE

1. As GSR, you are the Group contact in the original sense too. Upon election, your name and address are sent (by you or your Group) to the Secretary of your Area Committee and to General Service Office (be sure to include the name of the GSR you are replacing, so the records won't become confused.) You will be listed as contact person for your Group at Area Committee and at General Service Office.

2. In return, General Service Office sends you the quarterly bulletin “*AA Around Australia*”. This bulletin contains news from all over this country, together with items of interest from overseas, and lists any new pieces of literature available. You then share this information with your Group.
3. Because you've made a special point of studying the information listed herein, you can help when your Group faces a problem involving one of the Traditions. You don't have to know all the answers - no one member possibly could - but you learn where to look for good suggestions drawn from the broad AA experience.
4. Thinking of Tradition Seven particularly, you work with the Group treasurer to remind your Group of its part in keeping all of AA self-supporting. You explain the Group Donation Plan concept (formerly known as the ‘60-30-10 Plan’ – see the free service pamphlet “Group Donation Plans” available from General Service Office or your CSO) for financial support of your CSO, General Service Office, Area Committee, and the Birthday and Action Clubs for individual contributions.
5. Since you're in touch with AA throughout your Area, you can bring your Group news of upcoming Area events. As GSR, you share with your fellow members the joy of widening AA horizons.

## INFORMATION YOU'LL NEED

1. **On the General Service structure:** the “Australian AA Service Manual”, “*Twelve Concepts for World Service*” and the video “*Circles of Love and Service*”.
2. **On the Traditions:** “*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*”, “*AA Comes of Age*”, “*The AA Tradition - How It Developed*” and “*The Twelve Traditions Illustrated*”.
3. **On Group affairs:** “The AA Group Handbook”, the pamphlet “*Group Donation Plans*” and the “AA Guidelines”.

## WHEN YOUR GROUP ELECTS A GSR

As GSRs are the very foundation of our General Service structure, the GSR is probably the most important job in AA. Through your GSR, your Group's voice is heard at District meetings, at Area Assemblies and eventually at the Australian General Service Conference. Through your GSR, your Group is strengthened by sharing the experience of other Groups, just as your own sobriety is strengthened by sharing the experience of other AA members.

## WHEN AND HOW

1. The term of a GSR is two years. This coincides with the terms of the Area's other trusted servants, the DCMs and the Delegate. So a Group usually elects its GSR before the Assembly at which the Area Committee is elected. January is a good month, if it can be arranged, since that gives the new GSR time to study the responsibilities of the job before taking office on 1st March.

2. An informed Group enjoys a special election meeting, at which a member with a solid background in service work explains the function of the GSR and a video from General Service Office may be shown.
3. Procedures for electing a GSR are the same as for any other Group servant, having regard to *Three Legacies* or other normal Group procedure.
4. Prompt notification about your choice of GSR is essential. If your Area Committee and GSO do not have your new GSR's name and address, communication breaks down.
5. At the same election meeting it is important to elect an Alternate GSR, perhaps the runner-up in the GSR ballot. The two work together closely, the Alternate becoming a knowledgeable deputy if the GSR is unable to attend a District or Area meeting.
6. What happens if your Group's GSR is elected DCM for your District? Then the Alternate automatically becomes your GSR, an extra reason for care in filling both offices.

## THE MAKING OF A GOOD GSR

1. Two or three years of sobriety are generally the desired minimum, although length of sobriety alone is not necessarily a qualification. It is also important that you should not hold office in any other Group.
2. Prior AA service experience provides a long head start for a GSR. Consider former Group officers and members who have shouldered responsibility at your CSO or on special committees (PI, Treatment and Correctional Facilities etc).
3. The same character qualities that mark a good trusted servant of any sort - patience, understanding and a firm determination . . . to place principles before personalities”.
4. Most future Conference Delegates will come from the ranks of today's GSRs, so careful choice now will ensure good representation for your whole Area in years to come and continuing vitality for our GSC, the heart of our Co-Founders' *Three Legacies* to all AA.

## BILL W ON GENERAL SERVICES AND THE GSR

*An AA service is anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer, ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent telephone call and a cup of coffee, and to our General Service Office for worldwide AA work. The sum total of these is our Three Legacies of Service. Whether performed by individuals or Groups or Areas or AA as a whole, these activities are vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make AA more simple by abolishing such services. To do so would only be asking for complication and confusion. Among the most vital, yet probably least understood, group of services are those that help us function as a whole - the work of the General Service Office<sup>†</sup> and the General Service Board (the trustees). Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to them. To get the benefit of direct guidance from AA as a whole, the General Service Conference was formed. These delegates sit yearly with our trustees and the staff of the GSO. The Conference has proved itself an immense success. Over the years, its record of achievement has been completely convincing. The strength of our whole AA service structure starts with the Group and with the General Service Representative the Group elects. I cannot emphasise too strongly the importance of the GSR.*

*<sup>†</sup>(General Service Office, also, in Australia)*

