

THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL

SECTION SIX

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THE DUTIES & ROLE OF THE AREA DELEGATE

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 in November prepared, in order to vote intelligently. Every Area Delegate, immediately upon election is put on the General Service 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, 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, the Area Delegate will have gained a better grasp of our Australian General Service Office services and will now be able to explain the importance of General Service 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 concerns in the Area and a greater ability to make suggestions for Conference discussion items.
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 General Service 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 literature, including books, pamphlets and videos, and the national and service websites. The delegate also encourages groups to stock Conference approved literature.
9. As the Area's communication link, the Delegate co-operates with General Service Office on information studies. Reminding Area Committee members and GSRs that General Service Office is an information centre for important AA matters. Many Groups are in frequent touch with General Service Office on matters which affect the Group, but there are others who do not yet know what services are available. Maintaining communication during the year with General Service Office is a vital part of the job.
10. If the Area Committee Chairperson is unable to serve, the Area Delegate assumes this added responsibility, until a new chairperson is elected. 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.

11. As a member of the Area Committee, the Delegate works closely with the other Committee officers, sharing experience throughout the year.
12. 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.
13. It is important that the outgoing delegate works with the incoming delegate to provide basic knowledge of Conference procedures. Induction workshops for incoming delegates hosted by outgoing and past delegates and trustees have proved to be particularly useful.
14. Inactive Delegates. AA relies on the Autonomy of each group regarding the period of time and involvement that constitutes inactivity. While the group needs to establish its own practices and guidelines, it is generally suggested that the service worker be asked to resign if he or she is unable to carry out the responsibilities of the position.
15. The Area Delegate provides AA leadership in solving local problems involving AA Traditions. 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:-

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 OF SERVICE

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? NO. The Conference has affirmed the limit of the term of Area Delegate as one three-year term.

An Area Delegate who does not complete his/her term is not eligible to nominate for a Delegate position again, even in another Area.

ABOUT THE ALTERNATE DELEGATE

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 General Service Office mailing

list as the Area Delegate until General Service Office is informed otherwise by the Area Committee.

There are only two situations in which the Alternate Delegate can be seated at Conference: -
1) if there is an elected Delegate who, for some reason, is unable to attend Conference; and
2) when the Delegate position is vacant.

DELEGATE EXPENSES

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.

With the advantages of modern technology, the actual cost of reporting back to the Area and Districts can be achieved with minimal actual cost. 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.

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. 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.

PREPARING FOR THE CONFERENCE

Prior to Conference you will be contacted by the Conference Co-Ordinator. Pre-Conference is a very busy time for General Service Office staff. It is important that you regularly check your emails and respond to requests for information by the deadline date.

Such requests include:

- Flight booking requests. (You need to comply with the deadline to ensure we get the most economical airfares.)
- Your Area Delegate report to Conference for inclusion in the Conference folder.
- Your up to date contact details, for mailing of your conference folder.
- Positions Vacant such as Trustee, World Service Delegate, National Co-Ordinator (Treatment Facilities & Special Needs; Correctional Facilities, Public Information NS Co-operation with the Professional community, Remote communities.
- Bid for upcoming events e.g. National Conventions, PI&CPC Forums; T&CF Forums; Regional Forums.
- The Service Manual contains detailed descriptions of each Committee.

“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. Meetings between conferences may be useful to follow Delegates

“Start a Conference file, because you’ll get lots of letters from the Conference secretary at the General Service 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. General Service 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.

“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.

It also contains everything you will need to be as prepared as possible for the entire Conference experience.

- The Composition, Scope and Procedure Documents. Be prepared to make suggestions and comments on this document.
- The Action List of recent Advisory Actions still requiring follow-up or finalizing.
- New Business – or Topics for the current Conference.

“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 General Service office staffers. Many of your Area’s problems and questions can be discussed in this free interchange. At General Service 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.

“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.

“Remember, no matter if you are a first, second- or third-year delegate, your views are just as important to the Conference proceedings as anyone else’s. Your voice expresses your informed Area Conscience, but you are there to be part of the Group Conscience of all Australia. Your thoughts and your questions must be shared - loudly and clearly for the benefit of all. Having said that, as a first year Delegate, your learning curve is very steep.

Above all go to Conference with a positive attitude, prepared to learn, and prepared to have your own experience of this wonderful service position.

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 member 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”