



# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

**Ninth Edition**

**Revised 2020**

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Alcoholics Anonymous Australia**

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# FOREWORD

This is the revised eighth edition of the Australian AA Service Manual. It incorporates all of AA's traditional 'legacy documents': the *Twelve Steps*, the *Twelve Traditions*, and the *Twelve Concepts*, as well as the *Conference Charter* together with the *Memorandum* and *Articles of Association* of the General Service Board. Since the fourth edition, the Manual has been posted at the Australian AA Service website as a service to AA Members. Since the sixth edition, the Manual and associated AA Guidelines have both been available as bound volumes, while Internet versions have enabled Members to download updated sections as they became available between editions.

As with the previous edition, this version is clearly an Australian document, but it honours its North American roots, the history taking its proud place, mainly in the first section.

This seventh edition was the first to incorporate an Index. The Index has been constructed by being mindful of the references likely to be sought by both newcomer and advanced *trusted servants*. To facilitate indexing and reader access, page numbering is now sequential. It is hoped that Members will now find significantly more accessible, the Manual's great richness as an AA source.

As before, the editors have kept in mind the primary purpose of having a Service Manual: to provide a clear, informative, accurate resource that can be referred to with confidence by all who volunteer to do AA *General Service* work, who need to understand how AA's *General Service Structure* was and is built, how it works, and how the various *trusted servant* roles fit together in the context of the General Service Conference.

The North American and past Australian AA Service Manuals begin with a statement of responsibility:

This is AA's Service Manual – an outgrowth of the "*Third Legacy Manual*" which served the movement so well beginning with Bill W's first draft in 1951. All of the basic service principles and procedures outlined in that document have been retained. In the interests of convenience and completeness, the material has been edited and rearranged.

No alterations or additions have been made in the *Twelve Concepts for World Service* in conformity with the decision of the 1985 US/Canada General Service Conference. For details see Preface to the "*Twelve Concepts for World Service*" in this edition.

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# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION ONE**

# **THE CONFERENCE PLAN**



**AA's Legacy of Service – Bill W**  
**Highlights of AA Service History**  
**Jack Alexander Looks at AA**  
**Service to the Whole of AA**  
**Birth of the Conference**  
**The Conference Plan**  
**A Resolution (North America)**  
**Historical Background of AA in Australia**  
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# AA's LEGACY OF SERVICE – Bill W

by Bill W.

Our Twelfth Step, carrying the message, is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives: this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer, ranging all the way from the *Twelfth Step* itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to AA's General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our *Third Legacy of Service*.

Services include meeting places, hospital co-operation, and *Intergroup* offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.

## VITAL TO AA's GROWTH

These services, whether performed by individuals, Groups, Areas, or AA as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make AA more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion.

Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek AA.

The most vital, yet least understood, Group of services that AA has are those that enable us to function as a whole, namely: the *General Service Office*, *AA World Services Inc*, the *AA Grapevine Inc*, and our Board of Trustees, known legally as the *General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities.

Until 1950, these overall services were the sole function of a few oldtime AA's, several nonalcoholic friends, Doctor Bob and me. For all the years of AA's infancy, we oldtimers had been the self-appointed Trustees for *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

## FELLOWSHIP READY FOR RESPONSIBILITY

At this time, we realised that AA had grown up, that our Fellowship was ready and able to take these responsibilities from us. There was also another urgent reason for change. Since we oldtimers couldn't live on forever, newer trustees would be virtually unknown to the AA Groups, now spread over the whole earth. Without direct linkage to AA, future trustees couldn't possibly function alone.

This meant that we had to form a conference representing our membership which could meet yearly with our Board of Trustees in New York, and thus assume direct responsibility for the guardianship of AA tradition and the direction of our principal service affairs. Otherwise, a virtually unknown Board of Trustees and our too little understood service headquarters operations would someday be bound to face collapse.

Suppose that future trustees, acting quite on their own, were to make a serious blunder. Suppose that with no linkage to AA, they tried to act for us in time of great trouble or crisis. With no direct

guidance from AA as a whole, how could they do this? Collapse of our top services would then be inevitable. And if, under such conditions, our world services did fall apart, how could they ever be reconstructed?

These, briefly, were the conclusions that led to the formation of the *General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Later, I will outline in more detail the events that have now become AA history.

The deliberative body known as the Conference is made up of elected Area Delegates from the United States and Canada now numbering about ninety, together with the Trustees, the directors of *AAWS Inc*, and the *AA Grapevine Inc*, and GSO and *Grapevine* staff members numbering forty or more. The Conference held its first annual meeting in 1951. Since then it has met annually in April in New York. (*Except for the 1955 Conference held in St Louis, Missouri*). It has proved itself an immense success, establishing a record of advisory actions that have served the Fellowship well during the intervening years of growth and development.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF AA SERVICE HISTORY

To go back to the beginning: One day in 1937, at Doctor Bob's Akron home, he and I added up the score of over two years' work. For the first time we saw that wholesale recovery for alcoholics was possible. We then had two small but solid Groups at Akron and New York, plus a sprinkling of members elsewhere. How could these few recovered ones tell millions of alcoholics throughout the world the great news? That was the question.

Forthwith, Doctor Bob and I met with eighteen of the Akron Group at the home of T. Henry Williams, a steadfast nonalcoholic friend. Some of the Akron Group still thought we ought to stick to the word-of-mouth process; but the majority felt that we now needed our own hospitals with paid workers and, above all, a book for other alcoholics that could explain to them our methods and results. This would require considerable money - millions perhaps. (We didn't know that millions would have ruined us even more than no money at all). So the Akron meeting commissioned me to get to New York and raise funds. Arrived home, I found the New York Group in full agreement with this idea. Several of us went to work at once.

## AA's EARLY MONEY PROBLEMS

Through my brother-in-law, Dr LV Strong Jr, my only remaining friend and the confidant of the worst of my drinking time, we made a contact with Willard S. Richardson, a friend and long-time associate of the Rockefeller family. Mr Richardson promptly took fire and interested a Group of his own friends.

In the winter of 1937, a meeting was called at the offices of John D. Rockefeller Jr. Present were Mr Richardson and his Group, Dr William D Silkworth, alcoholics from Akron and New York, Doctor Bob and I. After a long discussion, we convinced our new friends that we urgently needed money - a lot of it, too.

One of them, Frank Amos, soon made a trip to Akron early in 1938 to investigate the Group there. He returned with a very optimistic report, a digest of which Mr Richardson quickly laid before John D. Rockefeller Jr. Though much impressed, Mr Rockefeller declined to give any large sum for fear of professionalising AA. He did, however, donate \$5,000. This was used to keep Doctor Bob and me going during 1938. We were still a long way from hospitals, missionaries, books and big money. This looked mighty tough at the time, but it was probably one of the best breaks that AA ever had.

In spite of Mr Rockefeller's views, we renewed our efforts to persuade his friends of our crying need for money. At length, they agreed that we did need more money, certainly enough to prepare a textbook on our methods and experience.

In the late spring of 1938, I had drafted what are now the first two chapters of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous". Mimeographed copies of these were used as part of the prospectus for our futile fund-raising operation. At Board meetings, then held nearly every month, our non-alcoholic friends commiserated on our lack of success. About half of the \$5,000 Mr Rockefeller advanced had been used to pay the mortgage on Doctor Bob's home. The rest of it, divided between us, would, of course, soon be exhausted. The outlook was certainly bleak.

## AA ITS OWN PUBLISHER

Then Frank Amos remembered his old time friend Eugene Exman, religious editor at Harper's, the book publishers. He sent me to Harper's, and I showed Mr Exman two chapters of our proposed book. To my delight, Mr Exman was impressed. He suggested that *Harper's* might advance me \$1,500 in royalties to finish the job. Broke as we then were, that \$1,500 looked like a pile of money.

Nevertheless, our enthusiasm for this proposal quickly waned. With the book finished, we would be \$1,500 in debt to Harper's. And if, as we hoped, AA then got a lot of publicity, how could we possibly hire the help to answer the inquiries, maybe thousands, that would flood in?

There was another problem too, a serious one. If our AA book became the basic text for Alcoholics Anonymous, its ownership would then be in other hands. It was evident that our Society ought to own and publish its own literature. No publisher, however good, ought to own our best asset.

So two of us bought a pad of blank stock certificates and wrote on them "Works Publishing, par value \$25". My friend Hank P and I then offered shares in the new book company to alcoholics and their friends in New York. They just laughed at us. Who would buy stock, they said, in a book not yet written!

Somehow, these timid buyers had to be persuaded, so we went to "*Reader's Digest*" and told the managing editor the story of our budding Society and its proposed book. He liked the notion very much and promised that in the spring of 1939 when we thought the book would be ready, the "*Reader's Digest*" would print a piece about AA, mentioning the new book, of course.

This was the sales argument we needed. With a plug like that, the proposed volume would sell by carloads. How could we miss? The New York alcoholics and their friends promptly changed their minds about Works Publishing stock. They began to buy it, mostly on instalments.

Ruth Hock, our nonalcoholic secretary, typed away as I slowly dictated the chapters of the text for the new book. Fierce argument over these drafts and what ought to go into them was a main feature of the New York and Akron Groups' meetings for months on end. I became much more of an umpire than I ever was an author. Meanwhile, the alcoholics at Akron and New York and a couple in Cleveland began writing their stories - 28 in all.

When the book project neared completion, we visited the managing editor of the "*Reader's Digest*" and asked for the promised article. He gave a blank look, scarcely remembering who we were. Then the blow fell. He told how months before he had put our proposition to his editorial Board and how it had been turned down flat. With profuse apologies, he admitted he'd plumb forgot to let us know anything about it. This was a crusher. Meanwhile, we had optimistically ordered 5,000 copies of the new book, largely on a shoestring. The printer, too, had relied on the "*Reader's Digest*". Soon there would be 5,000 books in his warehouse, and no customers for them.

The book finally appeared in April, 1939. We got the "*New York Times*" to do a review and Dr Harry Emerson Fosdick supplied us with another really good one, but nothing happened. The



book simply didn't sell. We were in debt up to our ears. The sheriff appeared at the Newark office where we had been working, and the landlord sold the Brooklyn house where Lois and I lived. She and I were dumped into the street and then onto the charity of AA friends.

How we got through the summer of 1939 I'll never quite know. Hank P had to get a job. The faithful Ruth accepted shares in the defunct book company as pay. One AA friend supplied us with his summer camp; another, with a car.

## AA MAKES NEWS

The first break came in September, 1939. *"Liberty"* Magazine, then headed by our great friend-to-be Fulton Oursler, carried an article, *"Alcoholics and God"*, written by Morris Markey. There was an instant response. About eight hundred letters from alcoholics and their families poured in. Ruth answered every one of them, enclosing a leaflet about the new book, the book *"Alcoholics Anonymous"*. Slowly, the book began to sell. Then the *"Cleveland Plain Dealer"* ran a series of pieces about Alcoholics Anonymous. At once, the Cleveland Groups mushroomed from a score into many hundreds of members. More books sold. Thus we inched and squeezed our way through that perilous year.

We hadn't heard a thing from Mr Rockefeller since early in 1938. But in 1940 he put in a dramatic reappearance. His friend, Mr Richardson, came to a trustees' meeting, smiling broadly. Mr Rockefeller, he said, wanted to give Alcoholics Anonymous a dinner. The invitation list showed an imposing collection of notables. We figured them to be collectively worth at least a billion dollars.

The dinner came off early in February at New York's Union League Club. Dr Harry Emerson Fosdick spoke in praise of us, and so did Dr Foster Kennedy, the eminent neurologist. Then Doctor Bob and I briefed the audience on AA. Some of the Akron and New York alcoholics scattered among the notables at the tables responded to questions. The gathering showed a rising warmth and interest. This was it, we thought; our money problems were solved!

Nelson Rockefeller then rose to his feet to speak for his father, who was ill. His father was very glad, he said, that those at the dinner had seen the promising beginning of the *Society of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Seldom, Nelson continued, had his father shown more interest in anything. But obviously, since AA was a work of pure goodwill, one man carrying the good news to the next, little or no money would be required. At this sally, our spirits fell. When Mr Rockefeller had finished, the whole billion dollars' worth of capitalists got up and walked out, leaving not a nickel behind them.

Next day, John D. Rockefeller Jr wrote to all those who had attended the dinner and even to those who had not. Again he reiterated his complete confidence and high interest. Then, at the very end of his letter, he casually remarked that he was giving Alcoholics Anonymous \$1,000!

Only much later did we realise what Mr Rockefeller had really done for us. At risk of personal ridicule, he had stood up before the whole world to put in a plug for a tiny society of struggling alcoholics. For these unknowns, he'd gone way out on a limb. Wisely sparing of his money, he had given freely of himself. Then and there John D. Rockefeller Jr saved us from the perils of property management and professionalism. He couldn't have done more.

## AA GROWS TO TWO THOUSAND MEMBERS

As a result, AA's 1940 membership jumped sharply to about two thousand at the year's end. Doctor Bob and I each began to receive \$30 a week out of the dinner contributions. This eased us greatly. Lois and I went to live in a tiny room at AA's number one clubhouse, on West 24th Street in Manhattan.

Best of all, increased book sales had made a national headquarters possible. We moved from Newark, NJ, where the AA book had been written, to Vesey Street, just North of the Wall Street District of New York.

We took a modest two-room office right opposite the downtown Church Street Annex Post Office. There the famous Box 658 was ready and waiting to receive the thousands of frantic inquiries that would presently come into it. At this point, Ruth (though nonalcoholic) became AA's first national secretary, and I turned into a sort of headquarters handyman.

Through the whole of 1940, book sales were the sole support of the struggling office. Every cent of these earnings went to pay for AA work done there. All requests for help were answered with warm personal letters. When alcoholics or their families showed continued interest, we kept on writing. Aided by such letters and the book "Alcoholics Anonymous", new AA Groups had begun to take form.

## BEGINNING OF GROUP SERVICES

More importantly, we had lists of prospects in many cities and towns of the United States and Canada. We turned these lists over to AA travelling businessmen, members of already established Groups. With these couriers, we corresponded constantly, and they started still more Groups. For further benefit of our travellers, we put out a Group directory.

Then came an unexpected activity. Because the newborn Groups saw only a little of their travelling sponsors, they turned to the New York office for help with their innumerable troubles. By mail we relayed the experience of the older centres on to them. A little later, as we shall see, this became a major service.

Meanwhile, some of the stockholders in the book company, *Works Publishing*, began to get restive. All the book profits, they complained were going for AA work in the office. When, if ever, were they going to get their money back? We also saw that the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" should now become the property of AA as a whole. At the moment it was owned one-third by the 49 subscribers, one-third by my friend Hank P, and the remainder by me.

As a first step, we had the book company, *Works Publishing*, audited and legally incorporated. Hank P and I donated our shares in it to the *Alcoholic Foundation* (as our Board of Trustees was then called). This was the stock that we had taken for services rendered. But the 49 other subscribers had put in real money. They would have to be paid cash. Where on earth could we get it?

The help we needed turned up in the person of A. LeRoy Chipman. Also a friend and associate of John D. Rockefeller Jr, he had recently been made a Trustee of the Foundation. He persuaded Mr Rockefeller Jr, two of his sons, and some of the dinner guests to lend the Foundation \$3,000. This promptly paid off a \$2,500 indebtedness to Charles B. Towns, (*owner of Towns Hospital in New York; his loan helped to make the 'Big Book' possible*), settled some incidental debts, and permitted the reacquisition of the outstanding stock. Two years later, the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" had done so well that we were able to pay off this whole Rockefeller loan.

# JACK ALEXANDER LOOKS AT AA

The spring of 1941 brought us a ten-strike. The “*Saturday Evening Post*” decided to do a piece about Alcoholics Anonymous. It assigned one of its star writers, Jack Alexander, to the job. Having just done an article on the New Jersey rackets, Jack approached us somewhat tongue-in-cheek. But he soon became an AA “convert”, even though he wasn’t an alcoholic. Working early and late, he spent a whole month with us. Doctor Bob and I and elders of the early Groups at Akron, New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Chicago spent uncounted hours with him. When he could feel AA in the very marrow of his bones, he proceeded to write the piece that rocked drunks and their families all over the nation. It was the lead story in the “*Saturday Evening Post*” of March 1, 1941.

Came then the deluge. Frantic appeals from alcoholics and their families, six thousand of them, hit the New York office. At first, we pawed at random through the mass of letters, laughing and crying by turns. How could this heartbreaking mail be answered? It was a cinch that Ruth and I could never do it alone. Form letters wouldn’t be enough. Every single one must have an understanding personal reply.

Maybe the AA Groups themselves would help. Though we’d never asked anything of them before, this was surely their business, if it was anybody’s. An enormous *Twelfth Step* job had to be done and done quickly.

So we told the Groups the story, and they responded. The measuring stick for voluntary contribution was at that time set at \$1.00 per member per year. The trustees of the Foundation agreed to look after these funds, placing them in a special bank account, earmarking them for AA office work only.

We had started the year 1941 with two thousand members, but we finished with eight thousand. This was the measure of the great impact of the “*Saturday Evening Post*” piece. But this was only the beginning of uncounted thousands of pleas for help from individuals and from growing Groups all over the world, which have continued to flow into the General Service Office to this day.

This phenomenal expansion brought another problem, a very important one. The national spotlight now being on us, we had to begin dealing with the public on a large scale. Public ill will could stunt our growth, even bring it to a standstill. But enthusiastic public confidence could swell our ranks to numbers we had only dreamed of before. The “*Post*” piece had proved this.

Finding the right answers to all our public relations puzzlers has been a long process. After much trial and error, sometimes punctuated by painful mistakes, the attitudes and practices that would work best for us emerged. The important ones can today be seen in our AA Traditions. One hundred percent anonymity at the public level, no use of the AA name for the benefit of other causes, however worthy, no endorsements or alliances, one single purpose for Alcoholics Anonymous, no professionalism, public relations by the principle of attraction rather than promotion - these were some of the hard-learned lessons.

**Figure 1 The Jack Alexander Article**

# SERVICE TO THE WHOLE OF AA

Thus far in our Society story, we have seen the Foundation, the AA book, the development of pamphlet literature, the answered mass of pleas for help, the satisfied need of Groups for counsel on their problems, the beginning of our wonderful relations with the public, all becoming part of a growing service to the whole world of AA. At last our Society really began to function as a whole.

But the 1941-1945 period brought still more developments of significance. The Vesey Street office was moved to Lexington Avenue, New York City, just opposite Grand Central Terminal. The moment we located there, we were besieged with visitors who, for the first time, began to see Alcoholics Anonymous as a vision for the whole globe.

Since AA was growing so fast, GSO had to grow too. More alcoholic staff members were engaged. As they divided the work between them, departments began to be created. Today's office has a good many - Group, foreign and public relations, AA Conference, office management, packing and mailing, accounting, stenographic and special service to Loners, prisons and hospitals. (*Other services have been added since 1955*).

It was chiefly from correspondence and from our mounting public relations activity that the basic ideas for our Traditions came. In late 1945 a good AA friend suggested that all this mass of experience might be codified into a set of general principles, simply stated principles that could offer tested solutions to all of AA's problems of living and working together and of relating our Society to the world outside.

If we had become sure enough of where we stood on such matters as membership, Group autonomy, singleness of purpose, nonendorsement of other enterprises, professionalism, public controversy and anonymity in its several aspects, then such a code of principles could be written. Such a traditional code could not, of course, ever become rule or law. But it could act as a sure guide for our trustees, for headquarters people and, most especially, for AA Groups with bad growing pains.

Being at the centre of things, we of the headquarters would have to do the job. Aided by my helpers there, I set to work. The *Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous* that resulted were first published in the so-called long form in the "*Grapevine*" of May, 1946. Then I wrote some more pieces explaining the Traditions in detail. These came out in later issues of the "*Grapevine*".

## TRADITIONS TOOK PERSUASION

The first reception of the "*Twelve Traditions*" was interesting and amusing. The reaction was mixed, to say the least. Only Groups in dire trouble took them seriously. From some quarters there was a violent reaction, especially from Groups that had long lists of 'protective' rules and regulations. There was much indifference. Several of our 'intellectual' members cried loudly that the '*Traditions*' reflected nothing more than the sum of my own hopes and fears for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Therefore I began to travel and talk a lot about the new *Traditions*. People were at first politely attentive, though it must be confessed that some did go to sleep during my early harangues. But after a while I got letters containing sentiments like this: "Bill, we'd love to have you come and speak. Do tell us where you used to hide your bottles and all about that big, hot-flash, spiritual experience of yours. But for heaven's sake, please don't talk any more about those blasted '*Traditions*'!"

Time presently changed all that. Only five years later, several thousand AA members, meeting at the 1950 Cleveland Convention, declared that AA's *Twelve Traditions* constituted the platform upon which our Fellowship could best function and hold together in unity for all time to come.

## MEDICINE TAKES AN INTEREST

By this time, AA had found still more favour in the world of medicine. Two of the great medical associations of America did an unprecedented thing. In the year 1944, the Medical Society of the State of New York invited me to read a paper at its annual meeting. Following the reading, three of the many physicians present stood up and gave AA their highest endorsement. These were Dr Harry Tiebout, AA's first friend in the psychiatric profession, Dr Kirby Collier, also a psychiatrist friend and an early advocate of AA and Dr Foster Kennedy, world-renowned neurologist. The *Medical Society* itself then went still further. They permitted us to print my paper and the recommendations of these three doctors in pamphlet form. In 1949 the American Psychiatric Association did exactly the same thing. I read a paper at its annual meeting in Montreal. The paper was carried in the "*American Journal of Psychiatry*", and we were permitted to reprint it. (Now in the pamphlet "Three Talks to Medical Societies" by Bill W).

During the 1940's, two hospitals met all these urgent needs and afforded shining examples of how medicine and AA could co-operate. At St Thomas' hospital in Akron, Doctor Bob, the wonderful Sister Ignatia and the hospital's staff presided over an alcoholic ward that had ministered to five thousand alcoholics by the time Doctor Bob passed away in 1950. In New York, Knickerbocker Hospital provided a ward under the care of our first friend in medicine, Dr William Duncan Silkworth, where he was assisted by a redheaded AA nurse known as Teddy. It was in these two hospitals and by these pioneering people that the best techniques of combined Medicine and AA were worked out.

Since proper hospitalisation was, and still is, one of AA's greatest problems, the General Service Office has detailed this early hospital experience, along with the many subsequent developments and ramifications, to Groups all over the world - still another very vital service.

## A RASH OF ANONYMITY BREAKS

About this time a serious threat to our longtime welfare made its appearance. Usually meaning well, members began breaking their anonymity all over the place. Sometimes they wanted to use the AA name to advertise and help other causes. Others just wanted their names and pictures in the papers. Being photographed with the Governor would really help AA, they thought. (I'd earlier been guilty of this, too). But at last we saw the appalling risk to AA if all our power-drivers got loose at the public level. Already scores of them were doing it.

So our General Service Office got to work. We wrote remonstrances, kind ones, of course, to every breaker. We even sent letters to nearly all press and radio outlets, explaining why AA's shouldn't break their anonymity before the public. Nor, we added, did AA solicit money - we paid our own bills. In a few years the public anonymity-breakers were squeezed down to a handful - thus another valuable GSO service had gone into action.

## GSO (NEW YORK) SERVICES EXPAND

To maintain all these ever-lengthening service lifelines, the office had to go on expanding. GSO moved to 44th Street, then to 305 East 45th Street, then to 468 Park Avenue South. In 1992 it moved to 475 Riverside Drive. Today, it has an AA General Manager, an AA Chairman of General Services and several well qualified AA staff members.

On its service staff, more than 60 nonalcoholics look after bookkeeping, stenography, filing, records operations and shipping, each managed by a non-AA. An enthusiastic receptionist and a switchBoard operator preside over the outer office. There the visitor gets his first glimpse of his General Service Office. In a display cabinet stands a *Winged Victory*, symbol of the noted *Lasker Award* given to AA by the *American Public Health Association* in 1951. We have a good-sized space where all our shipping and mailing are done. Each year, this busy department (supervised by a nonalcoholic) ships more than 281,500 books and more than 3,800,000 pamphlets, mails more than 295,000 letters and bulletins and does huge quantities of mimeographing (1974 facts & figures).

No description of our world services would be complete without full acknowledgement of all that has been contributed by our nonalcoholic Trustees. Over the years they have given an incredible amount of time and effort; theirs has been a true labour of love. Some of them, like Jack Alexander, Fulton Oursler, Leonard Harrison and Bernard Smith, have given much in their fields of literature, social service, finance and law. Their example is being followed by more recent nonalcoholic Trustees.

Our present array of services may look like big business to some. But when we think of the size and reach of AA today, that isn't true at all. In 1945, for example, we had one paid worker to every 98 Groups; in 1955, one paid worker to every 230 Groups. In 2002, with greatly expanded services, one paid headquarters worker serves more than 731 Groups across North America. It therefore seems sure that we shall never be burdened with a bureaucratic and expensive service set up.

As I pointed out earlier, in the 1940's our headquarters was constantly overhung by one great threat to its future existence: Doctor Bob and I and our Board of Trustees had the entire responsibility for the conduct of AA's services.

In the years leading up to 1950 and 1951, we began to debate the desirability of some sort of advisory Board of AA's. Or maybe we needed a conference of larger numbers, elected by AA itself; people who would inspect the headquarters yearly, a body to whom the Trustees could become responsible, a guiding conscience of our whole world effort.

But the objections to this were persistent and nothing happened for several years. Such a venture, it was said, would be expensive. Worse still, it might plunge AA into disruptive political activity when conference delegates were elected.

Then Doctor Bob fell ill, mortally ill. Finally, in 1950, spurred on by the relentless logic of the situation, the Trustees authorized Doctor Bob and me to devise the plan with which this booklet deals. It was a *Plan for a General Service Conference of AA*, a plan by which our Society could assume full and permanent responsibility for the conduct of its most vital affairs (2004 update based on North American AA *Service Manual* 2002/3).

## BIRTH OF THE CONFERENCE

It was one thing to say that we ought to have a General Service Conference, but it was quite another to devise a plan which would bring it into successful existence. The cost of holding one was easily dismissed, but how on earth were we going to cut down destructive politics, with all its usual struggles for prestige and vainglory? How many delegates would be required and from where should they come? Arrived at New York, how could they be related to the Board of Trustees? What would be their actual powers and duties. With these several weighty considerations in mind, and with some misgivings, I commenced work on a draft of a plan, much assisted by Helen B, an AA staff member.

Though the Conference might be later enlarged to include the whole world, we felt that the first delegates should come from the US and Canada only. Each state and province might be allowed one delegate. Those containing heavy AA populations could have additional delegates. To give the Conference continuity, delegates could be divided into panels. An odd-numbered panel (Panel One), elected for two years, would be invited for 1951, the first year. An even-numbered panel (Panel Two), elected for two years, would be seated in 1952. Thereafter, one panel would be elected and one would be retired yearly. This would cause the Conference to rotate, while maintaining some continuity.

But how could we pull the inevitable election pressure down? To accomplish this, it was provided that a delegate must receive a two-thirds vote for election. If a delegate got a majority of this size, nobody could kick much. But if he or she didn't, and the election was close, what then? Well, perhaps the names of the two highest in the running, or the three officers of the committee, or even the whole committee could be put in a hat. One name would be drawn. The winner of this painless lottery would become the delegate.

But when these delegates met in conference, what would they do? We thought they would want to have real authority. So, in the Charter drawn for the Conference itself, it was provided that the delegates could issue flat directions to the Trustees on a two-thirds vote. And even a simple majority vote would constitute a mighty strong suggestion.

# THE CONFERENCE PLAN

The *Conference Plan* (sometimes called the “*Third Legacy Plan*”), was drawn up by Bill W. in 1950 immediately after the death of Dr Bob, who had given it his blessing. The intention was to hold a specially designed annual Conference that brought the Trustees together with the AA Delegates, to work together to guarantee that our movement-wide services would continue to function under all conditions.

The *Plan* was to provide a practical successor to the founders of AA. After a 5-year trial from 1951, during which time “Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions” was published and the *Third Legacy Procedure* was developed, the Conference was deemed a great success. The cooperation, *Unity* and understanding it afforded led the way to the full development of AA’s *World Services* and the New York Headquarters – and ultimately the *Twelve Concepts* for World Service (1962).

The *Conference Plan* is what this Manual is all about. It is a method by which AA’s collective *Group Conscience* can speak forcefully and put its desires for Australian services into effect. The Plan is the structure that takes the place of government in AA. It ensures that the full voice of Australian AA will be heard, whether it represents the great majority or a minority.

The Plan’s elements now include especially:

- the ‘**General Service Structure**’
- the **Principle of Substantial Unanimity** –votes requiring 2/3 majorities, and unique to AA, the *Third Legacy Procedure*
- ensuring that the *minority voice* can be heard
- the *Conference Charter*
- the *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, including the *6 Warranties of Conference*
- the *Principle of Rotation* out of AA service positions after a set term.

From “AA Comes of Age” : 208-219

Figure 2 The Conference Plan



## DELEGATES ENCOURAGED TO QUESTION

The first Conference was set for April, 1951. In came the Delegates. They looked over our offices, cellar to garret, got acquainted with the whole staff, shook hands with the Trustees. That evening, we gave them a briefing session, under the name of "What's on your mind?" We answered scores of questions of all kinds. The Delegates began to feel at home and reassured. They inspected our finances with a microscope. After they had listened to reports from the Board of Trustees and from all the services, there was warm but cordial debate on many a question of policy. Trustees submitted several of their own serious problems for the opinion of the Conference.

So went session after session, morning, afternoon and evening. The Delegates handled several tough puzzles about which we at GSO were in doubt, sometimes giving advice contrary to our own conclusions. In nearly every instance, we saw that they were right. Then and there they proved, as never before, that AA's *Tradition Two* was correct. The Group Conscience could safely act as the sole authority and sure guide for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Nobody present will ever forget that final session of the first Conference. We knew that the impossible had happened, that AA could never break down in the middle, that Alcoholics Anonymous was at last safe from any storm the future might bring. And as Delegates returned home, they carried this same conviction with them.

Realising our need for funds and better literature circulation, some did place a little too much emphasis on this necessity; others were a little discouraged, wondering why fellow members in their Areas did not take fire as they had. They forgot that they themselves had been eyewitnesses to the Conference and that their brother alcoholics had not. But, both here and at home, they made an impression much greater than they knew.

In the midst of this exciting turn of affairs, the Conference agreed that the *Alcoholic Foundation* ought to be renamed the *General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous*, and this was done. The word "Foundation" stood for charity, paternalism and maybe big money. AA would have none of these; from here out we could assume full responsibility and pay our expenses ourselves.

As I watched all this grow, I became entirely sure that *Alcoholics Anonymous* was at last safe - even from me.

## A RESOLUTION (NORTH AMERICA)

***The following text is the wording of the original Resolution presented to the Twentieth Anniversary Convention of AA in North America in 1955.***

***(This Resolution Authorises the General Service Conference to Act for Alcoholics Anonymous and to Become the Successor to Its Co-Founders).***

We, the members of the *Twentieth Anniversary Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous*, here assembled at St Louis in July of the year 1955, declare our belief that our Fellowship has now come of age and is entirely ready to assume full and permanent possession of the *Three Legacies* of our AA inheritance - the *Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service*.

We believe that the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, as created in 1951 by our co-founders, Doctor Bob S and Bill W and authorised by Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation, has now become entirely capable of assuming the guardianship of

AA's *Twelve Traditions* and of taking over full guidance and control of the world service of our Society, as provided in the "Third Legacy Manual of World Service" (Now called "The AA Service Manual"), recently revised by our surviving co-founder, Bill W (*Bill W died January 21, 1971*) and of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

We have also heard with approval Bill W's proposal that AA's General Service Conference should now become the permanent successor to the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, inheriting from them all their former duties and special responsibilities, thus avoiding in future time all possible strivings for individual prestige or personal power: and also providing our Society with the means of functioning on a permanent basis.

### **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED:**

That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous should become, as of this date, July 3, 1955, the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the perpetuators of the world services of our Society, the voice of the Group Conscience of our entire Fellowship and the sole successors to its co-founders, Doctor Bob and Bill W.

### **AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD:**

That neither the *Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous* nor the *warranties of Article XII of the Conference Charter* shall ever be changed or amended by the General Service Conference except by first asking the consent of the registered AA Groups of the world. **(This would include all AA Groups known to the General Service Offices around the world)\*.**

These Groups shall be suitably notified of any proposal for change and shall be allowed no less than six months for consideration thereof. And before any such Conference action can be taken, there must first be received in writing within the time allotted the consent of at least three-quarters of all those registered Groups who respond to such proposal.

### **\*Resolution:**

***It was resolved by the 1976 General Service Conference that those instruments requiring consent of three-quarters of the responding Groups for change or amendment would include the Twelve Steps of AA, should any such change or amendment ever be proposed.***

## **WE FURTHER UNDERSTAND:**

That, as provided in Article XII of the Conference Charter, the Conference binds itself to the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous by the following means:

That in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive, or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act in the service of Alcoholics Anonymous and may traditionally direct its world services, it shall never enact laws or regulations binding on AA as a whole or upon any AA Group or member thereof, nor shall it perform any other such acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

*(This Resolution was adopted by the Convention by acclamation and, in the Conference, by formal resolution by vote) St Louis, Missouri, July 3, 1955.*

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AA IN AUSTRALIA**

Enquiries from Australia about Alcoholics Anonymous first reached the GSO in New York in the year 1942; but it was 1945 before AA was functioning in Sydney, NSW, on an established Group basis, making Australia the first country outside of North America, to accept Alcoholics Anonymous as a means of recovery from the ravages of alcoholism.

During the next two years, the message of Alcoholics Anonymous spread to other States and the year 1947 saw Group meetings established in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland. It took a further two years for the Fellowship to reach Tasmania and the first meeting was held in Hobart in 1949. Perhaps, by reason of its geographical isolation, it was much later before the Northern Territory was to experience the impact of Alcoholics Anonymous. The inaugural meeting was held in Darwin in 1955.

By now meetings were springing up all over the continent and several Central Service Offices were opened in various capital cities, the first being in Sydney.

In 1954 the suggestion, emanating from NSW, was proposed that the States get together for a national forum discussion. This resulted in subsequent pooling of ideas which culminated in the first "*National Convention*" being held in Melbourne in 1959. At this Convention a resolution to establish a federal AA body, to be known as the "*Australian General Service Conference*", was passed by an overwhelming majority of the conventioners. The resolution contained a proviso that it would not become effective until confirmed by the various states.

This confirmation was forthcoming and it was decided to hold a second National Convention in Sydney over the Easter weekend of 1961; and the first one under the auspices of the Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.

During this Convention, elected representatives from the various States met in session for the first Australian General Service Conference meeting. The Australian General Service Conference was then, and is now, an all Australian body in which Australian AA can act on its administrative side at the national level of General Service. Among many other things, it was resolved at this first Conference to explore the possibility of establishing an Australian publishing body and an Australian magazine, along the lines of the similar services within the parent movement in the USA. It was also agreed to recommend for adoption, this short summary of the purposes of the Australian General Service Conference:

***The Australian General Service Conference is a part of the AA Fellowship in which all Groups throughout Australia join together for unity in service to alcoholics who seek recovery. Alcoholics Anonymous is more than a set of principles, it is a society of recovered alcoholics in action. AA's Twelfth Step, carrying the message, is the basic service that our Fellowship gives. The Australian General Service Conference exists to further our collective Twelfth Step work at the nation-wide level.***

Further Conferences were held annually in the various capital cities on a rotation basis and, on some occasions, there have been two Conferences in the one year. At the Conference in 1976, it was resolved that future Conferences ought to be conducted in Sydney.

Over a period of years, the *General Service Board* of *Alcoholics Anonymous* situated in New York encouraged the Australian General Service Conference to establish a General Service Board and a publishing operation along the same lines as had occurred in North America.

The year 1967 saw the emergence of *AA Publishing, Pty. Ltd.* which then began to supply most of the literature needs of Australia and other nearby countries. (*AA Publishing Pty. Ltd. ceased operations on January 5, 1979. The General Service Board of AA Australia is now responsible for the literature needs of Australia*).

Advice was received from America that the *First World Service Meeting* was scheduled to be held in New York in 1969 and, on the invitation of the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous in that city, the Australian General Service Conference was represented by two delegates at that meeting in 1969. A second World Service Meeting was held in 1972. Further meetings have been held every two years and Australia has been represented on each occasion.

At the Conference held in Sydney in 1970, a plan known as "*Operation '76*" was designed to achieve progress towards the formation of the *Australian General Service Board* by the year 1976. This plan was carried out and all necessary preliminary procedures were completed as scheduled. At the same Conference, on March 29, 1970, it was resolved that the *Australian General Service Conference* of *Alcoholics Anonymous* should become, as of that date, "the guardian of the traditions of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the perpetuators of the Australian services of our *Society*, the voice of the *Group Conscience* of our entire Australian Fellowship. This *Resolution* (following) is adapted from, and proffered in the spirit of, the classic *Resolution* passed at the *Twentieth General Service Conference*, St Louis, Missouri, July 3, 1955. It is hoped it will serve the interests of AA in Australia as faithfully as it has done in America.

Following a recommendation from the 1972 Conference a *General Service Office* was opened in Sydney in the same year. This made it possible more smoothly and effectively to operate the General Service function. In 2001 the GSO in Sydney was renamed the '*National Office*' of *AA Australia* because of perceived confusion in the Fellowship between *Central Service* and *General Service* offices (eg 'CSO' and 'GSO' sound very similar, and the distinct national role of GSOs was thereby emphasised). However, Conference of 2012 determined that the GSO title be restored.

The *General Service Board* of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Australia, was incorporated in 1979, and is operated by twelve Trustees, eight alcoholic and four non-alcoholic. This Board carries out the work of the Australian General Service Conference between conferences, is essentially custodial in its character, and truly reflects the voice of the "Group Conscience" of AA in Australia.

## A RESOLUTION (AUSTRALIA)

Offered by a Select Committee, under the leadership of the Australian General Service Conference Chairperson at the *Tenth Anniversary Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous*, Australia.

***(This Resolution authorises the Australian General Service Conference to act for Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia).***

We, the members of the Tenth Anniversary Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia, here assembled at Sydney on March 29, 1970, declare our belief that our Fellowship has now come of age and is entirely ready to assume full and permanent possession of the Three Legacies of our AA inheritance - the Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service.

We believe that the Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous has now become entirely capable of assuming the guardianship of AA's *Twelve Traditions* within Australia and of taking over full guidance and control of the Australian services of our Society, as provided in the AA Service Manual and thus avoiding in future time all possible strivings for individual prestige or personal power; and also providing our Society in Australia with the means of functioning on a permanent basis, in relation to the AA world.

### **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED:**

That the Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous should become, as of this date, March 29, 1970, the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the perpetrators of the Australian services of our Society, the voice of the Group Conscience of our entire Australian Fellowship.

### **AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD:**

That neither the *Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous* nor the warranties of Article XII of the Conference Charter shall ever be changed or amended by the Australian General Service Conference except by first asking the consent of the registered AA Groups of the world. These Groups shall be suitably notified of any proposal for change and shall be allowed no less than six months for consideration thereof. And before any such Conference action can be taken, there must first be received in writing within the time allotted the consent of at least three-quarters of those registered Groups who respond to such a proposal.

## **WE FURTHER UNDERSTAND:**

That, as provided in Article XII of the Conference Charter (North American Section), the Australian General Service Conference binds itself to the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous by the following means:

That in all its proceedings, the Australian General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Traditions, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve be its prudent financial principal; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others, that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive; or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act in the service of Alcoholics Anonymous and may traditionally direct its Australian services, it shall never enact laws or regulations binding on AA as a whole or upon any AA Group or member thereof, nor shall it perform any other such acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

***(This Resolution was unanimously adopted by the 1970 Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous held in Sydney). Rockdale, NSW, March 29, 1970.***

# THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

## WHAT IT IS - HOW IT IS BUILT

AA *Traditions* say that our program should never be 'organised', should always remain 'non-professional'. Also that there is no 'authority' in AA except that which expresses itself through the Group Conscience. Our belief in these principles has worked wonders for our Fellowship in guiding its growth away from 'bigness' and 'power'.

The same *Traditions* (Two, Eight and Nine) then go on to provide for the setting up of service centres, with special workers and Boards and committees - all responsible to those they serve.

The only 'authority', then, is that which is first expressed in the *Group Conscience* and which is then communicated - and here is where the idea of the Conference structure begins - by the Group to AA as a whole.

The first *Conference Plan*, or, as it is sometimes known, the *Third Legacy Plan*, was originally set up in 1950 by Bill W and Doctor Bob. It was confirmed in 1955 in St Louis on the occasion of the Second International Convention. Bill W took great pains to explain that the Plan was purely suggestive and traditional, not a body of rules or laws. But it has served the Fellowship well since 1955 and no doubt will continue to do so into the foreseeable future.

So the Conference structure starts with the Group Conscience - with the Group. Let us look at the structural chart and see how this can be transmitted all the way down the line until it affects AA Australia-wide. (See *Conference Structure* diagram below.)

In this Manual, we should remember that we are speaking only of the *General Service Conference of Australia*. Similar centres of world services are set up in other parts of the globe and there is a biennial *World Service Meeting* to which Australia sends two *World Service Delegates*. There has been no attempt to make New York the world capital of AA. GSO New York is regarded as the Senior Service Centre because of its longer experience.

*General Service Representatives* (GSRs) elect a *District Committee Member*, so called because this DCM automatically becomes a member of the *Area Committee*. GSRs and DCMs who make up the *Area Assembly*, then elect an *Area Delegate* to represent the Area in the overall Conference picture. The annual Conference meeting in November in Sydney (as explained in Chapter VI) is made up of Area and International Delegates, Trustees, General Service Office Staff and others that Conference may invite.

Area Delegates carry the major influence in the Conference, which is felt in two ways:

1. They make up the Conference committees, covering just about all kinds of AA activities;
2. all Area Delegates have free access to the Conference platform for the discussion of all actions affecting the movement.

Trustees meet three times a year (as finances allow) and pass along their guidance through their own committees. Actions of the Trustees are reported to the Fellowship through "AA Around Australia" (published quarterly) and the "*Final Conference Report*", sent to all Conference Members free of charge, and is also available for purchase to all AA Members and Groups.

The General Service Board of AA Australia, is responsible for the running and staffing of the General Service Office and its literature and publishing operations, and may appoint some of its members as a committee to carry out this responsibility.

So, in keeping with the best tradition of AA, we find that whatever 'authority' exists is first expressed in the Group Conscience - then passed along through the Group representative to the Conference - from Conference to Trustees, then to Trustee committees and the Board and its committees - to AA and non-AA staffs -all acting as custodians of our *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions* and all functioning within the framework of Bill W's *Twelve Concepts*.

Every two years in every Area, each AA Group has the opportunity to build its share of the Conference structure. It elects a *General Service Representative* (GSR). This GSR gets together with other GSRs to elect a *District Committee Member* (DCM) for the District.

Methods of election are handled in some detail in the chapters which follow. The end results are an Area Committee and an Area Delegate. Area Delegates gather each year in Sydney for a Conference meeting. They meet with the other Registered Members of the Conference: AA's Trustees, the General Service Office staff and World Service Delegates, and other non-voting participants who may be invited, such as Central Service Office personnel or AA visitors from overseas.

The Conference structure is in year-round operation, since the people involved, GSRs, District Committee Members, Area Delegates, are usually very active in Area affairs. The Conference meeting in November then provides a movement-wide forum for the discussion of principles and problems that affect AA as a whole. Every Region has at least one Area Delegate and one Area Committee. More populous Regions have several.

## WHAT ARE GENERAL SERVICES?

The newcomer soon learns about the importance of *Twelfth Step Work* - service to another alcoholic which helps both giver and receiver to stay sober. The member then sees such work broadened to include Central Service Office or *Intergroup* service and institutional committee service. Finally, General Services. What are they?

In Bill W's fine introduction to this Manual, he tells how general services grew to fill a need beyond the reach of individual, Group, Central Office and *Intergroup*.

The *Twelve Traditions* make clear the principle that AA as such, should never be organised, that there are no bosses and no government in AA. Yet at the same time, the *Traditions* recognise the need for some kind of organisation to carry the message in ways that are impossible for the local Groups – such as publication of a uniform literature and public information resources, helping new Groups get started, publishing a national or international magazine, and carrying the message in other languages into other countries. Therefore whilst the local Groups, *Intergroups* and Districts are mostly concerned with local *12<sup>th</sup> Step* work by providing 'Central' Service, ie coalface AA, 'General' Service is concerned with those services which affect AA as a whole - services that these local Groups are unable to provide.

Today, the term 'General Service' is applied to all kinds of activities within the Conference structure, carried on by District Committees, Area Committees, Area Delegates, Trustees and General Service Office staff. Almost always, they are part of AA's distinctive *Unity* which allows the Fellowship to function so well.

See also "*Working Together: General Services & Local Central Services*" in Section 5: "The Area": Part 2 - "*Area Activities*". Note: The term 'World Service' is used in North America to describe



service for AA as a whole, in situations where we in Australia would say 'General Service'. Thus the '*Twelve Concepts for World Service*' (Section 12: "AA's Traditional Legacy Documents"), describe the checks and balances that sustain the General Service Conference structure, but the term is also used to describe the international 'World Service Meetings', where delegates from many countries come together to share their experience, strength and hope in their General Service work at home and in their Zones. See Section 8: AA's "International Activities".

## THE CONFERENCE CHARTER

### MEANING OF THE CONFERENCE CHARTER

The General Service Conference Charter of 1955, adopted by the Australian General Service Conference in 1970, is a body of principles and relationships through which AA can function as a whole. It provides, for example, that a majority vote of the Conference shall be considered a 'suggestion' to the Board of Trustees and General Service Office, but that a two-thirds vote shall be binding on the Board.

The Conference itself, is unincorporated, and its Charter is not a legal instrument in the strictest sense. It is truly an informal agreement between the Fellowship as a whole and its Trustees, setting forth the means by which AA can give worldwide service.

Such is the practical balance of duties, responsibilities and powers as they stand today. Though these arrangements can be changed by Conference action, experience indicates that they are thoroughly practical and are likely to survive all future strain.

### FROM THE NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE CHARTER

#### **The North American Conference Charter states:**

Other sections of the Conference may sometimes be created in foreign lands as the need arises out of language or geographical consideration. The US and Canada Section of the General Service Conference will then become the Senior Section, related to the other Sections by ties of mutual consultation and a cross linking of delegates.

But no Conference Section shall ever be placed in authority over another. All joint action shall be taken only upon a two-thirds vote of the combined Sections. Within its boundaries each Conference ought to be autonomous. Only matters seriously affecting AA's worldwide needs shall be the subject of joint consideration.

# THE AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE CHARTER

The full *Conference Charter* is located in the back of this Service Manual with the other service documents, for easy Reference (Section 13: “AA’s Traditional ‘Legacy’ Documents”). The *Australian Charter* covers the following:

1. Purpose of Conference
2. Composition
3. Conference Relation to AA
4. Conference Relation to the General Service Board and its Corporate Services
5. Area Assemblies: Composition of
6. Area Assemblies: Purpose of
7. Area Assemblies: Method of Electing Area Committee Members and Delegates
8. Area Assemblies: Terms of Office for Group General Service Representatives, Area Committee Members and Delegates
9. The Australian General Service Conference Meeting
10. The General Service Board: Composition, Jurisdiction, Responsibilities
11. The Australian General Service Conference: Its General Procedures
12. General Warranties of the Conference.
13. The World Service Delegates: Selection, Roles, Terms and Alternates.

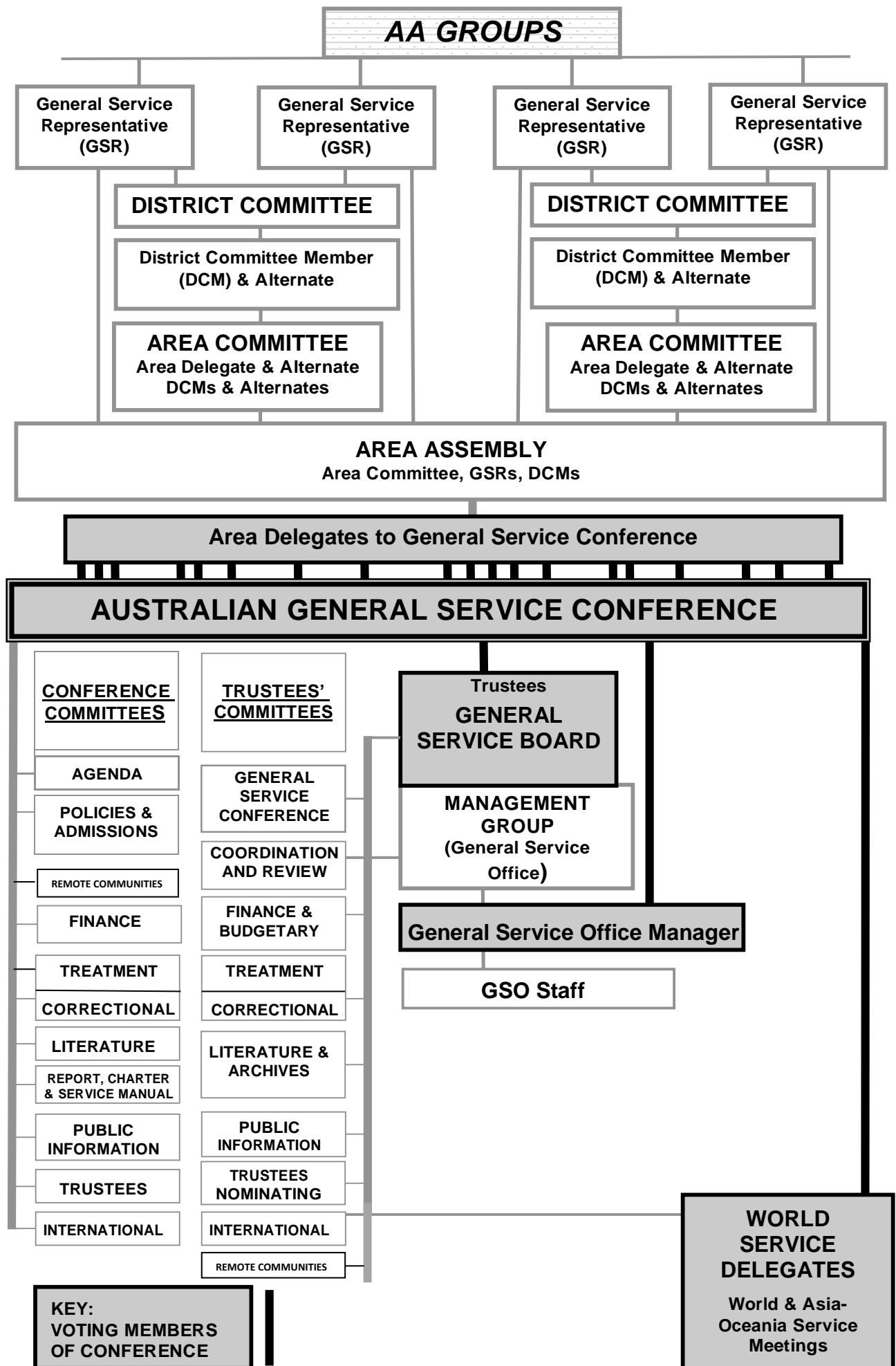


Figure 2 Australian General Service Conference Structure



# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION TWO**

# **THE AA GROUP**



**What is an AA Group?**

**Responsibility for All Our Services**

**The Final Voice**

**How Much Organisation?**

**Group Conscience Meetings**

**The Home Group**

**Group Information Sheets**

**Group Registration Form**

# WHAT IS AN AA GROUP?

The long form of *Tradition Three* and a section of *Warranty Six* in *Concept 12*, aptly define an AA Group:

*Tradition Three*: "Our membership should include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor should AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or more alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA Group provided that, as a Group, they have no other affiliation."

*Warranty Six, Concept Twelve*: "... much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which the AA Traditions accord to the individual member and to the Group, viz: no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to AA principles; no fees or dues to be levied - voluntary contributions only; no member to be expelled from AA - membership always to be the choice of the individual; each AA Group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes - it is merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure AA as a whole; finally, as stated above, any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA Group provided that, as a Group, they have no other purpose or affiliation."

To reiterate: **An AA Group consists of two or more alcoholics who gather together for meetings on a regular basis. These meetings are the start of recovery for the alcoholic who wants to stop drinking.**

As a Group, they are fully self-supporting, have no outside affiliations and no opinions on outside issues. Because AA's public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, the Group members maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV and film.

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL OUR SERVICES

**The primary purpose of the AA Group is to carry the AA message** to those alcoholics who haven't heard it yet. Much of this task is beyond the capacity of the individual Group, so all the Groups co-operate with one another to set up various means for reaching the suffering alcoholic in the community, e.g.:

- a) District and Area Committees to help new Groups get started, to carry the message into prisons and institutions;
- b) Central Offices to handle requests for help and to share local news;
- c) a General Service Office to provide supplies of uniform literature, to share AA experience among widespread Groups, to maintain contacts with the rest of the AA world.

These and other service activities are all governed by our singleness of purpose and are all the responsibility of the AA Groups.

# THE AA GROUP - THE FINAL VOICE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

Alcoholics Anonymous has been called an upside-down organisation because the final responsibility and ultimate authority for World Services resides with the Groups rather than with the Trustees of the General Service Board (GSB) or the General Service Office.

## HOW MUCH ORGANISATION SHOULD AN AA GROUP HAVE?

Because *Tradition Four* states that each Group is autonomous except in matters affecting other Groups or AA as a whole, there needs to be an open, readily-accessible channel of communication between the Groups and AA service structure in order to preclude problems of isolation.

For this to take place, some organisation is necessary. The Group selects or elects officers and committees. In some instances these officers, 'servants' of the Group, make up the *Group Steering Committee*, which conducts the routine business of the Group and is responsible to the Group. In other Areas Groups operate without a steering committee and simply conduct their business meetings with all Group members in attendance. The appropriate trusted servants within the Group then carry out the wishes of the Group Conscience.

Groups may also refer to the "Australian AA Group Handbook" for guidance.

## GROUP CONSCIENCE MEETINGS

The Group should take the necessary time to become informed about the matter to be discussed. A majority decision may still leave a most unhappy minority.

A minority particularly a silent minority should be encouraged to voice its opinions.

A decision need not be hurriedly made, it can be adjourned from time to time in order to achieve unanimity.

Compromises granted by a majority may result in an ultimate decision which sits comfortably with all, or nearly all of the participants.

A forceful advocate is not always right.

## THE HOME GROUP

Experience has shown that for most AA members, a feeling of 'belonging' to a particular Group, often known as the member's '*Home Group*', is important in maintaining sobriety through Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the early days of the Fellowship, the AA members met in the homes of fellow members to share their experience, strength and hope with one another. From such Home Groups they went on to help newcomers seeking sobriety through AA.

Thus the concept of the Home Group has grown to thousands of Groups through which the Home Group member helps others to recover from alcoholism. Through the years, the very essence of AA strength has remained with the traditional "AA Home Group". This is true especially where isolated alcoholics have found sobriety, Fellowship, service work and the true joy of good living through their own AA Group.

Traditionally, many AA members through the years have found it important to belong to one Group which they call their Home Group. This is the Group where they accept responsibility and try to sustain friendships. And although all AA members are welcome at all Groups and feel at home at any of these meetings, the concept of the Home Group has still remained the strongest bond between the AA member and the Fellowship.

The Home Group concept affords the AA member the privilege and right to vote on issues which might affect AA as a whole and is the very basis of our service structure. In *Concept One* Bill W writes "The ultimate responsibility and final authority for World Services resides with the Group, rather than with the Trustees of the General Service Board or the General Service Office."

Obviously, as with all Group Conscience matters, AA members have but one vote each, and this should be exercised through their Home Group.

One AA member states the following about her Home Group: "This is the Group where I accept responsibility for being informed and available. My Group cannot be in a contest designed for individuals, Group rivalry, or competition to see which Group is the biggest, or stays sober the longest, or which Group contributes the most service, or who is the most sought-after speaker."

"... part of my commitment is to show up at my Home Group meetings, greet newcomers at the door, and to be available to the newcomer - not only for them, but also for me. These Home Group members are the people who know me, who listen to me, and steer me straight when I am going off the beaten track. This Home Group cares about me, and thus I can care about the newcomers that come to my Group. When a newcomer walks in I want them to have the very best AA has to offer, just as I had.

"... if each of us stays active in our Home Group, emptying ashtrays, making coffee, rotating onto steering committees, opening and closing meeting places, taking the 12 Steps and practicing the 12 Traditions, our Home Group will not only survive, it will be there for days, months and years to come offering all of us the loving, joyful and free life that AA has to offer, not only to us, but to all who follow us in this life of giving."

## GROUP INFORMATION SHEETS

The information given to our service centres needs to be updated on a regular basis.

Every time a change is made to a meeting place, meeting times, newly elected officers of the Group or mailing address, the Group needs to update the various details. The Group is responsible for notifying their Central Service Office, the General Service Office, their own District and Area and whoever distributes meeting lists.

It is important for all Groups to realise that information given to one service centre does not necessarily get passed onto other services. If the Central Service Office, District, Area or the General Service Office does not have current information then the Group may lose contact with AA as a whole and not be fully informed or able to vote, when important decisions are needed. Group PO boxes are encouraged as an aid to continuity of mailing addresses.

At present the methods of updating Group records vary throughout Australia; the General Service Office has a simple form for the purpose (see following page), but check with your local Central Service or Intergroup Office and Area for their particular forms or methods of updating.

Most landlords require a *Certificate of Currency* of Public Liability Insurance. Conference has determined that these will be issued on completion of the Registration Form (next page), indicating your Group's agreement to make financial contributions (amount not specified) from your Group surplus to General Service Office, to help defray the cost of that insurance, as well as other services provided by the General Service Office.



**Figure 3 Form for Group Registration & Public Liability Insurance**

<b>PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FORM AND RETURN IT TO THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE</b>							
<b>The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia</b>							
<b>48 Firth Street ARNCLIFFE NSW 2205 PHONE: 02 9599 8866 FAX: 02 9599 8844</b>							
<b>GROUP REGISTRATION FORM</b>							
<b>Group Name</b>							
<b>Suburb</b>					<b>State</b>	<b>AA Area</b>	
<b>Meeting Day (tick)</b>	Mon <input type="checkbox"/>	Tue <input type="checkbox"/>	Wed <input type="checkbox"/>	Thur <input type="checkbox"/>	Fri <input type="checkbox"/>	Sat <input type="checkbox"/>	Sun <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Meeting Start Time</b>							
<b>Meeting Place (church, school etc)</b>							
<b>Year Group Started</b>		<b>No. of Members</b>			<b>Average Attendance</b>		
<b>Group Contact Details</b>		<u>This can be a person (eg Secretary) or a Post Office Box</u>					
<b>Name</b>							
<b>Address</b>							
<b>Suburb</b>				<b>State</b>	<b>Post Code</b>		
<b>Phone</b>			<b>Mobile</b>				
<b>Email</b>							
<b>PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE</b>							
<b>Does your group require a certificate of currency?</b>						(yes/no)	
<u>For more information on the policy or whether or not your group needs a certificate, contact GSO.</u>							
The premiums for this insurance are expensive and the scheme is costly to administer. We suggest that groups support the General Service Office by donating 30% of their surplus funds. Many groups are already providing this level of support and do not need to contribute an additional amount. The percentage of surplus funds you donate ought to be decided at a group conscience meeting.							
<b>To register in the scheme, and to receive your certificate of currency, the group's secretary needs to complete and sign the following statement. Thank you for your support.</b>							
Our group conscience has agreed to donate _____ % of our surplus funds to the General Service Office of AA to defray the cost of public liability insurance and the other services it provides.							
<b>Signed by Group Secretary</b>				<b>Date</b>			
Please contact General Service Office if you do not understand any part of this form							



**THE AUSTRALIAN AA  
SERVICE MANUAL**

**SECTION THREE**

**THE GENERAL  
SERVICE  
REPRESENTATIVE  
(GSR)**



**Qualifications & Duties  
Election Procedure  
The Alternate GSR**

# THE GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

## QUALIFICATIONS & DUTIES

The *General Service Representative* (GSR) is the link between the Group and AA as a whole and is probably the most important single factor in the whole AA structure. The GSR represents the voice of the *Group Conscience*, reporting the Group's wishes to the Area through the District Committee Member (DCM) and to the Area Delegate through Area Committees and Assemblies, from where it is passed on to the Australian General Service Conference. *Whatever authority there is in AA is vested in the Group Conscience, and is then conveyed by the GSR and/or the DCM to the wider AA community.*

Usually, the prospective GSR has two or three years of continuous sobriety in AA and has time available for District meetings and Area Assemblies. Because the GSR may become a Committee Member or an Area Delegate, the Group should consider whether a candidate has the abilities, the time and the resources for such future assignments. In order that a Group may make an informed decision in electing their GSR, they should be aware of the responsibilities the job carries. An effective GSR needs:

1. to be open minded and a good listener;
2. to be an information gatherer;
3. a keen interest in AA as a whole;
4. a willingness to serve AA.

The General Service Representative (GSR) is his/her Group's mail contact for the Australian General Service Office of AA in Sydney. The GSR receives the newsletter "*AA Around Australia*" in order to keep her/himself and the Group abreast of AA activities at national and international level.

Beyond that, the GSR keeps General Service Office supplied with changes of officers, meetings, venues etc. It is the GSR who fills out the annual Group Registration Form as required, essential for the AA Directory and for General Service Office mailings.

The GSR knows what material is available from General Service Office, eg *Guidelines*, bulletins, films, tapes and kits, etc. and advises the Group of new literature announced in the pages of "*AA Around Australia*". It is the GSR's responsibility to make sure the Group is informed of the availability of *Conference Approved* pamphlets and books. The GSR needs to learn as much as possible about our *Traditions* and *Concepts* and should be familiar with the books "*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*" and "*AA Comes of Age*" together with the publications "*The AA Group Handbook*" and "*AA Tradition - How it Developed*".

The General Service Representative is also the Group's contact for the DCM and the Area Committee, so that he/she can be kept informed of forthcoming activities and additional information coming out of General Service Office.

The GSR is required to attend the Group's Group Conscience Meetings and is usually involved in the Group's activities, such as the *Group Donation Plan*, the *Birthday Club* and *The Action Club*, all of which go towards the support of General Service Office. (S/he is equally interested in encouraging the Group to support the Central Service Office.)

The GSR also informs his/her Group of agenda items to be discussed at District meetings and Area Assemblies and makes sure s/he is aware of Group feelings on current AA issues and conveys this to those meetings and Assemblies.

The GSR participates in District and Area Service Meetings and often helps with planning, advance registration and publicity for Area get-togethers and Conventions. Following these events, the GSR reports back to the Group for the benefit of those who could not attend. *This reporting back is extremely important, as the GSR is the vital communication link between AA and the Group.*

The GSR has a good understanding of "*The AA Group Handbook*" and assists new Group Secretaries and Members to use it. When a new Group is forming, the GSR nearby can be a great help in advising them about General Service Office services.

## ELECTIONS

The GSR serves for two years and is elected at a Group Conscience meeting, which may be held specially for that purpose if the Group prefers. To emphasise the need for care in selecting the GSR and the importance of the GSR's work in the District and Area, it may be helpful to invite a seasoned District Committee Member to lead a special question-and-answer session.

An informed Group will enjoy a well-planned special meeting - it will emphasise the meaning of the hand of AA reaching out to bring the Group closer to the Fellowship as a whole.

There should be written nominations from the floor, then written ballots. A simple majority is usually sufficient for election; however, if there is likely to be a close vote, the Group should agree beforehand to have a second ballot with only the high-scoring candidates in the running. If two candidates then tie, or the second vote is not a 2/3 majority, the two names are placed in the hat and one is drawn.

*This is a simplified version of the Third Legacy Procedure (see Section 12 for full version) for use at Group level if preferred.*

## THE ALTERNATE GSR

In case a GSR is unable to attend all District and Area meetings an Alternate GSR is needed. The Alternate GSR is elected at the same time as the GSR.

It has been found by some Groups that the alternate GSR can make an excellent PI (*Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community*) representative, rather than just being a stop-gap for the GSR.

## REMINDER!

The GSR may be in line for election later as DCM, Area officer or as Area Delegate. Are your candidates qualified in terms of experience and time available? If a GSR is subsequently elected as DCM, it is suggested that the Group be invited to elect another GSR, as experience has shown that holding both positions simultaneously is likely to be too heavy a load for one person.

## NOTIFICATION:

As soon as your GSR is elected notify your Area Committee and/or DCM and include full contact details.



# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION FOUR**

# **THE DISTRICT & THE DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER (DCM)**



**What is a District?**

**The DCM**

**How elected**

**What the DCM does**

# WHAT IS A DISTRICT?

An AA District is a geographical unit within an Area containing a number of AA Groups, the number being dependent on the ability of the General Service Representatives (GSRs) to communicate between each other and to meet regularly together with comparative ease. A metropolitan District may cover a small Area but contain 15-20 Groups, while a rural District may cover many square kilometres but include as few as 3 or 4 Groups.

As the number of Groups in an Area increases more Districts are formed, each new one then electing another District Committee Member (DCM) to the Area Committee. Experience has shown that the answer to growth rests in the setting up of more Districts to meet the Fellowship's expansion in size and activities, that is, more DCMs rather than more Areas and more Area Delegates at the Conference.

Because of the closer communication links within the District the Groups are able to share together and to carry their message more effectively. In Areas where communication is difficult because of vast distances the District brings communication and support to more Groups.

## THE DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER (DCM)

The DCM usually has GSR experience and is elected by the GSRs of the District to be responsible for the District. S/he is also responsible for carrying the collective Group Conscience of the Groups in the District to the Area Committee.

The DCM is the vital, two-way communication link between the Groups' GSRs and the Area Committee, including the Area Delegate. The qualifications for a good DCM are not complicated:

1. A background in AA service work that goes with the GSR job;
2. Enough sobriety (say four to five years) to be eligible for election to Area Delegate *and*
3. The time and energy to serve the District and Groups well.

Usually an Alternate is also elected to act as the DCM's stand-in and to automatically replace the DCM who resigns or is unable to serve for any reason. Often this is the runner-up in the DCM election. In most Areas the DCMs are asked to resign if they find they cannot assume the responsibilities of the job, for the District GSRs need this leadership.

## HOW ELECTED

The term of office is two years and generally coincides with the terms of the GSRs and Area Committee officers, other than the Area Delegate. Some Areas, however, rotate half their DCMs each year.

The DCM is normally elected prior to March 1, the date when the term commences. The election takes place after that of the GSRs and before the election of Area Committee officers, including that of Area Delegate (if due). The reason is clear: the DCM is chosen from among the new GSRs or from among both the past and present GSRs. As well, **it is advisable that a candidate should be a DCM in order to be eligible for election as an Area Committee officer or Area Delegate.**

The retiring DCM sets up the election meeting and notifies both the GSRs who have just been elected and those who are rotating out. That is the procedure used by many Districts today, but the method used should be decided by the Area Assembly, not the DCM.



Here are some of the methods:

1. Only the new and immediate past GSRs are eligible to run and vote or
2. Only newly elected GSRs are eligible to run and vote or
3. Only immediate past GSRs are eligible to run but all GSRs, outgoing and new, can vote.

The last alternative has the advantage of ensuring that the elected DCM has two years of experience as a GSR before becoming eligible for the more responsible role. It is desirable to have the same procedure for all Districts in the Area, and to have it approved by the Area Assembly.

If a retiring GSR, able and experienced, has the time and enthusiasm s/he will make a good DCM. On the other hand it may be necessary to elect a currently serving GSR, in which case the Group concerned should elect a GSR replacement; experience has shown that it is not practical to serve as DCM and GSR at the same time.

Election is usually by written ballot with a simple majority needed to elect, but a District may choose to follow the *Third Legacy Procedure* and call for a 2:1 majority to elect. (See Section 12: "AA's Traditional Legacy Documents".)

Generally, and for reasons given earlier, District meetings to elect DCMs are held in advance of Area Assemblies and separate from them, although there are cases where the distances to be travelled make this impractical and even a hardship. (This often means that more Districts should be set up).

Where such a condition exists and cannot be corrected readily, meetings to elect DCMs may be held on the same day, but before and at the same place, as the Area Assembly held to elect Area officers.

Can a DCM be re-elected? This question arises occasionally and the answer is yes - at a regular election, where there is every opportunity for presenting all available candidates. Most AA Members feel, however, that rotation keeps the Area Committee more vital and productive.

## WHAT THE DCM DOES

### DCM RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose behind all the work of the DCM is the maintenance of a vital, active link between the Groups in a District and the Fellowship as a whole, through the Area structure. Among the responsibilities of the DCMs are:

- Holding regular meetings of all GSRs in the District at monthly, bimonthly or quarterly intervals, whichever is deemed most effective ('District Committee Meetings'.)
- Attending Area Assemblies and Committee meetings, carrying the collective Group Conscience of the Groups in the District.
- Obtaining Group information details from all Groups in the District for the General Service Office and Area communication.
- Keeping GSRs informed about Conference activities.
- Acquainting GSRs with the "Australian AA Service Manual", "*AA Around Australia*" and other AA Conference-Approved literature.

- Acquainting GSRs with the *Twelve Concepts*, the “AA Guidelines on Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community” (PI/CPC) and other service material.
- Encouraging non-supporting Groups in the practice of the *Seventh Tradition*.
- Assisting the Area Delegate in making the “Conference Report” to the Groups in the District.
- Holding workshops and sharing sessions on almost any service subject (see Section 6: “The Area Delegate” and Section 5: “The Area”).
- And, of course, making a regular practice of talking to Groups, new and old, on the value of General Service work.
- Making sure that District meetings have real purpose, i.e., that their agenda have practical proposals for ‘carrying our message’.

## DCM ACTIVITIES

In carrying out these responsibilities, the activities of the DCM will be many and varied and both challenging and stimulating. Among those most commonly reported are:

- Forming a *Public Information Sub-Committee* to encourage and coordinate PI&CPC activities throughout the District. (If the local CSO or Area is already active in PI&CPC work, to assist the sub-committee).
- Inviting the Area Delegate to attend and participate in District meetings.
- Organising *District workshops* to enable GSRs to discuss with the Area Delegate items on the coming Conference agenda.
- Keeping the Area Delegate informed of all District activities and *Traditions* problems through reports, and sharing of minutes and correspondence.
- Arranging guest participation at District meetings and workshops by Area Committee officers and other experienced general service workers.
- Organising workshops etc, to coincide with District meetings.
- Sharing experience and information with other Districts through interchange of minutes and inter-District meetings and workshops.
- Keeping Area Committee officers and the Alternate DCM informed through regular reports and copies of minutes.
- Involving the Alternate DCM in the DCM's activities and ensuring s/he can function when the DCM cannot.
- Encouraging the growth of the GSRs through involvement in varied General Service activities.
- Assisting GSRs, when necessary, to communicate with their Groups and to make interesting reports.
- Encouraging regular discussion of the *Twelve Traditions* at Group meetings.
- Attending conferences, conventions and forums whenever possible for sharing and gathering new ideas.
- Helping with the organising of forums and conventions.
- Encouraging interest among members, new and old, to attend District workshops, sharing sessions, etc.

# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION FIVE**

# **THE AREA**



### ***Part 1 The Area Committee***

**Area Officers, Qualifications**

**The Area Assembly**

**Third Legacy Elections**

**Area Support**

### ***Part 2 Area Activities - Local***

**Non-election Assemblies**

**Sharing Sessions**

**Working with Central Offices**

**How do we form a new Area?**

**The Role of the Area Registrar**

### ***Part 3 Areas Looking Outward***

**The Area & the Region**

**Area, Regional & National Conventions**

**Regional Forums**

**Regional Trustee Nominations**

**The Area & Conference**

**Help on the Annual Conference Program**

**Two Hats**

# **PART 1: THE AREA COMMITTEE**

## **SCOPE OF THE AREA COMMITTEE**

The *Area Committee*, perhaps more than any other group of people in AA, is responsible for the health of the Conference structure and, by the same token, for growth and harmony in our beloved Fellowship.

The Area for which the Area Committee is responsible may be part of a *Region* (see Map in Section 9: "The General Service Board"), or all of it. Thus, the Area Committee is in a fortunate middle position. Through its elected *Area Delegate*, it learns first hand what is happening in AA Australian and *World Services*. Through the *District Committee Members*, it is close to *District* and local scenes. If GSRs are lax, if there is a lack of harmony in the District, the District Committee Member soon knows it and can then turn to the whole Area Committee for help in restoring peace or generating more activity among the Groups in the District. This middle position is indeed a vital one.

An active Area Committee is aware of all kinds of service problems and is alert to situations which happen with some frequency throughout the Fellowship, such as:

### ***Group meetings that attract***

Are they generally interesting? Are they programmed to attract new members and to hold the interest of oldtimers as well?

### ***Active institutional work***

Is the AA message getting into hospitals, prisons, and rehab centres?

### ***Useful public information***

Are news media informed about AA in the District? Do they know the AA sources for news and feature material? Is there an active public information committee, or is one needed?

### ***New Groups and Loners***

Are they being visited and helped?

This is but a sampling of the problems with which an Area Committee may find itself involved. (See Part 2 of this chapter for full dress treatment of Area activities). A partial list has been given here to point up the kind of activity and the kind of active AAs the Area Committee needs to accomplish its purpose. In other words, there is much more to an Area Committee's work than the election of officers and an Area Delegate to the Australian General Service Conference in Sydney.

# WHO IS ON THE AREA COMMITTEE?

Basically, the Area Committee is composed of all *District Committee Members* (DCMs), **one from each District** in the Area, whom the GSRs have elected to represent their District, and the *Alternate DCMs*. (See preceding Section). There should be enough Districts, each with its DCM, to ensure good communication between the Area Committee and the Groups.

The *Area Delegate* and the *Alternate Delegate* also serve on the Area Committee and all have equal voting rights. Other Area Committee officers are elected by the Assembly, usually *Chairperson*, *Secretary* and *Treasurer*.

In some Areas, past Area Delegates can serve on the Area Committee without a vote; in others, the outgoing Area Delegate is an ex-officio member. This is left to the Group Conscience of the Area Assembly.

## AREA COMMITTEE OFFICERS & QUALIFICATIONS

Leadership must come from the officers. They must have the enthusiasm and know-how of the individual District Committee Member, plus the ability to organise and give the Area Committee direction and incentive.

Past Area Committee Chairpersons were asked to weigh their successes and failures and to decide, judging by the record, what attributes and experience seemed most helpful to them in fulfilling their jobs. Here are their opinions of the qualifications needed by a good Chairperson:

## CHAIRPERSON QUALIFICATIONS

### ***AA experience***

Many preferred five years of continuous sobriety, some three, but all agreed that a considerable period of sobriety is desirable, plus experience in Group, Central Service Office, or institutional affairs. This would normally include a sound understanding and appreciation of the *Steps*, the *Traditions* and the *Concepts* and, better still, the know-how gained by applying these guides successfully to local problems.

### ***Leadership***

Chairpersons should be able to organise and to lead yet act like servants rather than dictators. Their leadership talent should help them instil in others a high interest in Conference service. It should also help them to make sure that **some** action is taken on **all** matters coming before the meeting, leaving no troublesome loose ends. The ideal Chairperson too has considerable planning ability and certainly will be able to conduct meetings in an orderly manner.

### ***Ability to communicate***

The ideal candidate is sensitive to the wishes of the Area but is not too sensitive about self.

Such a candidate

- Has an keen desire to see AA thrive and prosper, but is tolerant of those who cannot see beyond their own Group's horizon.
- Has an interesting and meaningful AA history to relate at Group meetings, along with a service talk.

- Is skilled in communication and can serve well as a 'stay at home' Delegate.
- Is aware of what goes on in the District, so as to keep the Area Delegate informed and is also aware of what goes on in *World Services*, so as to keep the Area Committee informed.

### ***Living the example***

Ideal Chairpersons know that one of the greatest services they can render AA is to live in such a way that their example may influence many people without their knowing it. Through watching them, members may realise that service to the Fellowship is part of our personal recovery.

## **SECRETARY QUALIFICATIONS**

A good Secretary can add great vitality and drive to the Area Committee. Even the best committee can be greatly handicapped by an inefficient secretary and, conversely, can be much more effective with a competent one. Here is what three former secretaries have to say regarding qualifications:

### ***Sobriety and business experience***

"Reasonable period of sobriety" may mean two years in an Area where AA is still young, four or five years in an older Area. Some service in Group or Central Office or General Services is useful, as is some background in general office work. Computer skills are useful."

### ***Sense of order***

"Taking minutes of meetings means sifting through quite a few thousand words to get the kernel, the essence of what has been said. The Secretary is also responsible for keeping mailing lists up to date and for getting out mailings. He or she may also be responsible for preparing lively bulletins which will bring people to Area Committee meetings and Assemblies."

### ***Time, interest and energy***

"The job demands considerable time and needs to be carried out on schedule; this takes interest, not to mention devotion. The secretary is in a good position to act as liaison between officers and District Committee Members and can play the role of arbitrator when necessary."

## **TREASURER QUALIFICATIONS**

The Area Treasurer should be a responsible person who can keep good records and handle money with integrity. The Treasurer needs to take care to hand on all records, bank account names and numbers and any other essential information when he or she rotates off.

### ***Time in AA***

Experience indicates someone who has had a substantial period of continuous sobriety and should be a careful guardian of Area funds, with an eye to preventing foolish or extravagant outlays of Area Committee money.

## **Accounting experience**

If the Treasurer's background includes bookkeeping, so much the better. Otherwise, help will be needed in setting up a system, or in understanding the present system.

## **Persuasiveness**

In many cases, the Treasurer is responsible for raising the money needed for the support of Area and of General Service Office, an activity which calls for firmness and diplomacy. If the Area Committee appoints a *Finance Chairperson*, the Treasurer is free for record keeping and financial controls.

## **Other Officer Qualifications**

Other officers may be elected or co-opted to be responsible for special activities such as *Public Information, Treatment & Correctional Facilities, Finance, Liaison with Central Office, Newsletter editor, Literature* etc.

# **THE AREA ASSEMBLY**

Any meeting of Area GSRs and the Area Committee is an 'Assembly' and the "**Area Assembly**" is the mainspring of the Conference structure. It is the democratic voice of the movement expressing itself. Assemblies are the responsibility of the Area Committee, and they are conducted by the Chairperson. An *Inaugural Assembly* is held to elect an Area Delegate and Alternate, when appropriate, and Area Committee officers; this election meeting is usually scheduled prior to February 1. The newly-elected Area Delegates and officers take office on March 1.

An Assembly of combined Areas may be held in order to choose a candidate for Regional Trustee. See Part 3 under "*Regional Trustee Nominations*".

## **THE NON-ELECTION ASSEMBLY**

Other Assemblies or meetings may be held as the Area wishes. In some Areas they may be called "*workshops*" or "*General Service sessions*", but most Areas call them "Assemblies" and include workshops, etc in that title. The election meeting, however, is always called an "Assembly". (More about non-election Assemblies in Part 2).

## **FOR THE CHAIRPERSON - SUGGESTIONS ON ASSEMBLIES**

### **ORGANISING AN ASSEMBLY**

#### **The Chairperson**

- Convenes an Assembly in consultation with the Area Committee.
- Makes sure that all Groups in the Area are notified, advising them to send a GSR or to elect a GSR if they have none. This action is usually handled by the Secretary. (Most Areas consider an Assembly to be a 'closed' meeting, for AA members only).

- Consults with Area Officers and DCMs on the agenda for the Assembly, paying particular attention to any need for additional Districts and additional DCMs.

Much depends on the Chairperson's ability to conduct a smoothly-functioning meeting. Those with little experience in chairing business meetings can still do a good job if they will bear these simple suggestions in mind:

- Be responsible for keeping the issues clear. If a motion is offered, be sure that it is seconded and stated clearly and distinctly so that everyone is fully aware of what is being voted upon.
- Adhere closely to *Third Legacy Procedure* for elections and discourage departures from it. (See below)
- A 'sense of the meeting' poll is preferred to a vote. In such cases, the Chairperson asks: "Is it the sense of the meeting that .... ?" If there are no 'Nos', it is apparent there is accord.
- Meetings may be fairly informal, but the attention of the entire meeting should be kept on one subject at a time, without the disruptive influence of private conversations.
- An Assembly may make its own rules, but the Chairperson should make it clear that the members must decide on any desired change in rules **before** a motion is voted on, or **before** an election is conducted. Be sure the Assembly is aware of suggested procedures in the Manual, before changes are made. (See below - "*Who is seated?*")

## A TYPICAL ELECTION ASSEMBLY AGENDA

Preparations are complete, the GSRs and DCMs are registered, manuals are available and blackboard and chalk are in the front of the room. What next? What is the order of business? Here is a typical agenda for an Election Assembly.

1. The outgoing Chairperson opens the meeting and the Twelve Traditions are recited, either all by one member or one each by successive members.
2. Secretary, Area Delegate and other officers report on the activities since the last Assembly.
3. Chairperson announces procedure for election of Area Committee Officers and acceptance of DCMs already elected by GSRs in their Districts.
4. If a District has not elected a DCM in advance of the Assembly, GSRs from that District convene to elect one. Chairperson announces a recess for this purpose.
5. Chairperson reviews the election procedure (also review subsection entitled "*Who Presides? Who Votes?*" in Part 2), and asks approval of it and the order of election. Usual procedure is to elect the *Area Delegate* first, then the *Alternate Area Delegate*, followed by the *Chairperson*, *Secretary*, *Treasurer* etc. The new Chairperson then takes the chair.

The Chairperson then adjourns the meeting.

## THIRD LEGACY PROCEDURE

In 2003 Conference approved a version of the *Third Legacy Procedure* which can be found under "AA's Traditional Legacy Documents" in Section: 12.



## **WHO IS SEATED?**

The Assembly comprises the GSRs, the DCMs and the Area Officers. Usually, GSRs attend the Assembly nearest their Group, but they may go to any Assembly their Group wishes them to attend, even across a Regional boundary, if deemed advisable and **approved by the Assembly of the Group's choice**.

Uniform procedures throughout the Fellowship are in no way obligatory or even practical in many cases. Procedures which are suitable in one Area may not be in another. It is desirable that every Area have its own agreed-upon procedure to expedite the conduct of its business. Every Area, operating on the *Fourth Tradition*, will decide what is best for its own needs and capabilities, and each Assembly should be the final judge of whom it will seat.

## **GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE IS FREQUENTLY ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

1. Who is eligible to vote at Assemblies? Do incoming or outgoing Area Committee Members and GSRs vote? Do both incoming and outgoing District Committee Members vote? How long should an Area Committee Member or GSR hold office before being eligible to vote?

*The question is usually answered by referring to Part 2 of this Section; it is important for each Area Assembly to decide, through its own Group Conscience, the method it plans to use, so that Assembly time is not taken up in the discussion and debate of procedural questions.*

2. As each Group has only one vote, what about the vote of DCMs or Committee officers who also belong to one or another of the Groups?

*The experience that has been shared with General Service Office indicates that the Area Delegate, Committee officers and DCMs are each members of a Group in the Area which is represented by a GSR. They are, nevertheless, entitled to vote at the Assembly according to their own ideas; the GSRs vote according to the consciences of the Groups they represent.*

3. If the District Committee Member also serves as the GSR, should this member have two votes, one as Area Committee member and one as GSR?

*At no time should a member have two votes. This Manual suggests that when a GSR is elected to DCM, thus becoming a member of the Area Committee, the Group should then elect another GSR.*

4. Do the Chairpersons of special committees - public information, institutions, literature, etc. - have a vote?

*In many Areas these Chairpersons are voting members, but this is a decision to be made by the Area Assembly.*

5. How long must a Group have been in existence before its GSR is eligible to vote?

*Once again, Assemblies can establish their own ground rules on this matter; but usually, if an AA Group has submitted the name of a GSR to represent that Group at the Assembly, that GSR is eligible to vote.*

6. Can one GSR represent two Groups?

*No. Each Group should have its own GSR, and that GSR may vote for one Group only.*

7. When the GSR cannot be present, can a proxy vote be accepted?

***If a GSR cannot be present, the Alternate votes in his or her place. A GSR can vote by proxy, but this is not a common practice; it usually applies only in the case of institutions Groups.***

8. Are voting restrictions placed on GSRs, DCMs and Area Committee officers who have been absent from the preceding two (or more) Assemblies?

*It is suggested that Area Committee members be asked to resign if time does not permit them to assume their responsibilities. This, too, is a decision to be made by the Assemblies themselves, and some do have ground rules relating voting eligibility to attendance at previous Assemblies.*

## **WHERE HELD?**

Many Areas rotate their Assembly sites from city to city. Some are held in the same place, and at the same time, as a regional convention. This saves the time and cost of travel to a separate meeting and gives all AAs who attend the convention a chance to see General Services in action. However, the convention programme and convention traffic sometimes get in the way of the orderly flow of Assembly business, and for this reason the combination site is becoming less popular. Most Areas schedule Assemblies monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly. Some are weekend functions, some are one-day affairs, etc.

## **HOW THE AREA COMMITTEE IS SUPPORTED**

Typical of most financial undertakings in AA, the cost of supporting an Area Committee is small in relation to comparable activities in business firms and in many other organisations. Nonetheless, sufficient funds are needed or the work of the Area Committee will be hampered. Most Areas today maintain solvent treasuries and report regularly to their GSRs on the financial picture.

There are, of course, the routine expenses of postage, phone calls and bulletin printing. The Area Delegate needs money for the trip to the Conference meeting each November in Sydney. Area Committee members incur further travel expenses when they report to Groups following the Conference meeting. Many active Area Committees support public information programmes and buy literature for Groups in institutions. Each Area contributes a specified amount of money (determined annually), to General Service Office to help defray the cost of the Conference. This amount is sent to General Service Office no later than August 31 of each year, but normally in quarterly instalments.

## **HERE ARE SOME OF THE METHODS AREAS USE TO KEEP THEIR COMMITTEES SOLVENT AND EFFECTIVE:**

- They take collections at Assemblies and District meetings.
- They ask Groups for annual or monthly contributions based on about \$1.00 per year per member, usually with a \$5.00 minimum for the Group.
- They leave "money boxes" with Groups, pointing out that each member who puts ten cents in weekly will have contributed \$5.20 when the year is done.
- They share in a regular contribution plan whereby groups contribute on a monthly or quarterly basis to CSO, General Service Office, District and Area. See the free pamphlet "Group Contribution Plans" from General Service Office.
- After Group expenses have been met, one suggested division is the 60-30-10 Plan: (60% to CSO, 30% to General Service Office and 10% to Area); another possibility is 50-30-10-10 (CSO 50%, NOAA 30%, Area 10%, District 10%); another could be 40-30-30 (CSO or District 40%, NOAA 30%, Area 30%) – it is up to the Group Conscience.

***End of part 1***

## **PART 2: AREA ACTIVITIES – LOCAL**

In the beginning, *General Service Assemblies* were held only to elect Area Committee officers and an Area Delegate to the Annual Conference. This was important, for without such elections there would be no service structure in your Area today. But today an Assembly for elections is only a beginning. This part of Section 5 deals with other activities which are the muscle and blood of General Services in the Area. It deals with sharing sessions, public information programs and the kind of discussion that makes AA strong and vital. It deals with activities that have succeeded in stimulating interest in General Service and in helping Groups grow in number, strength and influence.

(The *District Meeting* - for the DCM and his or her GSRs - can use many of the same program activities).

### **NON-ELECTION AREA ASSEMBLY MEETINGS**

#### ***HOW FREQUENTLY ARE MEETINGS HELD?***

The majority of Areas hold their Assembly meetings quarterly or every other month. Some report monthly Assemblies. When the travel distances are great, Assemblies may be cut to biannual or even annual, with more emphasis being placed on District meetings, which are readily accessible to GSRs.

An Assembly is usually held in a convenient central spot in the Area. Some Areas, however, rotate from one District to another. Growing in popularity are weekend Assemblies, usually held Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, with all AA members invited to attend. Most Areas no longer hold Assemblies in conjunction with local or national conventions. It proves too difficult to tie in business meetings with the kind of AA speaker program that makes conventions so successful. On the other hand, most local Area or Regional Conventions are under the guidance of Area or District Committees.

#### ***WHO PRESIDES? WHO VOTES?***

Assembly Meetings are usually conducted by the Area Chairperson, with the help of the officers and the Area Delegate. To keep agendas lively and meaningful, some Areas appoint *Agenda Committees* which include the officers and some of the GSRs.

All DCMs and Area officers, all GSRs and the Area Delegate have one vote each in an Assembly. Alternates normally vote only if the regular Area Committee member or GSR is not present. Proxy votes can be used, but this is not common practice.

The Assembly should decide whether or not GSRs of prison and hospital Groups are to have a vote - many do and find it helpful. It should formally fix the amount of time permitted for a participant's discussion, and should determine whether a two-thirds vote or a simple majority is needed for an action. (Some Assemblies find that a simple 'sense of the meeting' is preferable to the more formal vote on most items of business).

## **WHAT KIND OF PROGRAM?**

A typical meeting (other than the Election Assembly outlined earlier) could have the following agenda:

1. Chairperson's report on committee activities since last meeting.
2. Area Delegate's Conference report or recent communications from General Service Office.
3. Secretary's report.
4. Treasurer's report. (Usually a good time to remind everyone of the suggested methods whereby Groups may contribute to all their AA service entities).
5. District reports.
6. Newsletter editor's report.
7. Treatment and Correctional Facilities report.
8. Public Information report.
9. Special reports - magazine, literature, convention, etc.
10. GSR time - for ideas, opinions and criticisms from GSRs.
11. Sharing session (see below *"How to Set Up a Sharing Session"*).
12. Brief information session on General Service Office services - conducted by Area Delegate.

Should an Area or District invite a General Service Board trustee (other than Regional trustee), GSO staff member/s, World Service Delegate or National Co-ordinator to attend an Area or District event (excluding Regional/National Forums and approved special events), the costs for travel, accommodation, meals and registration of the guest/s should be covered by that Area or District.

## **SOME IDEAS FOR ASSEMBLY AND DISTRICT MEETINGS**

General Service Office appreciates copies of Assembly and District Meeting minutes, also letters about the meetings. There is no easier way for the office to keep up with what is happening in the Area, and no easier guide to the kind of help it can best render. Here are some ideas from the mailbag:

"The meeting considered the formation of an Area Hospitals and Institutions Committee. GSRs felt they should first study the "Guidelines" which General Service Office had provided and discuss that matter with their Groups."

"At our Area Assembly, we allow enough time for each DCM to report on District activities. We also encourage participation by as many GSRs as possible. The more sharing, the greater the exchange of ideas and solutions and the richer the harmony. Everyone benefits as the message is shared."

"In election years, we limit committee members' reports to two minutes each."

"We have not shied away from what some think are taboo subjects, such as money and why we need it, length of sobriety for GSRs, etc. We always open the meeting with a 'state of the Area' report - brief, to the point, touching on most of the subjects to come before the meeting. This lets the participants know what is coming and means better use of allotted time."

"Our Assemblies run Saturday and Sunday. The first morning is a GSR sharing session with our Area Delegate as moderator, usually with a pre-announced topic. We put out flyers for each Assembly. The afternoon is a business session, followed by a short session with the Area Chairperson as moderator, and past Area Delegates telling how General Service Office is set up and how it helps AA work around the world."

"We found it best to keep business to a minimum and to use most of the time for sharing sessions. Generally, these sessions are handled by one or two past Area Delegates; we call them 'action meetings'. One meeting, for example, had two short talks, each relating the experience of someone overseas and the help received from General Service Office. These small vignettes bring our worldwide services to light better than anything else."

"One advantage of having District Meetings became obvious when we received a news release from General Service Office. When it came to placing this, GSRs seemed to be much better informed about the newspapers and editors in their particular towns than did the Committee members."

"Our District meetings are held every three months, prior to a regular AA meeting on Sunday afternoon, and the location of the meeting is rotated. Since beginning this system, our GSR attendance has increased from 50% to 95%."

"Each year we have two Area Assemblies which are attended by GSRs or their Alternates. Our Assemblies and our Area Committee have two objectives: firstly, to help the Groups (this *must* come first or AA will surely die); and secondly, to support General Service Office."

## HOW TO SET UP A SHARING SESSION

A sharing session is a meeting where **everyone** gets a chance to contribute ideas and criticisms about what is best for AA. It can be set up anywhere for any group of people, but it is especially useful for Assemblies and District Meetings. It is aimed at drawing out the ideas of the shyest member, and somehow it keeps the more articulate from dominating the meeting.

In a sharing session you may offer your opinion and never need to defend it. You have a Chairperson or a leader, who is more a timekeeper than a source of great wisdom. Here is how the session works:

Let's say that the topic is "How can we get more AAs interested in General Services?" The leader, armed with a loud bell and a watch or stopwatch, reads the questions and explains the rules. Each member present may talk for one and half or two minutes or whatever limit the group agrees upon. The leader starts with the first AA on the left or right. When that member's time is up, the bell rings, and on to the next member. After everyone has had a crack at the question, the leader starts around the room again. On this circuit, it is likely that many people will pass. A single topic may take from 20 minutes to more than an hour. The session should not be hurried nor should it be dragged out after the majority feel the topic has been exhausted.

A member should be appointed to take down just the essence of the meeting. These notes will provide a mine of good ideas for use by Area Committee officers, DCMs and GSRs. General Service Office has service literature on sharing sessions, free on request.

Good topics for sharing sessions? The field is limitless. A subject arousing emphatic Group interest is always desirable, such as:

- When a Group's meeting attendance has fallen off, what steps can be taken to rebuild it? How can other Groups help?
- Are 'special' meetings becoming more important - *Young People's Meetings*, *Women's Meetings*, *Stag Meetings*? Is this trend good or bad?
- Sponsorship: the hand of AA.
- Group Conscience ... the voice of AA.
- What kind of help do Groups want from General Service Office? How useful is "AA *Around Australia*" and other regular General Service Office services? How can they be made more useful?

Some sessions may also focus on topics affecting the General Service structure, such as:

- How can an Area Committee work productively with Central Offices in the Area?
- What painless methods are there for encouraging a Group to provide its share of the Area and General Service Office budgets?
- Are the local Groups supporting their Central Office/local 12<sup>th</sup> Step Committee, General Service Office and Area Committee by use of the “60:30:10” or similar Plan? What about their District?

General Service Office will appreciate a digest of your sharing session ideas, as well as minutes of all your meetings. Such information on your effective activities can be extremely helpful when it is relayed to other Areas in this country and abroad.

## HOW AREAS STIMULATE INTEREST IN GENERAL SERVICES

Time and effort have provided the main stimulation in most Areas. Any AA member's primary interests are, as they should be, in the home Group, in his or her own sobriety, and in helping another drunk. While the work of General Services has the same objectives, the connection is not always direct and obvious. Some stimulators are usually needed to get the attention of AA members, to show them that Service can mean a number of activities that they may not be aware of.

Here are two that DCMs, GSRs and Area Delegates have found useful in arousing an Area:

- Video meetings. See below under “*Communication Tools*”.
- Sharing session. Already dealt with at some length previously in this chapter.

## COMMUNICATION TOOLS

These ‘communications’ are available from General Service Office (48 Firth Street Arncliffe NSW 2205). By using them, you can show Groups in your Area the kind of help being offered to Groups everywhere by their own General Service Office.

- Videos: are available which show how *AA World Services* reach out to help drunks all over the world.
- Literature display: poster and format for setting up a display of Conference-Approved pamphlets and books, many of which some AAs have never seen.
- Literature Order Forms: these list all pamphlets and books. Another order form lists non-English literature.
- “Guidelines” display: a sample of all available “Guidelines”, covering service Areas common to most AAs.
- Newsletters: General Service Office will send samples of service bulletins.
- Sharing sessions: these are of great importance in the programming of District and Assembly meetings. Service pamphlet on sharing sessions available from General Service Office.
- The “*I Am Responsible*” banner. This sums up in a few words the service responsibility of AAs as individuals and as members of our Fellowship.
- “Conference Reports”: each year's Conference is fully covered in the Final Report sent free to all Area Delegates and available for purchase by Area Committees and any interested Member (an abbreviated version is published in “*AA Around Australia*”).
- *Group Starter Kit*: particularly useful to new Groups, which receive it at no charge. It is available to all Groups at nominal cost.

# WORKING TOGETHER - GENERAL SERVICES & LOCAL CENTRAL SERVICES

General Service committees and Central Service Offices (CSOs) traditionally have had different functions. Central Offices provide **local** services, while General Service committees maintain the link between the AA Groups and the *General Service Conference*. So these two separate but vital service structures coexist in many Areas in mutual co-operation and harmony, to the benefit of the entire Fellowship.

At the time the Conference was started there were already well-established CSOs in some of our larger cities, providing local services for AA Groups and members. The same offices still provide these needed services and they have been joined by many more such offices throughout the AA world. CSOs are supported by the AA Groups in the communities they serve, each Group electing its own representative to attend CSO meetings. In most cases, these offices provide the following local services:

- Receiving, distributing and following up *Twelfth Step* calls.
- Answering enquiries about AA.
- Establishing local Public Information and Institutions Committees.
- Maintaining information about local hospitals and recovery facilities for alcoholics.
- Providing local AA meeting lists.
- Providing a newsletter about local AA events.
- Ordering, selling and distributing AA Conference-Approved literature.

The Conference structure is the method through which all AA Groups in a Region (or in a specified Area of such) can provide the most effective communication within the Area and between the Groups and their General Service Board and General Service Office on matters affecting AA as a whole. These matters include AA policy on:

- AA Conference-Approved literature.
- AA Public Information.
- AA's relations with professionals in the field of alcoholism.
- AA institutions activity.
- AA finances.
- The "AA Around Australia" Bulletin.
- The election of Trustees to the AA General Service Board.

The First Concept states: "*The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for AA World Services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.*" Each Group may elect a GSR to represent it at an Assembly where the Area Delegate is elected to represent all Groups in the Area at the Conference. Thus, the link between the AA Groups and their General Service Board and General Service Office is established and maintained, and the Conference becomes, as nearly as possible, the voice of AA in Australia.

In Areas where there are CSOs providing the necessary services, General Service committees should not duplicate those services; however, in those Areas where there is little or no CSO activity, the General Service committee has frequently undertaken to provide many of these services.

# WHEN THE SERVICE STRUCTURE NEEDS REBUILDING

Today, most Areas accept the need for General Service structure; the chief problem is how to increase Area activity in order to help the Fellowship reach more alcoholics with the AA message. Nevertheless, every now and then an Area Committee finds that it needs to build the Conference structure all over again. Here are two Area situations in North America that Chairpersons found very lean, and what was done about each:

"Let's start with finding yourself elected Area Chairperson, without an Area Committee! How do you put one together? There is probably no easy way. Like our growth in this program, it must be slow and gradual and a continuing process; but we have to begin somewhere.

"In our case, activity was started with letters, phone calls and personal visits to members and Groups all over the Area. AA members will co-operate if you let them know you need them.

"Our Area has a small AA population; at that time there were only thirty Groups in five Districts. Groups were asked to elect GSRs and Alternates and they did. That gave us sixty for an Assembly. Three DCMs for each District gave us fifteen more. Then we added five past Area Delegates, four officers and a current Area Delegate. Starting from nothing we now had eighty-four assembly members.

"Next we picked a central location and started quarterly Assemblies. Urgent letters brought good attendance, but there was still a lot of work to be done - the entire Committee needed educating in General Service. District activities were started next."

"Round robins brought DCMs and GSRs closer together. Later, a Saturday night open AA meeting was scheduled before the Sunday morning service session. Members were urged to make a weekend of it. Al-Anon co-operated, holding its committee meetings separately, of course, but at the same time. The idea caught on. Three times a year, these "little conferences" built service activities. The annual Area convention took over the fourth meeting.

"It has been encouraging to watch the growth of and increased interest in GSC activities, among individuals and within Groups. The picture has changed from a handful of AAs getting together to elect an Area Delegate to an enthusiastic, living, functioning Area Committee assuming its service responsibility. Maybe we are growing up a little and becoming responsible for our service activities.

"We pretty well started from scratch in setting up our Area, following the AA Service Manual. First thing was to reach AA friends all over the Area, people with several years' sobriety who knew something about General Service Office and the structure of AA. We asked them to serve as temporary DCMs.

"I worked with each DCM. I visited Groups and talked General Service Office and GSR to them and, of course, found many members who did not know what either meant. This has been time-consuming and tiring, but it has paid off. We have had many Assembly meetings, Committee meetings and Sharing Sessions.

"All of this has been the most interesting and gratifying experience of my entire life. In my opinion, AAs who never get into General Services are missing much. They are not getting what they are entitled to in this program."



## PAST AREA DELEGATES CAN BE HELPFUL

“After I served my term as Area Delegate, the full impact of being a has-been in Conference affairs hit me, with all of its loneliness and feeling of being separated from the heart and core of AA.”

This past Area Delegate did something about it. But many others do not, or feel that they cannot. It is true that AA has in past Area Delegates a mine of experience that may not be getting used. The AA practice of rotation prevents Area Delegates from succeeding themselves and frowns on their re-election to the same office at a later date. Now gradually emerging is a role for the past Area Delegate that involves them in Area activities, but leaves the Area Committee and new Area Delegate free to run their own show. It is suggested that past Area Delegates not hold office as GSRs or DCMs, but find other ways to become involved in Area service.

A round-up of Area experience shows that past Area Delegates are frequently ex-officio, non-voting members of Area Committees. They are called in from time to time for consultation or for a special assignment. Frequently, they are found in the chair of committees or Regional or Area conventions. Or they may be appointed by the Area Chairperson to be responsible for Area PI, or to urge more widespread distribution of Conference-Approved literature and the “AA Around Australia” bulletin.

Another approach is the regular annual meetings of past Area Delegates in a Region. It originated in the south eastern US and is described here by one of the originators:

The idea started with a breakfast meeting for past Area Delegates, held in connection with the Southeast Convention (for all AAs). This went on for several years, always functioning in a somewhat informal manner, avoiding all possibility of growing into hierarchy. Then it was decided that a single session each year did not meet the growing needs for complete communication and information. It was suggested that a weekend of informal meetings be tried.

They were, and have become a regular thing each February. At the first one, we found ourselves discussing and recommending actions that were not our concern, but the concerns of the many Area Committees in our Region. We got back on the track, and now it can be said that we are in no way acting like an authoritarian group but are interested in informing ourselves so that we can help to interest other AAs in Area activities. I think loosely knit bodies like ours can help strengthen the lines of communication between the Conference, General Service Office and AA as a whole.

## HOW DO WE FORM A NEW AREA?

If the AA population of an Area seems to have grown to the point where the current delegate and other trusted servants can no longer provide adequate service and communication, there may be local interest in forming a new Area. In such a case, the Area committee or committees involved may write to the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous and request application for an additional Area.

This three-page form, adapted from the North American version which was first painstakingly worked out in 1968 and revised in 1992 by that Conference, requests detailed information about the current service structure, such as: How often assemblies are held; whether there is an Alternate Delegate; how often District Meetings are held; the number of active DCMs and whether they assist the delegate and alternate; the number of active GSRs in the Area and its pattern of growth over the last five years, broken down to yearly figures.

The application form is designed to determine problems regarding geography and AA population, as well as whether or not the current Area service structure is as well developed as it might be to provide help for the Delegate (see the Section 4: “The District”).

When such a request came up at the 1961 North American Conference, a memo from Bill W provided enlightening opinions on the subject. Our co-founder wrote (in part):

The Conference Committee on Admissions should weigh each application for a new delegate on its own merit, taking into consideration the primary factors of population, geography – and also expense. But this process of adding delegates ought to be gradual, aiming at the remedying of obvious marked flaws in local communications. We should, our budget allowing, continue to remedy obvious flaws in local communications, and that is all.

It should be re-emphasised that the Conference is not a political body, demanding a completely rigid form of representation. What we shall need will always be enough delegates at the Conference to afford a reliable cross section of AA plus enough more to make sure of good local communication.

*Adapted from the North American AA Service Manual*

## **PROCEDURE FOR CHANGE OF REGION**

1. The Delegate from an Area requesting a change of Region will write, on behalf of the assembly, to the Secretary of the Trustee's Nominating Committee, requesting the change of Region, and will send copies of the letter to the Trustees in the two regions involved.
2. The Delegate will ask the General Service Office to send a letter to all of the Area Delegates in the two Regions involved, requesting them to express their approval/disapproval on an enclosed card.
3. Approval by two thirds of the Delegates from each Region involved is required before the proposal is presented to the General Service Conference for its approval.

## **THE ROLE OF THE AREA REGISTRAR**

In some Areas, Registrars now develop and maintain records of all Groups within the Area. The records include Group information such as Group name, meeting location, time, and GSR. or contact for the Group. Registrars may also be responsible for names, mailing addresses, phone numbers of the GSRs, DCMs, District officers, Area officers and other Area Committee members. Another duty of the Registrar may be to provide mailing labels for Area publications such as monthly newsletter or a mailing of minutes. A willingness to become organised, and computer literacy, may be helpful. There are many benefits to appointing a Registrar to the Area Committee, these include:

- The Area Committee knows how many Groups there are in the Area.
- The Area Committee knows how many meetings there are in the Area.
- The Area Committee knows roughly how many Members there are in the Area.
- Over any given period the statistics can be compared, and the growth (or decline) of the Area can be observed with some accuracy.
- If all Areas have Registrars, or someone who performs the same function, then the above statistics can be regularly conveyed to General Service Office so that more accurate figures about Group numbers and the numbers of members in the Fellowship can be kept. Thus the growth of the Fellowship can be monitored.

- Area Registrars are in close contact with the Groups in the Area. If Groups do not respond to registration forms sent to them, the Area Registrar rings them for the details. This has been proven to draw Groups into taking an interest in Area service, and to lead to greater participation.
- Meetings lists become more accurate as it is known whether Groups/Meetings are operating or not. Defunct meetings do not continue to appear on meetings lists because nobody bothered to inform the publisher. The Registrar would be authorised to act on this.
- The Registrar would have a working relationship with both the General Service Office and the local Central Service Office or Intergroup, keeping Group records up to date.
- Districts can also appoint District Registrars, which eases the job of the Area Registrar.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR NEWSLETTERS OR BULLETINS**

Newsletters or bulletins published by Area Committees or CSOs may include local AA news, information about Groups and committees, and reprinted material from AA literature. As in most AA service activities, it has been found prudent to make a committee (rather than one or two individuals) responsible for the format, planning and content.

Many local publications quote from AA literature such as the 'Big Book', the "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", "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.

It is very important that quoting and reprinting is done in the correct manner to protect our message and copyrights. Details of these legal requirements regarding copyright, logos, trademarks, copying and reprint permission can be found in Section 11 of this Manual: "AA Literature".

Perhaps you might consider these ideas, based on local experience with AA newsletters and bulletins:

- Printing your newsletter on A4 paper (most commonly used),
- Scheduling 'theme issues' on some aspect of the AA program and using excerpts from Conference-Approved material (with proper credit) relating to the theme,
- Asking for and publishing letters from AA readers,
- Carrying minutes of various committee meetings,
- Running a '*Calendar of Events*' feature,
- Conducting a subscription campaign (perhaps making announcements at Group meetings), to build paid readership.

***End of part 2***

# **PART 3: AREAS LOOKING OUTWARD:**

## **AREA – REGION – NATION**

### **AREA, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CONVENTIONS**

In Australia the 'National Convention' is the norm, rather than a Regional one, although Area Conventions are occasionally held, but still rare. Whereas Conferences, Forums and Assemblies are about service work, Conventions are about carrying the message, networking and sharing.

A Convention is "a get-together beyond the Group level". It sets up an opportunity to share the AA experience in a broader way, but requires a great deal of planning and preparation. See Guideline GL-14: "*AA Get-Togethers*" and GL-15: "*The National Convention*".

From Guideline GL-14: "As one member puts it, the best AA Convention is 'just a darned good AA meeting blown up big.'"

North American Area Conventions are a special type of AA meeting, usually weekend affairs, but sometimes extending several days. They are usually set up and guided by Area Committees or by special committees appointed by Area Chairpersons. As mentioned earlier, experience shows that it is not wise to hold Area Assemblies during Conventions, but sometimes they can be held just before or after.

Whether or not an Area Committee is responsible for Conventions, these suggestions from previous North American Convention Chairpersons for setting one up may prove useful for smaller Australian events at Area or Region scale. With both of these, the Regional Trustee should also to be involved, and driving the process if at regional scale.

"We have a lot of geography between our two major cities. Made two mailings to all Groups, offered baby-sitting and some rooms in our own homes. We invited Groups from a distance to run our workshops and had unexpected response. We counted heavily on support from local Groups and particularly from GSRs. We timed our meetings to allow for anticipated driving time from remote sections. We made a gentleman's agreement on turnabout, one year up north and next down south."

"The greatest problem was to get interested people from four Areas together in one place to make plans. Finally, it was decided that the Area Chairpersons and Area Delegates should meet, with a DCM from the local Area to act as secretary. Our first meeting produced plans for a complete Convention, with location and format settled. Each Area treasury put up \$50, which was repaid after the Convention. We called it a Convention rather than a Conference to avoid confusion with **the** Conference. Now the committee meeting is held regularly at the site of the next Convention, so that all facilities can be surveyed by Area Delegates and Area Chairpersons of the other three Areas. The committee also meets at the close of each Convention to sum up the proceedings and to set a date and place for the next."

"The first Convention was really a means to an end - we needed some way to bring Groups closer together. We needed something that every AA member could feel part of. Our permanent theme is *Unity*, so everyone knows our purpose. We brought as many in on the planning as possible, at least one member of each Group. This approach has met with a great deal of success, arousing the enthusiasm of both older and younger members. The Convention, we hope, will increase their interest in service work.

# REGIONAL FORUMS

Regional Forums are primarily service meetings. Whereas in Australia we often hold District Meetings and Area Assemblies for service purposes, when we get to Region scale, we call it a 'Regional Forum'. In North America it is common to hold Regional 'Service Assemblies' where information is collected and knowledge is shared, but no decisions are made – similar to our Regional Forum in intent. At national scale, of course, the service meeting equivalent is the annual General Service Conference.

One of the duties of Area Delegates is to assist Regional Trustees and General Service Office when an Area in a Region has successfully bid to run a Regional Forum. This takes place at Conference, and must be bid for and have explicit advance support of the Area involved. Where possible, Areas will take turns and a Forum will be run each year. Regional Forums are an opportunity for Areas in a Region to come together to discuss issues and provide information relevant to the Service Structure. Regional Forums are not decision- or recommendation-making structures. Also, unlike Conventions of various scales, their objective is not to run AA meetings, although a meeting where old timers share their experience around particular service themes, has been found to be very interesting and enjoyable as a learning opportunity. See Guideline GL-06 "*Regional Forums*".

Notwithstanding AA purism, organisers of Regional Forums often find that relaxation opportunities, interesting speakers, dancing etc., in the evening, attract more Members, lend a balance to the hard talking and listening that continue all day, and help energise people for the discussions following.

## REGIONAL TRUSTEE NOMINATIONS

Each AA Region has a place on the General Service Board of AA Australia. The Board (which relies heavily on the General Service Office for most implementation), is the service arm of the Conference, and works with Area Delegates to take care of the Fellowship's needs at national level.

When Regional Trustee positions become vacant, normally every four years, Areas have the responsibility for searching for suitable nominees. Ideally this search should begin well before the nominations are due. General Service Office will notify the Areas that an election is due, and CVs must be sent in by a set date.

Areas preparing to present candidates for Board positions are advised to carefully read Section 9 of this Manual: "The General Service Board" beforehand.

Areas have a choice: all a Region's Areas may join together and collectively nominate one candidate, or each Area may send a maximum of one candidate. The *Third Legacy Procedure* is used for important local elections of this type. See Section 12: "AA's Traditional Legacy Documents" for details. Any single, locally chosen candidate will normally be endorsed by Conference and elected to the Board. If Areas choose to send their candidates' applications to Conference, a special *Nominating Session* will select a nominee, who is then presented to the full Conference and subsequently elected to the Board of Trustees. See "*How AA Chooses Regional Trustees*" under Section 9: "The Board", also "*Articles of Association*" under Section 13: "Service Documents" and "Conference Charter Australian Section" Clause 10 under Section 12: "AA's Traditional 'Legacy' Documents".

# THE AREA & CONFERENCE

## HELP ON THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Most of the agenda for the annual meeting of the Conference in Sydney in November comes from the AA Groups by way of the GSR, the Area Committee members and the Area Delegate. Every AA member has something to say about the Fellowship's present and future and a good part of it gets discussed at the Australian General Service Conference. (Section 7 covers this in some detail). So one of the most important program items for an Area Assembly or District Meeting is a good look at what might help AA on a broad basis. A certain problem may appear to be peculiar to your Area but it is surprising how many are found to be common to every corner of AA once someone brings them to light. This cannot be over emphasised: Group problems make up a considerable part of the Conference program. Area Assemblies and District Meetings are the ideal time to find out what problems and what solutions are shared by AA Groups everywhere.

Another important activity of Assemblies and District meetings is reporting the benefits of the annual Conference meeting to the membership. These gatherings provide ideal opportunities for reporting fully on what took place at the November Conference, for querying the Area Delegate in detail and for deciding what problems need more attention at future Conferences. (More on this in Section 7: "The Conference".)

## TWO HATS

In AA it seems there are always more service positions than people to fill them. And if we do manage to fill them, we create still more. As a result, some members may feel pressure to shoulder more than one service role at a time. On the surface this may appear to be expedient. After all 'someone has to do it'. However, the following issues need to be considered by any member contemplating donning two hats;

- Holding two service positions simultaneously deprives other members of the opportunity to serve.
- Sometimes it's better to leave a position vacant for a while. Someone will decide to step up, or be encouraged to volunteer, if they understand the need.
- When a member wears two hats, there is a real danger of a conflict of interest and an inclination to undue influence.

When it comes to general service, experience shows it's usually better to do one job well than two jobs poorly."

***End part 3***

# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION SIX**

# **THE AREA DELEGATE**



**The Duties & Role of the Area Delegate**

**Area Delegates. Servants not Senators**

**Term of Service**

**Delegate**

**The Alternate Delegate**

**Delegate Expenses**

**What makes a good Area Delegate?**

**Preparing for Conference**

**What Makes an AA 'Leader'?**

# 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"*

# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION SEVEN**

# **THE CONFERENCE**



**Why Do We Need a Conference?**

**How Does it Work?**

**Who Conference Members Are & What They Do**

**The Conference Acts for AA as a Whole**

**A Reminder about 'Chiefs' in AA**

**How to get Something Discussed at the  
Conference**

**Advisory Actions**

**Historical Advisory Actions**

**Changing the AA 'Service Documents'**

**Advisory Action Flow Chart**

**Reporting to the Fellowship**

**Conference Committees**

## WHY DO WE NEED A CONFERENCE?

The late Bernard B. Smith, non-alcoholic, then chairman of the North American Board of Trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting in New York:

*We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in AA that rebirth which brought us back to life.*

*We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade AA. We need it to insure AA against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect AA against disintegration while preventing over integration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.*

*We need it to ensure that changes within AA come only as a response to the needs and the wants of AA, and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of AA never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.*

Figure 5 Why do we Need a Conference?

# THE ANNUAL GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE MEETING

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Australian General Service Conference holds its annual meeting in November. Just what kind of meeting is this? Is it like a Group business meeting only bigger? Is it like an Area Assembly?

Area Delegates coming to their first Conference say it is beyond anything they have previously experienced in AA. To begin with, the Conference spans several days. Then there is overwhelming evidence of the year-long work that has gone into the preparation of the agenda or program. The program is meaty; the Area Delegates, Trustees, General Service Office staff members and World Service Meeting Delegates are well prepared.

Of course, there is also a great deal of give and take discussion. Many people express themselves, informally and often emotionally. Conference sessions are by no means stiff. Delegates simply act like themselves - which, we know, is the way it should be in AA. While there is full discussion on any question that seems to have various possible answers, everyone tends not to waste time, but to cover the agenda and to stick to matters that affect the movement as a whole.

The Area Delegates come to Conference in November well-prepared, already having shared the experience of past Area Delegates. Then, in the weeks preceding the Conference, General Service Office has kept them advised of questions and problems that will be up for discussion. They receive a deluge of advance information, filling them in on actions of previous Conferences, on what the committees are, and on what reports they will hear (so that they can "preview" the Conference with their committees and GSRs). They receive just about everything practicable to let them know what to expect when they get to the Conference.

Conference committees are of great help in winnowing out the material that belongs on the Conference floor. These committees first meet early in the Conference period. They go on meeting as frequently as they need for full discussion of each item on the committee agenda. Their recommendations are presented in the committee report. Or, a subject may be reported as discussed with no conclusion reached. Any Conference members who have a problem or a complaint may go to a committee session and present their case. Frequently, there are hot discussions. Toward the end of the Conference, each Conference committee chairperson reads the full committee report to the entire Conference. Every action of the report is then presented separately to the Conference. An action may be accepted or rejected by the Conference, and ample time is allowed for full discussion. The total committee report may then be accepted, or the report may be accepted after the deletion of one or more items.

Later, it will be seen that the General Service Office Manager, International Delegates and Trustees (members of the General Service Board) are voting members of the Conference. Trustee committee chairpersons also meet with their corresponding Conference Committee for communication and liaison purposes in at least one session.

*The General Service Office staff contribute a great deal of know-how and knowledge of AA history to committee and Conference discussions. However, the General Service Office people are seeking Conference opinion or guidance, not trying to influence Conference action. The fact is, many of the matters brought to the Conference are those that staff, Trustees or their committees have not wished to act upon during the year. They have felt that these matters were questions of Fellowship-wide importance and so belonged at the Conference.*

*While no one can speak for AA officially, the Conference comes close to being AA's voice. It cannot be an AA authority, but it can bring into free discussion problems, trends and dangers that seem to affect Fellowship harmony, purpose, and effectiveness. When an entire Conference (or a vocal majority) has expressed concern about a possible threat to our AA program, the Fellowship has listened. It probably always will.*

## WHO CONFERENCE MEMBERS ARE

At the annual meeting of the Conference in November, Area Delegates should ideally constitute more than two-thirds of the voting members. Other voting Conference members are Trustees, International Delegates and the General Service Office Manager.

A word about members of the Conference other than the Area Delegates:

The largest number are Trustees (the General Service Board), both non-alcoholic and AA.

The General Service Office Manager and International Delegates are also members of the Conference.

It should be made clear that each voting member of the Conference has only one vote, no matter how many positions each may hold.

Historically, the voting ratio has never been important in that no issues have ever divided Conference decisions along lines of Area Delegates opposed to other Conference members. But it could conceivably be important sometimes. To take care of that situation, the Charter provides that, as a matter of tradition, a majority vote of the Conference shall be a suggestion to the General Service Board (the Trustees), but a two-thirds vote shall be absolutely binding upon the Board. In practice, the Board and General Service Office do their best to implement all Conference's Advisory Actions and wishes, as they are expected traditionally and by the Board's *Memorandum of Association* to do so. They therefore report their completion, or explanation to the Conference if unable to comply.

The structure of the Conference has worked out well; experience seems to indicate that it is practical. The Conference itself is not incorporated. But the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia (Board of Trustees) is. So would be any companies related to the Australian General Service Board. This incorporation is necessary for the handling of funds and the conduct of business.

## WHAT THEY DO

New Area Delegates to the Conference are usually surprised at the heavy work schedule they are faced with. It is a full agenda; a great deal of AA business is transacted in the several days of the Conference. A typical Conference has several morning and afternoon sessions, and also several evening sessions.

What kind of business is transacted? Well, below are some representative actions of past North American and Australian Conferences, which seem to have some effect on the Fellowship as a whole.

Conference Advisory Actions represent recommendations made by the standing committees and approved by the Conference body as a whole; or recommendations discussed and voted on by all Conference members during general sessions. Reports of workshops do not constitute Conference Advisory Actions.



## A REMINDER ABOUT ‘CHIEFS’ IN AA

The Conference comes closer to ‘government’ than anything else in our Fellowship. But, as Bill W put it in the very first edition of this Manual:

*Of course, it cannot be too often said that while the Conference can issue orders to the General Service Office, it can never mandate or govern the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves. The Conference represents us, but cannot rule us.*

For a full explanation of the checks and balances built into the *Conference Plan*, read *Concept Twelve*, which describes the six “*General Warranties of the Conference*”.

## THE CONFERENCE ACTS FOR AA AS A WHOLE

Here is what co-founder, Bill W, has to say about this in *Concept Three* in his “*Twelve Concepts for World Service*”:

Excepting its Charter provisions to the contrary, the Conference always should be able to decide which matters it will fully dispose of on its own responsibility, and which questions it will refer to the AA Groups (or, more usually, to their DCMs or GSRs) for opinion or for definite guidance. “Therefore, it ought to be clearly understood and agreed that our Conference Delegates are primarily the world servants of AA as a whole, that only in a secondary sense do they represent their respective Areas. Consequently, they should, on final decisions, be entitled to cast their votes in the General Service Conference according to the best dictates of their own judgement and conscience at that time ...

Similarly, the Trustees of the General Service Board (operating, of course, within the provisions of their own Charter and bylaws) should be able at all times to decide when they will act fully on their own responsibility and when they will ask the Conference for its guidance, for its approval of a recommendation or for its actual decisions and direction ...

Within the scope of their defined or implied responsibilities all headquarters service corporations, committees, staff, or executives should also be possessed of the right to decide when they will act wholly on their own and when they will refer their problems to the next higher authority.

## HOW TO GET SOMETHING DISCUSSED AT THE CONFERENCE

A GSR, an Area Delegate, or a District Committee Member, may want to discuss the idea first in the Group or at a District or Area meeting. Then it is sent on to the Conference secretary at General Service Office. That is the normal routing of ideas which are referred to as Conference Topics. See Guideline GL-28 “*How a Conference Topic is Developed*”.

Members who are not part of the Conference structure and want to reach the Conference, can give their idea to their GSR or write directly to the Conference secretary at General Service Office. There the Topic will be passed on to the Conference Agenda Committee.

Other suggested Conference Topics come from staff members at General Service Office and from the Board and its committees. No matter where the Topic originates, it follows about the same path to the Conference agenda. All Topics received are allocated a Conference Topic number and passed on to the Conference Agenda Committee. At its first meeting in June, the Conference Agenda Committee assigns each Topic to its relevant Conference Committee for discussion at the Conference. Some Topics require further information, or are rejected. Reasons for rejection could be that the Topic has already been discussed at the previous year’s Conference or that it is not a matter that Conference can make a decision on, eg an issue which should be resolved at Group level.

The procedure may sound complicated, but it has proved to operate effectively.

The flow chart on page 78 of this Section examines the path of a Conference Topic through to its fruition as an Advisory Action.

# ADVISORY ACTIONS

## SOME HISTORICAL NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE ADVISORY ACTIONS

- Adopted resolution affirming importance of anonymity and approved its wide distribution to press, broadcasting and other media. (Reaffirmed by two later Conferences).
- Agreed that Area Delegates come to Conference being only tentatively instructed for the following reasons: (1) that each Area Delegate brings to the Conference the thinking of their Area, and (2) that the maximum wisdom of the Conference be achieved and voted through the exchange of these ideas at the Conference.
- In regard to misuse of the World Directory: It was recommended that the attention of Groups again be directed to its purpose as listed on the inside directory cover. Recommended that this statement be used as a guide and not a rule, as it is not intended to interfere with free communication between AA's in sharing experience and activities. That non-AA misuse be handled as in the past. (Recommendation reaffirmed by two later Conferences. AA directories now comprise four separate volumes).
- Recommended that AA literature should have Conference approval. That all Conference approved literature show identifying symbol.
- Accepted Bill's manuscript on Twelve Concepts and recommended that it be distributed as a supplement to "The AA Service Manual".
- Recommended that a hard-cover book containing Bill's letters, writings and excerpts from the Grapevine, Big Book, "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", etc, be published, format and contents to be determined by the Board of Trustees. (Result: "As Bill Sees It - The AA Way of Life.")
- Agreed that, in general, it was not advisable to accept proxies from regular Groups at AA Assembly meetings. At the same time, it was recognised that Groups in correctional institutions and in certain hospitals might be unrepresented at Area Assemblies if they were not permitted to assign their voting privileges to members outside their Groups.
- Suggested that Area Delegates establish lines of communication with directors of tax-supported and voluntary alcoholism programs in their Areas.
- The restructuring plan was approved 92 to 24 to increase the General Service Board to twenty-one, seven of whom shall be nonalcoholic and fourteen alcoholic. (In 1966).
- Approved guidelines for Group separation of AA and Al-Anon.
- Approved position paper concerning clubs organised and directed by AA members, to the effect that such clubs should operate within AA Traditions and abide by them to the fullest extent.
- Approved position paper on rehabilitation centres, to the effect that such rehabs, rest homes and hospitals are not a part of AA and, therefore, have no responsibility to adhere to the Traditions of AA.
- Approved the proposal that the first World Service Meeting be held in New York in the fall of 1969.

- Recommended that showing the full face of an AA member at the level of press, TV and films be regarded as a violation of our Tradition of anonymity, even though the name is withheld.
- Approved division of World Directory into two editions - one for US and Canada, the second for all other countries.
- Approved a survey within AA. Area Delegates agreed to conduct this survey at meetings in their Areas.
- Agreed that the General Service Office should not accept contributions from clubs, listed or known as such, whether or not composed solely of AA members. Contributions are welcome from Groups meeting in clubs.
- Recommended that when an elected Area Delegate cannot attend the annual meeting of the General Service Conference, the Alternate Area Delegate seated at the Conference will be considered the Area Delegate until notification is sent to the General Service Office by the Area Committee that the originally elected Area Delegate is ready to resume his or her duties.
- Suggested that retiring Area Delegates become Grapevine representatives.
- Recommended for institutional Groups: "Open meetings are traditionally open to all interested in AA, but should be devoted exclusively to the alcoholic problem. Closed meetings should traditionally be restricted to alcoholics."
- Suggested that when a local AA facility (Central Office, Group, etc) sells non-Conference approved literature, it be clearly designated as such.
- Recommended that, ever mindful of AA's traditional policy of "co-operation but not affiliation", we continue to meet with organisations outside AA concerned with the problem of alcoholism, for the purpose of improving communications.
- Reaffirmed that all requests for AA directories from other organisations be referred to the Area Delegate. After inquiring about the purpose planned for the directory, the Area Delegate will make a decision re its availability.
- Approved the Anonymity Statement presented by the Trustees' Public Information Committee, with the following reservations: That it be made clear the disclosing one's AA membership to those outside AA be a matter of personal choice and not a matter of obligation .... That the use of full names and addresses, **where indicated**, could improve communications **within AA**
- Recommended that a Regional Trustee shall not be a candidate for General Service Trustee (US and Canada).
- Recommended that Family Groups not be listed under the Family Group name in the AA directories and agreed that alcohol-and-pill Groups not be listed in AA directories or meeting lists.
- Recommend that all GSRs receive the Group mailings from the General Service Office. Agreed the General Service Office should not be asked to intervene in local disputes or misunderstandings.
- Naming an AA Group after an individual: approved the suggestion that an AA Group should not be named after an AA member or a non-alcoholic living or deceased.
- AA Group policy re "Family" Groups: reaffirmed that "only those with a desire to stop drinking may be members of AA groups; only AA members are eligible to be officers of AA Groups; non-alcoholics are welcome at open meetings of AA." It was suggested that the word "Family" not

be used in the name of an AA Group; that, if AA's and their non-alcoholic mates wish to meet together on a regular basis, they consider these gatherings "meetings", not AA Groups.

- Approved the discontinuance of past Area Delegates' ex officio membership on Conference committees. Past Area Delegates can keep themselves informed of committees' activity through present Area Delegates and the Final Conference Report.
- Approved replacing Part 1 (US and Canada) of the World Directory with three AA directories: Eastern US, Western US, Canada.
- Recommended that the wording of Tradition Eleven remain as is, and that Area Delegates explain to the local membership that "TV" is implicit in the last phrase of the Tradition: at the level of press, radio and **films**.
- Approved the granting of permission to the Eastern and Western Missouri Areas to change from the West Central Region to the Southwest Region.
- Recommended the preparation of an illustrated pamphlet (like "What happened to Joe" and "It Happened to Alice") directed to teen-aged and pre-teen-aged alcoholics.

## **A SAMPLE OF ACTIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE FROM 1967**

In the earlier years of the Conference's existence, most effort was devoted to streamlining its operation, defining its functions and, most importantly, promoting its awareness insofar as the Groups in Australia were concerned. Since 1967, as well as broadening its base of support, Conference has made some very significant decisions which will vitally influence AA service in this country. Some few of these include:

- 1967 Formation of our own AA Publishing Pty Ltd.
- 1969 Two World Service Delegates appointed by the Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous attended the first World Service Conference Meeting in New York.
- 1970 Appointment of first non-alcoholic Trustee, Dr W.A. (Bill) Spence, subsequently elected Conference Chairperson.
- 1970 Unanimous adoption of resolution authorising the Australian General Service Conference to act for Alcoholics Anonymous Australia. This was modelled on and phrased similarly to the classic Resolution passed at the 20th North American General Service Conference held at St. Louis, Missouri, July 3, 1955.
- 1970 Formation of subcommittees to investigate and prepare means of implementation of AA General Service structure, ie. General Service Board and other service entities modelled on the North American system.
- 1971 National exchange bulletin, "*AA Around Australia*": commenced.
- 1971 Australian General Service Conference gave its approval for its seal to be added to those publications which met with Conference approval for distribution by its publishing operation. This often appears concurrently with the AAWS seal of approval.
- 1973 Implementation of approved regular Group contribution plan, birthday plan and Annual National Convention registration.

- 1973 Approved a maximum personal contribution of \$400 per year, or similar amount from a deceased estate, provided this is made within twelve months of the donor's death.
- 1979 Approved a maximum personal contribution of \$500 per year.
- 1979 AA Publishing Pty Ltd was wound-up and the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia assumed responsibility for AA in this country.
- 1980 Approved publication of quarterly national magazine "AntennA"
- 1982 Approved a National AA Survey.
- 1982 Endorsed the formation of Loners Internationalists Australia.
- 1983 Approved the Australian General Service Office pamphlet for publication and distribution.
- 1984 Approved the production of a banner containing the "Declaration of Unity".
- 1985 Approved a discount package suitable for presenting to interested members of the community at Public Awareness Meetings.
- 1985 Application for formation of Area B, Western Region was received and accepted.
- 1986 Raised maximum contribution from any one member per annum to \$2,000 and from a deceased estate to \$5,000.
- 1986 Accepted first Australian print of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous".
- 1986 Approved that Area Delegates, through Area Assemblies and Forums, encourage Groups to establish a weekly or monthly budget which includes the 60:30:10 Plan (now known as "Group Donation Plans")

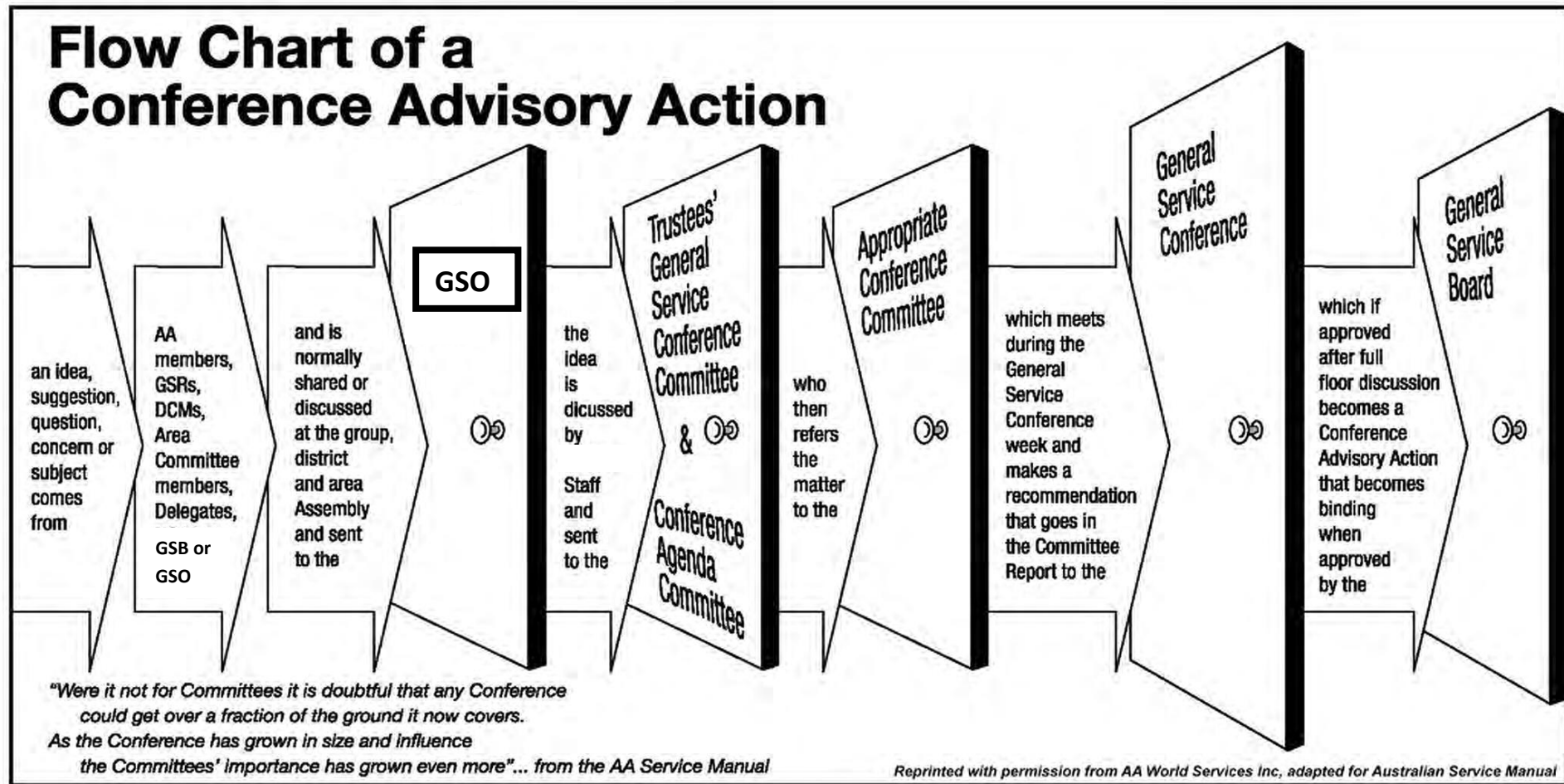
## **A NOTE ABOUT CHANGING THE AA SERVICE DOCUMENTS**

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*, this *Service Manual*, the *AA Guidelines*; the *Conference Administrative Procedures* and the *Composition, Scope and Procedure* documents for all the Board and Conference committees.

These documents form a stable framework for operations, both traditional and legal, within the AA Service Structure. We rely on them to give consistency in the operations of Conference and the Board. 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.

When Conference passes an Advisory Action that affects one of these documents, it often also affects one or more of the others at the same time. Changes to them also need special voting procedures. This can be a very complex task, so everyone who handles Advisory Actions should keep an eye out for this special type of Topic. As with so many other AA processes and procedures, there is a *Guideline* that recommends how this should be handled (GL-27). The Board, the Conference Agenda Committee and the Chairs of the Conference sessions are best placed to identify these Topics early in the process, and the Board is responsible to see that their implementation is taken right through to all the required changes in all documents. See "*Document Integration Group*" under "*Trustees' Service Committees, Subcommittees & Other Related Bodies*" in Section 9: "The General Service Board".

## ADVISORY ACTION FLOW CHART



See also AA Guidelines GL-27: "Process for Changing AA Service Documents" and GL-28 "How a Conference Topic is Developed"

Figure 6 Conference Advisory Action Flow Chart



# REPORTING TO THE FELLOWSHIP

The most productive Conference sessions are of little value unless Area Committees and Groups back home hear about them. So the Area Delegate's reporting job, covering about forty hours of meeting, becomes as important as the program for the Conference itself. No Area Delegate could possibly relate everything that took place; they should prepare a digest of significant discussions, reports and actions and that is no small task.

Over the years, General Service Office, with the aid of Area Delegates, has developed a system of reporting that has proved to be a tremendous help to Area Delegates and DCMs eager to keep Groups in their Areas and Districts aware of Conference activities.

In a sense, the system starts with the advance information mailed to Area Delegates. This gives them the background for Conference sessions. It "explains" the Conference, not only telling them what to expect, but providing the facts they need to "explain" the Conference to their committees and Groups.

During the Conference, Area Delegates take reams of notes. Much of the reporting material presented there is available in photocopied reports, but personal notes are a vital addition, to give each Area Delegate some points of emphasis in the flood of information. They can turn a tedious recitation into a living, breathing report.

A more complete report is needed, and this is the Conference Report. It is published and goes into detail on reports, discussion, workshops and actions. It is not a verbatim account, but no significant aspect of the Conference is deliberately omitted.

Throughout the year, Area Delegates and Committee Members are kept informed on General Service Office activities, results of meetings of the General Service Board and of the work being done by the Trustees committees.

With all this material provided for them, it is then up to the Area Delegates and DCMs to get the attention of Groups. Each year, the Group members learn more and more about the whole AA world. They discover that every event in the entire global service picture affects their own AA life sometime, somehow. The Conference is proud of its reporting to the Fellowship. Largely because of this, the membership as a whole is learning to observe and understand the performance of its General Service Conference.

## CONFERENCE COMMITTEES AND HOW THEY SERVE AA

Area Delegates carry the major influence in the Conference, and this is felt in two ways:

1. They make up the Conference committees, covering just about all kinds of AA activities;
2. All Area Delegates have free access to the Conference platform for discussion of all actions affecting the Fellowship.

Since the Australian Conference structure was first set up in 1961, a need has developed for Conference committees. Some will correspond closely to working committees of the General Service Board, and each of the pairs of committees liaises profitably during Conference. Representatives from the Board committees assist in the deliberations of the Conference committees by acting as liaison and providing relevant background information.

Were it not for committees, it is doubtful that any Conference could cover a fraction of the ground it now does. As the Conference has grown in size and influence, the committees' importance has



grown even more. Over the years, more committees have been added; each committee has been strengthened. All have ample time to meet and consider the problems before them.

However, no annual Conference meeting is "committee run". A committee meets, deliberates and may reach a conclusion which is reported on the Conference floor for action. Or the committee may decide to pass the problem along to the Conference floor without adding an opinion of its own. But even if a committee reports decisively on its solution to a problem, the Conference as a whole need not accept the report. It can refuse a committee's decision; if it does, the matter is discussed and decided in general session. In typical AA fashion, a Conference committee does not represent "authority".

## **MAKING UP COMMITTEES**

Every Area Delegate serves on a Conference committee. The work of all committees is intensely interesting, as members discover after they have served.

As Area Delegate numbers attending the Australian General Service Conference are relatively small, committee membership averages about 3-5. A new system of back-to-back meetings has been established, to give committees more time for their deliberations.

Allocation to Conference committees is managed by the Conference Coordinator, who is at all times guided by the principle of wherever possible keeping a balance between length of service and geographical Regions. It is impractical to have each choose his or her own post.

Incoming Delegates normally replace the Delegate rotating off. Delegates usually stay on the same committees throughout their tenure. This supports the system of accountability follow-up from the previous year, and enhances continuity.

At one of its meetings in November, each committee chooses by ballot its Chairperson and alternate Chairperson for the next Conference year. The new Chairperson takes office as soon as the current Conference is adjourned.

AA staff members serve as non-voting secretaries of the committees. If it has a counterpart Trustees' committee, the staff member is also secretary of that committee, where practical.

## **THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES ARE:**

### **Agenda Committee:**

The opposite number of the Agenda Committee is the Trustees' General Service Conference Committee, with which it should maintain contact throughout the year. Of course, this committee also meets on its own, as do all Conference committees. The scope of the committee is to prepare the overall Conference Agenda and to co-ordinate specific agenda items as outlined below. The committee meets three times in each year:

1. In June at the General Service Office in Sydney to:
  - Review, approve and allocate to appropriate Conference committees the Topics (that is, discussion items, suggestions and Board recommendations) submitted for this year's Conference; and to bring forward only appropriate Topics, and
  - Set the preliminary Agenda for the year's Conference.
  - Review and if appropriate update this document (that is the Composition, Scope & Procedure document).
  - Appoint two committee members to be responsible for compiling a list of suggestions for themes for next year's Conference.

2. As soon as possible after the July Board meeting by way of Teleconference to:
  - Allocate additional Board recommendations to appropriate Conference Committees;
  - Consider suggestions from the Trustee's General Service Conference Committee on ways of improving Conference; and
  - Finalise the Agenda and allocate the rooms for all Conference committee sessions for this year's Conference.
3. In November during Conference to:
  - Remain in constant session to consider changes to the agenda and consider allocated Topics and work out recommendations to Conference;
  - Elect a committee member to ensure that an article on the Conference Theme be with the editor of AA Around Australia by mid January for the March edition, and by mid April for the June edition. This article need not necessarily be written by a member of the Conference Agenda Committee.
  - Elect the new chairperson and alternate chairperson; and
  - Review and if appropriate update the Composition, Scope and Procedure Document.

The Agenda Committee has the year-round job of communicating with General Service Office on subjects for the Conference Agenda and Theme.

### **Conference Public Information and Co-Operation with the Professional Community (CPI&CPC) Committee:**

Corresponds exactly to the Trustees' committee of the same name and communicates with them each November through the Trustees' committee's Chair, who acts as liaison. The purpose and function of this committee is to further AA's purpose of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic by informing the general public about AA and by co-operating (while not affiliating) with the professional groups and individuals whose work brings them into contact with alcoholics.

The Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community Committee considers Topics that propose new ways to carry the AA message and provide information about the Fellowship to the public. It is also concerned with anonymity breaks and misinformation about AA at the public level. It helps the Trustees' PI Committee gear its efforts to those of local committees all over the continent. It appraises and supports efforts to create mutual understanding and co-operation between the Fellowship and those professional groups and individuals concerned with alcoholism and the sick alcoholic.

### **Conference Finance Committee:**

The Conference Finance Committee has the same concerns as the Trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee.

The purpose and scope of this committee is to keep abreast of AA's needs nationwide, to study General Service Office's budget and to take an active interest in its income, with a view to expanding its services to groups and to the public. This committee should liaise at least once a year with the Trustees' Finance Committee, which normally happens through Trustee liaison at Conference time.

## **Conference Treatment Facilities and Special Needs Committee:**

The Conference Treatment Facilities and Special Needs Committee's purpose is to review all aspects of service to AA groups in Treatment Facilities, and make recommendations for improvement of communication with such groups. It is also concerned with those separated from the programme and Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous by language, culture, impairment of sight, hearing, mental health and other permanent or temporary disabilities

## **Conference Correctional Facilities Committee:**

Conference Correctional Facilities Committee's purpose is to examine and review all aspects of service conducted by members and groups carrying AA's message in Correctional Facilities. It encourages AA members to assume responsibility for carrying the message to alcoholics confined to long or short term correctional for treatment facilities, and upon release.

## **Conference Literature Committee:**

The Conference Literature Committee cooperates with the Trustees' Literature & Archives Committee as needed, and communicates in detail through Trustee liaison at Conference.

The purpose and function of the Literature Committee is:

1. To review any recommendations made to the Conference that involve literature or publishing.
2. To review any recommendations directed specifically to the Literature Committee.

The Literature Committee examines all AA pamphlets, printed materials and other media prior to their being presented to full Conference. It has recommended the printing in Australia of all Conference Approved pamphlets as this becomes financially possible, and in 1985 first recommended the Australian printing of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous".

## **Policies and Admissions Committee:**

This Conference committee examines only 'Conference' policy. There is no similar Trustees' committee. The purpose and function of the Policy/Admissions Committee is to review and initiate recommendations involving policies and requests for admission to the Australian General Service Conference.

All changes in the Conference Plan, all steps in the expansion of the Conference, and all procedures affecting the cost of the Conference have passed before the Conference Policy and Admissions Committee. It also has the ticklish job of approving or disapproving requests for additional Areas. As AA Groups multiply, the problem of reaching them via the Conference structure increases. The committee might say: "Go ahead, set up another Area". Or it could say: "You need more Districts, more DCMs, rather than more Area Delegates".

## **Conference International Committee:**

The Conference International Committee, formed in 1999, liaises with the Board committee of the same name and seeks to encourage the Fellowship's participation in international sharing and carrying of our message. The scope of this committee is:

1. To review any recommendations made to the Conference that involve the participation of AA Australia in the wider AA Fellowship.
2. To review any other recommendations directed specifically to the International Committee.
3. To encourage AA in Australia to participate in world-wide service programs.
4. To encourage support in Australia for the International Sponsorship Fund.
5. To see that updated local information is provided for the AOSM Directory.

6. To see that the distribution of the AOSM Directory and Newsletter to CSOs and Areas around Australia is actively promoted.
7. To ensure that a register is maintained by General Service Office of AAs with languages other than English – as sponsors, translators, checkers.
8. To support and encourage actions that promote understanding of our responsibility to carry our message anywhere, both outside and inside Australia, including ethnic communities.

### **Report, Charter & Service Manual (RC&SMC) Committee:**

There is no similar Board committee, although the committee liaises with the Trustees' Literature & Archives Committee and with the Document Integration Group set up by the Chairman of the General Service Board from time to time (see Section 9: "The Board"), to which it contributes one member.

This committee has the responsibility for:

1. Considering any proposal or recommendation for change in "The Australian AA Service Manual" (which includes the *Conference Charter*) and in "Twelve Concepts for World Service", and offering these recommendations to the Conference.
2. Proposing any alterations considered desirable for improving the format, method of reporting, style or content of the *Conference Report*.
3. Reviewing the rough draft of the *Conference Report* with careful attention to accuracy, completeness of reporting, together with any other suggestions that may occur.
4. Establishing a deadline for examining the rough drafts and returning to General Service Office with corrections or suggestions.

### **Conference Committee on Trustees:**

This committee liaises with the Trustees' Nominating Committee and has the task of reviewing standards, appointment processes and résumés for elected trusted servants of Conference.

1. This committee is responsible for overseeing and reviewing standards, appointment processes and résumés for Class A Trustees, Class B Regional Trustees and General Service Trustees, and for International delegates.
2. At Conference the committee reviews résumés of all nominees for members of the General Service Board and International Delegate positions, and prepares a report of this review which shall include reasons for the committee's disapproval of nominees, if any, based on the Trustee Qualifications outlined in the "Australian General Service Manual".
3. The chairperson of this committee presents this report to the entire Conference for disapproval if any, before these nominees go forward for election either by the General Service Board or the Conference.
4. If any unexpired term of a Class A, Regional or General Service Trustee or International Delegate must be filled between Conferences, the nominees' résumés are sent by the Trustees' Nominating Committee to the committee members for review before any election is held.
5. The actions of this committee will contribute to the continuous success of our Services. Careful deliberation and analysis of all résumés, painstaking investigation, refusal to accept casual recommendations: these need to be the guiding principles of this committee.

## Conference Committee on Remote Communities:

Remote communities are defined as those separated from the programme and Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous by geographical limitations.

This committee discusses and makes recommendations on topics presented to Conference relevant to carrying the message to remote communities within Australia, and developing a service structure in these remote communities.

## HOW COMMITTEES SERVE AA

In keeping with the best Tradition of AA, we find that whatever 'authority' exists, is first expressed in the *Group Conscience*, then passed along through the Group representatives to the Conference, then from Conference to Trustees. The Conference Committees are responsible for seeing that this is done between Conferences, and to maintain communication with General Service Office, regarding their progress, throughout the year.

How effective has the pattern of Conference committees been? What Conference actions have they been responsible for? How well have they functioned between Conference meetings?

As in the case of almost any sort of committee, a great deal depends on the chairperson. If this member is active, the committee starts to hum and keeps on humming.

However, Conference committees have another factor in their favour. Their secretaries, usually staff members, are vitally interested in the contributions of their committees.

Every day, staff members are involved with the service Areas that are the committees' responsibilities, and in fact carry out most of the actual work for which the committees are responsible. The committees are important to staff as a means of getting answers to problems and indications of new service opportunities, in order to support their efforts in working with Groups all over the country.

***Down through the years, Conference committees have brought about many actions vital to AA's health and growth.***



# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION EIGHT**

# **AA'S INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES**



**Overview of the International Service Structure  
Election of Australian World Service Delegates  
Relationship to the General Service Structure  
Activities – WSM, AOSM and AOSM Zone  
Qualifications, Roles & Responsibilities  
The International Sponsorship Fund**

# OVERVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE STRUCTURE

## HISTORY

An appreciation of international relations began in AA almost as early as the movement itself. The first *World Service Office* opened in Vesey Street, New York, in February 1940. The first *International Convention* was held in Cleveland in 1950, at which meeting the *Twelve Traditions* were adopted, (the first *General Service Conference* was held in 1951). "The Twelve Concepts for World Service" was published in 1962. The international service structure, centred on the *World Service Meeting* is facilitated by the General Service Office in New York. In Australia the General Service Office performs a similar function for the General Service Conference at national scale.

The first World Service Meeting was held in New York in 1969, with biennial meetings from 1972 onwards. Delegates from 14 countries attended that first meeting, including two delegates from Australia. We have been sending delegates ever since. While Australian delegates have attended World Service Meetings now for several decades, the formal, International Committee system in our own country is more recent.

The *Trustees' International Committee* was first activated in 1995 and its *Composition, Scope & Procedure* document ratified by Conference. A parallel *Conference International Committee* was established in 1998. *International Delegates* had earlier been appointed by the Board, and had not been voting members of Conference, but in 1999 they were granted voting rights at Conference conditional upon their being elected by Conference and becoming *Members of Conference*. Delegates are elected specially for this purpose by Conference, but report to the General Service Board and to Conference. Before that, in Australia and in some other countries, delegates to international service meetings have sometimes been Board members, non-alcoholic Trustees, General Service Office staff or in the USA and Canada, special Trustees on the Board, known as '*Trustees-at-large*'.

The first ('zonal') *Asia-Oceania Service Meeting* was held in Japan in 1995. Australia did not send any delegates due to financial constraints.

## THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATES TODAY

Two World Service Delegates travel to each international Service Meeting to represent AA Australia, bring back their knowledge and experience to share with the Fellowship . and carry out their *international 12<sup>th</sup> Step* work.

Until 2002 there were two *World Service Meeting Delegates* (first & second term), two *Alternate WSM Delegates*, two *Asia-Oceania Service Meeting Delegates* (again, first & second term), and two *Alternate AOSM Delegates* (total eight people). Conference 2002 decided to reduce the numbers to two International Delegates and two Alternates. Both International Delegates now attend both World and Asia-Oceania Service Meetings. The Alternate steps in when the Delegate is not available to attend a meeting due to unavoidable circumstances, may help with big projects, or may fill a gap brought on by resignation or death, doing the work but not actually filling the position. This keeps the rotation at four years, unlike Area Delegates, who serve for three years from the date of commencement.

Most other countries have only two delegates, called '*World Service Delegates*' (WSD), who also attend their own zonal service meetings. In Australia, Conference decided in 2000 that *Alternate International Delegate* positions should have elections separate from other International Delegates. We had so many types of Delegate that the collective term 'International' emerged. In 2003 Conference decided that after a transition period of attrition, AA Australia would have two International Delegates who attended both World and Asia-Oceania (zonal) Service Meetings. In 2004 it was agreed that the title would change to '*World Service Delegate*', and that the Alternate position should be offered to the runner-up in the WSD election.



# ELECTION OF AUSTRALIAN WORLD SERVICE DELEGATES

Nominations are sent to General Service Office by the end of June; they are usually submitted through Area Assemblies. The nominations are included in the July Board meeting folder for information and are included in the Conference folder. They are not allocated to any particular Committee, except that the Conference Committee on Trustees will review the applications and make recommendations to Conference as to the suitability of the candidates. The whole of Conference elects the Delegate by *Third Legacy Procedure*.

General Service Office notifies the Fellowship of impending delegate elections and brings attention to the closure date for nominations from the Areas around Australia.

For continuity, the elections alternate two-yearly, for one Delegate plus a concurrent Alternative Delegate, then the other, with each term lasting four years. The term of service starts from the January following election, and does not normally exceed the four years.

## RELATIONSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES TO THE AA GENERAL SERVICE STRUCTURE

### WORLD SERVICE DELEGATES AT CONFERENCE

Both World Service Delegates are present at Conference in November, and are voting members. They present Reports on their activities to the Conference.

World Service Delegates attend Conference International Committee meetings as non-voting *ex-officio* members, while the Chairman of the *Trustees' International Committee* acts as liaison to the Conference Committee.

Although elected by Conference, the World Service Delegates are 'answerable' to the Board, ie they remain engaged with the Board and General Service Office and deliver Reports on their activities to the Board throughout the year. They are also required to report to the annual Conference.

### RELATIONSHIP OF DELEGATES TO THE BOARD

In Australia, the World Service Delegates are not Trustees, however they need to be familiar with the proceedings of the Board in order to explain Australian activities to their overseas contacts and Service Meetings. They have therefore been given the right to attend Board meetings. At least one Delegate is funded from general revenue to attend, and they do so in an advisory capacity only. Their particular role is with the *Trustees' International Committee*, where they may vote. When they attend Board meetings they have also been included as non-voting members on other Board committees to take advantage of their presence as a human resource. As considerable AA experience is required for a candidate to be considered for election in the first place, World Service Delegates are potentially a rich source of AA know-how and wisdom.

The international activities are overviewed by the Trustees' International Committee, in liaison with the Conference International Committee. As with other Committees, the Chairman of the Trustees' Committee keeps in touch with the Chairman of the Conference Committee.

# WORLD SERVICE DELEGATE ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITIES WITHIN AUSTRALIA

World Service Delegates spend their time in Australia preparing for meetings overseas, and collecting and delivering information around the country in the performance of their international 12<sup>th</sup> Step work. For this they are provided with a small budget from Fellowship funds. World Service Delegates are also included in the Conference-Approved Guideline List of office-bearers who may attend Regional Forums at Board expense (up to one from the following list to each Forum).

- General Service Office staff member
- World Service Delegate
- Non-alcoholic Trustee
- Other Regional or General Service Trustee.

The World Service Delegates involve their Alternates in the quarterly production of *International Corner* in "AA Around Australia", rotating the responsibility.

## WORLD SERVICE MEETINGS

World Service Meetings are held every two years, in locations alternating between New York City and cities in other countries. The World Service Meeting serves as a forum for sharing the experience, strength and hope of delegates from all parts of the world. It seeks ways and means of carrying the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers, in any nation and any language. It can also represent an expression of the Group Conscience worldwide. It encourages the planning of sound service structures and exploration of expanding AA services to reach the alcoholic through internal communication, literature distribution, sponsorship, public information, community relations and work with institutions.

These meetings in many ways resemble the Australian Conference, and they have a very busy Committee system. General Service Office New York encourages countries each to send two Delegates, to facilitate the assignment of work and to cover as many as possible of the many meetings.

Ideally the World Service Meeting itself should be self-supporting financially, but at this stage (2002) it is not.

Each participating country forwards a nominal fee per Delegate to General Service Office New York, which then takes the responsibility for the remainder of the expenses incurred. This arrangement is similar to that between the Areas and Conference in Australia, where the Board underwrites from 'general revenue', shortfalls from *Area Levies* to fund Conference.

Participating countries fund the fares and accommodation of their Delegates. Australian Delegates are funded out of membership donations through the normal surplus funds *Donation Plan* from the Groups, so our ability to send Delegates depends on a healthy donation level to General Service Office.

# ASIA-OCEANIA SERVICE MEETINGS

## WHERE DO ZONAL DELEGATES COME FROM?

*Asia-Oceania Service Meeting Zone Delegates* come from countries within the Zone illustrated above. Here there are probably more languages spoken, religions practised and more alcoholics needing to hear our message than in the rest of the world. As AA grows all over the world, new Zones are sure to emerge. Membership of the Zone is a fluid matter, similar to the situation with individuals and the selection of the Groups they might attend. Wherever a country anywhere in or near our zone reaches out for help, AAs in the the AOSM structure do their best to extend the hand of AA. At present,

- The southern boundary runs from South of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean East of South Africa, running eastwards South of Australia and New Zealand, but also potentially including part of Antarctica, to the Pacific Ocean, well to the East of our neighbours in New Zealand.
- From the South-East corner, the boundary extends North through Oceania, including many small island states as far East as French Polynesia (Tahiti), running North past China, Korea and Japan to Eastern Russia, which provides the northern and western boundaries.
- The western boundary runs down through the Russian Federation, East of the Ural Mountains and the Caspian Sea in the South, to include countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India; it then moves South to Diego Garcia. The designation of Middle Eastern countries to a Zone is presently uncertain.
- These boundaries include Papua-New Guinea, Indonesia, South-East Asia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mongolia and all of China.

Within this Zone, better established countries take solo or shared responsibility for those with less developed structures. The AOSM recognizes that it has no authority over any AA service or group. The only decisions to be made by the AOSM are those which affect the meeting itself.

## ASIA-OCEANIA SERVICE MEETING ZONE



Figure 7 Asia-Oceania Service Meeting Zone

## THE ASIA-OCEANIA SERVICE MEETING

The *Asia-Oceania Service Meeting* is Australia's Zonal AA meeting, and is held every two years, alternating with the *World Service Meeting*. The primary purpose of the Asia Oceania Service Meeting is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who still suffers, by providing a forum for Delegates from all parts of Asia and Oceania. The Asia-Oceania Service Meeting has no authority over any AA service or group.

It can also represent an expression of the Group Conscience throughout the Region and provide a link to the World Service Meeting for countries unable to be represented there.

Experience has shown that a sound service structure enables the message to be delivered more effectively. The Asia Oceania Service Meeting encourages the planning of sound service structures suited to the needs of the individual countries and the expansion of AA services to reach the alcoholic through the spoken word, literature and institutions work.

The Asia-Oceania Service Meeting is self-supporting through the voluntary contributions of its members, service entities and Groups within each country represented.

The Asia-Oceania Service Meeting has its own Secretariat. The Australian General Service Conference normally contributes a donation towards its funding each year and hosts the meeting itself from time to time. The Secretariat produces a quarterly Newsletter, the *Asia-Oceania Service Meeting Directory*, and plays a major role in organising the biennial Meetings.

## INTERNATIONAL SERVICE: QUALITIES RECOMMENDED FOR DELEGATES

1. Experience in Service at national level & advanced knowledge of AA traditions, structure & literature; at least five years current unbroken sobriety in AA.
2. Citizenship of Australia; Legal residence in Australia.
3. Absence of past criminal convictions of the type that would impede ability to travel (especially to USA).
4. Good communication skills. Speak & write fluent English.

## ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORLD SERVICE DELEGATES

### ***THESE INCLUDE IN AUSTRALIA:***

1. To set up a cooperative email 'loop' of World Service *trusted servants*, including both Delegates and Alternates and key members (eg Chairs) of Trustees' and Conference International Committees so as to keep everyone abreast of activities throughout the year and seek help where needed eg for Newsletter preparation or literature-related activities.
2. Membership of International Committees (Board and Conference). Attendance at Board meetings with voting rights only at Committee level, or studying Board proceedings if unable to attend. Full participation at Conference.
3. To assist in making the Fellowship aware of forthcoming World Service Meeting Delegate vacancies and encourage suitable members to nominate to fill the vacancies

4. After the World Service Meeting to present to the Australian General Service Board a succinct Report which should contain the following:
  - a) Information regarding any recommendations the World Service Meeting may have made
  - b) Information on the meetings and workshops
  - c) Other information of general interest.
5. Present a similar Report to the Australian General Service Conference in November.
6. Share experiences gained at the World Service Meeting with Australian members via bulletins, "AA Around Australia", attending Regional Forums, Conventions etc, whenever possible.

### **FOR THE WORLD SERVICE MEETING:**

1. To send a *Report* to General Service Office New York six months before the World Service Meeting; the report to contain the following information:
  - a) General information regarding AA activities in Australia, eg *Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community, Treatment and Correctional Facilities*, literature, finances and the like.
  - b) General description of General Service structure and the various committees it comprises.
  - c) Statistics on AA in Australia, eg number of groups, percentage of men and women members, Central Service Offices, average length of sobriety etc.
  - d) Information about the principle aspects of AA in Australia, eg Regional Forums, National Conventions, growth.
2. To study the material dispatched by General Service Office New York referring to the forthcoming World Service Meeting. This will enable the Delegates to participate constructively in the various committees and workshops.
3. To maintain good communications with other World Service Delegates internationally and with General Service Office New York.
4. To attend and fully participate in the World Service Meeting.

### **FOR THE ASIA-OCEANIA SERVICE MEETING:**

1. To report to the Asia/Oceania Service Meeting on activities in this country regarding Service Structure growth, *Public Information, Treatment Facilities*, literature, finances and the general status of AA.
2. Actively participate in sponsoring neighbouring Countries. This includes communication, encouragement and assistance with literature, banners and public information. Some member countries have special funds allocated to finance this inter-national 12<sup>th</sup> Step work.
3. Keep fully informed of international matters such as literature translation procedures and copyright. Study Reports from the *World Service Meeting, European Service Meeting* and the *Meeting of the Americas*, so as to be informed of trends in the worldwide Fellowship.
4. Encourage interest and participation in Asia-Oceania Service Meeting activities at Group, District and Area levels. This includes reporting back as broadly as possible to the Fellowship following AOS Meetings.
5. Actively participate in planning and implementation of the Asia-Oceania Service Meeting itself when it is Australia's turn to host the meeting.

# THE INTERNATIONAL SPONSORSHIP FUND (ISF)

The *International Sponsorship Fund* (formerly known as the '*International Literature Fund*') supports the translation, printing and distribution of literature to help establish AA in developing countries. In 1995 Conference recommended that all AA Groups in Australia be encouraged to contribute any surplus funds from one meeting each year during Founders Day Week (June 10th) to be forwarded to General Service Office to be consolidated and sent on to New York for this purpose. It is the role of the Trustees' International Committee to encourage AA in Australia to support this fund, and presently a 'brown paper bag' donation system, is organised by the International Service Delegates and others.

The following year, Conference endorsed the proposal that a portion of the International Literature Fund collection be used to help Australia's efforts to carry the message into the Asia/Oceania zone. Following this, several developing country Delegates have been supported financially to attend the AOSM. For legal reasons, the name of the fund therefore had to be changed in 2002 to make it accurate to the purpose for which the money was collected. In 2003 Conference specified that the proportion of the collection earmarked for our own Zone be 75% of the ISF collection: "(to) ... be used to sponsor literature and PI&CPC activities in the Asia/Oceania zone ...", the remainder to be sent to New York for the International Literature Fund.

The 75% Asia-Oceania Zone portion of the fund is administered jointly by the Chair and Coordinator of the Trustees' International Committee together with the World Service Delegates. The Chairperson of the Trustees' International Committee is expected at all times to have a complete record of all expenditure from this fund.

In 2009, Conference resolved that when proposed expenditure from the International Sponsorship Fund exceeds \$5,000.00, approval should be sought from the Conference International Committee on behalf of Conference.

# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION NINE**

# **THE GENERAL SERVICE BOARD**

**(THE TRUSTEES)**



**The Board**

**The Trustees**

**How AA Chooses its Trustees**

**Why the Board Chooses its Members**

**Disapproval Votes at Conference**

**Trustees' Committees**

**Legal Structure of the Board**

**Overview of AA's Structural Documents**

# WHAT IS THE BOARD?

*The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia, is the chief service arm of the Australian General Service Conference and is essentially custodial in its character ...*

Excepting for decisions on matters of policy, finance or AA tradition liable to affect AA as a whole, the General Service Board has entire freedom of action in the routine conduct of the policy and business affairs of the AA service corporation ...

**- excerpt from the Conference Charter**

The Trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous are concerned with everything happening inside and outside AA that may affect the health and growth of the movement.

The Trustees are close to the General Service Office's activities and are often the first to become aware of trends that may influence AA's future. However, as the Charter points out, their duties are essentially custodial. Whenever a decision on movement-wide policy is needed, they turn to the Conference. And, because they are a part of the Conference body, they participate in policy-making, but only as individual Conference members, not as a group.

The Trustees do much of their work through the Trustees' committees. The diagram "*The Australian General Service Conference Structure*" at the end of Section 1: "The Conference Plan" clearly shows how the General Service Board fits into the whole picture, and how the Trustees derive from the Conference what 'authority' they have. This relationship was established when the Conference structure was first set up in the USA and Canada. Experience there, and in Australia, has demonstrated that this relationship continues to work well, and there is every indication that it will continue to do so in the future.

It was felt, even at a relatively early date in our national development, that a General Service Board would eventually become a necessity. State Trustees gradually became an integral part of the Conference structure and were granted full debating and voting rights at the Adelaide Conference in 1969. In 1970, Conference ratified the appointment of the first Non-alcoholic Trustee, Dr Bill Spence.

In that year also, the establishment of an Australian General Service Board was formally approved, and methods of implementing its functions first discussed and put into motion. The Board adopted the North American structure, with a mixture of alcoholic Trustees (*Class B*) and non-alcoholic Trustees (*Class A*). Most alcoholic Trustees were *Regional Trustees*. It was also agreed that for the Board to operate effectively, some Trustees must be available within easy reach of the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous to serve as the nucleus of a working structure. It was considered necessary to have two such Trustees, appointed by the Board and designated '*General Service Trustees*'.

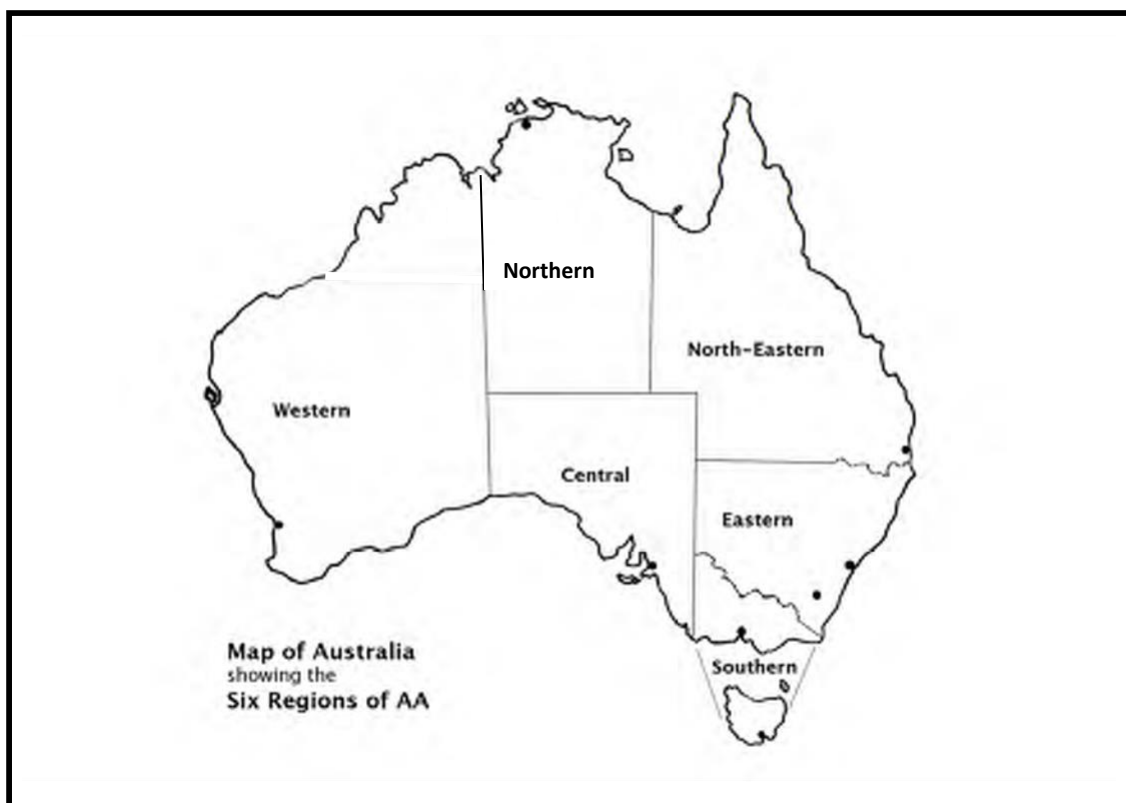
## COMPOSITION & TERM OF SERVICE

### COMPOSITION

The Australian ratio calls for four non-alcoholic Trustees on a Board of twelve, so the General Service Board today consists, where possible, of 12 men and women, of which there are 8 alcoholics (*Class B*) and 4 non-alcoholics (*Class A*), who bring varying talents and backgrounds to their service responsibilities. There is always a careful balance on the Board between Trustees who are elected primarily to bring regional and AA service experience to the Board and those selected primarily for business or other professional backgrounds.



The following map shows the AA Regions. For a formal description see Section 13 *Articles of Association* Article 1.



**Figure 8 The Six Regions of AA**

## **DURATION OF TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS**

A Trustee who resigns may not be reappointed.

Class A Trustees are usually elected by the Board in July, and attend their first Board meetings at Conference the following November. In all cases the Australian Securities and Investment Commission must be notified within two weeks of the appointment's becoming operational. They may serve for five consecutive years with the option of serving a further five-year period subject to Board approval followed by Conference disapproval (a 2/3 vote of all Conference Members, disapproving the motion).

The six Regional Trustees and two General Service Trustees serve a four year term. All Class B Trustees must rotate off after four years. Class B rotation occurs on the last day of December and the new Trustee takes up the position on 1st January, with the first Board meeting attended being in February.

Interim appointments are for four years from the date of appointment.

While a new Trustee does not usually attend Board meetings until his or her predecessor has rotated out of the job, both the incumbent and the General Service Trustees elect may attend the February Board meeting to preserve continuity.

Where possible, but at the Board's discretion, interim appointments are avoided, and casual vacancies left until the following Conference. The Board has the right to act to keep its numbers at an appropriate level.

# THE TRUSTEES: QUALIFICATIONS

## AN EFFECTIVE TRUSTEE

AA has been fortunate over the years in having many competent Trustees, both AA members and Non-alcoholics, and the choice of Trustees remains one of the most important factors in ensuring AA's future. There are no hard-and-fast rules governing qualifications. In general though, there are certain things to look for.

## NON-ALCOHOLIC TRUSTEES (*'Class A'*)

In seeking candidates for Class A Trustee positions, the Board looks for men and women with a proven track record in their own fields, with a demonstrated interest in Alcoholics Anonymous, and some experience in working with AA and its members. It would be safe to say that the busiest people have made the largest contribution and shown the greatest dedication and judgment. From time to time the Board has included members of the medical and nursing professions, accountancy, the Law, researchers, people familiar with the media, as well as those well versed in the general business world. They have all made their various contributions, not only in their own special fields but often also in the wider world of organisational management.

AA's debt to those who do not share our disease but willingly share our problems is immense, going back to the beginning. Bill W wrote: "In the days when AA was unknown, it was the nonalcoholic Trustees who held up our hands before the general public. They supplied us with ideas ... They voluntarily spent hours on end, working side by side with us and among the grubbiest of details. They gave freely of their professional and financial wisdom. Now and then they helpfully mediated our difficulties." Written in 1966, those words hold true today. Nonalcoholic Trustees remain a rich source of wisdom and perspective.

The experience of the Fellowship in North America has shown the wisdom of selecting non-alcoholic Trustees as described in Bill's introduction to this Manual. We, in Australia, benefit similarly from their professional experience.

Since they need not maintain anonymity, Class A Trustees are also our public face, should it become necessary to put AA before the general public in any matter. They are often called upon to chair meetings and committees, to speak at Regional Forums and take formal roles at major Conventions.

The Chair of the General Service Board is traditionally a Class A Trustee, partly due to the public aspects of the role, but there have been exceptions where alcoholic Trustees have held the position. The Board will always seek to select the best person available for the task.

## ALCOHOLIC TRUSTEES (*'Class B'*) – GENERAL SERVICE & REGIONAL TRUSTEES

Experience has shown that AA Trustees, who are strong in one or more of the following Areas, have contributed most to matters that come before the Board:

### **Length of sobriety:**

Experience shows that a minimum of ten years of continuous sobriety is right for Regional Trustees, although not mandatory. For General Service Trustees seven years of continuous sobriety is suggested.

## **Business or professional background:**

While business experience is not necessary for all alcoholic Trustees, it has proved essential for General Service Trustees, who deal with the business affairs of the Fellowship. Regional Trustees with sound professional qualifications are always valuable to the Board, but may also be stronger in other Areas.

## **Leadership:**

In AA this seems to mean qualities enabling a member to deal with AA growth and affairs with good feeling and a minimum of friction. Good leaders can bring to the Board the quality of resoluteness and the courage of their convictions, along with good judgment, objectivity, and the willingness to stand up and express themselves. Such candidates generally have the love and respect of AAs in their community or Region and can represent the Board and interpret its actions back home.

## **Grasp of AA structure:**

Some AAs have special aptitude for the AA structure and are thoroughly familiar with all its elements, from the Group through the Area to the Board and the Conference. They are usually familiar with AA's history and the trends that affect its future.

## **Work Load / Availability:**

All Trustee candidates need to think long and hard about the time they have available, without hurting family or career. Trustees have especially time-consuming jobs. In addition to two Board meetings plus travel time, they are required to attend another Board meeting and the four-day General Service Conference in November, and often have demanding travel schedules within their Regions. Throughout the year, these Trustees keep in touch with their colleagues on the Board and with the General Service Office.

## **Availability of General Service Trustees to General Service Office:**

General Service Trustees must be available for consultation with the General Service Office staff members at any time. The two General Service Trustees are very active members of the Board who reside within commuting distance of the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous. They are available every week, and sometimes every day, for the solution of problems about which General Service Office staff may need help.

They bring to the problems of a growing movement the kind of experience and training that can prove most useful. While there are no 'specialists' in AA - only recovered drunks - it has been possible to choose for General Service Trusteeships, men and women with the kind of business and professional acumen that is particularly applicable to problems at hand, whether their business backgrounds are in, for example, publishing, accounting, public relations, administration or the Law.

# **REGIONAL TRUSTEE'S ROLE**

## **General**

While their Service allegiance is to AA as a whole through the General Service Board (via the General Service Conference), and many tasks may arise from this, Regional Trustees' regional presence is also critical, especially in formal chairing responsibilities and as AA educators.

Their leadership roles will draw on their communication skills. They are available as speakers at AA Service events. They have a general role of encouragement, information sharing and awareness raising about the General Service Structure.

Ideally, then, Regional Trustees will have been selected for their wide General Service experience and AA knowledge, and will be open to learning. This Australian AA Service Manual and the Guidelines contain a great deal of accessible AA wisdom for reference.

### **A two-way bridge, not a political representative**

Just as Area Delegates form a bridge between the Groups, Districts and Areas and Conference, so Regional Trustees provide a lively bridge between the Fellowship and the Board, particularly by keeping in close communication with their Area Delegates.

Like Area Delegates, they do not represent their Regions or Areas as would a politician. They bring an invaluable regional perspective to the Conference and to the Board, and are relied on to explain the Board and its activities to the Areas. At Conference, they take an *AA-as-a-whole* perspective, and vote on the full information before them on the day, not in line with any pre-ordained position of Board, Region or Area, but informed by those perspectives.

Regional Trustees report on the wellbeing and activities of their Areas to the July Board meeting. In turn, Trustees are expected to communicate regularly with Delegates by email, especially after each Board meeting, and if chairing Board committees, with the Chairs of corresponding Conference committees.

### **Relationships within the Region**

#### **Co-operating with Areas**

The annual General Service Conference is a significant opportunity for Regional Trustees to meet and build working relationships with their Area Delegates.

In the Region, Regional Trustees have no formal role and do not vote in Area meetings (ASM Section 5 The Area, Section 6 The Area Delegate). However they may be invited to participate in Area Assemblies, especially Election Assemblies where their experience and Area Delegate relationships may be very helpful in finding candidates for Regional Trustee. They can also be useful in explaining the relationship between the Board and Conference, the Topics system (Guideline GL-28 *How a Conference Topic is Developed*; also see Guidelines GL-2, 5, 27) and the processes used by the Board.

#### **Getting around the Region**

Regional Trustees try to attend as many General Service Structure meetings as possible, and will need to travel to do so, most trying to visit each Area at least once per year.

However logistics vary greatly around the country, depending on Region size, population and number of Areas. Reasonable, properly evidenced costs are likely to be covered by the Board, as are those involved if the Trustee is invited to speak at an AA event such as a Regional Forum.

Use of email and internet video can be a very satisfactory way to communicate through the year.

#### **Chairing AA event planning committees**

Regional Trustees encourage and assist the Areas Delegates in running Regional Forums, which ideally should be conducted every year to share the wisdom, strength and hope of members participating in the General Service Structure (see Guideline GL-06 *Regional Forums*).

The Regional Trustee has *ex officio* the role of convening and chairing the Host Planning Committee for the National Convention when held in that Region, representing the Board in that capacity. This is a challenging task that requires a strong team, tight project management and long-term commitment. AA has over time developed comprehensive Guidelines for this (Guideline GL-15 *The National Convention*, also GL-14 *Conferences and Conventions*), and the Trustee will find positive support from many quarters, including the Board and the General Service Office.

#### **Being a Service Sponsor**

A Regional Trustees is invaluable as a type of informal *Service Resource*, available when local

members or those in General Service are uncertain of procedures or AA traditions applicable to local situations. They may also accept the formal role of *Service Sponsor* to particular individuals who request it.

As with any elected position in AA, Regional Trustees are well advised to have an active succession plan, to start looking for talent well in advance of their rotating off, encouraging as many others into General Service as possible.

#### **Not the 'AA police'**

Regional Trustees may find themselves being invited to act as some type of authority in local disputes. They may listen, explain AA traditions, or share their knowledge, experience, strength and hope in these matters, but they do not have authority over anyone (Warranty 3). Nearly always, the appropriate answer will be very local: to refer those issues to the collective *Group Conscience* of the Group or other AA entity involved, and as ever, any police matters should be referred to the police.

#### **Relationship with Central Service Offices**

While the role of a CSO is local service, answering to the Groups that support it financially, Regional Trustees or Area Delegates may have liaison and/or reporting roles with Central Service Offices. With some, due to overlap of local services, they may have a courtesy non-voting position on the CSO committee of management. This should not be not a General Service matter.

## **HOW AA CHOOSES ITS TRUSTEES**

### **HOW AA CHOOSES ITS CLASS A TRUSTEES**

*Class A Trustees* are nominated and elected by the *General Service Board* itself, after an extensive search. This begins by asking current and past members of the Board, Area Delegates, and the General Service Office staff to submit names and background information for 'friends of AA' to fill a vacancy. An advertisement is placed in "*AA Around Australia*" so that the whole Fellowship can be informed of, and involved in, the selection process. The list is narrowed down by the *Trustees' Nominating Committee* which then forwards it with CVs to the *Conference Committee on Trustees* for comment.

Feedback will need to be sought from the Conference Committee on Trustees before the election is expected. Taking all available information, including CV and feedback from the Conference Committee on Trustees, the candidate is selected by the full Board of Trustees, requiring a 2/3 majority vote, or *Third Legacy Procedure* for more than one candidate, and ASIC is notified within two weeks. The following Conference is given the opportunity to disapprove, requiring a 2/3 vote against the appointment to overthrow it. Interim appointments are carried out along similar lines.

### **HOW AA CHOOSES GENERAL SERVICE TRUSTEES**

General Service Trustees (GSTs) are nominated and elected by the *General Service Board* itself, after an extensive search and interview process. Approximately 12 months before a General Service Trustee rotates off, the canvassing process begins. Current and past members of the Board,

Area Delegates, and the General Service Office staff are asked to submit names and background information for suitably qualified candidates who live within commuting distance of the General Service Office. An advertisement is placed in *AA Around Australia* so that the whole Fellowship can be informed and involved in the selection process.

Potential Trustees are invited to attend monthly *General Service Office Management Group* meetings (see description under Trustees' Service Committees below). This gives them valuable insight into the demanding features of the job before officially submitting their nomination. It also gives the Management Group an opportunity to assess their skills and knowledge of the General Service Structure.

Election usually takes place at the Board meeting during Conference. This means that feedback will need to be sought from the Conference Committee on Trustees before this. Taking all available information, including CV and feedback from the Conference Committee on Trustees, the candidate is selected by the full Board of Trustees, requiring a 2/3 majority vote, or *Third Legacy Procedure* for more than one candidate. Conference is given the opportunity to disapprove, requiring a 2/3 vote against the appointment to overthrow it. ASIC is notified within two weeks. Interim appointments are carried out along similar lines, but during the year.

The Trusteeship becomes active on March 1, however as the new GST already lives in Sydney, he or she is asked to attend the February Board meeting along with the outgoing GST, for continuity reasons.

## HOW AA CHOOSES REGIONAL TRUSTEES

Candidates for Regional Trustee are proposed by the Areas, either one candidate from each Area or, in some cases, one candidate is put forward by two or more Areas acting together. Each Region tends to have its own preference. Most commonly, those Regions with more numerous or more geographically separated Areas tend to invite each Area to elect its own candidate, and all the candidate CVs are sent to Conference for final selection by a special nominating session as

described below. In Regions with smaller numbers of Areas it is easier to come together to select a single nominee for the Region at a local level. Such candidates only need Conference ratification before being elected to the Board, which traditionally accepts Conference's nominees. The same General Service Office notification system applies.

This responsibility should be considered carefully by the AAs involved. It is suggested that along with the qualifications and responsibilities required to fill the Trustee position described, that this entire section of the *Service Manual* plus the *Conference Charter* and the full version of the "*Twelve Concepts for World Service*" be carefully reviewed before the selection is made. By doing so, an informed Group of AAs will participate in selecting a candidate.

### Notification

Delegates and Area Committee members in a Region required to select a Regional Trustee candidate, will be informed by the General Service Office. All AA Groups in the Region will also be notified of the vacancy, and the suggested selection procedures, through the following issue of "*AA Around Australia*".

### Procedure for Election

1. A Conference 1997 Advisory Action should be kept in mind, which states that Area Delegates are not eligible for Trustee appointments until twelve months after their last Conference as a Delegate, except under extraordinary circumstances such as early resignation or death of the incumbent.
2. At the Area level, the Delegate(s) or Area Committee(s) should decide whether the candidate presented by Area will be selected at a meeting of the *Area Committee* or by an *Area Assembly*. In any case the *Third Legacy Procedure* should be used (Section 12: "AA's Traditional Legacy Documents").
3. The *General Service Conference Delegate* or *Chair of the Area Committee* should send to the General Service Office a complete report of all procedures followed in the selection.
4. A résumé for the Trustee candidate selected, should be forwarded to the General Service Office on the correct form, *by the Area Delegate or nominated Area Officer*. A special form is available for this purpose from General Service Office, and it should be completed by the

candidate and signed by someone from Area other than the candidate. It should be sent by registered mail, and should cover professional, business and AA service qualifications, with name and address and full contact information.

5. In the event that circumstances prevent an Area's candidate for Regional Trustee from serving as Trustee, the same Area will have the right to submit another candidate subject to the approval of the *Trustees' Nominating Committee* and the *Conference Committee on Trustees*.
6. The Trustees' Nominating Committee and Conference Committee on Trustees review all candidate CVs for eligibility and all Conference members vote, by Third Legacy Procedure, to select a candidate. The selected candidate is then referred to the General Service Board for election.
7. Finally, the Board of Trustees formally elects the new Trustee(s) at its meeting following the Conference. Traditionally, the General Service Board will accept for election the Regional Trustee nomination of Conference. ASIC is then notified as specified.

## TRUSTEE EMERITI

Trustees emeriti are appointed by the General Service Conference following nomination either by the General Service Board, or from the Fellowship. The appointments are considered after rotation following a lengthy period of service and only Class A Trustees are eligible for these positions. The positions are for life, or until the Trustee Emeritus wishes to resign.

It is recommended that Trustees emeriti are invited to attend quarterly board meetings of the General Service Board and the annual General Service Conference with participation, but not voting rights. They are a resource of corporate memory and are often asked to share their experience with past board decisions, how previous General Service Boards conducted business, and the processes they used to reach a group conscience. Trustees emeriti do not vote on any matter before the General Service Board or the Conference.

## INTERIM APPOINTMENTS

In the event that any member Trustee shall resign or die, or if the Trusteeship becomes vacant under other subclauses of *Article 6*, the Trustees may at any regular or special meeting elect a new member Trustee to fill such a vacancy, or, alternatively, permit such a vacancy to continue until the next annual meeting of the General Service Board. In 2003 the Conference resolved that the following procedures be observed.

### ***Regional Trustees***

1. If possible delay the appointment until the next Conference.
2. Areas are asked to nominate new candidate(s). Both the Trustees Nominating Committee and the Conference Committee on Trustees representing the Conference vet the nominees' CVs.
3. If not delayed to the next Conference the election is performed directly by *Third Legacy Procedure* by the Board.
4. All Delegates are notified with the next mailing.
5. Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) is notified.
6. The Trustee elect is presented to the next Conference for disapproval, if any.

### ***General Service Trustees & Class A Trustees***

1. The need is announced in *AA Around Australia* and all are requested to help search for potential candidates.
2. The Trustees Nominating Committee vets all CVs and chooses a short list.

3. The short list is referred to the Conference Committee on Trustees for comment.
4. The Board elects the appropriate candidate.
5. All Delegates are notified with the next mailing.
6. Australian Securities and Investments Commission is notified.
7. The Trustee elect is presented to the next Conference for disapproval, if any.

## WHY THE BOARD CHOOSES ITS MEMBERS

The General Service Board has much work to do for the Fellowship during the year. The Trustees must work together, frequently, and therefore must have faith and confidence in the professional capacities of the people with whom they work. Furthermore the Board members know what professional qualities are most needed on the Board. They may see that there is a need for people with specific professional qualifications and experience in, for example: health, management, accountancy, public relations, publishing, media, education or the law. In this case a search can be made for people with these skills. The Board must be trusted to choose the people it needs, for Class A, General Service and interim appointments. The Fellowship still has the right to 'disapprove' of the Board's selections through its Delegates, the Conference Committee on Trustees, which is consulted, and the Conference, if it can be shown that a candidate is unsuitable. The Fellowship also has a direct opportunity to participate in the selection process for the six Regional Trustee positions, at grass roots level. Areas nominate candidates or collaborate to select one Regional nominee, and later the Area Delegates of that Region participate directly in any final nominee selection at Conference. By tradition, the Board will normally accept and elect Conference nominees for Regional Trustee positions, and Conference will accept the nominee selected by the nominating session. Further information may be found in Concept VII and Concept III.

## 'DISAPPROVAL' VOTES AT CONFERENCE.

Where one part of AA is contemplating overturning the considered decision of another group, duly acting in its Area of responsibility, a serious, binding decision is made. Therefore the electorate for such decisions is all the registered Members of Conference, and the disapproval voting level required is 2/3. Examples of where disapproval may be entertained by Conference are Board appointments of Class A and General Service Trustees, the acceptance from combined Areas of a single regional nominee for a Regional Trustee position, interim Board appointments and Conference ratification of changes by the Board to its own documents.

For example, rigorous processes are gone through in searching for and selecting, Class A and General Service Trustee candidates. If due processes have been followed, all sections of the Fellowship, through advertisements and trusted committees, have had an opportunity to suggest or vet candidates before the Conference meets.

For Trustee selections, with the exception of Regional Trustees, a Conference vote is not legally required. But an opportunity is given to the whole Conference to 'disapprove' of a nominee in the extraordinary event that a Conference member has information, not previously revealed, which would disqualify a Trustee nominee from filling a vacancy on the General Service Board.

Our leaders are *trusted* servants and are therefore trusted to carry out these important duties, in line with Concepts III, IV and VII, which cover the *Rights of Participation* and *Decision*, and the checks and balances built into the AA system with regard to the appointment of Trustees.



# **TRUSTEES' SERVICE COMMITTEES, SUBCOMMITTEES & RELATED BODIES**

## **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT BOARD COMMITTEE FUNCTION**

There are many Trustees' committees, most of which have corresponding Conference committees. To optimise communication and understanding of Trustee activities during the year, the Chairs of the Trustees' committees act in a non-voting capacity as *Trustee Liaison* to advise their related Conference committees during the annual General Service Conference. They also write to their corresponding Conference Chairs following the February and July Board meetings and confer with them during the year as necessary to keep them informed, seek advice or draw on additional skills (See Conference Structure Chart in Section 1: "The Conference Plan"). The Board is empowered to dismantle or set up other service committees as the need arises, and to co-opt extra, non-voting members if necessary.

In 2003 the Board adopted a new process whereby for all ordinary Board meetings in Sydney, all Board members sit on each Committee. This was done in order to save double handling and to access a wider array of talents for each task. The Chair of each Committee is a Trustee, elected as before, by simple majority for a two-year term, and chairs the relevant section of the Board meeting. The Chair manages the relevant Committee Reports, correspondence and projects, and now has access to the full range of Board skills in selecting project teams.

The quorum for each committee is 5 voting members. Coordinator and Minute Secretary roles are taken by the General Service Office staff, and Board meetings are now recorded, to facilitate accurate reporting to the Fellowship. The General Service Office Manager is *ex officio* a voting member of all the Board committees but not of the Board as such.

## **TRUSTEES' COMMITTEES & OTHER ENTITIES**

### ***TRUSTEES' FINANCE COMMITTEE***

Even before the recent changes whereby all Board members sit on all committees, this committee was composed of the full Board membership.

If possible, the accountant attends to present the financial details and answer questions. The Committee meets in February and July, and more often if necessary, by telephone, teleconference, fax or email. The Auditor's Report is presented to the Board at the Annual General Meeting in November. Financial matters can be raised at the General Service Board Meeting in November, but no specific Finance Committee meeting is held at the time of the Conference. The Committee reviews any matters concerning AA finance, reviews the budgets of the General Service Office and the General Service Conference and reviews General Service Trustee requests for expenditure.

### ***TRUSTEES' NOMINATING COMMITTEE***

This committee is chaired by the Chair of the General Service Board. The Committee overviews all nominations for membership to the General Service Board. The Nominating Committee acts to see that all vacancies for *Trustees*, including *Class A Trustees*, also *World Service Delegate* and *General Service Office Manager* positions, are properly filled, in terms of the greatest possible competence, stability and industry. This includes careful deliberation, painstaking investigation and interviewing, refusal to accept casual recommendations and preparation of suitable candidates well in advance, resisting any temptation to snap decisions or hasty judgment.

The ongoing success of AA Service depends on the quality control exerted by this committee.

The committee maintains a close relationship with the Conference Committee on Trustees in the review process of Trustee nominations, either at Conference or during the year if interim appointments to the Board are considered necessary. It is less directly involved in International Delegate nominations, receiving information but only occasionally advising.

Recommendations are received from the Management Group at General Service Office when the position of General Service Office Manager must be filled.

## **TRUSTEES' LITERATURE & ARCHIVES COMMITTEE**

This has the highest workload of any of the Conference or Trustees' committees. When developing new literature or other media it may work hand in hand with the *Conference Literature Committee* on a year-round basis. It also works, at times, with the *Report, Charter and Service Manual Committee*, or *Conference Finance, Trustees' Treatment & Correctional Facilities, Trustees' Public Information & Cooperation with the Professional Community*, Committees when they have requested the development of specialised literature. It meets twice annually but its project teams may need to spend a great deal of time between meetings, reviewing, writing or reading manuscripts for new or revised pamphlet material. The Committee also reviews audio-visual needs and develops new material of this type.

In addition, the Committee is concerned with preserving and organising records of AA *history* already to hand and seeking out further material. An *Archives Liaison Officer* other than the Chair (ideally the General Service Office Manager) communicates with archives specialists on their activities and the management, recording and preservation of the national archives collection, and reports to each Board meeting. A National Archivist is appointed by the Board for a four-year term.

Non-voting *Editorial Consultants* may be co-opted to assist with literature writing, assessment and editorial tasks.

## **TRUSTEES' PUBLIC INFORMATION & CO-OPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY COMMITTEE**

This meets at least twice a year, in February and July, and more frequently if necessary. It is responsible for determining policies and supervising activities that increase public understanding of AA and prevent, or at least lessen, public misunderstanding of our program. It seeks to create mutual understanding and co-operation between the Fellowship and those professional Groups and individuals concerned with alcoholism and the sick alcoholic. It also has close ties with the Trustees' Literature & Archives Committee, as their activities are complementary.

It is through this committee that the Class A Trustees can play their major role of being the public face of the AA Fellowship – by facilitating and attending activities such as seminars and press/media releases, and promoting co-operation with professional community programs, e.g. in medical, nursing or law schools.

### **TRUSTEES':**

- **TREATMENT FACILITIES COMMITTEE**
- **CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES COMMITTEE**

These are **separate** committees that have similar key tasks. These committees work to further the acceptance of AA in hospitals, rehabilitation centres and correctional facilities to bring additional help to alcoholics under treatment and/or serving time. Their activities include research, investigation and development of recommendations put forward by the Conference committees of the same names. These committees are concerned with clarification of what AA can and cannot do within its Traditions, to assist the patient or inmate while hospitalised or incarcerated and on discharge or release.

Class A Trustees can also play a major role here of being the public face of the AA Fellowship – by promoting co-operation with legal, law enforcement or correctional institutions and their programs, being available for interviews or facilitating or participating in educational activities.

## **TRUSTEES' INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE**

This committee is chaired by a Trustee, and includes two *World Service Delegates* who have voting rights when they are present (see International Section (Section 8) for information of International Delegate roles and responsibilities). The committee meets twice yearly in February and July, and between times by mail, fax, email or teleconference, as required. Its functions centre around advising the General Service Conference in Australia on matters of our participation and service obligations to, and with, the world-wide Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, and on related budgetary matters. This committee is also involved in a number of activities concerning literature: The *International Literature & Sponsorship Fund*, developing and distributing foreign language literature in Australia, and obtaining overseas literature and supportive contacts for Australian endeavours such as literature and archives development. It facilitates participation in international service programmes.

The International Literature and Sponsorship Fund is administered by the *Chair of this Committee*, the *Committee Coordinator* from General Service Office and the *World Service Delegates*.

## **TRUSTEES' GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE**

This committee is chaired by a *General Service Trustee*. The *Manager of the General Service Office* acts as Coordinator. It meets twice annually and works on the Conference procedures, agenda and theme.

It sees that Delegates are appropriately assigned to the Conference committees. Throughout the year it shares responsibility for the *Conference Agenda* and *Theme* with the *Conference Agenda Committee*, and the Chairs of the two committees meet during the Conference. The Committee Chair reports to the Conference Committee in full, and also reports, in recommendation format, to the entire Conference. Committee activity has a prescribed pattern that reflects its preparation for the next Conference and its review of outcomes after it. While assisting the Conference Agenda Committee it also takes an overview role with the goal of improving the quality of the Conference itself, and the selection and allocation of its topics. At the end of each Conference it receives *feedback forms* from Conference members and uses this information to inform its continual improvement commitment.

## **BOARD INVENTORY MEETINGS**

These are an opportunity for the Board to review its responsibilities and performance. It is a type of quality control system, initiated in 1999. These meetings are also an opportunity for the Board to appraise its adherence to AA traditions in the conduct of its business. Meetings are in February and March and chaired by the Chair of the General Service Board.

## **TRUSTEES' CO-ORDINATION & REVIEW COMMITTEE**

This is a committee of review, facilitation and encouragement. It is made up of the *General Service Trustees* and the *General Service Office Manager*. It meets bi-monthly at General Service Office to review the progress of *Conference Advisory Actions*, *Board decisions*, *General Service projects*, *National Convention Host Committees*, *Regional Forums* and other AA events. It reports to the Board and the Australian General Service Conference.

## **THE DOCUMENT INTEGRATION GROUP**

This is an *ad hoc* committee that replaces the '*Constitutional Working Party*' set up in 2002 to complete the process of Australian AA Service Manual updating, structural document review and integration, and Guideline development for structural document change.

It is coordinated by the Chair of the General Service Board and has a maximum of six members, including a balance from Board and Area Delegates, at least access to a person with legal or

constitution-drafting knowledge, at least one person with high level AA knowledge, and the Chair(s) of Conference Committees affected by changes to structural documents, including the Report, Charter & Service Manual Committee.

*Its purpose is to take responsibility for the structural consequences of all Conference or any other decisions that may impact any AA structural document, and to ensure they will be implemented fully, including coordinating the change(s) across the full set of documents as appropriate, and ensuring that for each, the proper processes are followed and completed according to the Guideline.*

After each Conference, the Chairman of the General Service Board will peruse the *Conference Report* for Advisory Actions that trigger this need, and will set up a Document Group for that year **if justified**. Simple tasks are dealt with by the Board or General Service Office. See “*Procedures for Change of AA’s Traditional ‘Legacy’ Documents*” below and Guideline GL-027: “*Process for Changing AA Service Documents*”. Also see “*A Note About Changing the AA Service Documents*” in Section 7: “The Conference”.

## **TRUSTEES’ REMOTE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

This committee functions in an advisory capacity to the General Service Conference in Australia, in matters of our participation and service obligations to remote communities within Australia. Remote communities are defined as those separated from the programme of Alcoholics Anonymous by geography

It’s Scope includes the publishing of articles in AA Around Australia and on the service and national websites to make remote communities aware that help is available through AA and to encourage existing members to communicate with remote communities.

This Committee also encourages the production and distribution of relevant literature to remote communities.

## **NATIONAL CONVENTION HOST PLANNING COMMITTEES**

AA National Convention Committees are considered **subcommittees of the General Service Board** and are ultimately answerable to the Board. The Chair of the General Service Board is ex officio a member of each Convention Host Committee, and should receive all minutes. The Board underwrites the Conventions, takes ultimate financial responsibility and has the final word on where and if they are run. The Board normally loans seeding money for the Convention Committees once their budgets and auditors are in place. Traditionally the Board is given any surplus funds together with repayment of the seeding funds after the final Convention accounting. The seeding funds are recycled, and any surplus used where needed in the Service Structure, at the Board’s discretion. The Host Planning Committee is asked to include the Regional Trustee as Chair, and to ensure that the key roles are occupied by experienced members. The Regional Trustee is responsible to the Board for all aspects of the Convention.

A useful database, managed by the National Office, has been set up to pass on learned experience from one Convention to the next. Guideline GL-14 “*Conferences & Conventions*” and GL-15 “*The National Convention*” are also essential references for Host Planning Committees and should be read before making a bid to run a Convention.

## **NATIONAL ‘WORKING WITH OTHERS’ FORUMS AND COORDINATORS**

The form and function of these Forums are *works in progress*. They are national scale, initially seeded by the Board, and now underwritten and hosted by Areas successfully bidding at Conference. They were initiated in 2001, with the ‘PI Forum’ (Public Information & Cooperation with the Professional Community ~ PI&CPC). A PI Coordinator was appointed in 2004, and in 2006 Conference decided to institute similar arrangements for Treatment and Correctional Facilities (T&CF), with a Coordinator, and Forums alternating with the PI Forum after 2007.

The Coordinators' main roles are to coordinate the Forums and to collect and disseminate PI&CPC or T&CF information nationally, including contribution to the news sheets that accompany *AA Around Australia*.

The Conference delegated the implementation of these new systems to the relevant Trustees' committees, including appointment of the Coordinators.

Nominations from internal AA advertising and from the floors of the Forums go to the Board for selection and appointment (2 years).

See Guideline GL-30 "*PI&CPC and T&CF Coordinators & Forums*" (in progress).

## LEGAL STRUCTURE OF THE BOARD

### THE COMPANY AND ITS NAME

The Board's principal legal responsibilities are to protect the intellectual property of the Fellowship; to protect the financial and policy integrity of its services; to provide services for the Fellowship and fulfil the legal requirements for the operation of the Company formally named *The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia (Limited)*. AA has legal permission not to use the term 'Limited' in its title. The company structure is known as a 'non-profit public company limited by guarantee', which is not the same as a Proprietary Limited Company. It does not have shareholders, but has a membership of Trustees. This arrangement allows the Fellowship to remain at arm's length from necessary matters of finance, taxation and legality, in order to concentrate more fully on the primary purpose of helping suffering alcoholics to become and stay sober.

### THE COMPANY'S 'CONSTITUTION'

The *Corporations Act* 2001, introduced since Alcoholics Anonymous Limited was established, requires a *Constitution* to be lodged with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC), for which standardised '*Replaceable Rules*' could be used, which would replace the original *Memorandum* and *Articles of Association*. The purpose of this was to enable easier setup of standard companies in Australia.

AA's unusual structure would not be well-served by the new arrangements, and we are legally able to continue to adhere to our original constitutional documents based on the 1961 Act, but now require notification to the Australian Securities Commissioner of any amendments to the *Memorandum* or *Articles* within two weeks of amendment. The proper process according to the Act now requires a Special Resolution of the General Service Board, with a minimum 3 weeks' prior notice. Where the two Acts conflict, the more recent one has precedence.

Words like '*Constitution*' solely apply to the Board in its corporate role and its legally registered documents. The *Conference Charter*, while essential to the Company's Constitution, may be referred to as a 'core, traditional, structural' document. The term 'structural document' is used to include all the documents that explain AA's structure and thus facilitate and explain AA's function, such as the above mentioned documents, together with this *Service Manual*, the *Guidelines* and the *Composition, Scope and Procedure* documents for all the various Conference and Trustees' committees.

The *Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts* are also core structures of a very special category, and rarely if ever, subject to change (see below). These latter express the spiritual core of AA, yet are woven deep into the fabric of the legal documents also, so that notwithstanding the legal obligations of the Company, this spiritual values system is ever present. Thus the Trustees'

traditional role is written into the Board's constitutional documents, the *Memorandum* and *Articles of Association*, requiring the Board to make all their deliberations in the context of the *Conference Charter* and the *Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts*. While the traditional arrangements are not legally enforceable, the checks and balances learned from long experience and provided by the *Charter* and *Concepts*, organise AA activities and the relationship between Board and Conference in ways that repeatedly demonstrate their inherent wisdom.

The full versions of the *Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions* and *Twelve Concepts* and the *Conference Charter* together with the Conference approved version of the *Third Legacy Procedure* are located together in Section 12: "AA's Traditional 'Legacy' Documents".

The Company's constitutional (legal) documents, the *Memorandum of Association* and the *Articles of Association*, are found in Section 13: "AA Service Documents". The "Guidelines", which are another, highly practical and informative type of service document, are normally published separately, but have their own Section (14).

## THE COMPANY AND THE CORPORATIONS AND TAXATION ACTS

As a *Registered Company* (ACN 001 417 125) Alcoholics Anonymous Australia is required to adhere to the Australian law relating to corporations and taxation. By private Taxation Office ruling, most AA literature items are sold GST-free on the basis that their price is less than 50% of the market value, as specifically defined.

The Company submits *Annual Company Returns* to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). It must have its books audited at least once annually. The books are open to Conference, and to the Trustees at any time. All Conference members are given a copy of the annual *Auditor's Report*, which is also published in the Conference Report, and available to all members.

The Corporations Act 2001 requires Directors to comply with and be bound by, the terms and conditions of the Company's *Memorandum* and *Articles of Association*. The Trustees are legally registered *Directors and Members of the Company* for their term of office only, carry a limited liability (\$50) in the event of Company wind-up, and must have *Directors' Liability Insurance* paid for by the Company. They must resign Board membership and Trusteeship at the expiry of their terms or at the request of Conference. By the non-profit legal structure, the Trustees are forbidden from benefiting personally from any profits made by the Company. Any profits must be invested back into the Company's approved activities for the benefit of the Fellowship.

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## THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE MANAGEMENT GROUP

This group consists of both *General Service Trustees*, one or more *office staff* including the *General Service Office Manager*, and the *financial adviser*. A quorum consists of one General Service Trustee and one other member. The Group meets at least monthly, and circulates its minutes to the Board in a timely manner. The Management Group is set up in response to *Articles of Association* 18 and 19, which spell out the duties and powers of the General Service Trustees, especially with regard to their responsible management of the Company's business, and their setting up of committees. Such committees may include non-Trustees, but must be chaired by a General Service Trustee. The Management Group also responds to the *Concepts for World Service* VI and VII, which explain the corporate responsibilities of the Trustees and how they interface with the traditional aspects of AA service management. This committee operates right at the functional core of AA Australia, and is usually the first to become aware of troublesome trends and impending financial difficulties.

# OVERVIEW OF AA'S CORE STRUCTURAL DOCUMENTS

## **THE CONFERENCE CHARTER**

The Charter, adopted by the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of AA North America in 1955, describes in detail the body of principles and relationships through which AA services function as a whole. The Conference itself is not incorporated, and its Charter is not a legal document – it is truly an informal agreement between the Fellowship as a whole and its Trustees, setting forth the means by which AA can give worldwide service. The Australian equivalent Resolution process was unanimously adopted by the 1970 Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous held at Rockdale Sydney, NSW, on March 29, 1970. See Section 1: The Conference Plan.

## **COMPANY MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION**

The *Memorandum of Association* preoccupies itself with the legal structure and objectives of the *Company Alcoholics Anonymous Australia Ltd*, commits the Board to serving the Fellowship of AA Australia, to implementing the decisions of Conference and to working within the framework of the AA traditions. It defines the relationship between the Company and the Trustees as legal and financial custodians.

## **COMPANY ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION**

The *Articles of Association* preoccupy themselves with the structure and function of the *Company Alcoholics Anonymous Australia Ltd*, meeting as a *Board of Trustees*. It covers such arrangements as Trustee selection, appointment processes, meeting types, notification and voting procedures, records, wind-up and various duties. It reciprocates with the *Conference Charter* and the *Twelve Concepts for World Service* in defining the relationship between the Board and the Australian General Service Conference.

## **PROCEDURES FOR CHANGE OF AA'S TRADITIONAL 'LEGACY' DOCUMENTS**

As mentioned above, a Resolution was passed by Conference in 1970 that took responsibility, on behalf of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia, for the *Three Legacies* (*Recovery, Unity, Service*), for the Australian AA services, for the voicing of the Australia-wide *Group Conscience*, and guardianship of the *Twelve Traditions*. In particular, Conference agreed never to change or amend the *Traditions* nor the *General Warranties of the Conference* (see Clause 12 of the *Conference Charter*, also expressed as *Concept XII*), without first obtaining a written authority from 3/4 of responding Groups globally, in a minimum 6-month period: a process mediated through AA North America. If the *Concepts* are changed the originals must remain beside them. See Section 1: "The Conference Plan".

Changes to AA Australia's core structural documents require a 3/4 vote of all members of Conference in the case of the *Conference Charter*, or of 3/4 of all Board members in the case of the *Memorandum* and *Articles of Association* (which is required by the Corporations Act). As a courtesy, changes to formal Board documents are by tradition submitted to the full Conference to invite a 2/3 disapproval if any. See "*The Document Integration Group*" above under "*Trustees' Service Committees, Subcommittees & other Related Bodies*" and Guideline GL-27 "*Process for Changing AA Service Documents*".





**THE AUSTRALIAN AA  
SERVICE MANUAL**

**SECTION TEN**

**THE GENERAL  
SERVICE  
OFFICE**  
of  
**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AUSTRALIA**



**A Tour of General Service Office - “GSO”**

**What gets done at General Service Office?**

**How General Service Office is structured**

**AA as a Publisher**

**How General Service Office is supported**

**The Australian General Service Office of AA is located in Sydney, as it has been since its commencement in 1972.**

Here you will find a small staff of employed AAs busily coping with the needs of AA Service Offices, Groups and individual members. It operates as an efficient business office and service centre.

## **A TOUR OF GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE .....**

A trip to General Service Office is recommended for every AA who is visiting Sydney. Be sure to phone first to set a suitable time to drop by ! For those who can't, here is a kind of 'guided tour':

The General Service Office is divided into two Areas, one is the office Area, the other a working Area. The staff members desks are located in the office Area, together with computers, filing cabinets, and telephones, all essential in maintaining contact with both local and world-wide AA activities. The working Area houses the literature and this is where literature orders are packed ready for despatch.

From the desk of the Office Manager upstairs, day to day direction of the office is conducted. All staff are AA members and are responsible for the efficient running of General Service Office.

The staff members are known by sight to many who have talked with them and heard them speak at meetings, and by name to many who have written, phoned or emailed in about difficult situations to receive helpful answers. These members deal with all kinds of AA services and AA problems, in this clearinghouse for matters affecting the unity and growth of the movement.

The records section is kept busy continually updating of the records of Groups, Conference delegates, Conference committee members, Areas, Districts and GSRs. Since communication plays such an important part in keeping our far-flung Groups in touch with General Service Office and with each other, the value of records cannot be overstated. Yet this vital work must rely on Groups to keep General Service Office informed on changes in their statistics. *(This is done by the Group sending in its Group Registration Form, which is obtained through the Group Secretary, whenever a change takes place in Group status.)*

You will also find at General Service Office a treasury of Australian AA history, early Conference programs and reports, and many other records of the Fellowship's beginnings in Australia.

The quarterly newsletter "AA Around Australia", including supplements, "PI Around Australia" and the "Treatment and Correctional Facilities Newsletter", is produced in General Service Office for circulation to members and Groups. This publication is freely circulated to all Groups who have registered their postal address with General Service Office. Extra copies are available to individual members on subscription.

In the working Area, you will find a variety of activities taking place - printing, folding, addressing and filling envelopes, packing literature orders prior to shipment, preparing material and folders for Conference. During the course of a year, it would be true to say that some hundreds of thousands of items would pass through this section and be distributed Australia-wide.

Here every registered AA Group in Australia is listed in the computer database, as well as every GSR, Area Committee member and Delegate.

So ends our brief tour. It is a quick one, but there is more information to come.

# WHAT GETS DONE AT GSO ?

Much more interesting, however, is **what** is done rather than **how** it is done. In an abbreviated form, here are the services that General Service Office provides day by day and throughout the year.

## 1. **Conference-approved books and pamphlets**

AA literature has been the lifeblood of the movement. Editing, publishing and distributing Conference-approved literature remains among the most vital of General Service Office services.

## 2. **Help with Group problems**

The main lines of communication are telephone, fax, email, correspondence, AA website and the publications "*AA Around Australia*" (AAAA), *T&CF Newsletter* and "*PI Around Australia*", which share Group problems and solutions and communicate information to the Fellowship.

## 3. **Special help to new Groups**

New Groups are encouraged through correspondence, complimentary literature packages, including the "*Australian AA Group Handbook*".

## 4. **AA overseas**

World-wide AA moves ahead rapidly in spite of the differences in language and customs. Conference-approved literature in languages other than English helps. So do special bulletins and, most of all, correspondence. General Service Office provides the communication link by which other countries can share experience with us.

## 5. **Relations with alcoholism agencies**

The field of alcoholism is crowded with activity today. AA needs to keep informed and to relate itself to other work in the field in ways that will not violate its Traditions. General Service Office provides a communication link on a national level with many of these agencies and maintains a national website through which information about AA can be obtained by outside professional bodies.

## 6. **Public information**

Relations with the media are as important to AA today as they were in the early days. General Service Office takes the responsibility for contact on national levels. To meet local needs, information is exchanged through the bulletin "*PI Around Australia*" and the "*PI Workbook*" with local Public Information Committees, with Area Committees and with Central Service Offices.

## 7. **General Service Conference**

This is a year-round activity, co-ordinating the program and arrangements for the annual meeting in November, gathering ideas and solutions from Conference committees, helping delegates to keep their Areas informed. A full and detailed Report of each Conference is available for sale at cost to every AA member who wants one. General Service Office is also responsible for the actual implementation of many of the Conference Advisory Actions.

## 8. **General Service Board**

Just as General Service Office is a mainstay of Conference, it is also the support system for the Board, organising and coordinating three Board meetings per year, coordinating Board committees, taking or recording and writing up minutes, reporting Board activities to the Fellowship, helping with communications in every direction, providing information, facilitating the Board's services to Conference, informally educating (especially Class A) Trustees and much more.

## 9. **Self-support**

As AA grows and as new services are added, regular financial support is needed, for General Service Office, Service Committees, Districts and for Central Service Offices. General Service Office encourages Groups and individuals to keep AA self-supporting, ensuring a safe future.

- **Idea exchange for Central Service Offices**

General Service Office letters help to keep Central Service Offices in touch with what other offices are doing, so that common problems and solutions can be shared. A regular page is made available in “AA Around Australia” through which Central Service Offices may share their experience Australia-wide.

- **Anonymity breaks**

When General Service Office learns that an AA member’s anonymity has been broken in the public media, this information is given to the Delegate in the Area where the break occurred. Either the Delegate or the General Service Office normally will write to remind the member of our Tradition of anonymity at the media level. Usually, the Tradition has been violated just through carelessness or ignorance, and the reminder heads off further breaks. An annual letter explaining our Tradition of Anonymity is also sent to the media outlets in the major cities.

- **Conventions and Forums**

General Service Office helps by exchanging programming ideas. Frequently, AA Staff members and Trustees are invited as speakers at Area Conventions, Regional Forums and similar, and General Service Office usually has a display at the National Convention. NOAA keeps a database of positive and negative experience and suggestions from each Convention, available to new Host Committees.

- **Guidelines**

AA’s experience with police and court activities, Treatment and Correctional facilities, Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community activities etc, now spreads over many years. It is being made available in the form of Guidelines and useful Literature items such as workbooks to any Group, Central Service Office, Area Committee or District requesting them.

- **AA archives**

Early correspondence, directories, Conference data - all are being kept as part of AA’s living history. These Archives of our Australian Fellowship are housed at the General Service Office.

A National Archivist attends the GSO on a regular basis, to preserving and organise records of AA history already to hand and also with seeking out further material of archival value.

The role of the Archivist is concerned with preserving and organising records of AA history already to hand and with seeking out further material.

Archives of our Australian Fellowship are housed at the General Service Office, Arncliffe

Duration of appointment: 4 years

Weekly visits to GSO Arncliffe are envisaged

Key Skills Required:

- inquisitive, methodical and logical approach
- excellent administrative skills
- a high level of computer literacy is mandatory
- able to relate well to a wide range of personal sources
- an excellent verbal communicator
- able to carry out independent research

forward-thinking, with an ability to anticipate and prepare for changing demands for archived information

- **Loners Internationalists - Australia**

General Service Office works in close contact with the editor of the Australian *LIM*, the Loners and Internationalist Meeting-by-Mail. This important service provides AA contact for those members who, by reason of disability or distance, cannot avail themselves of regular AA meetings.

# HOW GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE IS STRUCTURED

The Board of Trustees is responsible for General Service Office and, through the Management Group, takes care of its administrative duties, handling of general services and publishing of pamphlets and books. Members of this Group are, among others, the two General Service Trustees and the General Service Office Manager.

While the Board does not interfere with the daily operations of General Service Office it recognises its own ultimate responsibility for seeing that it operates in the best interests of the Fellowship as a whole.

## AA AS A PUBLISHER

Very early, AA made the decision to be its own publisher, a decision that has meant a great deal to the unity and growth and general good health of the Fellowship. By acting as its own publisher, AA can be sure that its highly successful recovery program is not tampered with by those who may be well-meaning but overzealous. The program and the Traditions go on unchanged - in essence and in presentation.

AA publishes all its own books and pamphlets and its own magazine, much of this being based in New York. Many of these items, however, are printed by our General Service Office here in Australia, with reprint permission from GSO in New York, rather than being imported, while several items are written and published here for specific Australian purposes, e.g., the *Australian AA Service Manual*, the *Public Information Workbook*.

Following the recommendations from the World Service Meeting and in the light of our AA Tradition, only AA Conference-approved literature, the AA Grapevine and AA Service Literature are made available by the General Service Office.

The first four AA books were written by Bill W. Since then, all literature has been written by AAs who have taken great pains to gather their material from all over the Fellowship, from the first draft to the last (there have been as many as seven). Committee and staff members, and frequently a broadly representative special panel, are free to criticise and to suggest, underlining what they feel will best express the AA point of view.

A full explanation and description of how AA Literature is written and produced, of its copyrights and legal requirements can be found in this Manual's Section 11: "AA Literature".

This role as a publisher is a major function of our General Service Office, which has the responsibility of filling the literature needs and maintaining the supply for the whole Australian Fellowship.

In addition, in our Asia-Oceania Zone, it assists many Groups and Loners in smaller neighbouring countries with their literature needs.

# HOW GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE IS SUPPORTED

In *theory*, AA Groups contribute enough to support their General Service Office. In *practice*, they do not quite make it. Where does the rest come from? A foundation? A government grant? AAs know that *Tradition Seven* insists our Fellowship be fully self-supporting, a Tradition that has made AA a very special and much-admired kind of society.

*Tradition Seven* says: “**Every AA Group ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions.**” The General Service Office carries this a step further and implements a ceiling on individual AA contributions, which is CPI-linked, and accepts contributions only from AA members. From November 2015, this limit is \$15,000.

The number and extent of services have increased over the years, but the cost of service per Group has decreased consistently. So, even allowing for higher living costs and decreased dollar value, the need for support of General Service Office remains almost the same. However, not all Groups contribute. More than half do not. This places a heavier burden on the Groups that do, on AA publishing and quite often on the Prudent Reserve Fund.

The suggested method of Group contribution is the division of the Group's surplus, after the Group's expenses have been covered, into three or four amounts in a *Group Contributions Plan* agreed upon by the Group's Conscience, eg 60:30:10, 50:30:10:10, depending on that Group's particular situation. These amounts are contributed to the AA services relevant to that Group and include, where there is one, a Central Service Office or answering service, General Service Office, Area and District.

## **Additionally, members are encouraged to make personal contributions:**

- The **AA Birthday Club** is one method. On their AA anniversaries each year, members make a contribution to General Service Office based on \$2 for each year of sobriety and in return receive an attractive Birthday Card.
- Another method is the **Action Club**. Members of this Club forward \$10 per month to General Service Office to assist it in its many tasks. (General Service Office will forward details of the *Birthday Club* and *Action Club* on request).
- Bequests from AA members, not to exceed the limit set by the General Service Board, are also accepted, but only during the year following their death. From November 2015, the limit set by the General Service Board is \$25,000.

All receipted contributions to the General Service Board of AA by individual members are tax deductible.

# **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 AA *Grapevine Inc.*
- Magazines such as *Your Pathfinder*, *Serenity*, *Message of Hope*.
- 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 General Service 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 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, e.g., 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" or not by checking on the back cover or inside the front pages. Conference Approved literature from our main publisher, *AA World Services*, carries the statement "*This is AA General Service Conference Approved literature*".

Conference Approved 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 General Service 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, e.g., 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:

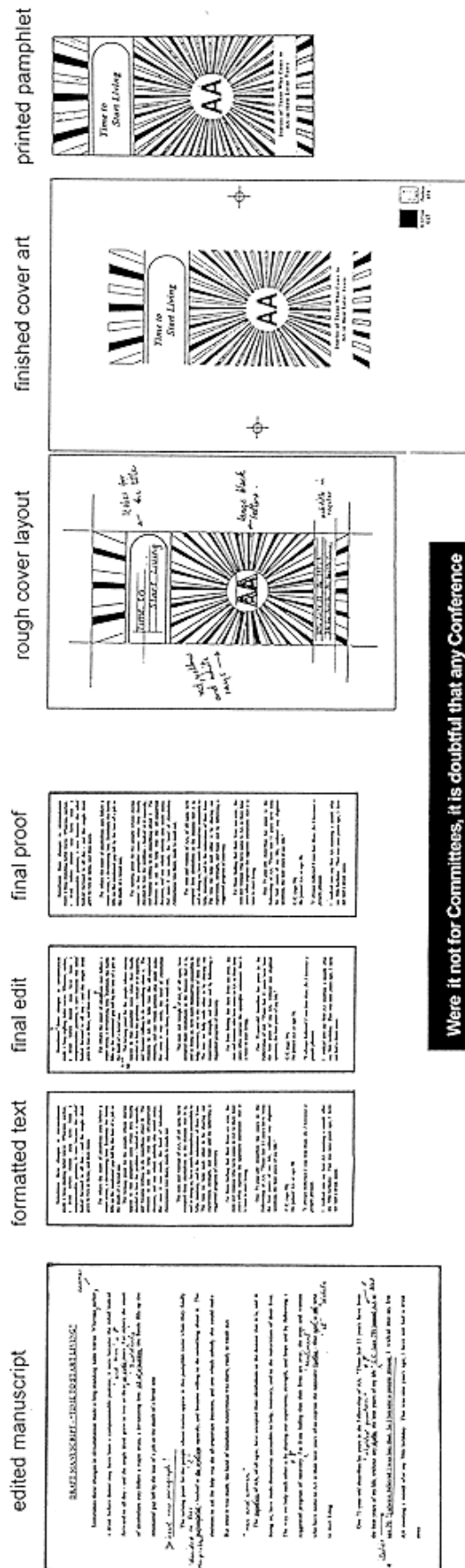
Use of these marks on goods and services that do not emanate from AA, and have not been approved by AA, both infringes upon and dilutes AA marks, in legal terms. The resulting harm is that the marks and AA itself, since AA is what the marks symbolise, will come to be associated with a variety of products 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.***

# Flow Chart for Development of an AA Pamphlet



## PRODUCTION STEPS FOR PAMPHLET - TIME TO START LIVING



Were it not for Committees, it is doubtful that any Conference could get over a fraction of the ground it now covers. As the Conference has grown in size and influence the Committees' importance has grown even more.

*from the AA Service Manual*

Reprinted with permission of AAWS Inc.

## 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.*





**THE AUSTRALIAN AA  
SERVICE MANUAL**

**SECTION TWELVE**

**AA'S TRADITIONAL  
LEGACY  
DOCUMENTS**



***The Twelve Steps***

***The Twelve Traditions***

***The Twelve Concepts for World Service***

***The Charter of the Australian General  
Service Conference***

***The Third Legacy Procedure***



# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION TWELVE LEGACY DOCUMENTS**

# **THE TWELVE STEPS**

## **The ‘First Legacy’: RECOVERY**



# THE TWELVE STEPS

## **Step One**

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.

## **Step Two**

Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

## **Step Three**

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

## **Step Four**

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

## **Step Five**

Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

## **Step Six**

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

## **Step Seven**

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

## **Step Eight**

Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

## **Step Nine**

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

## **Step Ten**

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

## **Step Eleven**

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

## **Step Twelve**

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION TWELVE LEGACY DOCUMENTS**

# **THE TWELVE TRADITIONS**

## **(LONG FORM)**

**The ‘Second Legacy’: UNITY**



# THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

## (The Long Form)

***Our AA experience has taught us that:***

### **Tradition One**

Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

### **Tradition Two**

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group Conscience.

### **Tradition Three**

Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

### **Tradition Four**

With respect to its own affairs, each AA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect AA as a whole without conferring with the Trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

### **Tradition Five**

Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose – that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

### **Tradition Six**

Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to AA should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An AA group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to AA, such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the AA name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, AA managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside AA – and medically supervised. While an AA group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An AA group can bind itself to no one.

## **Tradition Seven**

The AA groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those AA treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated AA purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

## **Tradition Eight**

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counselling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Special services may be well recompensed. But our usual AA Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for.

## **Tradition Nine**

Each AA group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan Area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The Trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our AA General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our AA Tradition and the receivers of voluntary AA contributions by which we maintain our AA General Service Office at New York 1. They are authorised by the Groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the AA Grapevine<sup>2</sup>. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in AA are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles: they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

## **Tradition Ten**

No AA group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, express any opinion on outside controversial issues – particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

## **Tradition Eleven**

Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think AA ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as AA members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

## **Tradition Twelve**

And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

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<sup>1</sup> In Australia, National Office, Sydney.

<sup>2</sup> In Australia, the National Newsletter, "AA Around Australia".





# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION TWELVE LEGACY DOCUMENTS**

# **THE 12 CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE**

by Bill W.

## **The 'Third Legacy': SERVICE**



as adopted by  
the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous  
on April 26, 1962

Published by

The National Office  
of Alcoholics Anonymous<sup>®</sup> Australia

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16<sup>th</sup> Printing 1985  
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Third Australian Printing 2007

# PREFACE

The “Twelve Concepts for World Service” were written by Bill W. in 1962. His introduction to that first printing, following this preface, explains its purpose, as relevant today as at that time.

Over the years the size of the Fellowship and the responsibilities of its service entities have grown immensely. Therefore, some details of the original text have become outdated and were changed in editions of the Concepts since that time, and a number of bracketed inserts were added.

Following the recommendations of an *ad hoc* committee of the AA General Service Board, the 1985 General Service Conference recommends that future publication of the Concepts in “The AA Service Manual” and the booklet “Twelve Concepts for World Service” be in the original 1962 version, with required factual changes provided as numbered footnotes at the end of each chapter. The only exceptions are certain footnotes written by Bill W. in the years following the first appearance of the Concepts: these are marked by asterisks that appear on the same pages as the text they refer to.

*A “short form” of the Concepts was prepared by the 1974 General Service Conference for inclusion in The AA Service Manual. It now appears in the Bylaws of the General Service Board, printed in that Manual, and also precedes the introduction to the Twelve Concepts.*

**General Service Office\*\* September 1985**

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\* New York. References to the “AA Service Manual” and the “Bylaws of the General Service Board” are to those documents published by AAWS for the United States and Canada.

# CONTENTS: THE CONCEPTS IN SUMMARY

- I. *The Ultimate Responsibility for AA World Services Belongs to the AA Groups.*
- II. *The AA Groups Have Delegated Complete Administrative and Operational Authority to their Conference and Its Service Arms.*
- III. *The “Right Of Decision” Makes Effective Leadership Possible.*
- IV. *“Participation” Is the Key to Harmony.*
- V. *The Rights of “Appeal” and “Petition” Protect Minorities and Insures<sup>Ψ</sup> That They Be Heard.*
- VI. *The Conference Acknowledges the Primary Administrative Responsibility of the Trustees.*
- VII. *How the Legal Rights of the Trustees Are Related to the Traditional Rights of the Conference.*
- VIII. *The Trustees Function as the Direct Managers of Overall Finance and Policy: Also as the Custodians, but not as the Immediate Managers of the Active Service Corporations.*
- IX. *Good Personal Leadership at All Conference Levels Is a Primary Necessity. In the Area of World Service the General Service Board and Its Leaders Must Necessarily Replace the Founders of AA. This Is the Most Critical Structural Problem That We Still Face.*
- X. *Service Authority Should Equal Service Responsibility. Executive Authority Should Always Be Single: ‘Double-Headed Management’ Should Be Carefully Avoided.*
- XI. *A Description of the Primary Committees and Service Corporations of the General Service Board: The Personal Status of Corporate Directors, Executives and Staff Members.*
- XII. *The Spiritual Foundation for AA’s World Services – “Article 12” of the Conference Charter.*

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<sup>Ψ</sup> [Sic: in Australian English: ‘ensure that ...’].

# INTRODUCTION

## *by Bill W.*

The “Twelve Concepts for World Service” to be described in this Manual are an interpretation of AA’s world service structure. They reveal the evolution by which it has arrived in its present form, and they detail the experience and reasoning on which our operation stands today. These Concepts therefore aim to record the “why” of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost.

Quite rightly, each new generation of AA world servants will be eager to make operational improvements. Unforeseen flaws in the present structure will doubtless show up later on. New service needs and problems will arise that may make structural changes necessary. Such alterations should certainly be effected, and these contingencies squarely met.

Yet we should always realize that change does not necessarily spell progress. We are sure that each new group of workers in world service will be tempted to try all sorts of innovations that may often produce little more than a painful repetition of earlier mistakes. Therefore it will be an important objective of these Concepts to forestall such repetitions by holding the experiences of the past clearly before us. And if mistaken departures are nevertheless made, these Concepts may then provide a ready means of safe return to an operating balance that might otherwise take years of floundering to rediscover.

There will also be seen in these Concepts a number of principles which have already become traditional to our services, but which have never been clearly articulated and reduced to writing. For example: the “*Right of Decision*” gives our service leaders a proper discretion and latitude; the “*Right of Participation*” gives each world servant a voting status commensurate with his (or her) responsibility, and “Participation” further guarantees that each service Board or committee will always possess the several elements and talents that will insure effective functioning. The “*Right of Appeal*” protects and encourages minority opinion; and the “*Right of Petition*” makes certain that grievances can be heard, and properly acted upon. These general principles can of course be used to good effect throughout our entire structure.

In other sections, the Concepts carefully delineate those important traditions, customs, relationships and legal arrangements that weld the General Service Board into a working harmony with its primary committees and with its corporate arms of active service – AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. This is the substance of the structural framework that governs the internal working situation of AA’s World Headquarters.

Concern has been expressed lest the detailed portrayal of our internal structure might not later harden down into such a firm tradition or gospel that necessary changes would be impossible to make. Nothing could stray further from the intent of these Concepts. The future advocates of structural change need only make out a strong case for their recommendations – a case convincing to both the Trustees and to the Conference. This is no more than would be required for the transaction and passage of any other important piece of AA business. Save for an exception or two, it is noteworthy that the Conference Charter itself can be easily amended.

Perhaps one more precaution ought to be observed when a proposed structural change is to be specially far-reaching. In such an event, the alteration should for an appropriate period be labeled as “experimental”. On final approval, an alteration of this character could be entered into a special section of this Manual which might be entitled ‘AMENDMENTS.’ This would leave the original draft of the Twelve Concepts intact as an evidential record of our former experience. Then it could always be clearly seen by our future service workers just what did happen and why.

In other chapters great emphasis is laid on the need for a high order of personal leadership, on the desirability of careful induction methods for all incoming personnel, and upon the necessity for the

best possible personal relations between those who work in our services. The Concepts try to design a structure in which all may labor to good effect, with a minimum of friction. This is accomplished by so relating our servants to their work and to each other that the chances of personal conflict will be minimized.

In the AA services we have always had to choose between the authoritarian setup, whereby one group or one person is set in *unqualified* authority over another, and the democratic concept which calls for "checks and balances" that would prevent unqualified authority from running unrestrained. The first approach is that of the "institutional" or authoritarian type. The second is the method of "constitutional" governments and many large business corporations in their upper echelons.

Well knowing our own propensities for power driving, it is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on the system of "checks and balances." We have had to face the fact that we usually try to enlarge our own authority and prestige when we are in the saddle. But when we are not, we strenuously resist a heavy-handed management wherein someone else holds the reins. I'm the more sure of this because I possess these traits myself.

Consequently ideas like the following pervade the Concepts: "no group or individual should be set in *unqualified* authority over another," "Large, active and *dissimilar* operations should be separately incorporated and managed, each with its own staff, equipment and working capital," "We ought to avoid undue concentration of money or personal influence in any service group or entity," "At each level of service, authority should be equal to responsibility," "Double-headed executive direction should be avoided." These and other similar provisions define working relations that can be friendly and yet efficient. They would especially restrain our tendency to concentrate money and power, this being nearly always the underlying (though not always the conscious) motivation of our recurrent passion for the "consolidation" of world service entities.

Because of the large range of topics which had to be included, these Concepts have been difficult to organize and write. Since each Concept is really a *group of related principles*, the kind of abbreviated statements used in AA's "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" have not been possible. However, these Concepts do represent the best summation that I am able to make after more than twenty years experience in the creation of our service structure and in the conduct of AA's world affairs. Like the earlier written "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions," and the Conference Charter, these service principles are also the outcome of long reflection and extensive consultation.

It is much to be hoped that these Twelve Concepts will become a welcome addition to our "Third Legacy Manual of AA World Service," and that they will prove to be a reliable working guide in the years that lie ahead.

**(Written in 1962)**

# AUSTRALIAN INTRODUCTION TO THE TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE

Following are the *Twelve Concepts for World Service* that were written by Bill W. and adopted by the North American General Service Conference on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1962.

When reading these there are a number of points worth remembering.

Firstly, that here in Australia whilst we have attempted to follow the North American *Service Structure* as closely as possible, there are a number of differences. Whilst it is entirely possible to change the long form of the *Concepts* (except *Concept XII*) to suit the Australia Service structure we are hesitant to do so as they are historical documents that can still give us an understanding of how things can best be done.

You will see mentioned “AA World Services Inc”. Here in Australia our equivalent is “Alcoholics Anonymous Australia (Ltd)”. Also, whilst Conference has approved the setting up of a national magazine, we do not at this stage have a functioning equivalent of the “Grapevine” nor a body called the “AA Grapevine Inc.” We do though, have a national newsletter “AA Around Australia”, published by our National Office, the Australian equivalent of “GSO”, the General Service Office in New York.

For those of us new to Service there may be some confusion as to the mention of ‘World Services’: here in Australia we commonly call our world services ‘General Service’.

Not everything written in the *Concepts* by Bill W. is set in concrete. Yet his explanations are powerful guides, born of long practical experience and trial and error. They explore the reasons and principles behind simpler statements of the *Concepts*, explaining how we are all related through our different AA roles and responsibilities, and in particular, explaining the function of Conference and the relationship between Board and Conference. An understanding of the deeper checks and balances of the AA service structure can help us work together on our common goals - of serving the Fellowship, and of providing to those alcoholics who have yet to find us, the opportunity for sobriety.

# CONCEPT I

***The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.***

The AA groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services - those special elements of over-all service activity which make it possible for our Society to function as a whole. The groups assumed that responsibility at the St. Louis International Convention of 1955. There, on behalf of Dr. Bob, the Trustees and AA's old-time leaders, I made the transfer of world service responsibility to our entire Fellowship.

Why, and by what authority was this done? There were reasons of stark necessity for it, and there were further reasons which have to do with AA's fundamental structure and tradition.

By the year 1948 our necessities had become clear enough. Ten years earlier, in 1938, helped by dedicated friends, Dr Bob and I had commenced work upon a world service structure. Our first step was the creation of a trusteeship for AA as a whole. We called this body The Alcoholic Foundation; and in 1954 it was renamed The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

This trusteeship was designed to inaugurate and maintain all of those special services for AA as a whole that could not well be performed by single groups or Areas. We envisioned the writing of a uniform AA literature, the development of a sound public relations policy, and a means of handling the large numbers of pleas for help that might follow in the wake of national and international publicity. We thought in terms of aiding new groups to form and of furnishing them with counsel based upon the experience of the older and already successful groups. We thought there would be a need for a monthly magazine and also for translations of our literature into other languages.

By 1950 nearly all of these dreams for world service had come true. In the dozen years following the creation of The Foundation, AA membership had jumped from 50 to 100,000. The AA Traditions had been written and adopted. A confident unity had pretty much replaced fear and doubt and strife. Our services had unquestionably played a large and critical role in this unfoldment. World service, therefore, had taken on crucial meaning for AA's future. If these vital agencies were to collapse or bog down, our unity within and the carrying of our message to innumerable alcoholics without, would suffer serious and perhaps irreparable damage. Under all conditions and at any sacrifice, we would have to sustain those services and the flow of life blood that they were pumping into the world arteries of our Fellowship. Among the AA groups it had been proven that we could survive great strain and stress. But could we stand heart failure at our world centre?

And so we asked ourselves: What further precautions could we take that would definitely guard us against an impairment or a collapse? Nevertheless the period 1945 to 1950 was one of such exuberant success that many AAs thought that our future was completely guaranteed. Nothing, they believed, could possibly happen to our Society as a whole, because God was protecting AA. This attitude was in strange contrast to the extreme vigilance with which our members and groups had been looking after themselves. They had quite prudently declined to charge Providence with the entire responsibility for their own effectiveness, happiness, and sobriety.

When, at AA's Service Headquarters, some of us began to apply this tested principle of "stop, look, and listen" to AA's world affairs, it was widely thought that we must be foolish worriers who lacked faith. Many said, "Why change? Things are going fine!" "Why call in delegates from all over the country? That means expense and politics, and we don't want either." And the clincher was always, "Let's keep it simple."



Such reactions were natural enough. The average member, preoccupied with his group life and his own "twelfth stepping" knew almost nothing of AA's world services. Not one member in a thousand could tell who our Trustees were. Not one in a hundred had the least idea what had been done for AA's general welfare. Tens of thousands already owed their chance at sobriety to the little noticed activity of our Trustees and general services. But few realised that this was true.

Among the Trustees themselves, a sharp division of opinion was developed. For a long time most of them had strongly opposed calling together a representative conference of AA delegates, to whom they would become accountable. They thought that the risks were immense and that politics, confusion, expense, and fruitless strife surely would result. It was true that the woes of much lesser undertakings, such as local AA services and clubs, had sometimes been great. Hence the conviction was widespread that calamity would be in the making if ever a conference representing all of AA were assembled. These arguments were not without merit; they were difficult to contest.

However, in 1948, there occurred an event that shook us all. It became known that Dr. Bob was suffering from a fatal illness. As nothing else could, this news drove home the hard fact that he and I were almost the sole links between our virtually unknown Trustees and the movement they served. The Trustees always had relied heavily upon Dr. Bob and me for advice. They had taken a firm grip on money expenditures, but they necessarily turned to us every time that AA policy questions arose. Then, too, the groups of that time did not really rely much on the Trustees for the management of their service affairs; they were still looking to Dr. Bob and me. So here was a society whose total functioning was still largely dependent upon the credit and the confidence which, for the time being, its founders happened to enjoy.

The fact had to be faced that AA's founders were perishable. When Dr. Bob and I had gone, who would then advise the Trustees; who could link our little-known Board to our thousands of groups? For the first time it was seen that only a representative conference could take the place of Dr. Bob and me. This gap simply had to be filled without delay. Such a dangerous open end in our affairs could not be tolerated. Regardless of trouble or expense, we had to call an AA General Service Conference and deliver our world services into its permanent keeping. It took little imagination to see that future collapse would be the certain penalty if we did not act boldly and decisively. Thus propelled by events, we did take the necessary action. Now that the Conference is in its second decade, we find that our former fears of the troubles a Conference might involve were largely groundless. The results of the Conference have exceeded our highest expectations. It now stands proven that the AA groups can and will take the final responsibility for their world services.

There were other reasons for this basic shift of ultimate responsibility and authority to AA as a whole. These reasons centre around Tradition Two, which declares, *"For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group Conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."*

Tradition Two, like all the AA Traditions, is the voice of experience, based upon the trials of thousands of groups in our pioneering time. The main principles of Tradition Two are crystal clear: the AA groups are to be the final authority; their leaders are to be entrusted with delegated responsibilities only.

Tradition Two had been written in 1945, and our Trustees had then authorised its publication. But it was not until 1951 that the first experimental General Service Conference was called to see whether Tradition Two could be successfully applied to AA as a whole, including its Trustees and founders. It had to be found out whether the AA groups, by virtue of this Conference, could and would assume the ultimate responsibility for their world service operation. It took five years more for all of us to be convinced that Tradition Two was for everybody. But at St. Louis in 1955, we knew that our General Service Conference - truly representing the conscience of AA world-wide - was going to work and work permanently.

Perhaps many of us are still vague about the "Group Conscience" of Alcoholics Anonymous, about what it really is.

Throughout the entire world today we are witnessing the breakdown of "Group Conscience." It has always been the hope of democratic nations that their citizens would always be enlightened enough, moral enough, and responsible enough to manage their own affairs through chosen representatives. But in many self-governing countries we are now seeing the inroads of ignorance, apathy, and power-seeking upon democratic systems. Their spiritual resources of right purpose and collective intelligence are waning. Consequently many a land has become so helpless that the only answer is dictatorship.

Happily for us, there seems little prospect of such a calamity in AA. The life of each individual and of each group is built around our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We very well know that the penalty for extensive disobedience to these principles is death for the individual and dissolution for the group. An even greater force for AA's unity is the compelling love that we have for our fellow members and for the principles upon which our lives today are founded.

Therefore we believe that we see in our Fellowship a spiritualized society characterised by enough enlightenment, enough responsibility, and enough love of man and of God to insure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions. We are confident that we can rely upon Tradition Two, our Group Conscience and its trusted servants. Hence it is with a sense of great security that we old-timers have now fully vested in AA's General Service Conference the authority for giving shape - through the labours of its chosen Delegates, Trustees, and service workers - to the destiny that we trust God in His wisdom is holding in store for all of us.

## CONCEPT II

***When, in 1955, the AA groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference - excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter - the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.***

It is self-evident that the thousands of AA groups and the many thousands of AA members, scattered as they are all over the globe, cannot of themselves actually manage and conduct our manifold world services. The Group Conscience is out there among them, and so are the needed funds. The power of the groups and members to alter their world service structure and to criticise its operation is virtually supreme. They have all of the final responsibility and authority that there is. The operation is really theirs; they really own it. This has been true ever since the groups took over from the founders and old-timers at St. Louis in 1955.

But an ultimate authority and responsibility in the AA groups for world services, if that is all there were to it, could not amount to anything. Nothing could be accomplished on that basis alone. In order to get effective action, the groups must delegate the actual operational authority to chosen service representatives who are fully empowered to speak and to act for them. The Group Conscience of AA could not be heard unless a properly chosen Conference were fully trusted to speak for it respecting most matters of world service. Hence the principle of amply delegated authority and responsibility to "trusted servants" must be implicit from the top to the bottom of our active structure of service. This is the clear implication of AA's Tradition Two.

Even from the beginning, large delegations of service authority had to be the rule. It will be recalled how, in 1937, the Akron and New York Groups authorised Dr. Bob and me to create over-all services which could spread the AA message world-wide. Those two fledgling groups gave to us the authority to create and manage world services. Following their action, we held both the final responsibility and the immediate authorisation to get this project underway and keep it going. On our own, however, we knew we could do little, and so we had to find trusted servants who in turn would help us. As time went by, we found that we had to delegate to these friends a very large part of our own authority and responsibility. That process of delegation was as follows:

First of all, Dr. Bob transferred nearly all of his immediate responsibility for the creation of world service to me. In New York we stood a better chance of finding friends and funds, and we saw that our world service centre consequently would have to be located in that city. I started the search for trusted non-alcoholic friends who could help, and in 1938 The Alcoholic Foundation was formed as a small trusteeship of AA members and our non-alcoholic friends.

At first the Trustees of our new Foundation took jurisdiction over money matters only. Little by little, however, they were obliged to assume many other responsibilities, because I alone could not discharge these on any permanent basis. Hence I gave the Trustees added responsibility and corresponding authority as fast as possible.

For example, in 1940, a year after the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" was published, we all saw that this great new asset had to be put in trust for our whole Fellowship. Therefore the stock ownership of Works Publishing, Inc.<sup>3</sup> (a publishing corporation which I helped to separately organize) was turned over to the Board of Trustees.

Nearly all the income from the AA book was then needed to finance the overall service office that we had set up for AA. The Trustees, therefore, presently took over the primary management of office operation, because they were now responsible for the funds upon which its support depended. Consequently, so far as financial decisions were concerned, I became an adviser only. Another sizeable chunk of my original authority was thus delegated. When, in 1941, the AA groups began to send contributions to The Alcoholic Foundation for support of our over-all service office, the Trustees' control of our world service monies became complete.

After some time it became apparent that AA's public relations, a vital matter indeed, could not continue to be entrusted to me alone. Therefore the AA groups were asked to give the Trustees of the Foundation complete control in this critical Area. Later on, the Trustees took jurisdiction over our national magazine, "The AA Grapevine", which had been separately organized by another group of volunteers.

Thus it went with every one of our world services. I still functioned in an advisory capacity in our Headquarters operation, but the Board of Trustees was in full legal charge of all our affairs. As Dr. Bob and I looked to the future, it was clear that ample delegation to the Board was the only possible way.

Notwithstanding these delegations, Dr. Bob and I did quite properly feel that we still held an ultimate responsibility to AA, and to the future, for the proper organization and structuring of our AA world services. If anything were to go wrong with them, we would be held accountable, because the groups still looked to us, rather than to their then little known Trustees, for leadership in AA's world affairs.

In the course of these developments the great difference between ultimate and immediate service authority became apparent.

As early as 1945 it began to be evident that the co-founders' ultimate responsibility and authority for services should never be wholly vested in a Board of Trustees. Certainly our Trustees must be given a large share of the active and immediate responsibility. But the ultimate and final responsibility which Dr. Bob and I still possessed simply could not be transferred to a self-appointing Board which was relatively unknown among AAs as a whole. But where, then, would our ultimate responsibility for world services finally be lodged? And what would become of my own leadership in world service matters? AA's history now shows where the ultimate authority finally went. At St. Louis it went from Dr. Bob and me to the AA groups themselves.

But the groups' acceptance of ultimate service authority and responsibility was not enough. No matter what authority the groups had, they could not meet their new responsibilities until they had actually delegated most of the active ones. It was precisely in order to meet this need that the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous was given the general responsibility for the maintenance of AA's world services and so became the service conscience for AA as a whole.

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<sup>3</sup> Works Publishing, Inc. was later renamed AA Publishing, Inc. Today AA Publishing is a division of AA World Services Inc.

Exactly as Dr. Bob and I earlier had found it necessary to delegate a large part of our active authority to the Trustees, so have the AA groups since found it necessary to delegate these same powers to their General Service Conference. The final say - the ultimate sanction in matters of large importance - has not been given to the Trustees alone. By the Conference Charter, confirmed at St. Louis, this authority is now delegated to the AA groups and thence to their Conference, a body which is a representative cross section of our entire Fellowship.

*Therefore the General Service Conference of AA. - plus any later formed sections - has become for nearly every practical purpose the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.*

In making this momentous transfer, we old-timers deeply hope that we have avoided those pitfalls into which societies have so often fallen because their originators have failed, during their lifetimes, to properly delegate and distribute their own authority, responsibility, and leadership.

## CONCEPT III

***As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the group, the Conference, the AA General Service Board and its several service corporations, staffs, committees and executives, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional “Right of Decision”.***

Within the framework of their general responsibilities, whether these be defined by character, by resolution, or by custom, it should be the traditional right of all world service Boards, committees, and executives to decide which problems they will dispose of themselves and upon which matters they will report, consult, or ask specific directions. We ought to trust our world servants with these discretions, because otherwise no effective leadership can be possible. Let us consider in detail, therefore, why the need for a “right of decision” in our leadership is imperative, and let us examine how this principle can be applied practically in all levels of our structure of world service.

We have seen how the AA groups, under the concept of the “Group Conscience,” are today holding the ultimate authority and the final responsibility for world services. We have also noted how, by reason of the Conference Charter and the “trusted servant” provision of Tradition Two, the groups have delegated to their General Service Conference full authority to manage and conduct AA’s world affairs.

The Conference and General Service Board Charters in broad terms define the responsibility of the Conference to act on behalf of AA as a whole. In these two documents a necessarily large Area of delegated service authority and responsibility has been staked out. These instruments, in a general way, describe the relation between the groups, the Conference, the Trustees, and the active service units. These broad definitions and descriptions are an indispensable frame of reference, and we could not function without them.

Nevertheless it has long been evident that these highly important Charter provisions cannot *by themselves* ensure smooth functioning and proper leadership at the several different levels of service which are involved. This has become crystal clear, and we need not seek very far for the reasons.

For example: knowing that theirs is the final authority, the groups are sometimes tempted to instruct their Delegates exactly how to vote upon certain matters in the Conference. Because they hold the ultimate authority, there is no doubt that the AA groups have the *right* to do this. If they insist, they can give directives to their Delegates on any and all AA matters.

But good management seldom means the full exercise of a stated set of ultimate rights. For example, were the groups to carry their instruction of Delegates to extremes, then we would be proceeding on the false theory that group opinion in most world service matters would somehow be much superior to Conference opinion. Practically speaking, this could almost never be the case. There would be very few questions indeed that “instructed” Delegates could better settle than a Conference acting on the spot with full facts and debate to guide it. Of course it is understood that complete *reporting* of Conference actions is always desirable. So is full *consultation* with Committee Members and Group Representatives. Nevertheless the “instructed” Delegate *who cannot act on his own conscience* in a final Conference vote is not a “trusted servant” at all; he is just a messenger.

Now the Conference Charter does not actually solve typical problems like this. It is a broad document which can be variously construed. Under one interpretation, the groups can instruct the Delegates all they like. Under another, the Delegates and Trustees actually can ignore such instructions, whenever they believe that to be desirable. How, then, shall we practically understand and reconcile such a condition?

Let us look at two more illustrations: the Conference, as will be later demonstrated, is in a state of nearly complete practical authority over the Trustees, despite the legal rights of the Board. Suppose the Conference Delegates began to use this ultimate power of theirs unwisely? Suppose they began to issue hasty and flat directives to the Trustees on matters respecting which the Trustees would be far more knowledgeable than the Delegates? What then?

This same kind of confusing problem used to beset the relations between the Trustees and their wholly-owned active service corporations, entities which are nowadays partly directed by non-Trustee volunteers and paid service workers. But the Board of Trustees certainly does own these outfits. Therefore the Trustees can hire and fire; their authority is final. Yet if the Trustees were constantly to exert their really full and absolute authority, if they were to attempt to manage these operating entities in *detail*, then the volunteers and Staff members working in them would quickly become demoralized; they would be turned into buck-passers and rubber stamps; their choice would be to rebel and resign, or to submit and rot.

Therefore some traditional and practical principle has to be devised which at all levels *will continuously balance the right relation between ultimate authority and delegated responsibility*. How, then, are we going to accomplish this?

There are three possible attitudes that we might take toward such a state of affairs. We could, for instance, throw away all corporate charters, bylaws, job definitions, and the like. This would leave it entirely to each group of trusted servants to figure out what its authority and responsibility really is. But such an absence of any chartered structure would be absurd; nothing but anarchy could result.

Then of course we could take the opposite tack. Refusing to give our leadership any worthwhile discretion at all, we could add to our present Charters great numbers of rules, regulations, and bylaws that would attempt to cover every conceivable action or contingency. That would be altogether too much red tape – more than we AAs could stand.

The right AA solution for this problem is to be found, however, in the latter part of Tradition Two, which provides for “trusted servants.” This really means that we ought to trust our responsible leaders to decide, within the understood framework of their duties, *how they will interpret and apply their own authority and responsibility to each particular problem or situation as it arises*. This sort of leadership discretion should be the essence of “The Right of Decision” and I am certain that we need not have the slightest fear of granting this indispensable privilege at nearly every level of world service.

There will always be plenty of ultimate authority to correct inefficiency, ineffectiveness, or abuse. If the Conference does not function well, the groups can send in better Delegates. If the Trustees get badly out of line, the Conference can censure them, or even reorganize them. If the Headquarters’ services go sour, the Trustees can elect better directors and hire better help. These remedies are ample and direct. But for so long as our world services function reasonably well – and there should always be charity for occasional mistakes – then “trust” must be our watchword, otherwise we shall wind up leaderless.

These are the reasons for my belief that we should forthwith invest in all of our service bodies and people a traditional “Right of Decision.” In our structure of world service this “Right of Decision” could be practically applied as follows:

- A. Excepting its Charter provisions to the contrary, the Conference always should be able to decide which matters it will fully dispose of on its own responsibility, and which questions it will refer to the AA groups (or more usually, to their Committee Members or GSRs) for opinion or for definite guidance. Therefore it ought to be clearly understood and agreed that our Conference Delegates are primarily the world servants of AA as a whole, that only in a secondary sense do they represent their respective Areas. Consequently they should, on final decisions, be entitled to cast their votes in the General Service Conference *according to the best dictates of their own judgment and conscience at that time.*
- B. Similarly the Trustees of the General Service Board (operating of course within the provision of their own Charter and Bylaws) should be able at all times to decide when they will act fully on their own responsibility and when they will ask the Conference for its guidance, its approval of a recommendation, or for its actual decision and direction.
- C. Within the scope of their definitely defined or normally implied responsibilities, all Headquarters service corporations, committees, staff or executives should also be possessed of the right to decide when they will act wholly on their own and when they will refer their problems to the next higher authority.

This “Right of Decision” should never be made an excuse for failure to render proper reports of all significant actions taken; it ought never be used as a reason for constantly exceeding a clearly defined authority, nor as an excuse for persistently failing to consult those who are entitled to be consulted before an important decision or action is taken.

Our entire AA program rests squarely upon the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust AA, and we trust each other. Therefore we cannot do less than trust our leaders in service. The “Right of Decision” that we offer them is not only the practical means by which they may act and lead effectively, but it is also the symbol of our implicit confidence.



## CONCEPT IV

***Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional “Right of Participation”, taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.***

The principle of “Participation” has been carefully built into our Conference structure. The Conference Charter specifically provides that the Trustees, the Directors of our service corporations (AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc)., together with their respective executive staffs, shall always be voting members of the General Service Conference itself.

Exactly the same concept is borne in mind when our General Service Board elects the Directors of its wholly-owned active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. If it wished, the General Service Board could elect none but its own Trustees to these corporate directorships. But a powerful tradition has grown up to the effect that this never ought to be done.

For example, AA World Services, Inc. (which also includes the AA Publishing division) currently has seven directors, only two of whom are Trustees.<sup>4</sup> The other five non-Trustee directors comprise three volunteers, both expert in office management and publishing, and two directors who are paid staff members: the general manager and his assistant. The general manager is traditionally the president of AA World Services, Inc. and his assistant is a vice president. For communication linkage, the editor or a staff member of the Grapevine or his nominee is invited to attend AA World Services, Inc. meetings.

Therefore the active management of AA World Services, Inc. and its publishing division is composed of Trustees whose mission is to see that these projects are properly managed; of volunteer experts who contribute their advice and professional experience; and of two paid office executives who are charged with getting most of the work done. It will be seen that each member of every classification, is a director, and so has a legal vote; that each corporate officer bears a title which, both practically and legally, denotes what his (or her) actual status and responsibility is.

Such a typical corporate business management easily permits a proper degree of voting “participation.” Every skilled element to do the allotted job is present. No class is set in absolute authority over another. This is the corporate or “participating” method of doing business, as distinguished from structures so common to many institutional, military and governmental agencies wherein high-level people of classes of people often are set in absolute authority, one over the other.

We should also note that the seven<sup>5</sup> AA Grapevine directors are elected on the same principle as those of AA World Services, Inc. Here too we see Trustees, volunteer experts and paid staff members acting in concert as the active managers of that operation. And a world service nominee should be present at all GV meetings, both corporate and editorial.

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<sup>4</sup> Currently AAWS has nine directors, of which four are Trustees.

<sup>5</sup> Currently nine.

The General Service Board, furthermore, rigorously abides by the principle of "Participation" whenever its chairman makes appointments to the Board's principal standing committees. Numbers of non-Trustees and paid staff workers are customarily chosen for these important posts. As with the active service corporations, the same elements are nearly always present in these committees, viz., representatives of the General Service Board, non-Trustee experts, and one or more staff members who must do most of the leg work. All can vote, and therefore all can truly "participate." When the time comes to ballot, there are no "superiors," no "inferiors," and no "advisers."

To this highly effective and unifying principle of "Participation" at all responsible levels, there is one regrettable but necessary exception. Members holding paid staff positions cannot become Trustees. This cannot be permitted because such a practice would interfere with the four-year rotation of the AA Trustees. And if ever the General Service Board had to be reorganized by the Conference, paid AA Trustees might prove to be a vested interest most difficult to dislodge.

Nevertheless our Trustees of today traditionally invite paid executives, staff members, accountants, and any others whose reports or advice may be required, to attend each quarterly meeting of The General Service Board. Thus the Trustees are put into direct communication with these workers who are thus made to feel that they are wanted and needed. Although they do not vote, these workers may freely participate in debate.

The preservation of the principle of "Participation" in our service structure is, to those of us who already understand its application and benefits, a matter of the highest importance to our future. Experience suggests, however, that some of each new generation of Delegates and Trustees will inevitably try to weaken, modify, or toss out the principle of "participation." Every year, a few Delegates will question the "right" of the corporate directors, staffs and even of the Trustees to vote in Conference. Every now and then a move will be made to abolish AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. It will be urged that these separate corporations ought to become "departments" or "committees" of the General Service Board, mainly managed by Trustees. To my view, it is so vital that we preserve this traditional "Right of Participation" in the face of every tendency to whittle it down that we should here bring some of our pioneering experience to bear upon the problem.

In its early days the AA Headquarters was run on authoritarian and institutional lines. At that time the Trustees saw no reason to delegate their managerial powers or to work in voting participation with any others outside their own body. The result was often grievous trouble and misunderstanding, and it was out of this rough going that the principle of "Participation" finally emerged. This lesson was learned the hard way, but it was learned.

We have seen how Dr. Bob and I had placed our Board of Trustees in full legal possession of all of our service assets. This had included our book literature, our funds, our public relations, and our AA General Service Office. This is how our early Trustees came to have all of the authority there was. But most of the actual responsibility for the conduct of AA's Headquarters nevertheless fell on me, my assistant, and her staff. On the one hand we had Trustees who possessed complete authority, and on the other hand there were founders and office managers who had great responsibility but practically no authority. It was a kind of schizophrenia, and it caused real trouble.

It was natural for the Trustees, who had all of the authority and all of the money, to feel that theirs was the duty to directly manage the office and to actively superintend practically everything that was done. To accomplish this, two Trustee committees were formed, a policy and an administrative committee. We at the office had no membership on these committees and hence no real "participation." Of course I could go to Trustee meetings to persuade or advise, and the same was true of the committee meetings. But my assistant, who really carried the greater part of the office load, couldn't get inside a Trustees meeting, and she was called into committee meetings only to make suggestions and reports, answer questions, and receive orders. Sometimes these committees issued us conflicting directives.

The situation was complicated by yet another wheel in the management machine. Our publishing company (then Works Publishing, Inc). was of course wholly owned by the Board of Trustees. Except in one important particular, Works Publishing, Inc. had, however, become a pure "dummy." It had nothing to do with the active management except to issue checks for office and publishing expenses. An old AA friend of mine, its Trustee-treasurer, signed those checks. Once, when he was a bit out of sorts, he tore up all of our paychecks because my assistant had issued them of couple of days early so that the gals in the back office could buy Easter bonnets. Right then and there we began to wonder how much absolute authority over money and people any one of us drunks could handle. Also, how much of this type of coercion we alkies on the receiving end could sit and take. In any case it had become dead sure that our Headquarters could not be run by two executive committees and a dummy corporation, each able to issue point-blank nonparticipating directives.

The point may be made that nowadays we drunks can "dish it out" or "take it" better than we used to. Even so, I would sure hate to see us ever go back to a nonparticipating setup. Now that we have more service people involved and more money to handle, I am afraid the result would be much the same and maybe worse. There was really nothing exceptional about the incident of the torn-up checks. Every time an absolute authority is created, it always invites this same tendency toward overdomination respecting all things, great and small.

It was years before we saw that we could never put all authority in one group and virtually all responsibility in another and then expect efficiency of operation, let alone real harmony. Of course, no one is against the idea of final authority. We are only against its misapplication or misuse. "Participation" can usually stop this sort of demoralizing nonsense before it starts.

Let us look at another aspect of this participation problem. The final authority for services must lie in the AA groups; but suppose the groups, sensing their great power, should try to over-exercise it by sending in Delegates irrevocably instructed as to how to vote on most questions. Would the Delegates feel that they were participants, trusted servants? No, they would feel like agents and order-takers.

The Delegates themselves, of course, could also give the Trustees this same treatment. The Delegates' power is so great that they could soon make the Trustees feel like rubber stamps, just as the Trustees unknowingly did to workers at Headquarters. If, therefore, the Conference ever begins to refuse the Trustees vote in it, and if the Trustees ever again refuse to let corporate service volunteers and staff members vote at the level of their own corporate and Conference work, we shall have thrown all past experience to the winds. The principle of allowing a proper voting participation would have to be painfully relearned.

One argument for taking away the Trustee and service worker vote in the Conference is this: it is urged that there is danger if we allow service people and Trustees to vote on their own past performance; for example, their annual reports. To a certain extent this argument is sound. As a matter of tradition, there is no doubt that Trustees and service workers alike should refrain from voting on reports on their own past activities.

But those who would *do away entirely* with the votes of Trustees and service workers in the Conference overlook the point that such reports of past performance constitute only a fraction of the business of that body. The Conference is far more concerned with policies, plans, and actions which are to take effect in the future. To take away the votes of Trustees and service workers on such questions would obviously be unwise. Why should our Conference be deprived of the votes of such knowledgeable people as these?\*

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\* There is another very practical reason for not giving Conference Delegates absolute voting authority over Trustees, service directors, and staff members. It should be borne in mind that our Delegates can never be like a Congress in constant session, having its own working committees, elected leaders, etc. Our Delegates cannot possibly function in this manner for the simple reason that they meet for a few days only, once a year.

Perhaps someone will object that, on close votes in the Conference, the combined Trustees and service worker ballots may decide a particular question. But why not? Certainly our Trustees and service workers are no less conscientious, experienced, and wiser than the Delegates. Is there any good reason why their votes are undesirable? Clearly there is none. Hence we ought to be wary of any future tendency to deny either our Trustees or our service people their Conference votes, except in special situations that involve past performances, job qualification, or money compensation, or in case of a sweeping reorganization of the General Service Board itself, occasioned by malfunction of the Board. However, this should never be construed as a bar to Trustee vote on structural changes. It is also noteworthy that in actual practice our Trustees and Headquarters people have never yet voted in a "bloc". Their differences of opinion among themselves are nearly always as sharp and considerable as those to be found among the Delegates themselves.

There is another good reason for "participation", and this one has to do with our spiritual needs. All of us deeply desire to belong. We want an AA relation of brotherly partnership. It is our shining ideal that the "spiritual corporation" of AA should never include any members who are regarded as "second class". Deep down, I think this is what we have been struggling to achieve in our world service structure. Here is perhaps the principal reason why we should continue to ensure "participation" at every important level. Just as there are no second-class AAs, neither should there be any second-class world service workers, either.

The "Right of Participation" is therefore a corrective of ultimate authority because it mitigates its harshness of misuse. It also encourages us who serve AA to accept the necessary disciplines that our several tasks require. We can do this when we are sure that we belong, when the fact of our "participation" assures us that we are truly the "trusted servants" described in AA's Tradition Two.

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Hence they cannot have an extensive first-hand acquaintance with many of the problems on which they are expected to vote. This is all the more reason for allowing the sometimes better-informed minority of Trustees and Headquarters people the balloting privilege in all cases where no self-interest is involved.

## CONCEPT V

***Throughout our world service structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.***

In the light of the principle of the “Right of Appeal,” all minorities – whether in our staffs, committees, corporate Boards, or among the Trustees – should be encouraged to file minority reports whenever they feel a majority to be in considerable error. And when a minority considers an issue to be such a grave one that a mistaken decision could seriously affect AA as a whole, it should then charge itself with the actual duty of presenting a minority report to the Conference.

In granting this traditional “Right of Appeal,” we recognise that minorities frequently can be right; that even when they are partly or wholly in error they still perform a most valuable service when, by asserting their “Right of Appeal,” they compel a thorough-going debate on important issues. The well-heard minority, therefore, is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority.

The traditional “Right of Appeal” should also permit any person in our service structure, whether paid or unpaid, to petition for the redress of a personal grievance, carrying his complaint, if he so desires, directly to the General Service Board. He or she should be able to do this without prejudice or fear of reprisal. Though in practice this will be a seldom exercised right, its very existence will always tend to restrain those in authority from unjust uses of their power. Surely our workers should cheerfully accept the necessary direction and disciplines that go with their jobs, but all of them should nevertheless feel that they need not silently endure unnecessary and unfair personal domination.

Concerning both “Appeal” and “Petition,” I am glad to say that in AA’s world services these valuable practices and rights have always been put to good use. Therefore I am committing them to writing only by way of helping to confirm and enlarge their future applications.

The *Rights* of “*Appeal*” and “*Petition*” of course aim at the total problem of protecting and making the best possible use of minority feeling and opinion. This has always been, and still is, a central problem of all free governments and democratic societies. In Alcoholics Anonymous individual freedom is of enormous importance. For instance, any alcoholic is a member of AA the moment he says so; we cannot take away his right to belong. Neither can we force our members to believe anything or pay anything. Ours is indeed a large charter of minority privileges and liberties.

When we look at our world services, we find that here we have also gone to great lengths in our trust of minority groups. Under Tradition Two, the *Group Conscience* is the final authority for AA world service, and it will always remain so respecting all the larger issues that confront us. Nevertheless the AA groups have recognised that for world service purposes the “Group Conscience of AA” as a totality has certain limitations. It cannot act directly in many service matters, because it cannot be sufficiently informed about the problems in hand. It is also true that during a time of great disturbance the Group Conscience is not always the best possible guide because, temporarily, such an upset may prevent it from functioning efficiently or wisely. When, therefore, the Group Conscience cannot or should not act directly, *who does act for it?*

The second part of Tradition Two provides us with the answer when it describes AA leaders as “trusted servants.” These servants must always be in readiness to do for the groups what the groups obviously cannot or should not do for themselves. Consequently the servants are bound to use their own information and judgment, sometimes to the point of disagreeing with uninformed or biased group opinion.

Thus it will be seen that in world service operations AA often trusts a small but truly qualified minority – the hundred-odd members of its General Service Conference – to act as AA's Group Conscience in most of our service affairs. Like other free societies, we have to trust our servants, knowing that in the unusual event that they should fail their responsibilities, we shall still have ample opportunity to recall and replace them.

The foregoing observations illustrate, in a general way, AA's concern for the freedom and protection of individual members and the whole membership's willingness to trust able and conscientious servants to function in their several capacities, for us all. As the longtime recipients of this kind of trust, I am sure that many of AA's old-timers would like me to record their gratitude along with my own.

By 1951, when the General Service Conference was put into experimental operation, these attitudes of trust already were an essential part of AA life. In drafting the Charter for our Conference, therefore, we naturally infused that document with provisions which would insure protection and respect for minorities. This is exemplified, for instance, in our "Third Legacy" method of selecting Delegates. Unless the majority candidate can poll a two-thirds vote of his State or Provincial Assembly, he must place his name in a hat with one or more of the choices of the Assembly minority. By thus drawing lots, the minority candidates have an equal chance with the majority's choice.

Strictly speaking, a democracy operates on the will of the majority, no matter how slim that majority may be. So when making special concessions to the feelings and the often-demonstrated wisdom of minorities, we occasionally may deny democracy's cherished principle of final decision by a simple majority vote. Nevertheless we actually have found that our Third Legacy method of electing Delegates has much *strengthened the spirit* of democracy among us. Unity has been cemented, cooperation has been increased, and when the Delegate is finally chosen, no discontented minority can trail in his wake. To increase the actual *spirit of democracy* by special deference to minority opinion is, we think, better than to follow blindly the rule which always insists on an unqualified dominance by a slight majority vote.

Consider another example: our respect for the minority position, plus a desire for unity and certainty, often prompts AA's General Service Conference to debate at length on important questions of policy, provided there is no need for an immediate or early decision. On many occasions the Conference has insisted on a continuing discussion even in certain cases when a two-thirds majority easily could have been obtained. Such a traditional voluntary practice is evidence of real prudence and courteous deference to minority views. Unless it has been absolutely unavoidable, the Conference has usually refused to take important decisions on anything less than a two-thirds vote.

This same kind of consideration for the minority position can be found in the Charter provision that no Conference vote can be considered binding on the Trustees of the General Service Board unless it equals two-thirds of a Conference quorum. This gives the Trustees a power of veto in cases where the majority is not great. By reason of this provision the Trustees, if they wish, can insist on further debate and so check any tendency to haste or emotionalism. In practice the Trustees seldom exercise this option. More often they go along with a simple majority of the Delegates, especially when prompt action on less critical matters is clearly needed. But the choice is always theirs whether to veto a simple majority or to act with it. Here again is a recognition of the constructive value of a trusted minority.

If to such a generous recognition of minority privileges we now add the traditional Rights of "Appeal" and "Petition," I believe we shall have granted to all minorities, whether of groups or of individuals, the means of discharging their world service duties confidently, harmoniously, and well.

More than a century ago a young French nobleman named De Toqueville came to America to look at the new Republic. Though many of his friends had lost their lives and fortunes in the French Revolution, De Toqueville was a worshipful admirer of democracy. His writings on government by the people and for the people are classics, never more carefully studied than at the present time.

Throughout his political speculation De Toqueville insisted that the greatest danger to democracy would always be the “tyranny” of apathetic, self-seeking, uninformed, or angry majorities. Only a truly dedicated citizenry, quite willing to protect and conserve minority rights and opinions could, he thought, guarantee the existence of a free and democratic society. All around us in the world today we are witnessing the tyranny of majorities and the even worse tyranny of very small minorities invested with absolute power. De Toqueville would have neither, and we AAs can heartily agree with him.

We believe that the spirit of democracy in our Fellowship and in our world service structure will always survive, despite the counter forces which will no doubt continue to beat upon us. Fortunately we are not obliged to maintain a government that enforces conformity by inflicting punishments. We need to maintain only a structure of service that holds aloft our Traditions, that forms and executes our policies thereunder, and so steadily carries our message to those who suffer.

Hence we believe that we shall never be subjected to the tyranny of either the majority or the minority, provided we carefully define the relations between them and forthwith tread the path of world service in the spirit of our Twelve Steps, our Twelve Traditions, and our Conference Charter – in which I trust that we shall one day inscribe these traditional Rights of “Appeal” and “Petition.”

## CONCEPT VI

***On behalf of AA as a whole, our General Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.***

Just as the AA groups find themselves unable to act decisively respecting world service affairs unless they delegate a great amount of active authority and responsibility to their Conference, so must the Conference in turn delegate a liberal administrative authority to the General Service Board, in order that its Trustees may act freely and effectively in the absence of the Conference itself.

This critical need for Trustee liberty of action raises several important questions.\* Next to the Conference, AA's Board of Trustees should be the most influential group of world servants that we have, and therefore we shall have to consider carefully the kind and degree of authority, responsibility, leadership, and legal status the Trustees must possess in order to function at top effectiveness over the years to come. We shall need to review and perhaps amend somewhat our present methods of choosing Trustees. We shall need to define clearly the several kinds of professional and financial skills that will always be required for a balanced trusteeship. Only by doing so can we permanently insure the Board's capability of future leadership.

In order to avoid continuous confusion, it will also be necessary to show precisely how the Trustees ought to be related to the Conference and just how they in turn should relate themselves to their active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. (including its division of AA Publishing) and the AA Grapevine, Inc., our monthly magazine. In a general way these relations already are indicated in our Conference Charter, and to some extent they have been discussed on preceding pages. Nevertheless there still remains a real need to interpret and spell them out in detail. Of course there is no desire to freeze these relations into a rigid pattern. However satisfactory and right our present arrangements seem, the future may reveal flaws that we do not yet envision. New conditions may require refinements or even considerable alterations. For this reason our service Charter is capable in most respects of being readily amended by the Conference itself.

It ought to be recalled, however, that all of our present arrangements, including the status of AA's Trustees, are based on a great amount of experience, which it is the purpose of these writings to describe and make clear. When this is done, we shall not be hampered later on by such a lack of understanding that we could be tempted into hasty or unwise amendments. Even if we do someday make changes that happen to work out poorly, then the experience of the past will not have been lost. These articles can then be relied upon as a point of safe return.

Let us therefore make a more specific examination of the need of a wide latitude of administrative freedom for the Trustees of the General Service Board.

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\* See Concept VIII for a definition of the Trustees' powers and activities.



As we have seen, the Conference Charter (and also the Charter of the General Service Board, and its Bylaws) has already staked out a large Area of freedom of action for our Trustees. And we have reinforced these Charter provisions by granting to all world service bodies, including of course our Trustees, the traditional Rights of "Decision," "Participation," and "Appeal." A careful review of these legal and traditional rights can leave little doubt what the actual administrative responsibilities of the Trustees are; nor can there be any question that their authority in this Area is large indeed.

Why should our Trustees be given this very wide latitude of judgment and action? The answer is that we AAs are holding them mainly responsible for all our service activities: AA World Services, Inc. (including AA Publishing) and The AA Grapevine, Inc. These entities (as of 1960) have combined gross receipts approaching one-half million dollars annually<sup>6</sup>. Our Trustees are also responsible for AA's world-wide public relations. They are expected to lead in the formulation of AA policy and must see to its proper execution. They are the active guardians of our Twelve Traditions. The Trustees are AA's bankers. They are entirely responsible for the investment and use of our substantial reserve funds. The very wide range of their activities will be still further seen under "Concept XI," wherein the work of their five<sup>7</sup> standing committees is described.

While the Trustees must always operate under the close observation, guidance and sometimes the direction of the Conference, it is nevertheless true that nobody but the Trustees and their wholly-owned service corporations could possibly pass judgment upon and handle the very large number of transactions now involved in our total world service operation. In view of this very large responsibility, they must therefore be given a correspondingly large grant of authority and leadership with which to discharge it. We should quite understand too, that the conduct of our world services is primarily a matter of policy and business. Of course our objective is always a spiritual one, but this service aim can only be achieved by means of an effective business operation. Our Trustees must function almost exactly like the directors of any large business corporation. They must have ample authority to really manage and conduct AA's business.

This is the basic corporate concept on which our structure of world service rests. We have deliberately chosen the corporate form rather than the institutional or governmental model, because it is well known that the corporation is a far superior vehicle when it comes to the administration of policy and business.

From top to bottom, our whole service structure indeed resembles that of a large corporation. The AA groups are the stockholders; the Delegates are their representatives or proxies at the "annual meeting"; our General Service Board Trustees are actually the directors of a "holding company." And this holding company, the General Service Board, actually owns and controls the "subsidiaries" which carry on our active world services.

This very real analogy makes it even more clear that, just like any other Board of directors, our Trustees must be given large powers if they are to effectively manage the principal world affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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<sup>6</sup> The 1998 revenue of AA World Services and the Grapevine was over 15 million dollars.

<sup>7</sup> There are now eleven standing committees.

## CONCEPT VII

***The Conference recognizes that the Charter and the Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document: that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the AA purse for its final effectiveness.***

This concept may appear to be contradictory; it may look like the collision of an irresistible force with an immovable object. On the one hand we see a Board of Trustees which is invested with complete legal power over AA's funds and services, while on the other hand we find that AA's General Service Conference is clothed with such great traditional influence and financial power that, if necessary, it could overcome the legal rights of the Board of Trustees. It can therefore give the Trustees directives and secure compliance with them – practically speaking.

This means that the practical power of the Conference will nearly always be superior to the legal power of the Trustees. This superior power in the Conference flows from the powerful traditional influence of the Charter itself. It derives from the large majority of group-chosen Delegates in the Conference. And finally, in any great extremity, it would rest upon the undoubted ability of the Delegates to deny the General Service Board the monies with which to operate – viz., the voluntary contributions of the AA groups themselves. Theoretically, the Conference is an advisory body only, but practically speaking, it has all of the ultimate rights and powers that it may ever need.

When we reflect that our Trustees have no salaried financial interest in their posts, we can be quite sure that such a Board would never think of legally contesting the clear and sustained will of the Conference Delegates and the AA Areas they represent. If someday the chips were really down, there would be little chance of a stalemate. The Conference would find itself in complete control of the situation. As the conscience of AA, the Delegates would find themselves in ultimate authority over our General Service Board and also its corporate arms of active world service.

The history of this development is interesting and important. When in 1950 the Conference Charter was drawn, this question of where the final authority ought to rest was a very moot matter. Would the Conference have the last word, or would the Trustees? By then we knew for sure that complete and final authority over our funds and services should never continue to reside in an isolated Board of Trustees who had an unqualified right to appoint their own successors. This would be to leave AA world services in the hands of a paternalistic group, something entirely contradictory to the "Group Conscience" concept of Tradition Two. If the Trustees were to be our permanent service administrators and the guardians of AA's Twelve Traditions, it was evident that they must somehow be placed in a position where they would necessarily have to conform to our Traditions, and to the desires of our Fellowship.

To accomplish this objective, we considered all kinds of devices. We thought of incorporating the Conference itself, thus placing it in direct legal authority over the Board. This would have meant that all Conference members would have had to have a legal status. It would have been much too cumbersome an arrangement, involving really the incorporation of our whole Fellowship, an idea which the Conference itself later repudiated.

We also considered the idea of country-wide elections for all Trustees. But this procedure would have produced a political shambles, rather than the top flight managerial talent the Board had to have. So that notion was abandoned.

We next inquired whether the Conference itself could not both nominate and directly elect our trustees. But how could several scores of Delegates do this? They would come from all over the country. They would not be too well acquainted with each other. Their terms would be short and their meetings brief. How, then, could such a body nominate and elect alcoholic and nonalcoholic Trustees of a top managerial caliber? Clearly there could be no reliable method for doing this. Very reluctantly, we had to drop the idea.

It thus became obvious that new Trustee choices – subject to Conference approval – would still have to be left pretty much to the Trustees themselves. Only they would be capable of understanding what the Board needed. Except in a time of reorganization, this method of selection would have to continue – certainly as to the larger part of the Board's membership. Otherwise the Board could not be held accountable for management results. We might wind up with no effective management at all. For these reasons, the Conference was given the right to reject, but not to elect, new Trustee candidates.<sup>8</sup>

It was out of these considerations that our present Conference Charter was developed, a structure which clearly gives the Conference a final and ultimate authority but which nevertheless legally preserves the right of the Trustees to function freely and adequately, just as any business Board of directors must. This arrangement is in strict conformity with the “trusted servant” provision of Tradition Two, which contemplates that our servants, within the scope of their duties, should be trusted to use their own experience and judgment. Trusted servants at all AA levels are expected to exercise leadership, and leadership is not simply a matter of submissive housekeeping. Of course leadership cannot function if it is constantly subjected to a barrage of harassing directives.

Up to the present time our experience shows that this balance of powers between the Trustees and the Conference is thoroughly workable. We have taken great pains to reserve final authority to the Conference by practical and traditional means. By legal means we have delegated ample functional and discretionary authority to the Trustees. We believe this balance can be maintained indefinitely, because the one is protected by tradition and the other by law.

Now we come to another interesting question often raised by new General Service Board Trustees. They say, “We Trustees have certain rights and duties which are legally established by our Charter. Are we not violating this Charter when we accept a Conference opinion or directive? We would have a perfect legal right to say ‘no’ to anything and everything that the Conference wants.”

Our Trustees certainly do have this absolute legal authority, but there is nothing in their Charter that *compels* them to use *all* of their authority *all* of the time. They are quite at liberty to accept advice or even direction from anyone at all. They can simply refrain from using their absolute legal right to say “no” when it would be much wiser, all things considered, to say “yes.” Just as the Conference should avoid the overuse of its traditional authority, so should the Trustees avoid overuse of their legal rights. The President of the U.S., for example, has an absolute legal right to veto congressional legislation. Yet ninety-nine percent of the time he does not do it, because (a) he likes a piece of legislation or (b) he does not like the legislation but believes a veto would nevertheless be unwise or impossible of success. Whether or not he will exercise his veto is determined by circumstances. It is just like that with AA's Board of Trustees.

Clearly, then, our Board of Trustees does reserve a veto power over any Conference action; this is legally necessary and right in principle, even though the veto will seldom be used. At certain times, however, the Trustees' veto could be of important and constructive use.

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<sup>8</sup> Trustee elections are now held during Conference week for regional and at-large trustees; to that extent the Conference now chooses trustees according to the procedure described in the “Service Manual.”

Here, for instance, are three typical examples in which it would be the duty of the Trustees to veto Conference action:

1. If, in a time of haste or heavy stress, the Conference should take an action or issue a directive to the Trustees in clear violation of its own Charter, or that of the General Service Board; or if the Conference were to pass any measure so ill-considered or so reckless as to seriously injure, in the judgment of the Trustees, AA's public relations or AA as a whole, it would then be the duty of the Trustees to ask for a Conference reconsideration. In the event of a Conference refusal to reconsider, the Trustees could then use their legal right to veto. And, if desirable, they could appeal the issue directly to the AA groups themselves.
2. Although traditionally the Trustees never should substantially exceed a Conference-approved budget without consulting the Conference, they should feel entirely free to reduce the Conference budget figure during any fiscal year, even though such an action might curtail or cancel specific plans or projects initiated and directed by the Conference itself.
3. If, by reason of unforeseen conditions, any particular plan, project, or directive of the Conference should become impractical or unworkable during a fiscal year, the Trustees should, without prejudice, be able to use their right of veto and cancellation.

If, therefore, in the years ahead, the Conference will always bear in mind the actual rights, duties, responsibilities and legal status of the General Service Board, and if the Trustees in their deliberations will constantly realize that the Conference is the real seat of ultimate service authority, we may be sure that neither will be seriously tempted to make a "rubber stamp" out of the other. We may expect that in this way grave issues will always be resolved and harmonious cooperation will be the general rule.

## CONCEPT VIII

***The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities:***

***(a) With respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs.***

***(b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of full stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.***

Since our Trustees bear the primary responsibility for the good conduct of all our world service affairs, this discussion deals with the basic concepts and methods by which they can best discharge their heavy obligations. Long experience has now proved that our Board as a whole must devote itself almost exclusively to the larger and more serious questions of policy, finance, group relations, public relations and leadership that constantly confront it. In *these more critical matters*, the Board must of course function with great care and deliberation. Here the Board is expected skilfully to *plan, manage, and execute*.

It follows therefore, that the close attention of the Board to such large problems must not be subject to constant distraction and interference. Our Trustees, as a body, cannot be burdened with a mass of lesser matter; they must not concern themselves with the endless questions and difficulties which arise daily, weekly, and monthly in the routine conduct of the World Service Office and of our publishing enterprises. In these Areas the Board cannot possibly manage and conduct in detail; it must delegate its executive function.

Here the Board's attitude has to be that of custodial oversight; it cannot be the executive. Hence the Trustees are the guarantors of the good management of AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. They discharge their custodial obligation by electing the directors of these services, a part of whom must always be Trustees. By this means, the executive direction of these functions is securely lodged in the active service corporations themselves rather than in the General Service Board. Each corporate service entity should possess its own charter, its own working capital, its own executive, its own employees, its own offices and equipment. Except to mediate difficult situations and to see that the service corporations operate within their budgets and within the general framework of AA and Headquarters policy, the Board will seldom need to do more, so far as routine service operations are concerned.

This arrangement is in line with modern corporate business practice. The General Service Board is in effect a holding company, charged with the custodial oversight of its wholly-owned and separately incorporated subsidiaries, of which each has, for operating purposes, a separate management. We have demonstrated to our satisfaction that this corporate basis of operation is superior to any other.

This lesson, as we have observed before, has been learned the hard way. When discussing "Participation" in Concept IV, we saw that earlier attempts to manage the AA General Service Office and AA Publishing Company through a multiplicity of Trustee committees did not work well. These were really efforts to make our services into departments of the old Alcoholic Foundation (now the General Service Board). It was found difficult to define the powers of these several trustee service committees respecting each other respecting the work at hand. Responsibility and authority rarely could be kept in balance. Point-blank directives, rather than participating decisions, were the rule. In these committees nobody held titles that fully denoted what individual responsibilities actually were; and, naturally enough, those who handled money and signed checks

assumed the greater authority. The control of money, therefore, too often determined AA policy, regardless of the views of the workers and volunteers at the office who sometimes understood these matters better.

But the moment we consolidated our service office function into a single and permanent corporate structure wherein officers and directors had legally defined titles and duties and responsibilities – the moment such a corporation was provided with its own working capital, employees, and facilities – the moment its directors could legally vote in proportion to their actual responsibilities – the moment we were able in this way to define clearly executive authority – from that moment we began to see great improvement. More harmonious and effective conduct of our business has been the result ever since.

We finally learned what the business world well knows: that we could not, at the level of top management, run a large, active and full-fledged business entity with loose-jointed committees and departments. For example, how could our Trustees function today if they were to become a mere “committee” or “department” of the General Conference instead of the legally chartered and carefully defined body that they necessarily are?

Neither can our General Service Board be made into an operating corporation. Any corporation conducting a large and active business always must have a single executive head who is familiar with every department, who is actually on the job most of the time, and who therefore can directly coordinate the several departments and mediate their differences. This would mean (if we tried it) that the General Service Board “divisions” would have to report to the General Service Board Chairman, as their chief executive. But unless he was *an executive in fact*, and constantly available to them, how could they do so? In the very nature of our particular setup, our Board Chairman can never be such an executive. He is usually a nonalcoholic and could not give the required time. Nor, as a Trustee, could he be paid a salary for the work that would be required of him as the top executive of all our services.

Suppose, however, that the Trustees engaged a full-time manager who would actively conduct all three of our service enterprises as departments of the Board. An immediate difficulty would be that such a person could never be a Trustee and could therefore never act as the Chairman of the General Service Board. He would therefore have no real status. He would become a man of all work under the absentee direction of the Board Chairman. Consider, too, the fact that half of our Board of Trustees normally live out of town<sup>9</sup> and the further fact that we cannot well ask our nonalcoholic Trustees to give the active services close and continuous supervision. Altogether, these are weighty reasons why we should never turn the General Service Board into an operating corporation.

Nor would we be much better off if we formed one big subsidiary service corporation, wholly-owned by the General Service Board and designed to encompass under a single top executive all of our active services, including The AA Grapevine. This plan would also create executive difficulties because it would over-concentrate executive authority. And finally, an individual executive having the many diverse talents required would be hard to find and hard to replace.

A further consideration is that we have always rigorously avoided any great money or executive concentration by placing our reserve funds with the Trustees and by dividing our total working capital between the AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc., each entity having its separate executive. There is always a powerful connection between money and authority. Whenever we concentrate money, we shall inevitably create the temptation for the exercise of too much executive authority, an undesirable condition for us. Therefore we should strenuously avoid placing too much money or too much authority in any one service entity. These are potent reasons for maintaining separate incorporations for each of our active services.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1999, about 95% of the Trustees live “out of town.”

However, experience dating from our earliest days strongly suggests that future Trustees and service workers, in the supposed interests of accounting simplicity, tax savings, and hoped-for efficiency, will be periodically tempted to go in for concentrations and consolidations of one kind or another. Should this be again attempted, we know that the risk of making an administrative shambles out of the total operation will be great indeed.

These observations are not intended to bar any future needful change. It is urged only that we avoid unnecessary repetitions of those painful experiences and mistakes of the past which sometimes resulted from too much concentration of money and authority. It can only be left on the record that we still see no workable way to convert the Board of Trustees into an active, "all-purpose" service corporation.

## CONCEPT IX

***Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of AA must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.***

No matter how carefully we design our service structure of principles and relationships, no matter how well we apportion authority and responsibility, the operating results of our structure can be no better than the personal performance of those who must man it and make it work. Good leadership cannot function well in a poorly designed structure. But weak leadership can hardly function at all, even in the best of structures. But once we have created a basically sound structure, that job is finished, except for occasional refinements.

With *leadership* we shall have a continuous problem. Good leadership can be here today and gone tomorrow. Furnishing our service structure with able and willing workers has to be a continuous activity. It is therefore a problem that in its very nature cannot be permanently solved. We must continuously find the right people for our many service tasks. Since our future effectiveness must thus depend upon ever-new generations of leaders, it seems desirable that we now proceed to define what a good service leader should be; that we carefully indicate in each level of service, especially in our Board of Trustees, what special skills will always be required; and that we review our present methods of finding and choosing that leadership.

First let's remember that the base for our service structure rests on the dedication and ability of several thousand General Service Representatives (GSRs), several hundred Area Committee Members, and nearly a hundred Delegates. These are the direct agents of the AA groups; these are the indispensable linkage between our Fellowship and its world service; these are the primary representatives of AA's Group Conscience. Without their support and activity we could not operate permanently at all.

When making their choices of GSRs, the AA groups should therefore have such facts well in mind. It ought to be remembered *that it is only the GSRs* who, in Group Assembly meetings (or in caucus) can name Committee Members and finally name the Delegates. Hence great care needs to be taken by the groups as they choose these Representatives. Hit-or-miss methods should be avoided. Groups who name no GSRs should be encouraged to do so. In this Area a degree of weakness tends to persist. The needed improvement seems to be matter of increased care, responsibility, and education.

As the GSRs meet in their Assemblies to name Delegates, an even greater degree of care and dedication will be required. Personal ambitions will have to be cast aside, feuds and controversy forgotten. "Who are the best qualified people that we can name?" This should be the thought of all.

Thus far our Third Legacy method of naming Delegates by a two-thirds vote or by lot has proved highly satisfactory. This system of choosing has greatly reduced political friction; it has made each Delegate feel that he or she is truly a world servant rather than just the winner of a contest. In committee Members and Delegates alike, our Third Legacy methods have generally produced people of a high level of dedication and competence. In this Area of service we are in good shape. Our Area Assemblies need only to continue to act with care and in selfless good spirit.



It should be reported that some members still doubt whether choice by lot is ever a good idea. They say that the best man does not always win. In answer it must be pointed out that each time we have abandoned the "two-thirds vote or lot" in naming Delegates there has been a sense of defeat and disturbance in the minority camp which is nowhere nearly offset by the advantage of naming the supposedly best man. Indeed the second-best man can often be as good a Delegate as the Assembly's first choice, he may even be a better Delegate.

We now come to the principal theme of this particular Concept: How can we best strengthen the composition and leadership of the future Board of Trustees, the Board which in years to come will have to exercise AA's primary leadership in world service administration, the Trusteeship which will in fact have to assume most of my former duties and responsibilities in connection with AA's world services?

As previously noted, the actual transference of authority and responsibility from me to the Trustees has been going on for a long time. I am still around and still serving as an adviser, and I have also been finishing a few remaining chores (for example, the development of these Concepts) which were left over from the 1955 St. Louis Convention. But the time approaches when I shall have to withdraw from nearly all world service activity. This is why I feel a great interest now in doing everything possible to strengthen the administrative composition and AA leadership of our General Service Board, so that future Trustees may be better able to cope with the problems and dangers which time will no doubt bring.

My admiration for what AA's alcoholic and nonalcoholic Trustees have done for us all is boundless. During the time of our infancy and adolescence, nothing could have been structurally better than the setup we have had. Looking at this record, many AAs naturally feel that what was good for the past will surely be good for the future; that any change in the induction methods, in the Trustee ratio of alcoholics to nonalcoholics, or in the present composition of our Board will prove dangerous rather than beneficial.

But change has been pressing upon us right along, and it still doing so. For example, our Board operated in all the years between 1938 and 1951 without the support of Conference. But it was finally and reluctantly realized that this relatively unseen and unknown Board could not continue without a permanent linkage to AA, something that Dr. Bob and I could not give it forever. We did not like to face this change, but we had to. The trusteeship had to be securely anchored to AA or it eventually would have collapsed. The Conference simply *had* to come into being.

This change profoundly altered the position of the Trustees. Their former authority was modified; they were firmly linked to AA and were thus made directly accountable to our Fellowship. Nobody today questions the wisdom of that momentous change, because everybody can now see that it has provided an essential protection for the service effectiveness and security of AA's future. Experience has refuted the idea that changes which are needed to meet altered conditions are necessarily unwise.

We now stand on the edge of still another great change. Though we have already solved the problem of the Trustees' authority, their responsibility, and their linkage to AA, *we have by no means solved, in my belief, the questions of the Board's future role in service leadership.* Hence it is my deep conviction that the administrative and AA leadership strength of the Board should be considerably increased; that these and other improvements can place it in a much better position, practically and psychologically; that such changes are truly necessary to meet the conditions which will be certain to follow when my own world service leadership has been terminated.

Students of history recognise that the transference of the original leadership of a society to its successors in leadership is always a critical turning point. This difficult question of leadership, this problem of transference, must now be faced.

Let us finally consider what specific personal qualities a world service leader ought to have. For whatever use it may be to future generations of our trusted servants, I here offer a discussion of this subject published in a 1959 issue of "The AA Grapevine."

## ***LEADERSHIP IN AA: EVER A VITAL NEED***

No society can function well without able leadership in all its levels, and AA can be no exception. It must be said, though, that we AAs sometimes cherish the thought that we can do without much personal leadership at all. We are apt to warp the traditional idea of "principles before personalities" around to such a point that there would be no "personality" in leadership whatever. This would imply rather faceless automatons trying to please everybody, regardless.

At other times we are quite as apt to demand that AA's leaders must necessarily be people of the most sterling judgement, morals, and inspirations; big doers, prime examples of all, and practically infallible.

Real leadership, of course, has to function in between these entirely imaginary poles of hoped-for excellence. In AA certainly no leader is faceless, and neither is any leader perfect. Fortunately our Society is blessed with any amount of real leadership – the active people of today and the potential leaders of tomorrow as each new generation of able members swarms in. We have an abundance of men and women whose dedication, stability, vision, and special skills make them capable of dealing with every possible service assignment. We have only to seek these folks out and trust them to serve us.

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 he exercises no judgment 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.

A "politico" is an individual who is forever trying to "get the people what they want." A statesman is an individual who can carefully discriminate when and *when not* to do this. He recognises that even large majorities, when badly disturbed or uninformed, can, once in a while, be dead wrong. When such an occasional situation arises, and something very vital is at stake, it is always the duty of leadership, even when in a small minority, to take a stand against the storm, using its every ability of authority and persuasion to effect a change.

Nothing, however, can be more fatal to leadership than opposition for opposition's sake. It never can be "Let's have it our way or no way at all." This sort of opposition is often powered by a visionless pride or a gripe that makes us want to block something or somebody. Then there is the opposition that casts its vote saying, "No, we don't like it." No real reasons are ever given. This won't do. When called upon, leadership must always give its reasons, and good ones.

Then, too, a leader must realize that even very prideful or angry people can sometimes be dead right, when the calm and the more humble are quite mistaken.

These points are practical illustrations of the kinds of careful discrimination and soul-searching that true leadership must always try to exercise.

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 characterized 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.

Then there are those whom we like to call our “destructive” critics. They power-drive, they are “politickers,” they make accusations. Maybe they are violent, malicious. They pitch gobs of rumors, gossip, and general scuttle-butt to gain their ends – all for the good of AA, of course! But in AA we have at last learned that these folks, who may be a trifle sicker than the rest of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending very much on how we relate ourselves to them.

To begin with, we ought to listen carefully to what they say. Sometimes they are telling the whole truth; at other times, a little truth. More often, though, they are just rationalizing themselves into nonsense. If we are within range, the whole truth, the half truth, or no truth at all can prove equally unpleasant to us. That is why we have to listen so carefully. If they have got the whole truth, or even a little truth, then we had better thank them and get on with our respective inventories, admitting we were wrong. If it is nonsense, we can ignore it. Or we can lay all the cards on the table and try to persuade them. Failing this, we can be sorry they are too sick to listen, and we can try to forget the whole business. There are few better means of self-survey and of developing genuine patience, than the workouts these usually well-meaning but erratic brother members afford us. This is always a large order and we shall sometimes fail to make good on it ourselves. But we must keep trying.

Now we come to the all-important attribute of *vision*. Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future. Some might feel this sort of striving to be a sort of heresy, because we AAs are constantly telling ourselves, “One day at a time.” But that valuable principle really refers to our mental and emotional lives and means chiefly that we are not foolishly to repine over the past nor wishfully to day-dream about the future.

As individuals and as a Fellowship, we shall surely suffer if we cast the whole job of planning for tomorrow onto a fatuous idea of Providence. God’s real Providence has endowed us human beings with a considerable capacity for foresight, and He evidently expects us to use it. Therefore we must distinguish between wishful fantasy about a happy tomorrow and the present use of powers of thoughtful estimate. This can spell the difference between future progress and unforeseen woe.

Vision is therefore the very essence of prudence, an essential virtue if ever there was one. Of course we shall often miscalculate the future in whole or in part, but that is better than to refuse to think at all.

The making of estimates has several aspects. We look at past and present experience to see what we think it means. From this we derive a tentative idea or policy. Looking first at the nearby future, we ask how our idea or policy might work. Then we ask how our policies or ideas might apply under the several differing conditions that could arise in the longer future. If an idea looks like a good bet, we try it on – experimentally when that is possible. Later we revalue the situation and ask whether our estimate is working out.

At about this stage we may have to take a critical decision. Maybe we have a policy or plan that still looks fine and is apparently doing well. Nevertheless we ought to ponder carefully what its longtime effect will be. Will today's nearby advantages boomerang into large liabilities for tomorrow? The temptation will almost always be to seize the nearby benefits and quite forget about the harmful precedents or consequences that we may be setting in motion.

These are no fancy theories. We have found that we must use these principles of estimate constantly, especially at world service levels where the stakes are high. In public relations, for example, we must estimate the reaction both of AA groups and the general public, both short-term and long-term. The same thing goes for our literature. Our finances have to be estimated and budgeted. We must think about our service needs as they relate to general economic conditions, group capability, and willingness to contribute. On many such problems often we must try to think months and years ahead.

As a matter of fact, all of AA's Twelve Traditions were at first questions of estimate and vision for the future. Years ago for example we slowly evolved an idea about AA being self-supporting. There had been trouble here and there about outside gifts. Then still more trouble developed. Consequently we began to devise a policy of "no outside gifts." We began to suspect that large sums of this kind would tend to make us irresponsible and could divert us from our primary aim. Finally we saw that for the long pull, outside money could really ruin us. At this point, what had been just an idea or general policy crystallized firmly into an AA tradition. We saw that we must sacrifice the quick, nearby advantage for long-term safety.

We went through this same process on anonymity. A few public breaks had looked good. But finally the vision came that many such breaks eventually could raise havoc among us. So it went: first a tentative idea, then an experimental policy, then a firm policy, and finally a deep conviction – a vision for tomorrow.

Such is our process of estimating the future, and responsible world leadership must be proficient in this vital activity. It is an essential ability, especially in our Trustees. Most of them, in my view, should be chosen on the basis that they have already demonstrated an aptness for foresight in their own business or professional careers.

We shall be in continual need of these same attributes – tolerance, responsibility, flexibility, and vision – among our leaders of AA services at all levels. The principles of leadership will be the same whatever the size of the operation.

Maybe this seems like an attempt to stake out a specially privileged and superior type of AA member. But it really is not so. We simply are recognizing that our talents vary greatly. The conductor of an orchestra is not necessarily good at finance or foresight. And it is quite unlikely that a fine banker could be a great musical performer. So when we talk about AA leadership, we only declare that we ought to select that leadership on the basis of obtaining the best talent we can find.

While this article was first thought of in connection with our world service leadership, it is possible that some of its suggestions can be useful to anyone who takes an active part in our Society.

This is true particularly in the Area of Twelfth Step work, in which nearly all of us are actively engaged. Every sponsor is a leader. The stakes are about as big as they could be. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole family hang in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example – these qualities of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death.

We thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in all of its affairs.

# CONCEPT X

***Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority – the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and bylaws.***

Nearly all societies and governments of today exhibit serious deviations from the very sound principle that each *operational responsibility* must be accompanied by a *corresponding authority* to discharge it.

This is why we have been at such pains in preceding discussions to define the several authorities and responsibilities of the AA groups, the Conference, the Trustees, and our active service corporations. We have tried to make sure that authority in each of these levels is equal to responsibility. Then we have tried to relate these levels one to another in such a way that this principle is maintained throughout.

An outstanding characteristic of every good operational structure is that it guarantees harmonious and effective function by relating its several parts and people in such a way that none can doubt what their respective responsibilities and corresponding authorities actually are. Unless these attributes are well defined; unless those holding the final authority are able and willing properly to delegate and maintain a suitable operational authority; unless those holding such delegated authority feel able and willing to use their delegated authority freely as trusted servants; and unless there exists some definite means of interpreting and deciding doubtful situations – then personal clashes, confusion, and ineffectiveness will be inevitable.

The matter of responsibility and its necessary and co-equal authority is of such urgent importance that we might profitably recapitulate what has already been said, meanwhile taking a bird's-eye-view of our entire structure to better envision how this principle does, and always must, apply in our every activity and attitude.

The first characteristic that any working structure must have is a point, or succession of points, where there is ultimate responsibility and therefore an ultimate authority. We have already seen how, for AA's world services, this kind of final responsibility and authority resides in the AA groups themselves. And they in turn have apportioned some of their ultimate authority to the Conference and the Trustees.

We have observed how the Conference Delegates, directly representing the groups, are actually in a position of ultimate authority over the Trustees. We have seen further how the Trustees are in ultimate authority over the General Service Board's wholly-owned service corporations – AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. Likewise we know that the directors of these corporations are in ultimate authority over their officers who, on their part, are in like authority over their staffs.

The principle of ultimate authority runs clear through our structure. This is necessary, because all of our service affairs and activities have to head up *somewhere* for final responsibility. Ultimate authority is also needed so that each worker or each classification of servants knows where and who the final boss is.

If however, ultimate authority is not carefully qualified by delegated authority, we then have the reverse result. Were there no delegated authority, the groups would be directing their Delegates on every important vote, the Delegates would similarly turn the Trustees into a timid committee which would receive point-blank direction on just about everything; the Trustees would then install

themselves as the sole directors of the service entities and would commence to run them by directives. The corporate executives would become small czars, pushing the working staffs about. In short, such a misuse of ultimate authority would add up to a dictatorship wherein nearly every classification of AA servants would have large responsibilities but no real or certain authority, and hence no capability of effective decision and leadership with which to operate. Big or little tyrannies and buck-passing would be the inevitable penalties.

Therefore it becomes clear that ultimate authority is something which cannot be used indiscriminately. Indeed ultimate authority should practically never be used in full, *except in an emergency*. That *emergency* usually arises when delegated authority has gone wrong, when it must be reorganized because it is ineffective, or because it constantly exceeds its defined scope and purpose. For example, if the groups are dissatisfied with the Conference, they can elect better Delegates or withhold funds. If the Delegates must, they can censure or reorganize the Trustees. The Trustees can do the same with the service corporations. If a corporation does not approve of the operations of its executives or staff, any or all of them can be fired.

These are the *proper* uses of *ultimate authority*, because they rightly discharge a truly ultimate responsibility. The influence of ultimate authority must always be felt, but it is perfectly clear that *when delegated authority is operating well it should not be constantly interfered with*. Otherwise those charged with operating responsibility will be demoralized because their authority to do their work will be subject to arbitrary invasion, and because their actual responsibility will be made greater than their real authority.

How have we *structurally* tried to restrain the natural human tendency of those in ultimate authority to usurp and take over the needed operational or delegated authority? Well, this has been a large order, and several structural devices have been required. Let us review them, noting how they apply.

In our structure we have tried to create at each level accurate definitions of authority and responsibility. We have done this (a) by legal means, (b) by traditional means, and (c) by principles under which doubtful and seemingly or really conflicting situations can be interpreted and readily resolved.

Take the Conference Charter. It is not a legal instrument, but practically speaking it is the substance of a contract between the AA groups and their Conference. The Charter makes clear in a general way that the AA groups have delegated some of their ultimate authority and all needed operational authority to the Conference, which includes the Trustees and the active services. It is further suggested, in these present articles, that each Conference member on a final vote be entitled to cast his ballot according to the dictates of his own conscience; that the Conference itself also be granted, under the traditional "Right of Decision," the privilege of choosing which matters it will decide by itself and which it will refer back to the groups for their discussion, guidance or direction. These are the traditional definitions which can check the natural tendency of the groups to over-instruct Delegates. This gives the Conference an authority equal to its real responsibility.

Consider next the position of the Trustees. In previous articles we have made it clear that although the Conference has the ultimate authority, the Trustees at most times must insist on their legal right to actively administer our service affairs. Their legal right has been further strengthened and its use encouraged by the traditional "Right of Decision". In these articles we also recognize that the Trustees have a legal right of "veto" over the Conference when, in rare cases, they feel this should be used. By these means we have guaranteed the Trustees an administrative authority equal to their actual responsibility. This has of course been done without denying in any way the ultimate authority of the Conference, or of the Delegates, should it really be necessary to give the Trustees directives or censures, or to reorganize the Board. It should also be noticed that the position of the Trustees is still further strengthened by their "voting participation" in the Conference and by the recognition that they are AA's primary world service administrators.

Much care has also been taken to guarantee the Directors of AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. an ample operating authority that fully matches their responsibility for the routine conduct of our active services. The Charter provisions of their corporations legally protect their rights; the tradition that the Trustees must elect non-Trustee experts to these Boards strengthens them further. Besides, the traditional "Right of Decision" adds still more substance to their position. In these Concepts the perils of turning the General Service Board back into a "departmentalised" operating corporation have also been emphasized.

These are the extraordinary precautions we have taken to maintain the operating authority and integrity of the active services themselves. These safeguards are necessary because the General Service Board owns these corporations. Therefore the authority of the Trustees over them is not only ultimate, it is absolute the moment the Trustees want to make it that way. They can elect new Boards of directors at any time, they control the corporate budget; they can withhold operating funds. All these powers are needed and right. Nevertheless, so long as things go well, it is highly important that the Trustees do not unnecessarily interfere with, or usurp the operating authority of these entities. Hence the care we have taken in constructing these definitions of delegated authority.

To a considerable degree, the standing committees of the General Service Board – Policy, Finance, Public Relations, and the like – have a similar latitude. Under the principle of the "Right of Decision", each primary committee may choose what business it will dispose of on its own and what matters it will refer to the Board. The position of these committees is also fortified by the appointment of a generous proportion of non-Trustee members. Here, too, we try to make the authority of these committees equal to their responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

Now we come to the matter of conflicting authorities and to the question of how these conflicts are to be resolved. Most routine conflicts in the active services are easily settled, because we have provided ready communication between all service corporations and the committees of the General Service Board. For example: at every meeting of the Grapevine Boards or staff, a representative of AA World Services, Inc. is present, and vice versa. The General Policy committee always contains one or more members of the Finance and Budgetary Committee, and vice versa. Such interlocking provides easy communication. Each entity knows what the other is doing. This practical arrangement irons out many conflicts of authority – but not all.

Suppose, for example, that the framing and execution of an important AA policy is involved. In such a case the General Policy Committee naturally assumes the primary jurisdiction, taking on the job of planning and of making recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Let us suppose, however, that a considerable sum of money will be needed. In such a case, the plan also will have to be placed before the Finance and Budgetary Committee. If this committee agrees that the expenditure is warranted and is in line with the over-all budget, it tells the Policy Committee to go ahead and make its recommendation to the Trustees. But if the Finance and Budgetary Committee objects, then it must file its objection with the Trustees, who will settle the issue. Or if they think it necessary, the Trustees will refer the matter to the Conference.

The principle of a primary and a secondary jurisdiction also works the other way round. If the Finance Committee, for example, proposes a large expenditure that may strongly affect AA feeling and policy, it must be sure to check with the Policy Committee, even though the main jurisdiction still lies with the Budget and Finance people.

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<sup>10</sup> In the years since Bill wrote on the General Policy Committee (see also Concept XII), its functions have changed markedly. Now known as the General Sharing Session, it meets three times a year for about two hours on the Saturday preceding the General Service Board meeting, and considers the long-range plans of Board committees and other topics of special interest. Its membership comprises all the Trustees, the AAWS and Grapevine directors and staffs, and the appointed members of the Board committees.



In all matters of joint or conflicting authority, therefore, a senior jurisdiction must be established. The junior jurisdiction must be heard and, regardless of the question involved, there must be an understood point or body where a final settlement can be had. It is understood that lesser conflicts are not to be loaded upon the Trustees for final decision. But it should always be clear *where* the *point of final decision* is *located*.

A condition to be avoided at all costs is *double-headed* business or policy management. Authority can never be divided into equal halves. Nowhere does such split authority or double-headed management so bedevil a structure as in its executive departments. The vital need of avoiding double-headed executive management will be fully discussed under Concept XI.

In addition to the methods we use to make delegated authority equal to delegated responsibility, we have two more guarantees – the “Right of Appeal” and the “Right of Petition”. As we know, a bare majority is apt to constitute itself as a pseudo-ultimate authority on many occasions when it should not do so. Likewise, executives are apt to over-boss their assistants. Therefore we use the concepts of appeal and petition to ensure that every minority, and every worker doing a job, has an authority and a status commensurate with the responsibility involved.

To sum up: Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to reorganize; but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and discharge their clear responsibilities.

All of this is fully implied in AA’s Tradition Two. Here we see the “Group Conscience” as the *ultimate* authority and the “trusted servant” as the *delegated* authority. One cannot function without the other. We well know that only by means of careful definitions and mutual respect can we constantly maintain a right and harmonious working balance.

# CONCEPT XI

***While the Trustees hold final responsibility for AA's world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service Boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.***

The longtime success of our General Service Board will rest not only on the capabilities of the Trustees themselves; it will depend quite as much upon the competent leadership and harmonious association of those non-Trustee committee members, corporate service directors, executives, and staff members who must actively carry on AA's world services. Their quality and dedication, or their lack of these characteristics, will make or break our structure of service. Our final dependency on them will always be great indeed.

Far more than most of the Trustees, these servants will be in direct contact with AA world-wide, and their performance will be constantly on view. They will perform most of the routine labor. They will carry on most of our service. They will travel widely and will receive most visitors at the Headquarters. They will often originate new plans and policies. Some of them will eventually become Trustees. Because this group will form the visible image of world service, most AAs will measure our service values by what they see and feel in them. Members of this group will not only *support* the world leadership of the Trustees; in the nature of the case they will be bound to *share* world leadership with them.

Fortunately we already have a sound internal structure of service in which a very competent group of non-Trustee servants are now working. Only a few refinements and changes will still be needed in AA World Services, Inc. and at The AA Grapevine, Inc., the latter being a comparatively recent comer to our service scene. The main outlines of this underlying structure are now defined, and the effectiveness of this arrangement has been well proven. Of what, then, does our underlying structure of service consist?

It is composed of the following elements: the five<sup>11</sup> standing committees of the General Service Board, plus our two active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. (including its AA publishing division) and The AA Grapevine, Inc. Let's have a look at each of these operations.

The standing committees of the General Service Board are Nominating, Finance and Budgetary, Public Information, Literature, and General Policy – the titles clearly denoting the direct administrative responsibilities of the General Service Board. These committees are appointed yearly by the General Service Board chairman, whose first and last duty is to choose only the best obtainable for each vacant post, and each committee, as we have seen, includes a suitable proportion of Trustees, non-Trustee experts in the work to be done, a Headquarters executive, and a staff worker.

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<sup>11</sup> In the years since this was written, seven other specialised committees have been added: Cooperation With the Professional Community/treatment Facilities, General Service conference, Archives, International Convention/Regional Forums, Correctional Facilities and International.

### ***The Nominating Committee:***

This committee aids the Trustees in discharging their prime obligation to see that all vacancies – whether within their own ranks or among key service directors, executives, staff members – are properly filled with members and workers of the greatest possible competence, stability, and industry.

The recommendations of this committee to a large extent will determine the continuous success of our services. Its members will have the primary voice in choosing our future Trustees and non-Trustee workers. Careful deliberation, painstaking investigation and interviewing, refusal to accept casual recommendations, preparation well in advance of lists of suitable candidates – these will need to be the principal attitudes and activities of this committee. All temptation to haste or snap judgment will need to be faithfully and constantly resisted.

Another problem that future committees may have to face is the subtle tendency toward deterioration in the caliber of personnel due to the very natural and usually unconscious tendency of those who suggest nominees to select individuals of somewhat less ability than themselves. Instinctively we look for associates rather like ourselves, only a little less experienced and able. For example, what executive is likely to recommend an assistant who is a great deal more competent than he is? What group of staff members will suggest a new associate whose capabilities are a great deal above their own average? The reverse is the more likely. Government bureaus, institutions, and many commercial enterprises suffer this insidious deterioration. We have not yet experienced it to any extent, but let us be sure that we never do. All of us need to be on guard against this ruinous trend, especially the Nominating Committee,

### ***The Finance and Budgetary Committee:***

The main responsibility of this body is to see that we do not become money-crippled or go broke. This is the place where money and spirituality do have to mix, and in just the right proportion. Here we need hard-headed members with much financial experience. All should be realists, and a pessimist or two can be useful. The whole temper of today's world is to spend more than it has, or may ever have. Many of us consequently are infected with this rosy philosophy. When a new and promising AA service project moves into sight, we are apt to cry, "Never mind the money, let's get at it." This is when our budgeteers are expected to say, "Stop, look and listen." This is the exact point where the "savers" come into a constructive and healthy collision with the "spenders." The primary function of this committee, therefore, is to see that our Headquarters operation is always solvent and that it stays that way, in good times and bad.

This committee must conservatively estimate each year's income. It needs to develop plans for increasing our revenues. It will keep a cold and watchful eye on needless cost, waste, and duplication. It will closely scrutinize the yearly budgets of estimated income and expense submitted by AA World Service, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. It will recommend amendments of the estimates when necessary.

At mid-year it will ask for budget revisions if earlier estimates have gone too much wrong. It will scrutinize every new and considerable expenditure, asking "Is this necessary or desirable now? Can we afford it, all considered?"

This committee, in good times, will insist that we continue to set aside substantial sums to our Reserve Fund. It will pursue an investment policy in that fund which will guarantee the immediate availability of at least two-thirds of it at any time, without loss, thereby enabling us to meet hard times or even a calamity.

This is not to say that our Finance and Budgetary Committee constantly says "no" and fearfully hoards our money. I can remember an earlier day when we were so intent on building up the Reserve Fund out of book earnings that we let the office services run down

badly for sheer lack of enough help to cope with our fast growth. Confidence was thereby lost out in the groups, and contributions suffered severely; they dropped by tens of thousands a year. By the time the office had been reorganized and confidence restored, we had used all our current book earnings and a large part of our Reserve Funds besides. This sort of false and unimaginative economy can prove very costly – in spirit, in service, and in money.

Future committees, therefore, will ponder the difference between real prudence (which is neither fear nor hoarding, and which may indeed require us sometimes to run temporary deficits), and that kind of persistent recklessness which could someday result in the severe contraction or collapse of our vital services.

The safe course will usually lie midway between reckless budget-slashing and imprudent spending.

### ***The Public Information Committee:***

This one, too, is of top importance. Of course most of its members should be experts in the field of public relations. But emphasis should also be laid on the fact that sheer commercial expertness will not be quite enough. Because of AA's traditional conservatism, reflected in the maxim "Attraction rather than promotion," it is evident that the professional members of the committee should be capable of adapting their business experience to AA's needs. For instance, the techniques used to sell a big time personality or a new hair lotion would not be for AA. The committee should always include a certain number of AAs who, because of long experience, really do have "AA sense," that is, a thorough grasp of our total picture and what it needs public relation-wise.

At the same time let us not overlook the need for high professional skill. Dealing with the huge complex of public communications as it exists today is not a job wholly for amateurs. Skill in this Area implies much technical experience, diplomacy, a sense of what is dangerous and what is not, the courage to take calculated risks, and a readiness to make wise but tradition-abiding compromises.

These are the skilled talents we shall always need.

We are trying our best to reach more of those 25 million alcoholics who today inhabit the world. We have to reach them directly and indirectly. In order to accomplish this it will be necessary that understanding of AA and public good will towards AA go on growing everywhere. We need to be on even better terms, with medicine, religion, employers, governments, courts, prisons, mental hospitals, and all those conducting enterprises in the alcohol field.

We need the increasing good will of editors, writers, television and radio channels. These publicity outlets – local, national, and international – should be opened wider and wider, always forgoing, however, high pressure promotion tactics. It is to, and through, all these resources that we must try to carry AA's message to those who suffer alcoholism and its consequences.

This accounts for the importance in which we hold the work and the recommendations of our Public Information Committee. It is a critical assignment; a single large public blunder could cost many lives and much suffering because it would turn new prospects away. Conversely, every real public relations success brings alcoholics in our direction.

### ***The Literature Committee:***

This body is charged with the revision of existing books and pamphlets; also with the creation of fresh pamphlet material to meet new needs or changing conditions. Broadly speaking, its mission is to see that an adequate and comprehensive view of AA in its every aspect is held up in writing to our members, friends, and to the world at large. Our literature is a principal means by which AA recovery, unity, and service are facilitated. Tons of books and pamphlets are shipped each year. The influence of this material is incalculable. To keep our literature fully abreast of our progress is therefore an urgent and vital work.

The Literature Committee constantly will have to solve new problems of design, format, and content. Here our policy is to aim at only the best; we firmly believe that cheap looking, cheap selling, and poorly conceived literature is not in AA's best interest from any standpoint, whether effectiveness, economy, or any other.

Like other General Service Board Committees, this one must be expert in the work to be done. A key figure in its operation will necessarily be a paid writer and consultant. The creative work – that is, the initial form and draft and the final development of new undertakings – will be for this specialist to make. The role of the other committeemen will be of constructive criticism and amendment of the consultant's effort. Here, too, we should remember that the committee must certainly include persons of wide AA experience. This matter of getting the "AA feel" into all our writings is absolutely vital. What we say so well by word of mouth we must also communicate in print.

The Literature Committee consequently will find it desirable to test carefully each new creation by asking a number of AAs who are sensitive to AA feeling and reaction, to offer their criticism and suggestions. If the new material is to affect the nonalcoholic world, especially the fields of medicine and religion, a consultation should be held with those nonalcoholic Trustees or other qualified friends who are knowledgeable in these Areas.

### ***The General Policy Committee:***

Perhaps this is the most important of all of the General Service Board Committees, and it is regarded as the senior one. It can take jurisdiction of practically all problems or projects which involve AA policy, public information, or AA Traditions that may arise in the other committees or service corporations.<sup>12</sup>

Several years ago it became evident that the mass of business coming before the quarterly Trustees' meetings had become too big to handle. We therefore had to devise a committee that could filter all these matters, disposing of the lesser and fully examining the larger. The object was to break the jam at Trustees' meetings and to present the Board with carefully discussed recommendations, including minority reports, on the more serious issues. Thus the attention of the General Service Board could be accurately focused on what it really had to do.

This committee, with ample time at its disposal, could also strengthen our process of planning and policy formation. It could avert blunders, both large and small, due to haste.

This was our original concept, and it has worked wonderfully well. Because this committee is designed to be supersensitive to AA opinion and reaction, its hard core is composed of (a) the "out-of-town" AA Trustees, one of whom is traditionally named chairman, (b) two staff members of the World Service Office, (c) the president of the AA World Services, Inc., who is also general manager of the World Office, (d) the president of The AA Grapevine, Inc., who is the editor, and (e) those Trustees and service directors known to be long experienced with our Fellowship.

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<sup>12</sup> The Policy Committee is now known as the General Sharing Session, and its makeup and functions have changed, as explained on p.45.

All other Trustees, committee members and directors and staffs are invited to attend meetings – the Trustees because they can thus get a preview of the questions that will confront them at their own meeting to follow – the committeemen and directors because in this way they will get a comprehensive picture of what other Headquarters units have been doing.

This is a large committee, and it operates “town meeting-style,” requiring four to six hours each Sunday afternoon preceding the Monday quarterly meeting of the General Service Board. A carefully worked out agenda is always prepared. The committee issues to the Trustees a full report of its recommendations, together with any minority views. Its report also shows the actual disposition of minor matters.

This General Policy Committee has greatly strengthened our Headquarters unity. All participants get the feeling they are “on the team.” The size of the meeting is no obstacle. Many minds, plenty of time, and real sensitivity to AA insure a remarkable effectiveness of policy and planning.

Again it is emphasized that none of these five General Service Board Committees are executive in character. They do not manage and conduct the active affairs of the service corporations. They may, however, make any recommendations they wish – to the service corporations themselves or to the Trustees. It will be noted that the General Policy Committee always examines the quarterly reports of the corporate services and such reports of the other General Service Board Committees as may be available at meeting time. The committee can and does comment upon these reports and makes recommendations respecting them.

Next to be considered will be our active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. Their activities probably represent nine-tenths of our direct Headquarters effort.

The General Service Board owns the stock of these entities.<sup>13</sup> Therefore the Trustees yearly elect all of their directors, seven (at present) in each corporation. This means that so far as the routine direction of our established services is concerned, the Trustees have fully delegated their executive function in these constantly active service Areas.

The directorate of AA World Services, Inc. (including the AA Publishing Division) is traditionally composed of two Trustees for custodial oversight, three non-Trustee experts in the work to be done, and two executives, the general manager of the World Office and one of his staff assistants, who are president and vice president respectively. The two Trustee directors usually have seen past service on the Board as non-Trustee experts, and one of them is customarily named Treasurer. AA directors thus are those thoroughly experienced with these operations.<sup>14</sup>

The Grapevine situation is similarly structured, with two exceptions. The two Trustee directors of the Grapevine are (1) an ex-editor of the Grapevine, and (2) a finance man who has previously served on the Grapevine Board. The latter Trustee traditionally is made its chairman, and he presides at corporate meetings. This is because neither the editor, who is traditionally the Grapevine president, now his staff member director, the vice president, ordinarily will have the needed business experience to chair the Grapevine corporate Board. This arrangement also places the chairman in a favorable position to mediate differences that may arise between the

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<sup>13</sup> Both AA World Services, Inc., and The AA Grapevine, Inc. are now membership corporations; their members are the Trustees.

<sup>14</sup> The directorate of AA World Services, Inc. is now composed of: the GSO general manager, who is the president of AAWS; a GSO staff member, who is a vice-president; two Regional Trustees; two General Service Trustees; three nonTrustee directors. Its rotating chairperson is a Trustee.

editorial and business departments of the enterprise. The Grapevine also has an Editorial Board which names its own successors, subject to the approval of the corporate Board.<sup>15</sup>

The Editorial Board assists the editor and his staff in determining the editorial policy, slant and content of the magazine. It relieves the editor (up to now, a volunteer) of some of his work load. It surveys and makes recommendations respecting Grapevine promotional material going to the groups. It gives our makeup men, artists and writers both status and coherence in their joint efforts. And it is a training ground for future editors. Our Editorial Board therefore is the chief guarantor of the magazine's quality and editorial continuity.

Every new generation of workers will raise certain questions about these two corporate questions: "Why can't both of them be consolidated into the General Service Board?" Or, "Why can't the Grapevine be merged into AA World Services, Inc., thus placing all active Headquarters operations under a single management?" These questions have already been discussed under previous Concepts. We have concluded that the General Service Board is an unsuitable vehicle for an operating corporation; that because the Grapevine is such a dissimilar operation, and because we ought not concentrate too much money and executive authority in a single entity, there should be no merger of AA World Services and The AA Grapevine. Upon these points we seem well agreed – at least, as of now.

But this question has some other variations. It will often be asked, "If it is desirable to separately incorporate dissimilar enterprises, why then shouldn't the AA Publishing division of AA World Services be separately incorporated and managed by a Board of directors specially skilled in book and booklet publishing?" Offhand, this looks logical.

Today, however, AA Publishing is mostly a business operation. Unlike a commercial publisher, we do not have to ensure the selection, writing, and publication of a lot of new books each year. Most of our AA books are already written, and it is probable that not many more will be published. Of course we shall issue new pamphlets now and then, and revisions of older material occasionally are desirable. But this relatively small amount of creative publishing work can be handled easily by the Literature Committee. Hence the operation of the AA publishing division of AA World Services, Inc., is now mostly a matter of printing, distribution, accounting, and finance. For management purposes there is therefore no present need for a separate corporation; it is only required that the books of AA World Services, Inc. show a separate accounting for its AA Publishing division. Only in the highly unlikely event of a large and protracted entry *into the new book business* would we really ever need a separate corporate management.

Another question will be this: "Why don't we merge AA Publishing with The AA Grapevine, so placing all of our literature under a unified management?" The answer here is based on the complete dissimilarity of the two enterprises. The Grapevine has to produce a brand new quality product every month, on the dot. By contrast, AA Publishing success largely depends upon what has already been written.

In the Grapevine the paramount activity is therefore the creative. The Grapevine requires several paid staff members and the constant aid of a large number of specialized volunteers without whose help it could not operate. Why, then, should we load up these people with a lot more straight business activity? Obviously we should not.

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<sup>15</sup> Today AA Grapevine, Inc., has nine directors. The Corporate Board is publisher of the magazine; the chief operating officer is president. Two members of the Board are General Service Trustees; two are Regional Trustees; one is a nonalcoholic Trustee; three are non-Trustee directors. Production and management of the Grapevine are given over to a full-time paid staff. One staff member is a member of the Corporate Board.

Another question often is posed, "Why should AA World Services, Inc. not take over *all* the Grapevine's accounting, finances, promotion, and distribution. Would not such a consolidation of financing, employees, and routine business be more efficient and economical? Would not this relieve the Grapevine of all business headaches?"

This plan, too, looks reasonable at first glance. Nevertheless the chances are it would work poorly. It has serious structural defects. It would violate the basic good management principle that whoever has the responsibility for a given task must also have the needed authority, funds, personnel, and equipment to carry it out. The AA Grapevine, Inc. unquestionably holds full responsibility for its own solvency, promotion, policy, and the management of its circulation. It is supposed to have four business directors, expert in these phases of magazine operation. The Conference and the General Service Board will always hold them accountable. If, therefore, any large part of the Grapevine business functions are transferred to a completely different corporate management over which the Grapevine has no authority, what then? This certainly would be double-headed management and a source of continuous conflict. The Grapevine Board would become virtually impotent.

Such a situation also would tend to demoralize the editor, his staff, and the Editorial Board, all of them specialized volunteers. This group now has a representation of three directors on the Grapevine Board. In such a corporate body it is now possible to reconcile the editorial desire for excellence in the magazine with financial realities of the Grapevine situation. But if the business function of the Grapevine was transferred to AA World Services, Inc., the status and influence of the GV editorial people would be reduced to almost nothing. World Service directors would be mostly interested in business efficiency and solvency, while the GV editorial representatives would still be looking for quality and magazine improvements. There would be no practical way of reconciling these differences. The business directors of AA World Services, Inc. would dominate the editorial workers and therefore the editorial policy. The editorial group would find that they had become a mere committee, taking directions from AA World Services. "Who pays the piper calls the tune" would become the actual working arrangement. Having so split the management of the Grapevine in halves and having abandoned the principle of "Participation," it is doubtful if we could make this setup work at all, especially with all those volunteers. We might save some money, but we probably could not save the magazine.

Joint arrangements between The AA Grapevine and AA World Services for routine operations such as billing, mailing, etc., are not necessarily precluded, though to a lesser degree the same kind of frictions above described can be expected to develop unless there is the clearest possible understanding of "who controls what and when."

We who now work at AA's Headquarters are pretty much in agreement on the foregoing operations. They are recorded in some detail for whatever future benefits they may be. We deeply realize that we should be on guard always against structural tinkering just for money-saving purposes. These departures can often result in so much disharmony and consequent inefficiency that nothing is really saved, and there can often be a real loss.

A detailed description of the active operational side of our General Service Board Committees and active service corporations is too lengthy to set down here. But we should take note, however, of several more principles and problems which are common to both AA World Services, Inc. and to The AA Grapevine.

#### **1. *The status of executives – executive direction and policy formation distinguished:***

No active service can function well unless it has sustained and competent executive direction. This must always head up in one person, supported by such assistants as he needs. A Board or a committee can never actively manage anything, in the continuous executive sense. This function has to be delegated to a single person. That person has to have ample freedom and authority to do his job, and he should not be interfered with so long as his work is done well.



Real executive ability cannot be plucked from any bush; it is rare and hard to come by. A special combination of qualities is required. The executive must inspire by energy and example, thereby securing willing cooperation. If that cooperation is not forthcoming, he must know when real firmness is in order. He must act without favor or partiality. He must comprehend and execute large affairs, while not neglecting the smaller. He often must take the initiative in plan making.

The use of such executive abilities implies certain realizations on the part of the executive and those who work with him, otherwise there is apt to be misunderstanding. Because of their natural drive and energy, executives will sometimes fail to distinguish between routine execution of established plans and policies, and the making of new ones. In this Area they may tend to make new plans and put them into operation without sufficiently consulting those whose work is to be affected, or those whose experience and wisdom is actually or officially needed.

A good executive is necessarily a good salesman. But he often wants the fast sell and quick results on those very occasions where patient consultation with many people is in order. However, this is far better than timid delay and constant requests to be told by somebody or other what to do. The executive who overdrives can be reasonably restrained by the structural situation, and definitions within which he has to work. But a weak and wobbly executive is of little use at any time.

It is the duty of the good executive, therefore, to learn discrimination of when he should act on his own and when limited or wide consultation is proper, and when he should ask for specific definitions and directions. This discrimination is really up to him. His privilege of making these choices is structurally guaranteed by the "Right of Decision". He can always be censured after his acts, but seldom before.

In our world services we still have two more important executive problems. One is the lack of money to hire full-time top executives for AA World Services, Inc. and for the AA Grapevine. In our World Services Office, we can now afford only a part-time general manager. In the Grapevine we must rely on a volunteer.<sup>16</sup> Of course each of these executives has paid staff assistants. But the fact that one of our top executives can only give half his time and the other one considerably less is by no means an ideal situation.

A chief executive in fact should be constantly on the job, and ours cannot be. Someday we may be able to correct this defect. Even then, however, we should not make the mistake of hiring full-time executives who, lacking the necessary experience and caliber, are willing to work cheaply. No more expensive blunder than this could possibly be made. Outstanding ability in a volunteer, or a part-timer, is definitely preferable to that.

The second executive difficulty is inherent in our AA situation. Our key people at Headquarters are AA members; they have to be. Therefore the executives and their staffs are friends in AA, members of the same club. This sometimes makes it hard for an executive to give firm guidance and equally hard for his AA friends to accept it. Our AA executives find that they not only have to run a business; they must also keep their friends. In turn, those working under them have to realize seriously that we really do have a business to conduct as well as a cooperative spiritual enterprise to foster. Therefore a reasonable amount of discipline and direction is a necessity. Those who cannot or will not see this are not well suited for Headquarters work. Although excessive apartness or roughshod authority is to be rejected in an executive, nobody should complain if he is both friendly and firm. These problems are not insoluble; we do solve them right along, mostly by the application of AA principles.

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<sup>16</sup> Today there is a full-time editorial staff of two people and a part-time art director.

Problems of this sort occasionally crop up, but General Service Headquarters is not constantly beset with them. Because of the exceptional dedication of our people, a degree of harmony and effectiveness prevails that is unusual in the conduct of an outside business.

## **2. *Paid workers, how compensated:***

We believe that each paid executive, staff member, or consultant should be recompensed in reasonable relation to the value of his or her similar services or abilities in the commercial world.

This policy is often misunderstood. Many AAs no doubt regard AA world services as a sort of necessary charity that has to be paid for. It is forgotten that our particular charity is just as beneficial to us as it is to the newcomer; that many of those services are designed for the general welfare and protection of us all. We are not like rich benefactors who would aid the sick and the poor. We are helping others in order to help ourselves.

Another mistaken idea is that our paid workers should labor cheaply, just as charity workers often do elsewhere. If adopted, this concept would mark our service workers for unusual financial sacrifices, sacrifices that we would ask no other AAs to make. We AAs would be saying to each worker, "We send Headquarters \$3.00 apiece every year. But it would be just great if you would work for AA at \$2,000 a year less than you would be worth elsewhere." Seen in this light, the low-pay theory appears as absurd as it really is, especially when we remember that AA's world service overhead is about the smallest per capita of any large society on earth. The difference between fair and poor pay at World Headquarters is a matter only of a few cents a year to each of us.

We should also consider the well-known fact that cheap help is apt to feel insecure and be inefficient. It is very costly in the long run. This is neither good spirituality nor good business. Assuming that service money is readily available, we should therefore compensate our workers well.

## **3. *Rotation among paid staff workers*<sup>17</sup>:**

At AA's World Office, most staff members' assignments are changed yearly. When engaged, each staff member is expected to possess the general ability to do, or learn how to do, any job in the place – excepting for office management where, because of the special skills involved, rotation may sometimes be limited to part of the AA staff. But the basis of compensating all staff members is identical. Pay increases are based on time served only.

In the business world, such an arrangement would be unworkable. It would practically guarantee indifference and mediocrity, because the usual money and prestige incentives would be lacking. In our entire operating situation, this is the sole major departure from the structure of corporate business. Consequently there should be proved and compelling reasons for such a corporate heresy, and there are.

Our primary reason for the adoption of rotation and equal staff pay was the security and continuity of the office. We once had the Conventional system of one highly paid staff member with assistants at much lower pay. Hers had been the principal voice in hiring them. Quite unconsciously, I'm certain, she engaged people who she felt would not be competitive with her. Meanwhile she kept a tight rein on all the important business of the place. A prodigy [*sic*] of wonderful work was done. But suddenly she collapsed, and shortly afterwards one of her assistants did the same. We were left with only one partly

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<sup>17</sup> In order to meet the changing conditions since the writing of this section, AAWS, Inc., with the approval of the General Service Board, has implemented a two-year rotation of assignments for most staff members.

trained assistant who knew anything whatever about the total operation.

Luckily a good AA friend of mine, a fine organizer, pitched in and helped to put the office in order. We saw that we had to install a paid staff that simply couldn't break down. Next time there might be no one around to give the necessary amount of time for its reorganization. Besides this breakdown had cost us much confidence out in the field – so much so that we must have lost \$50,000 in three years of group contributions.

Thereafter we installed the principle of rotation in a considerably larger staff. Since then we have experienced sudden departures and collapses of AA staff members, each of which would have demoralized the place under the former conventional system. But since the remaining staff members always knew every assignment there was, no trouble at all was experienced. Under such a condition replacements can be carefully chosen and trained at leisure. And the usual tendency to select less able associates is largely overcome.

By thus putting our staff members on a complete parity, the removal of the usual money and prestige incentives did not really damage us at all. We AAs had what the commercial venture often lacks: a dedicated desire to serve which replaced the usual ego drives. At the same time many of the temptations to destructive competition and office "politicking" were also removed. The spirit of Headquarters improved immeasurably and found its way out into the Fellowship.

In the future – at those times when the rotation system does not work perfectly – there will be the natural demand to throw it out in the supposed interest of efficiency. Certainly our successors will be at liberty to try, but past experience surely suggests that they may be jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

One more aspect of rotation: the matter of time. We already know that the more responsible the assignment, the longer the term of service must be, if we are to have effectiveness. For example, a group secretary can be changed every six months and an Intergroup committeeman every year. But to be of any use whatever, a Delegate has to serve two years, and a Trustee must serve four.

In the World Service Office, we have found it impractical and unfair to set any fixed term of employment. A staff member has to have several years training. Are we then to throw her out, just as she is getting top grade? And if she realized that she could only serve for a fixed period, could we have hired her in the first place? Probably not. These posts are hard to fill because they require just the right ingredients of personality, ability, stability, business and AA experience. If we insisted on a fixed term of service, we would often be forced to engage AAs really not qualified. This would be both harmful and unfair.

But we need not fear too many staff members' getting "old in the service." The emotional pace of "AA around the clock" is too strenuous for most of them to take for a very long period of time. Already they come and go for this and for other personal reasons. Within reason, most of them can and must rotate from assignment to assignment. But we should attempt no more rotation than this.

Because of certain unusual skills required, rotation among Grapevine staff members is more difficult. If the magazine ever gets a part-time editor who can insist on and help in their training, we may someday bring this about. But in the Grapevine there will never be safety in numbers, as in the World Office. The present Grapevine paid staff of two could serve a circulation of many times today's size.

#### **4. *Full “Participation” of paid workers is highly important.***

We have already discussed the necessity of giving key paid personnel a voting representation on our committees and corporate Boards.<sup>18</sup> We have seen that they should enjoy a status suitable to their responsibility, just as our volunteers do. But full participation for paid workers cannot be established by voting rights only. Other special factors usually affect the extent of their participation. Let's see what these are, and what can be done about them.

The first is the fact of employment for money – the employer-employee relation. In human affairs, authority and money are deeply lined. Possession or control of money spells control of people. Unwisely used, as it often is, this control can result in a very unhappy kind of division. This ranges the “haves” on one side of the fence and the “have nots” on the other. There can be no reconciliation or harmony until a part of that fence is taken down. Only then can proper authority join hands with a responsible willingness to get on with the job.

In our AA structure of service we therefore must do more than give our paid workers a place at the AA council table. We ought to treat them in all respects as we would volunteers, people who are our friends and co-workers. So long as they work well, the fact that they are dependent upon the money they receive should never consciously or unconsciously, be used as a lever against them. They must be made to feel that they are on the team. If, however, they cannot or will not do their jobs, that is something else again. We can and should let them go.

Such are the realizations which we can all use every day of our working lives. Add to these the further thought that no organization structure can fully guarantee our Headquarters against the depredations of clashing personalities, that only the sustained willingness to practice spiritual principles in all our affairs can accomplish this, and we shall never need to have any fear for our future harmony.

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<sup>18</sup> As a director of the AAWS Board, the staff member serving as staff coordinator has a vote.

<sup>19</sup> The restrictions no longer apply. In 1999, six women and five men serve as GSO staff members.

## CONCEPT XII

***General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others: that all important decisions be reached by discussion vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.***

The Concept here considered consists of Article 12 of the Conference Charter. There are good reasons for placing it in this context.

Taken as a whole, our Conference Charter is the substance of an informal agreement which was made between the AA groups and their Trustees in 1955. It is the agreed basis upon which the General Service Conference operates. In part, the Charter is an elastic document: its first eleven Articles can be readily amended by the Conference itself at any time.

But Article 12 of the Charter stands in a class by itself. An amendment or a cancellation of any of its vital Warranties would require the written consent of three-quarters of all the directory-listed AA groups who would actually vote on any such proposals, and the considerable time of six months is allowed for careful deliberation. Although changes in the Warranties of Article 12 thus have been made difficult, they have not been made impossible.

It is clear that all of these Warranties have a high and permanent importance to AA's general welfare. This is why we believe we should permit change in them only upon positive evidence of their defectiveness and then only by common consent of the AA groups themselves. We have ranked them therefore with AA's Twelve Traditions, feeling that they are quite as important to AA's world services as the Traditions are to AA as a whole.

The Warranties of Article 12 are a series of solemn undertakings which guarantee that the Conference itself will conform to AA's Twelve Traditions; that the Conference can never become the seat of great wealth or government; that its fiscal policy shall ever be prudent; that it will never create any absolute authority; that the principle of substantial unanimity will be observed; that it can serve AA only; and that it shall always remain democratic in spirit. These Warranties indicate the qualities of prudence and spirituality which our General Service Conference should always possess.

Barring any unforeseen defects, these are the permanent bonds that hold the Conference fast to the movement it serves.

There are significant aspects of these Warranties which should be considered. Notice, for example, that all of them are counsels of *prudence* – prudence in personal relatedness, prudence in money matters, and prudence in our relations with the world about us. For us, prudence is a workable middle ground, a channel of clear sailing between the obstacles of fear on the one side and of recklessness on the other. Prudence in practice creates a definite climate, the only climate

in which harmony, effectiveness, and consistent spiritual progress can be achieved. The Warranties of Article 12 express the wisdom of taking forethought for the future based on the lessons of the past. They are the sum of our protection against needless errors and against our very natural human temptations to wealth, prestige, power, and the like.

Article 12 opens with this general statement: "In all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Tradition..." Of all bodies and groups in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Conference should above all feel bound by the AA Tradition. Indeed the Conference is named "the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous." The Traditions themselves outline the general basis on which we may best conduct our services. The Traditions express the principles and attitudes of prudence that make for harmony. Therefore AA's Twelve Traditions set the pattern of unity and of function which our General Service Conference is expected to exemplify at the highest possible degree.

**The Warranties of Article 12 are as follows:**

***Warranty One: "The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power."***

What is meant by "perilous wealth or power"? Does it mean that the Conference should have virtually no money and no authority? Obviously not. Such a condition would be dangerous and absurd. Nothing but an ineffective anarchy could result from it. We must use *some* money, and there must be *some* authority to serve. But how much? How and where should we draw these lines?

The principal protection against the accumulation of too much money and too much authority in Conference hands is to be found in the AA Tradition itself. So long as our General Service Board refuses to take outside contributions and holds each individual's gift to AA's world services at a modest figure, we may be sure that we shall not become wealthy in any perilous sense. No great excess of group contributions over legitimate operating expenses is ever likely to be seen. Fortunately the AA Groups have a healthy reluctance about the creation of unneeded services which might lead to an expensive bureaucracy in our midst. Indeed, it seems that the chief difficulty will continue to be that of effectively informing the AA groups as to what the financial needs of their world service actually are. Since it is certain therefore that we shall never become too wealthy through group contributions, we need only to avoid the temptation of taking money from the outside world.

In the matter of giving Delegates, Trustees, and staff enough authority, there can be little risk, either. Long experience, now codified in these Twelve Concepts, suggests that we are unlikely to encounter problems of too much service authority. On the contrary, it appears that our difficulty will be how to maintain enough of it. We must recall that we are protected from the calamities of too much authority by rotation, by voting participation, and by careful chartering.

Nevertheless, we do hear warnings about the future rise of a dictator in the Conference or at the Headquarters. To my mind this is an unnecessary worry. Our setup being what it is, such an aspirant couldn't last a year. And in the brief time he did last, what would he use for money? Our Delegates, directly representing the groups control the ultimate supply of our service funds. Therefore they constitute a direct check upon the rise of too much personal authority. Taken all together, these factors seem to be reliable safeguards against too much money and too much authority.

We have seen why the Conference can never have any dangerous degree of human power, but we must not overlook the fact that there is another sort of authority and power which it cannot be *without*: the spiritual power which flows from the activities and attitudes of truly humble, unselfish, and dedicated AA servants. This is the real power that causes our Conference to function. It has been well said of our servants, "They do not drive us by mandate; they lead us by example." While we have made abundantly sure that they will never drive us, I am confident that they will afford us an ever-greater inspiration as they continue to lead by example.

**Warranty Two: "Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, should be its prudent financial principle."**

In this connection we should pause to review our attitudes concerning money and its relation to service effort.

Our attitude toward the giving of time when compared with our attitude toward giving money presents an interesting contrast. Of course we give a lot of our time to AA activities for our own protection and growth. But we also engage ourselves in a truly sacrificial giving for the sake of our groups, our Areas and for AA as a whole.

Above all, we devote ourselves to the newcomer, and this is our principal Twelfth Step work. In this activity we often take large amounts of time from business hours. Considered in terms of money, these collective sacrifices add up to a huge sum. But we do not think that this is anything unusual. We remember that people once gave their time to us as we struggled for sobriety. We know, too, that nearly the whole combined income of AA members, now more than a billion dollars a year, has been a direct result of AA's activity. Had nobody recovered, there would have been no income for any of us.

But when it comes to the actual spending of cash, particularly for AA service overhead, many of us are apt to turn a bit reluctant. We think of the loss of all that earning power in our drinking years, of those sums we might have laid by for emergencies or for education for the kids. We find, too, that when we drop money in the meeting hat there is so much bang as when we talk for hours to a newcomer. There is not much romance in paying the landlord. Sometimes we hold off when we are asked to meet Area or Intergroup services expenses. As to world services, we may remark, "Well, those activities are a long way off, and our group does not really need them. Maybe nobody needs them." These are very natural and understandable reactions, easy to justify. We can say, "Let's not spoil AA with money and service organization. Let's separate the material from the spiritual. That will really keep things simple."

But in recent years these attitudes are everywhere on the decline; they quickly disappear when the real need for a given AA service becomes clear. To make such a need clear is simply a matter of right information and education. We see this in the continuous job now being done with good effect for our world service by Delegates, Committee Members, and General Service representatives. They are finding that money-begging by pressure exhortation is unwanted and unneeded in AA.

They simply portray what the giver's service dollar really brings in terms of steering alcoholics to AA, and in terms of our overall unity and effectiveness. This much done, the hoped-for contributions are forthcoming. The donors can seldom see what the exact result has been. They well know, however, that countless thousands of other alcoholics and their families are certain to be helped.

When we look at such truly anonymous contributions in this fashion, and as we gain a better understanding of their continuous urgency, I am sure that the voluntary contributions of our AA groups, supplemented by many modest gifts from individual AAs, will pay our world service bills over future years, in good times at any rate.

We can take comfort, too, from the fact that we do not have to maintain an expensive corps of paid workers at World Headquarters. In relation to the ever-growing size of AA the number of workers has declined. In the beginning our World Service Office engaged one paid worker to each thousand of AA members. Ten years later we employed one paid worker to each three thousand AAs. Today we need only one paid helper to every seven thousand recovered alcoholics. 20 The present cost of our world services (\$200,000 annually as of 1960) is today seen as a small sum in relationship to the present reach of our Fellowship. Perhaps no other society of our size and activity has such a low general overhead.

These reassurances of course cannot be taken as a basis for the abandonment of the policy of financial prudence.

The fact and the symbol of AA's fiscal common sense can be seen in the Reserve Fund of our General Service Board. As of now this amounts to little more than \$200,000 – about one year's operating expense of our World Office.<sup>21</sup> This is what we have saved over the last twenty years, largely from the income of our books. This is the fund which has repeatedly prevented the severe crippling, and sometimes the near collapse, of our world services.

In about half of the last twenty years, AA group contributions have failed to meet our world needs. But the Reserve Fund, constantly renewed by book sales, has been able to meet these deficits – and save money besides. What this has meant in the lives of uncounted alcoholics who might never have reached us had our services been weak or nonexistent, no one can guess. Financial prudence has paid off in lives saved.

These facts about our Reserve fund need to be better understood. For sheer lack of understanding, it is still often remarked: (1) that the Reserve Fund is no longer needed, (2) that if the Reserve Fund continues to grow, perilous wealth will result, (3) that the presence of such a Reserve Fund discourages group contributions, (4) that because we do not abolish the Reserve Fund, we lack faith, (5) that our AA books ought to be published at cost so these volumes could be cheapened for hard-up buyers, (6) that profit-making on our basic literature is counter to a sound spirituality. While these views are by no means general, they are typical. Perhaps, then, there is still a need to analyze them and answer the questions they raise.

Let us therefore try to test them. Do these views represent genuine prudence? Do we lack faith when we prudently insist on solvency?

By means of cheap AA books, should we engage, as a Fellowship, in this sort of financial charity? Should this sort of giving not be the responsibility of individuals? Is the Headquarters' income from AA books really a profit after all?

As this is written, 1960, our Headquarters operation is just about breaking even. Group contributions are exceeding our service needs by about 5%. The AA Grapevine continues in the red. Compared with earlier days, this is wonderful. Nevertheless this is our state in the period of the greatest prosperity that America has ever known. If this is our condition in good times, what would happen in bad times? Suppose that the Headquarters income were decreased 25% by a depression, or that expenses were increased 25% by a steep inflation. What would this mean in hard cash?

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<sup>20</sup> 1998 – about one to fifteen thousand, U.S. and Canada.

<sup>21</sup> In 1998, the \$7,440,000 Reserve Fund would have covered about 9 months' operating expense.



The World Service Office would show a deficit of \$50,000 a year and the Grapevine would put a \$20,000 annual deficit on top of this. We would be faced with a gaping total deficit of \$70,000 every twelve months. If in such an emergency we had no reserve and no book income, we would soon have to discharge one-third of our thirty paid workers and AA staff members. Much mail would go unanswered, pleas for information and help ignored. The Grapevine would have to be shut down or reduced to a second-rate bulletin. The number of Delegates attending our yearly General Service Conference would have to be drastically reduced. Practically and spiritually, these would be the penalties were we to dissipate our Reserve Fund and its book income.

Happily, however, we do not have to face any such slash as this. Our present reserve and its book income could see us through several years of hard times without the slightest diminution in the strength and quality of our world effort.

It is the fashion nowadays to believe that America can never see another serious business upset. We can certainly hope and pray that it will not. But is it wise for us of AA to make a huge bet – by dissipating our own assets – that this could never happen? Would it not be far better, instead, for us to increase our savings in this period when the world about us in all probability has already borrowed more money than can ever be repaid?

Now let us examine the claim that the presence of our Reserve Fund discourages group contributions. It is said that the impression is created that AA Headquarters is already well off and that hence there is no need for more money. This is not at all the general attitude, however, and its effect on contributions is probably small.

Next comes the question of whether AA as a whole should go in for what amounts to a money charity to individual newcomers and their sponsors – via the selling of our books at cost or less. Up to now we AAs have strongly believed that money charity to the individual should not be a function of the AA groups or of AA as a whole. To illustrate: when a sponsor takes a new member in hand, he does not in the least expect that his group is going to pay the expenses he incurs while doing a Twelfth Step job. The sponsor may give his prospect a suit of clothes, may get him a job, or present him with an AA book. This sort of thing frequently happens, and it is fine that it does. But such charities are the responsibility of the sponsor and not of the AA group itself. If a sponsor cannot give or lend an AA book, one can be found in the library. Many groups sell books on the installment plan. There is no scarcity of AA books; more than half a million are now in circulation. Hence there seems no really good reason why AA services should supply everybody with cheap books, including the large majority who can easily pay the going price. It appears to be altogether clear that our world service need those book dollars far more than the buyers do.

Some of us have another concern, and this is related to so-called book “profits.” The fact that AA Headquarters and most of the groups sell books for more than they cost is thought to be spiritually bad. But is this sort of non-commercial book income really a profit after all? In my view, it is not. This net income to the groups and to AA’s General Services is actually the sum of a great many contributions which the book buyers make to the general welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The certain and continuous solvency of our world services rests squarely upon these contributions. Looked at in this way, our Reserve Fund is seen to be actually the aggregate of many small financial sacrifices made by the book buyers. This fund is not the property of private investors; it is wholly owned by AA itself.

While on the subject of books, perhaps a word should be said concerning my royalties from them. This royalty income from the book buyers has enabled me to do all the rest of my AA work on a full-time volunteer basis. These royalties have also given me the assurance that, like other AAs I have fully earned my own separate livelihood. This independent income also has enabled me to think and act independently of money influences of any kind – a situation which has at times been very advantageous to AA as well as to me personally. Therefore I hope and believe that my royalty status will continue to be considered a fair and wise arrangement.

***Warranty Three: "None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others."***

We have learned that this principle is of incalculable value to the harmonious conduct of our Conference affairs. Its application in our structure has already been extensively discussed under the Concept entitled "The Right of Participation," which emphasizes that our world servants, both as individuals and as groups, shall be entitled to voting rights in reasonable proportion to their several responsibilities.

Because this right of participation is so important we have made it the subject of this Warranty, thus providing insurance that Conference action alone can never overturn or amend this right. For any such purpose widespread group consent would be needed, which would probably prove difficult though not necessarily impossible for the Conference to obtain. We believe that our whole service experience fully justifies the taking of this strong stand against the creation of unqualified authority at any point in our Conference structure.

It is to be noted, too, that this Warranty against absolute authority is far more general and sweeping in its nature than a guarantee of voting participation. It really means that we of AA will not tolerate absolute human authority in any form. The voting rights urged under our concept of "Participation" are simply the practical means of checking any future tendency to an unqualified authority of any sort. This healthy state of affairs is of course further reinforced by our concepts of "Appeal and Petition."

Many AAs have already begun to call Article 12 of the Conference Charter "The AA Service Bill of Rights." This is because they see in these Warranties, and especially in this one, an expression of deep and loving respect for the spiritual liberties of their fellows. May God grant that we shall never be so unwise as to settle for anything less.

***Warranty Four: "That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity."***

Here on the one hand we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and on the other hand we take notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision that we are called upon to make in the Conference.

When we take decisions in this fashion, the Conference voice speaks with an authority and a confidence that a simple majority could never give it. If any remain in opposition, they are far better satisfied because their case has had a full and fair hearing.

And when a decision taken in substantial unanimity does happen to go wrong, there can be no heated recriminations. Everybody will be able to say, "Well, we had a careful debate, we took the decision, and it turned out to be a bad one. Better luck next time!"

Like many very high ideals, the principle of substantial unanimity does, however, have certain practical limitations. Occasionally a Conference decision will be of such extreme urgency that something has to be done at once. In such a case we cannot allow a minority, however well-intended, to block a vitally needed action which is evidently in the best interests of AA. Here we shall need to trust the majority, sometimes a bare majority, to decide whether Conference debate is to be terminated and a final action taken. In certain other cases, the majority will also have to

exercise this undoubted right. Suppose, for example, that a small minority obstinately tries to use the principle of substantial unanimity to block a clearly needed action. In such an event it would be the plain duty of the majority to over-ride such a misuse of the principle of substantial unanimity.

Nevertheless our experience shows that majorities will seldom need to take such radical stands as these. Being generally animated by the spirit of "substantial unanimity," we have found that our Conference can nearly always be guided by this valued principle.

In passing it should be noted that the Conference will sometimes have to decide, with respect to a particular question, what the requirements of substantial unanimity are going to be – whether a two-thirds, three-quarters, or even a greater majority, will be required to settle a particular question. Such an advance agreement can, of course, be had on a simple majority vote.

Concluding the discussion on this Warranty, it can be said that without question both the practical and spiritual results of the practice of substantial unanimity already have been proved to be very great indeed.

### ***Warranty Five: "That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy."***

Practically all societies and governments feel it necessary to inflict personal punishments upon individual members for violations of their beliefs, principles, or laws. Because of its special situation, Alcoholics Anonymous finds this practice unnecessary. When we of AA fail to follow sound spiritual principles, alcohol cuts us down. Therefore no humanly administered system of penalties is needed. This unique condition is an enormous advantage to us all, one on which we can fully rely and one which we should never abandon by a resort to the methods of personal attack and punishment. Of all societies ours can least afford to risk resentments and conflicts which would result were we ever to yield to the temptation to punish in anger.

For much the same reason we cannot and should not enter into public controversy, even in self-defense. Our experience has shown that, providentially it would seem, AA has been made exempt from the need to quarrel with anyone, no matter what the provocation. Nothing could be more damaging to our unity and to the worldwide good will which AA enjoys, than public contention, no matter how promising the immediate dividends might appear.

Therefore it is evident that the harmony, security, and future effectiveness of AA will depend largely upon our maintenance of a thoroughly nonaggressive and pacific attitude in all our public relations. This is an exacting assignment, because in our drinking days we were prone to anger, hostility, rebellion, and aggression. And even though we are now sober, the old patterns of behavior are to a degree still with us, always threatening to explode on any good excuse. But we know this, and therefore I feel confident that in the conduct of our public affairs we shall always find the grace to exert an effective restraint.

We enjoy certain inherent advantages which should make our task of self-restraint relatively easy. There is no really good reason for anyone to object if a great many drunks get sober. Nearly everyone can agree that this is a good thing. If, in the process, we are forced to develop a certain amount of honest, humility, and tolerance, who is going to kick about that? If we recognize that religion is the province of the clergy and the practice of medicine is for doctors, we can helpfully cooperate with both. Certainly there is little basis for controversy in these Areas. It is a fact that AA has not the slightest reform or political complexion. We try to pay our own expenses, and we strictly mind our single purpose.

These are some of the reasons why AA can easily be at peace with the whole world. These are the natural advantages which we must never throw away by foolishly entering the arena of public controversy or punitive action against anybody.

Because our General Service Conference represents us all, this body is especially charged with the duty of setting the highest possible standard with respect to these attitudes of no punishments and no public controversy. The Conference will have to do more than just represent these principles; it will frequently have to apply them to specific situations. And, at times, the Conference will need to take certain protective actions, especially in the Area of Tradition violations. This action, however, never need be punitively or aggressively controversial at the public level.

Let us now consider some typical situations that may often require Conference consideration and sometimes definite action:

Let us suppose that AA does fall under sharp public attack or heavy ridicule; and let us take the particular case where such pronouncements happen to have little or no justification in fact.

Almost without exception it can be confidently estimated that our best defense in these situations would be no defense whatever – namely, complete silence at the public level. Unreasonable people are stimulated all the more by opposition. If in good humor we leave them strictly alone, they are apt to subside the more quickly. If their attacks persist and it is plain that they are misinformed, it may be wise to communicate with them in a temperate and informative way; also in such a manner that they cannot use our communications as a springboard for fresh assault. Such communications need seldom be made by the Conference officially. Very often we can use the good offices of friends. Such messages from us should never question the motives of the attackers; they should be purely informative. These communications should also be private. If made public, they will often be seized upon as a fresh excuse for controversy.

If, however, a given criticism of AA is partly or wholly justified, it may be well to acknowledge this privately to the critics, together with our thanks – still keeping away, however, from the public level.

But under no conditions should we exhibit anger or any punitive or aggressive intent. Surely this should be our inflexible policy. Within such a framework the Conference and the Headquarters will always need to make a thoughtful estimate of what or what not should be done in these cases.

We may be confronted by public violations of the AA Traditions. Individuals, outside organizations, and even our own members sometimes may try to use the AA name for their own private purposes. As AA grows in size and public recognition, the temptation to misuse our name may increase. This is why we have assigned to our Conference a protective task in respect to such conditions. The Conference, as we know, is the “guardian” of the AA Traditions. There has always been some confusion about this term “guardianship,” and perhaps we should try to clear it up.

To the minds of some AAs “guardianship” of the AA Traditions implies the right and the duty on the part of the Conference to publicly punish or sue every wilful violator. But we could not adopt a worse policy; indeed such aggressive public acts would place the Conference in the position of having violated one AA Tradition in order to defend another. Therefore aggressive or punitive action, even in this Area, must be omitted.

Privately, however, we can inform Tradition-violators that they are out of order.

When they persist, we can follow up by using such other resources of persuasion as we may have, and these are often considerable. Manifested in this fashion, a persistent firmness will often bring the desired result.

In the long run though, we shall have to rely mainly upon the pressures of AA opinion and public opinion. And to this end we shall need to maintain a continuous education of public communications channels of all kinds concerning the nature and purpose of our Traditions.

Whenever and however we can, we shall need to inform the general public also; especially upon misuses of the name Alcoholics Anonymous. This combination of counter forces can be very discouraging to violators or would-be violators. Under these conditions they soon find their deviations to be unprofitable and unwise. Our experience has shown that continuous and general education respecting our Traditions will be a reliable preventive and protection in the years to come.

Feeling the weight of all these forces, certain members who run counter to AA's Traditions sometimes say that they are being censored or punished and that they are therefore being governed. It would appear, however, that AAs' right to object calmly and privately to specific violations is at least equal to the rights of the violators to violate. This cannot accurately be called a governmental action. Some deviators have suffered rather severe personal criticism from individual AA members, and this is to be deplored. However this is no reason for us to stop reminding all concerned of the undesirability of breaking AA's Traditions before the entire public. It can be said in all fairness that the difficulties of those who contravene the Traditions are chiefly troubles of their own making.

Another kind of problem that merits consideration is the occasional severe internal disagreement among us that comes to unwelcome public attention. For example, we once hit the headlines with a pretty hard-bitten lawsuit wherein two factions of AAs were competing for the possession of the AA name for Intergroup use, the name having been incorporated by one of them. In another instance in an overseas Area there was some rather bad publicity when considerable section of the groups there became convinced they ought to accept money subsidies from their country's government to promote AA work, the AA Tradition notwithstanding.

This internal difficulty should not have surfaced before the public because there was certainly nothing about it that mutual understanding and good temper could not have readily handled.

Fortunately this sort of episode has been infrequent and relatively harmless. But such difficulties do pose certain questions for the future. What should our General Service Conference do about this sort of thing?

Always remembering group autonomy and the fact that AA's World Headquarters is not a police operation, the most that can be done in most cases is to make an offer of mediation. What the Tradition in this respect means, and what our experience with it has been, can always be offered as a matter of information. We can always urge the avoidance of any breakthrough of such disagreements at the public level. All parties can remember that unfavorable criticism or ridicule which might ensue from such conflicts can so reflect upon AA as to keep new prospects from joining up.

Then, too, a great many of these difficulties with the Tradition are of strictly local concern, there being no serious national or international implication. Many of them represent honest differences of opinion as to how the Tradition should be interpreted: whether a lenient or strict observance would be the better thing. Especially when operating below the public level, our experience with the Tradition reveals gray Areas, where neither white or black interpretations seem possible. Here the violations are often so debatable and inconsequential they are hardly worth bothering about. Here we usually refrain from offering suggestions, unless they are insisted upon. We feel that these problems must be solved chiefly by the local people concerned.

There is, too, a grave problem that we have never yet had to face. This would be in the nature of a deep rift running clear across AA – a cleavage of opinion so serious that it might involve a withdrawal of some of our membership into a new society of their own, or in their making an alliance with an outside agency in contravention of the AA Tradition. This would be the old story of split and schism of which history is so full. It might be powered by religious, political, national, or racial forces. It might represent an honest effort to change AA for the better. But it would certainly pose the Conference a question of what to do, or not to do.

Such a development is hard to imagine. We AAs usually assume that we have too much at stake and too much in common to succumb to this very ordinary ailment of the world about us. Yet this comforting assurance is no reason for refusing to give this contingency some calm forethought. If it ever came, such a development might be a terrific surprise and shock. Suddenly aroused passions could flare, making any truly constructive solution immensely difficult, perhaps impossible.

Because society everywhere is in such a state of fission today, many of us have given this subject a great deal of consideration. Our considered opinion is this: that the best possible Conference attitude in such a circumstance would be that of almost complete non-resistance – certainly no anger and certainly no attack. We have no doctrine that has to be maintained. We have no membership that has to be enlarged. We have no authority that has to be supported. We have no prestige, power, or pride that has to be satisfied. And we have no property or money that is really worth quarrelling about. These are advantages of which we should make the best possible use in the event of a threatened major division; they should make a calm and considered attitude of non-resistance entirely possible and highly practical.

Indeed we have always practiced this principle on a lesser scale. When a drunk shows up among us and says that he doesn't like the AA principles, people, or service management; when he declares that he can do better elsewhere – we are not worried. We simply say, "Maybe your case is different. Why don't you try something else?"

If an AA member says he doesn't like his own group, we are not disturbed. We simply say "Why don't you try another one? Or start one of your own." When our actors and cops and priests want their own private groups, we say "Fine! Why don't you try that idea out?" When an AA group, as such, insists on running a clubhouse, we say "Well, that sometimes works out badly, but maybe you will succeed after all." If individual AAs wish to gather together for retreats, Communion breakfasts, or indeed any undertaking at all, we still say "Fine, only we hope you won't designate your efforts as an AA group or enterprise." These examples illustrate how far we have already gone to encourage freedom of assembly, action, and even schism. To all those who wish to secede from AA, we extend a cheerful invitation to do just that. If they can do better by other means, we are glad. If after a trial they cannot do better, we know they face a choice: they can go mad or die or they can return to Alcoholics Anonymous. The decision is wholly theirs. (As a matter of fact, most of them do come back).

In the light of all this experience, it becomes evident that in the event of a really extensive split we would not have to waste time persuading the dissenters to stay with us. In good confidence and cheer, we could actually invite them to secede and we would wish them well if they did so. Should they do better under their new auspices and changed conditions, we would ask ourselves if we could not learn from their fresh experience. But if it turned out they did worse under other circumstances and that there was a steady increase in their discontent and their death rate, the chances are very strong that most of them would eventually return to AA.

Without anger or coercion we would need only to watch and to wait upon God's will.

Unless we make a problem where there really is none at all, there need be no difficulty. We could still go about our business in good cheer. The supply of drunks in our time will be inexhaustible, and we can continue to be glad that we have evolved at least one formula by which many will come to sobriety and a new life.

We have a saying that "AA is prepared to give away all the knowledge and all the experience it has – all excepting the AA name itself." We mean by this that our principles can be used in any application whatever. We do not wish to make them a monopoly of our own. We simply request that the public use of the AA name be avoided by those other agencies who wish to avail themselves of AA techniques and ideas. In case the AA name should be misapplied in such a connection it would of course be the duty of the General Service Conference to press for the discontinuance of such a practice – always short, however, of public quarreling about the matter.

The protection of the AA name is of such importance to us that we once thought of incorporating it everywhere throughout the world, thereby availing ourselves of legal means to stop any misuse. We even thought of asking Congress to grant us the unusual favor of a Congressional incorporation. We felt that the existence of these legal remedies might prove to be a great deterrent.

But after several years of deliberation, our General Service Conference decided against such a course. The dramatic story of this debate and its conclusion may be found in our history book "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age." Those early Conferences believed that the power to sue would be a dangerous thing for us to possess. It was recognized that a public lawsuit is a public controversy, something in which our Tradition says we may not engage.

To make our legal position secure, it would have been necessary to incorporate our whole Fellowship, and no one wished to see our spiritual way of life incorporated. It seemed certain that we could confidently trust AA opinion, public opinion, and God Himself to take care of Alcoholics Anonymous in this respect.<sup>22</sup>

**Warranty Six: "That though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit."<sup>23</sup>**

In preceding Concepts, much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which the AA Traditions accord to the individual member and to his group: no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to AA principles; no fees or dues to be levied – voluntary contributions only; no member to be expelled from AA – membership always to be the choice of the individual; each AA group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes – it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure AA as a whole; and finally that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that, *as a group*, they have no other purpose or affiliation.

It is probable that we AAs possess more and greater freedom than any Fellowship in the world today. As we have already seen, we claim this as no virtue. We know that we personally have to choose conformity to AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions or else face dissolution and death, both as individuals and as groups.

Because we set such a high value on our great liberties, and cannot conceive a time when they will need to be limited, we here specially enjoin our General Service Conference to abstain completely from any and all acts of authoritative government which could in any way curtail AAs' freedom under God. The maintenance of these freedoms in our Conference is a great and practical guarantee that the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit.

Therefore we expect that our Conferences will always try to act in the spirit of mutual respect and love – one member for another. In turn, this sign signifies that mutual trust should prevail; that no action ought to be taken in anger, haste, or recklessness; that care will be observed to respect and protect all minorities; that no action should ever be personally punitive; that whenever possible, important actions will be taken in substantial unanimity; and that our Conference will ever be

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<sup>22</sup> However, the name Alcoholics Anonymous and the abbreviation AA were all legally registered in 1972.

<sup>23</sup> Bill here, apparently inadvertently, used the phrase "in action and spirit," instead of "in thought and action," that appears elsewhere in both the Conference Charter and the statement of Concept XII.

prudently on guard against tyrannies, great or small, whether these be found in the majority or in the minority.

The sum of these several attitudes and practices is, in our view, the very essence of democracy – in action and spirit.

Freedom under God to grow in His likeness and image will ever be the quest of the Alcoholics Anonymous. May our General Service Conference be always seen as chief symbol of this cherished liberty.

**To a man, we of AA believe that our freedom to serve is truly the freedom by which we live – the freedom in which we have our being.**

**.-ooOoo-.**

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# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION TWELVE LEGACY DOCUMENTS**

# **THE CONFERENCE CHARTER**

## **AUSTRALIAN GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE**



# CONFERENCE CHARTER

## AUSTRALIAN SECTION

### 1. Purpose:

The Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous is a guardian of the World Services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for Alcoholics Anonymous.

### 2. Composition:

The Conference shall be composed of Area Delegates, entitled to Conference representation as elsewhere defined, the Trustees of the Australian General Service Board, staff of the National Office Manager or nominated deputy and the World Service Delegates.

### 3. Conference Relation to AA:

The Conference will act for AA in the perpetuation and guidance of its World Services, and it will also be the vehicle by which the AA movement can express its views upon all matters of vital AA policy and all hazardous deviations from AA Tradition. Conference Members should be free to vote as their conscience dictates; they should also be free to decide what questions should be taken to the Group level, whether for information, discussion or their own direct instruction.

But no change in Article 12 of the Charter or in the Twelve Traditions of AA or in the Twelve Steps of AA may be made with less than the written consent of three-quarters of the AA Groups worldwide, as described in the resolution adopted by the 1955 Conference and Convention, North America.

### 4. Conference Relation to the General Service Board and its Corporate Services:

The Conference will replace the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, who formerly functioned as guides and advisers to the General Service Board and its related service corporations. The Conference will be expected to afford a reliable cross section of AA opinion for this purpose.

A quorum shall consist of two-thirds of all the Conference members registered at that Conference.

To effectively further this same purpose it will be understood, as a matter of tradition, that a two-thirds vote of registered Members of Conference shall be considered binding upon the General Service Board and its related corporate services. But no such vote ought to impair the legal rights of the General Service Board and its service corporations to conduct routine business and make ordinary contracts relating thereto.

It will be further understood, regardless of the legal prerogatives of the General Service Board, as a matter of tradition, that a three-quarters vote of all Conference members may bring about a reorganization of the General Service Board and the directors and staff members of its corporate services, if or when such reorganization is deemed essential.

Under such a proceeding, the Conference may request resignations, may nominate new Trustees and may make all other necessary arrangements regardless of the legal prerogatives of the General Service Board.

## **5. Area Assemblies: Composition of:**

Assemblies, designated as Area Assemblies, are composed of the elected General Service Representatives of all the AA Groups desiring to participate, within a designated geographical Area.

Generally speaking, each Area will be entitled to one Assembly. But Areas of large AA populations and/or whose geography presents communication problems will be entitled to additional Assemblies, as provided by The Australian AA Service Manual, or by any further amendment thereto.

## **6. Area Assemblies: Purpose of:**

Area Assemblies convene for the election of Area Committee Members, from which are elected Area Delegates to the Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. Such Area Assemblies are concerned only with the general service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

## **7. Area Assemblies: Method of Electing Area Committee Members and Delegates:**

Whenever practicable, Area Committee Members are elected by written ballot without personal nomination. And Area Delegates are selected from among such Committee Members by a two-thirds written ballot or by *Third Legacy Procedure*, as provided in "The Australian AA Service Manual".

## **8. Area Assemblies: Terms of Office for Group General Service Representatives, Area Committee Members and Delegates:**

General Service Representatives and Area Committee members shall serve for two years, and these terms shall be concurrent. Area Delegate terms are three years from date of appointment.

## **9. The Australian General Service Conference Meeting:**

The Conference will meet yearly in or within close proximity to the City of Sydney, unless otherwise agreed upon. Special meetings may be called should there be a grave emergency. The Conference may also render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services.

## **10. The General Service Board: Composition, Jurisdiction, Responsibilities:**

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia shall be an incorporated body composed of alcoholics and non-alcoholics. It shall number eight alcoholics and four non-alcoholics.

Each of the six Australian regions shall provide one alcoholic Regional Trustee. The alcoholic Regional Trustees are chosen from candidates endorsed by the Areas of the relevant Regions.

The Areas may select their nominee themselves or ask Conference to make the selection according to the method prescribed from time to time in the Australian General Service Manual.

Conference has the opportunity to disapprove endorsement of single regional nominees or candidates chosen by a nominating session as above, by a 2/3 vote of all Conference Members. The Board then elects the new Trustee by a simple majority of remaining Board Members, for a four-year term only. By tradition, the Board shall accept the nominee of Conference.

The non-alcoholics are elected by the Board for a five-year term, subject to a disapproval vote of 2/3 of all Conference Members, with the option of another 5 years subject to Conference disapproval.

In addition, two further alcoholic Trustees, who shall reside within commuting distance of the Australian National Office, and shall be known as General Service Trustees, shall be elected by the Board and their appointment subject to a 2/3 vote of disapproval by the full Conference. These General Service Trustees shall provide continued service to the Board at all times of the year. They serve for a four-year term only.

All Trustee appointments shall be approved by a majority of Trustees remaining in office. Where considered essential, interim appointments may be made at its discretion by the Board in consultation with the Conference Committee on Trustees. In the case of Regional Trustees, interim positions may be filled by the Board by selecting from candidates provided by the relevant Areas, requiring a 2/3 vote of all Board Members present or the Third Legacy Procedure for more than one candidate. Such appointments are subject to a 2/3 disapproval vote of the following Conference.

As stated elsewhere, any Trustee having retired shall not be eligible for reappointment.

The General Service Board is the chief service arm of the Conference, and is essentially custodial in its character.

Excepting for decisions upon matters of policy, finance, or AA Tradition, liable to seriously affect AA as a whole, the General Service Board has entire freedom of action in the routine conduct of the policy and business affairs of the AA service corporations and may name suitable committees and elect directors to its subsidiary corporate service entities in pursuance of this purpose.

The General Service Board is primarily responsible for the financial and policy integrity of its subsidiary services.

The Charter and Memorandum and Articles of the General Service Board, or any amendments thereto, should always be subject to the approval of the Australian General Service Conference by a three quarters (3/4) vote of all its members.

Except in a great emergency, neither the General Service Board nor any of its related services shall take any action liable to greatly affect AA as a whole, without first consulting the Conference. It is nevertheless understood that the Board shall at all times reserve the right to decide which of its actions or decisions may require the approval of the Conference.

## **11. The Australian General Service Conference: Its General Procedures:**

The Conference will hear the financial and policy reports of the General Service Board and its related corporate services.

The Conference will advise with the Trustees, Directors and Staff members upon all matters presented as affecting AA as a whole, engage in debate, appoint necessary committees and pass suitable resolutions for the advice or direction of the General Service Board and its related services.

The Conference may also discuss and recommend appropriate action respecting serious deviations from AA Tradition or harmful misuse of the name "Alcoholics Anonymous".

The Conference may draft any needed bylaws and will name its own officers and committees by any method of its own choosing. The Conference at the close of each yearly session will draft a full report of its proceedings, to be supplied free of charge to all Conference Members and made available for purchase to any AA Member or Group. Also a condensation thereof will be published in AA Around Australia and will reach all AA Groups throughout Australia through their GSRs.

## **12. General Warranties of the Conference:**

In all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

## **13. The World Service Delegates: Election, Roles, Terms and Alternates:**

Two World Service (WS) Delegates who report to the Board and to Conference shall be appointed by Conference, using the Third Legacy Procedure, for a four year term. These Delegates shall represent AA Australia at both the World and the Asia-Oceania Service Meetings and bring knowledge back to the Australian Fellowship from sharing wisdom, strength and hope with the broad global AA network. Their main roles are World Service and 12th Step work at international level, and keeping the Australian Fellowship aware of their work.

For continuity, the terms of appointment shall overlap. Alternate positions shall be offered to runners-up in the Delegate election, in order of the votes attracted. These positions run parallel to the Delegate positions (overlapping, duration four years), unless the Delegate position falls vacant, in which case the Alternate will step into an acting Delegate role until the next election.



# THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL

## SECTION TWELVE LEGACY DOCUMENTS

# THE '*THIRD LEGACY*' PROCEDURE



# **THIRD LEGACY PROCEDURE: PURPOSE & PROCESS**

## **PURPOSE**

AA's *Third Legacy Procedure* is a special type of electoral procedure, used primarily for the election of Area Delegates, Regional and other Trustees and International Delegates, where more than one candidate is nominated. It is considered to be unique to AA, and at first glance, appears to introduce a strong element of chance into a matter that should depend solely on the judgement of the majority. In practice, it has proved highly successful in eliminating the influence of factions or parties. A second-place candidate who may be extremely well qualified, but without early popular support is encouraged to stay in the balloting rather than withdraw.

## **IT MUST FIRST BE ESTABLISHED**

- That the candidates are eligible and willing to stand.
- That the right to vote has been established.
- If the election involves appointing an Alternate position, it should be decided in advance whether the runner-up will be that Alternate or whether this will be by a separate election.

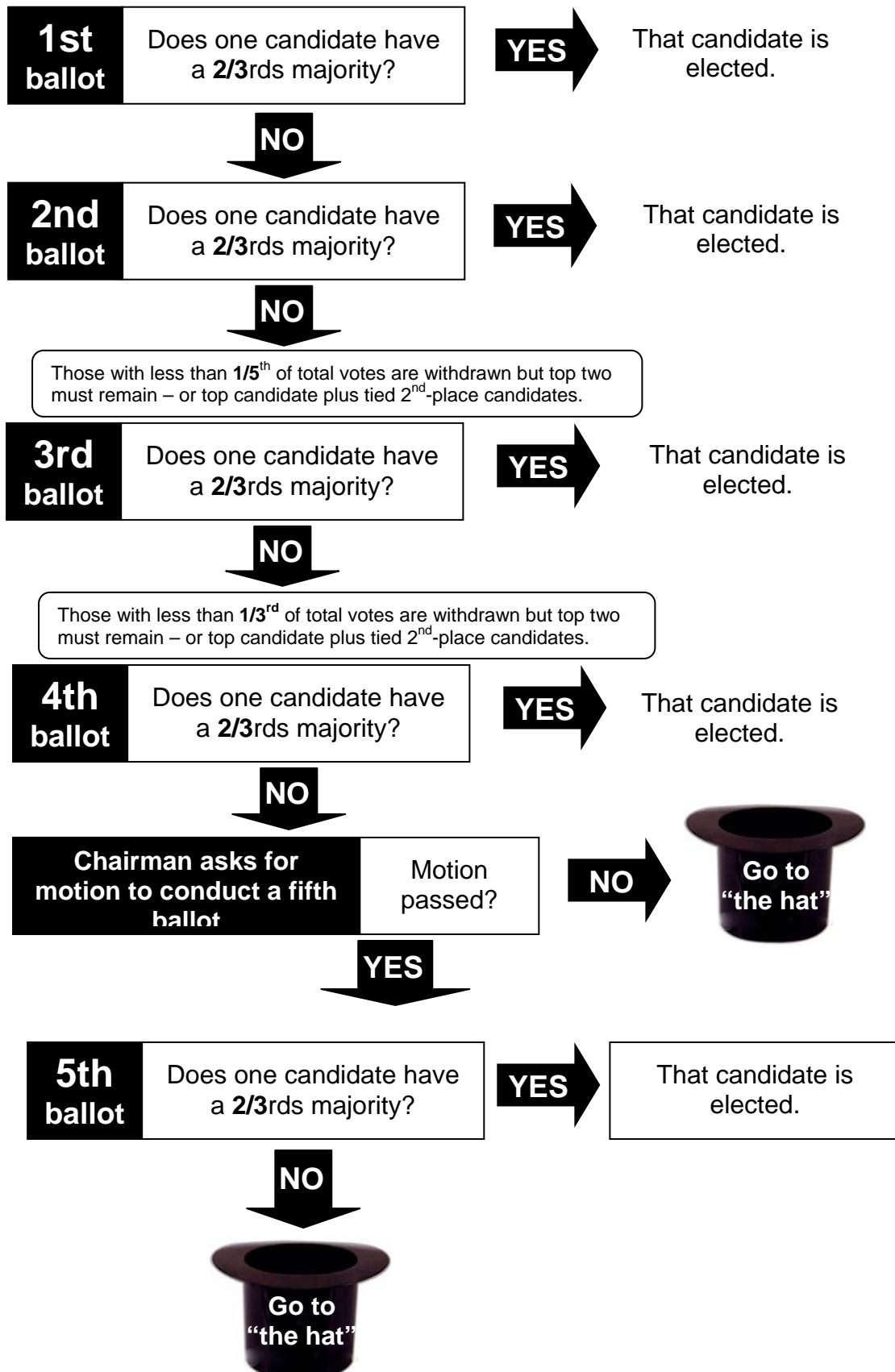
## **PROCEDURE**

1. The Chairman of the meeting will take charge of the proceedings.
2. Two scrutineers are appointed, preferably from among those not eligible to vote.
3. The names of candidates are written on a black/whiteboard or similar
4. The vote will be written on the board against the names of candidates.
5. The first candidate to receive two-thirds of the total vote is elected.
6. All ballots are secret, so blank papers (and sometimes pencils) are distributed.
7. Written ballots are cast in the traditional way (one choice to a ballot), collected and given to the scrutineers to count; the tallies are then posted on the Board.
8. If no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote at the first ballot, a second ballot is held, duplicating the first.



9. If no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote at the second ballot, any candidate having less than one-fifth of the total vote is withdrawn automatically except that the two top candidates must remain. In the case of a tie for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.
10. A third ballot is then held with the remaining candidates. As for the second ballot, if no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote at the third ballot, candidates with less than one-third of total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except that the two top candidates must remain. In the case of a tie for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.
11. A fourth ballot is then conducted as for the second and third above.
12. If no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote, the Chairman establishes by formal motion (with seconder) on a majority show of hands, whether to hold a fifth ballot or go straight to the "hat".
13. If no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote in the fifth ballot, or if the meeting has decided to drop the fifth ballot, the choice will be made by lot (by the "hat").
14. In the final round, the names of the remaining candidates will be placed in a hat, box or other suitable container, and a person nominated by the Chairman will draw one candidate's name from the hat.
15. That candidate is then the Delegate, Trustee or officer.

# The Third Legacy Procedure



**THE AUSTRALIAN AA  
SERVICE MANUAL**

**SECTION THIRTEEN**

**SERVICE  
DOCUMENTS**

**GENERAL SERVICE BOARD**



**Memorandum of Association  
Articles of Association**



**THE AUSTRALIAN AA  
SERVICE MANUAL**

**SECTION THIRTEEN  
SERVICE DOCUMENTS**

**MEMORANDUM OF  
ASSOCIATION**

*of the*  
**GENERAL SERVICE BOARD**

*of the COMPANY*  
**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AUSTRALIA  
(LIMITED)**



**COMPANIES ACT 1961**  
**A Company Limited by Guarantee**

**MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION OF THE  
GENERAL SERVICE BOARD OF ALCOHOLICS  
ANONYMOUS AUSTRALIA**

(COPY)

1. The name of the Company is "GENERAL SERVICE BOARD OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AUSTRALIA" hereinafter called "the Company".
2. The objects of the Third Schedule of the Companies Act, 1961 are hereby excluded.
3. The objects of the Company are:-
  - (a) To serve the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in its work of helping alcoholics to achieve and maintain sobriety and to implement the decisions of and to assist the Australian Service Conference to maintain the various services necessary for those who may seek, through Alcoholics Anonymous, the means of arresting the disease of alcoholism.
  - (b) To act as the chief service arm of the Australian Service Conference and to be guided in its deliberations and decisions by the Australian Service Conference.
  - (c) To accept and implement the plan of the Australian Service Conference which said plan is a method by which the Alcoholics Anonymous collective Group Conscience can speak forcefully and put its desires for Australia-wide service into effect, ensuring that full voice of Alcoholics Anonymous will be heard, whether such voice represents the majority or minority, and to act as a guarantee that the Australia-wide service of Alcoholics Anonymous would continue to function under all conditions.
  - (d) To provide appropriate premises for the Company and in connection therewith to rent or take on license appropriate premises.
  - (e) To be guided in its deliberations and decisions by the Twelve Steps, Twelve Concepts for World Service and the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous and to ensure that such Traditions are maintained.
  - (f) To undertake at the request of the Australian Service Conference any Agency Trust or other activity of the said Australian Service Conference.
  - (g) To incorporate new corporate bodies to service the purposes of Alcoholics Anonymous provided that any such corporate bodies shall not be formed without the approval of the Australian Service Conference.
  - (h) To publish and circulate all literature approved by the Australian Service Conference and to delegate the publication and circulation of such literature to such corporate bodies established under object (g) hereof.
4. The income and property of the Company, whencesoever derived, shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the Company as set forth in this memorandum of association, and no portion thereof shall be paid or transferred, directly or indirectly, by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise, howsoever by way of profit, to the members of the Company

(such members shall hereinafter be referred to as "Trustees").

Provided that nothing herein shall prevent the payment, in good faith, of out of pocket expenses and interest at a rate not exceeding the rate for the time being charged by bankers in Sydney on overdrawn accounts or money lent, or reasonable and proper rent for premises demised or let to the Company by the Trustees.

5. No addition, alteration or amendment shall be made to or in the Memorandum or Articles of Association for the time being in force, unless the same shall have been previously submitted to and approved by the Minister of the Crown for the time being, administering the Companies Act, 1961 (Hereinafter called "the Minister").
6. The fourth and fifth clauses of this Memorandum contain conditions on which a licence is granted by the Minister to the Company in pursuance of Section 24 of the Companies Act, 1961.
7. The liability of the Trustees is limited.
8. Every Trustee undertakes to contribute to the assets of the Company, in the event of the same being wound up while he is a Trustee, for payment of the debts and liabilities of the Company contracted before he ceased to be a trustee, and the costs, charges and expenses of winding up and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributories among themselves, such amount as may be required, not exceeding fifty dollars (\$50).
9. If upon the winding up or dissolution of the Company there remains, after satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever, the same shall not be paid to or distributed among the Trustees of the Company, but shall be given or transferred to some other institution or institutions having objects similar to the objects of the Company, and which shall prohibit the distribution of its or their income an property among its or their members to an extent at least as great as is imposed on the Company under or by virtue of Clause 4 hereof, such institutions or institution to be determined by the Trustees of the Company at or before the time of dissolution, and if and so far as effect cannot be given to the aforesaid provisions, then some charitable object.
10. True accounts shall be kept of the sums of money received and expenses by the Company, and the matter in respect of which such receipt and expenditure takes place; and of the property credits and liabilities of the Company; and, subject to any reasonable restrictions as to the time and manner of inspecting the same that may be imposed in accordance with the regulations of the Company for the time being in force, shall be open to the inspection of the Trustees. Once at least in every year, the accounts of the Company shall be examined and the correctness of the balance-sheet ascertained by one or more properly qualified Auditor or Auditors.
11. The names, addresses and occupations of the subscribers are as follow:-

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Names, Addresses and Occupations of Subscribers





# **THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL**

## **SECTION THIRTEEN SERVICE DOCUMENTS**

# **ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION**

*of the*

## **GENERAL SERVICE BOARD**

*of the* COMPANY  
**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AUSTRALIA (LIMITED)**



# ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF THE GENERAL SERVICE BOARD OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AUSTRALIA

(COPY)

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## ARTICLE 1

In these regulations –

“The Act” means the Companies Act, 1961;

“The Company” means the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia;

“The Trustees” means members of the Company;

“The Seal” means the common seal of the Company’;

“Secretary” means any person appointed to perform the duties of a Secretary of the Company and includes an honorary secretary;

“Regions” shall mean:

“North Eastern Region” which shall be the State of Queensland;

“Eastern Region” which shall be the State of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory;

“Southern Region” which shall be the States of Victoria and Tasmania;

“Central Region” which shall be the State of South Australia;

“Northern Region” which shall be the Northern Territory and that portion of the State of Western Australia North of latitude 20 degrees South;

“Western Region” which shall be the State of Western Australia excepting that portion North of latitude 20 degrees South;

“The Conference” means the Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous properly constituted by the Charter of that body;

“Registered Members of Conference” refers to those defined from time to time by the Australian General Service Conference Charter as being entitled to vote at the annual Australian General Service Conference and who register and attend;

“2/3 disapproval” means a minimum vote of 2/3 of the relevant electorate to reject a decision or candidate selection made by another body such as the General Service Board or the combined Areas of a Region;

‘Third Legacy Procedure’ refers to a special type of voting procedure carried out according to a process approved from time to time by the Australian General Service Conference and recorded in the General Service Manual of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia;

expressions referring to writing shall, unless the contrary intention appears, be construed as including references to printing, electronic communications, lithography, photography and other modes of representing or reproducing words in a visible form;

words of expression contained in these regulations shall be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of the Interpretation Act of 1897, and of the Act as in force at the date of which these regulations become binding on the company.

## ARTICLE 2

The Company is established for the purpose set out in the Memorandum of Association.

## ARTICLE 3

### **Membership: Board Composition**

The number of Trustees is twelve. Eight of the Trustees shall be alcoholics, also known as 'Class B Trustees' and four shall be non-alcoholic, also known as 'Class A Trustees'. The Conference shall nominate six alcoholic Regional Trustees referred to in Articles 4, 5 and 17. The Board shall appoint two General Service Trustees referred to in Articles 4, 18 and 19 and four non-alcoholic Trustees referred to in Articles 4 and 5.

Conference shall have a right of refusal requiring two thirds of all Registered Conference Members to disapprove selections made by the Board of candidates for non-alcoholic, General Service Trustee and interim positions referred to in Articles 4 and 5, and the ultimate right to change appointments to the Board as described in Article 16.

## ARTICLE 4

### **Trustee Terms of Service**

Alcoholic Trustees shall have had, as at the date of their election to the Board, five years of continuous sobriety; provided however this period shall be ten years wherever possible. All alcoholic Trustees serve for a period of four years from the date of their election, whether regular or interim.

In addition to providing services at the same time as Regional Trustees, General Service Trustees are expected to provide continued service to the Company during all times of the year, and attend to the duties laid out in Articles 18 and 19.

The non-alcoholic Trustees shall serve for a period of five years from the date of their appointment, whether regular or interim. The General Service Board may extend this term for a maximum of three years if it is considered advantageous. Extension of term is decided on an annual basis, with an explanation provided to the General Service Conference of the reason for extension of term.

Any Trustee having retired shall not be eligible for reappointment.

## ARTICLE 5

### **Election of Trustees**

- a Each of the six Regions of the Commonwealth shall provide one alcoholic Regional Trustee, nominated by the Australian General Service Conference as described in Article 17.
- b In addition to these Trustees, two further alcoholic Trustees who reside within commuting distance of the Australian General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, and they shall be known as General Service Trustees. General Service Trustees shall be elected by the Company using the process described in Article 5c below.
- c Election by the Board to non-alcoholic Trustee positions shall, in consultation with the Conference Committee on Trustees, be by a 2/3 vote of those Trustees present at the Board meeting, save where there is more than one candidate, in which case a Third Legacy Procedure shall be used, and such selection shall be subject to 2/3 disapproval of all registered Conference Members at the following Conference.

- d Subject to Article 17, if deemed essential, the Board at its discretion may fill a casual vacancy for any Trustee position, following consultation with the Conference Committee on Trustees, by a two thirds vote of all Trustees present, save where there is more than one candidate, in which case a Third Legacy Procedure as described in the current Australian General Service Manual shall be used, and such appointment shall be subject to 2/3 disapproval of all registered Members of the following Conference.

## **ARTICLE 6**

A Trustee membership shall become vacant if he or she:

- a ceases to maintain the qualifications required of a Trustee;
- b ceases to be a Trustee by virtue of the Act or is prohibited from being a Trustee by an order made under the Act;
- c becomes bankrupt;
- d if he or she becomes physically or mentally incapable of performing his or her duties;
- e if he or she is absent from three consecutive meetings without the leave of the Company;
- f if he or she resigns by notice in writing to the Company;
- g if he or she fails to declare the nature of his or her interests in a contract or an office or property with the Company as provided by the Companies legislation;
- h If notice in writing is received from the Australian General Service Conference that he or she is to be removed from the list of Trustees.

## **ARTICLE 7**

The Trustees being the members of the Company will meet annually to conduct the Annual General Meeting of the Company.

## **ARTICLE 8**

All Trustees are also Directors of the Company.

## **Proceedings of Trustees Meeting as Directors of the Company**

### **ARTICLE 9**

Subject to these Articles the Trustees may meet as Directors of the Company for the despatch of business and adjourn their meetings as they think fit, and may appoint committees the members of which need not be Trustees (provided that a Trustee shall normally be the Chairperson of such committee), and such Trustees may impose conditions and limitations on such committee. The provisions of these articles entitled "proceedings of Trustees" shall apply *mutatis mutandis*<sup>ψ</sup> to the proceedings of such committee.

### **ARTICLE 10**

Four Trustees may and the Secretary shall upon the request of four Trustees convene a meeting of Trustees.

### **ARTICLE 11**

The quorum for a Trustees meeting shall be five.

### **ARTICLE 12**

In the event of the number of Trustees becoming less than the minimum fixed for these Articles the continuing Trustees may act solely for the purpose of increasing their number or for calling a general meeting of the Company.

### **ARTICLE 13**

The Chairperson shall serve for a period of one year. The first Chairperson of the Company shall be elected at the first meeting of the Company after incorporation and shall serve for a period expiring at the first annual general meeting of the Company. At this meeting and at all annual general meetings, the presiding Chairperson may present him- or herself, for re-election or two Trustees may nominate another Trustee as Chairperson and upon election such Chairperson shall serve for period of one year PROVIDED HOWEVER no Chairperson shall serve for a longer period than four consecutive years. At any time a Chairperson may be removed by a two thirds vote of all the Members of the Conference.

### **ARTICLE 14**

All acts done by any meeting or by any committee of Trustees or by any person acting as a Trustee shall notwithstanding the subsequent discovery of some defect in the appointment of any such person or of the fact that any such person was disqualified at the time, be as valid as if no such defect or disqualification existed.

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<sup>ψ</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* = with due alteration of details (comparing cases): Concise Oxford Dictionary.

## **Ultimate Traditional Authority of Conference**

### **ARTICLE 15**

- a The Australian General Service Conference may by a two-third vote of all Registered Members bind the Trustees to call a general meeting or an extraordinary general meeting to implement the decisions of such Conference vote and the Trustees shall be bound to pass resolutions complying with such Conference vote.
- b In exercising the power conferred upon them by statute to amend the Articles or the Memorandum of Association, the Board, in accordance with the traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, will pay due regard to the wishes of the Fellowship expressed by resolutions disapproving proposed changes passed by a minimum vote of 2/3 of all registered Members of Conference.

### **ARTICLE 16**

The Australian General Service Conference may by a three quarters vote of all the registered Members of Conference require the resignation of a Trustee or Trustees or nominate a new Trustee or Trustees.

### **ARTICLE 17**

The process of appointment of alcoholic Regional Trustees shall be as follows:

- i. One nomination for Regional Trustee will be accepted from each Area within a given Region. Within a Region, all Areas may by joint agreement at their discretion, combine to select a single regional nominee.
- ii. If there is more than one candidate, selection of one candidate from Area nominees takes place at the annual General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia in November, by means of a nominating session as described in the Australian General Service Manual.
- iii. Conference is then given an opportunity to refuse to endorse the nomination of the selected candidate or regional nominee This requires a 2/3 disapproval vote of all registered Members of Conference.
- iv. The Board then elects Conference's nominated candidate to the position of Regional Trustee and simultaneously, Member of the Company. This election requires a simple majority of Board Members present and by tradition the Board shall accept the nominee of Conference.
- v. Interim vacancies for Regional Trustee positions may be filled by the Board by selecting from potential candidates provided by the Areas of the relevant Region by the voting processes specified in Article 5d.

## **Duties of General Service Trustees**

### **ARTICLE 18**

Subject to these Articles the management of the Company's business is vested in the two General Service Trustees who shall exercise all duties of the Company PROVIDED HOWEVER at general or extraordinary meetings of the Trustees the duties of the General Service Trustees may be expanded or restricted. Subject to the restriction or expansion of such duties of the General Service Trustees shall include, *inter alia*:

- a the nomination of persons to sign and/or accept cheques and other negotiable instruments;
- b the keeping of a Register of all charges in accordance with the requirements of the Act;
- c the keeping of minutes of meetings of Trustees;
- d the performance of administrative duties required for the proper functions and running of the Company, including purchase of stationery, payment of salaries, wages and Company running accounts (but such duties shall not be interpreted as conferring on such General Service Trustees the right to purchase equipment or property in the Company's name in excess of such amount as shall be fixed by the Board from time to time).
- e at extraordinary or general meetings of Trustees the Company may restrict or expand the duties of the General Service Trustees.

### **ARTICLE 19**

At any annual general meeting or extraordinary general meeting the Company may direct the General Service Trustees to appoint a committee or committees and such committee members need not be Trustees of the Company provided however one of the General Service Trustees must act as Chairperson of such committees PROVIDED FURTHER HOWEVER the Company shall at the time it directs the General Service Trustees to form such committee it shall also set out the terms of reference to such committee or committees and its duties.

## **Meetings of Trustees**

### **ARTICLE 20**

The first general meeting shall be held at such time, not being less than one month nor more than three months after the incorporation of the Company and at such place as the Trustees may determine.

### **ARTICLE 21**

An annual general meeting of the Company shall be held in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Other meetings can be called at the discretion of the Trustees.

## **ARTICLE 22**

Any four Trustees may whenever they think fit convene an extraordinary general meeting, an extraordinary general meeting shall be convened on such requisition or in default may be convened by such requisitionists as provided by the Act.

## **ARTICLE 23**

Subject to the provisions of the Act relating to special resolutions and agreements for shorter notice, twenty-eight days notice at the least (exclusive of the day on which the notice is served or deemed to be served, but inclusive of the day for which notice is given) specifying the place the day and the hour of meeting and in case of special business the general nature of that business shall be given to such persons as are entitled to receive such notices from the Company.

## **ARTICLE 24**

All business shall be special that is transacted at an extraordinary general meeting, and also all that is transacted at an annual general meeting, with the exception of the consideration of the accounts, balance sheets, and the report of the Trustees, auditors and the appointment and fixing of the remuneration of the auditors.

### **Proceedings at General Meetings of the Trustees Meeting as Members of the Company.**

## **ARTICLE 25**

No business shall be transacted at any general meeting unless a quorum of Trustees is present at the time when the meeting proceeds to business. Five Trustees present in person shall be a quorum.

## **ARTICLE 26**

If within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting a quorum is not present the Trustees who were present must request the Company to appoint and give notice of the time and place of the next meeting.

## **ARTICLE 27**

The Chairperson shall preside as chair at every general meeting of the Company and if he or she is not present within fifteen minutes after the time appointed for the holding of the meeting, then the Trustees present shall elect one of their number to be Chairperson of the meeting.



## **ARTICLE 28**

The Chairperson or his or her deputy may, with the consent of any meeting at which a quorum is present (and shall if so directed by the meeting), adjourn the meeting from time to time and from place to place. When a meeting is adjourned for thirty days or more, notice of the adjourned meeting shall be given as in the case of an original meeting. Save as aforesaid it shall not be necessary to give any notice of an adjournment or of the business to be transacted at an adjourned meeting.

## **ARTICLE 29**

At any general meeting a resolution put to the vote of the meeting shall be decided on a show of hands unless a secret ballot is (before or on the declaration of the result of the show of hands) demanded:

- a by the Chairperson or
- b by at least three Trustees present in person.

Unless a secret ballot is so demanded a declaration by the Chairperson that a resolution has on a show of hands been carried or carried unanimously, or by a particular majority, or lost, an entry to that effect recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of the company shall be conclusive evidence of the fact, without proof of the number or proportion of the votes recorded in favour of or against the resolution.

The demand for a secret ballot may be withdrawn.

If a secret ballot is duly demanded it shall be taken.

## **ARTICLE 30**

At the first general meeting of the Company, at any subsequent annual general meeting or extraordinary general meeting the Company may appoint any persons or person who need not be a Trustee of the Company to act as secretary, treasurer, auditor, public relations officers to act in any capacity in the performance of the Company's undertaking as the Company deems fit and in similar fashion the Company at any of the above meetings may appoint committees or persons (who need not be Trustees of the Company), may define the powers or terms of reference of such committees, disband existing committees, expand or decrease their number and accept or reject the findings of such committees notwithstanding anything hereinbefore contained any decision or appointment made by the Company may be rescinded or amended by a meeting of the Australian General Service Conference.

## **Mail polls**

### **ARTICLE 31**

- a Whenever in the judgment of one-third of the Trustees present at a meeting a decision to take any action involves a matter of principle or basic policy and in the judgment of at least one-third of the Trustees a delay in arriving at a decision will not adversely affect the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the matter will be submitted to a mail vote of all Conference Members as defined by the Conference Charter and if 2/3 of the Conference Members do not support the taking of such action, then the Board of Trustees will be expected to refrain from deciding to take such action.
- b Whenever a mail vote is taken of Conference members, at least four weeks' notice shall be given and the vote shall be determined in keeping with an analysis of such votes by the Chairperson and National Office Manager or, in their absence, by a deputy or deputies appointed by the Chairperson, at the end of such four-week period. An announcement of the result of such vote shall thereupon be mailed by the National Office Manager or appointed deputy, to all registered Members of Conference.
- c The Trustees may at their discretion conduct a mail poll of the Board, in which case at least two weeks notice shall be given and the vote shall be determined by the Chairperson or his or her appointed deputy. The results shall thereupon be mailed to all Trustees by the National Office Manager or his or her appointed deputy.

## **Company Seal**

### **ARTICLE 32**

The Company shall provide a seal, which shall only be used by the authority of the company or of a sub-committee of the Company authorised by the Company in that behalf, and every instrument to which the seal is affixed shall be signed by a Trustee of the Company and shall be countersigned by a second Trustee of the Company or by some other person appointed by the Company for the purpose.

## **Accounts**

### **ARTICLE 33**

The Company shall cause proper accounting and other records to be kept and shall distribute copies of every profit and loss account and balance sheet (including every document required by law to be attached thereto) accompanied by a copy of the Auditor's report thereon as required by the Act provided, however, that the Company shall cause to be made out and laid before each annual general meeting a balance sheet and profit and loss account made up to date not more than one month before the date of the meeting.

## **ARTICLE 34**

The books and records of the Company shall be at all times open to the inspection of the Australian General Service Conference.

## **ARTICLE 35**

A properly qualified Auditor or Auditors shall be appointed and his or their remuneration fixed and duties regulated in accordance with law.

### **Notices**

## **ARTICLE 36**

A notice may be given by the Company to any Trustee either personally or by sending it by post, to him or her at his or her address, supplied by him or her to the Company for the giving of notices to him or her. Where a notice is sent by post, service of the notice shall be deemed to be affected by properly addressing, prepaying and posting a letter containing the notice of a meeting on the day after the date of its posting, and in any other case at the time at which the letter would be delivered in the ordinary course of post.

## **ARTICLE 37**

Notice of every general meeting or extraordinary general meeting shall be given in any manner hereinbefore authorised to:

- a every Trustee; and
- b the Auditor or Auditors for the time being of the Company.

### **Winding Up**

## **ARTICLE 38**

The provisions of Clause 9 of the Memorandum of Association relating to the winding-up or dissolution of the Company shall have effect and be observed as if the same were repeated in these regulations.

### **Indemnity**

## **ARTICLE 39**

Every Trustee of the Company, auditor, secretary and other officer for the time being of the Company shall be indemnified out of the assets of the Company against any liability arising out of the execution of the duties of his or her office which is incurred by him or her in defending any proceedings, whether civil or criminal, in which judgement is given in his or her favour or in which he or she is acquitted or in connection with any application under the Act in which relief is granted to him or her by the Court in respect of any negligence, default, breach of duty or breach of trust.



# THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL

# APPENDIX





# ACRONYMS & TERMS COMMONLY USED IN AA

**AA** = Alcoholics Anonymous (sometimes term used to mean a Member of AA eg “AAs say x ...”)

**AA Grapevine Inc** nearest Aust. equivalent ≡ AA Around Australia

**AA World Services Inc (North America)** ≡ Alcoholics Anonymous (Ltd)(Australia)

**AAAA** = AA Around Australia (news sheet)

**AGM** = Annual General Meeting

**ASM** = Australian AA Service Manual

**AOSM** = Asia-Oceania Service Meeting

**ASIC** = Australian Securities & Investments Commission

**ATO** = Australian Taxation Office

**CAL** = Conference-Approved Literature

**CPC** = Cooperation with the Professional Community

**CSO** = Central Service Office

**DCM** = District Committee Member

**‘Delegate’** can refer to Area, CSO/‘quarterly’/‘Group’ or World Service Delegate

**Family Groups:** Al-Anon (sister Fellowship started by our founder Bill W’s wife: cooperates but not part of AA)

**GL** = AA Guidelines (an extension of the ASM, currently published separately)

**GSB** = General Service Board = ‘The Trustees’

**GSConference** = General Service Conference

**GSO** = General Service Office

**GSR** = General Service Representative

**GSS** = General Service Structure

**GV** = Grapevine (North American AA’s international magazine) = AA Grapevine

**Intergroup** ≡ Central Service Office

**ISF** = International Sponsorship Fund

**OSM** = older sober member

**PI** = Public Information (& Cooperation with the Professional Community)

**PI&CPC** = Public Information & Cooperation with the Professional Community

**PIAA** = PI Around Australia (news sheet that comes out with AAAA)

**PIF/ PI Forum** = Public Information Forum

**Three Legacies:** Recovery, Unity & Service

**Traditional Legacy Documents:** 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts, Conference Charter (& 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy Procedure)

**T&CF** = Treatment & Correctional Facilities

**T&CFAA** = Treatment & Corrections Around Australia (news sheet)

**World Service** (North America) ≡ General Service (Australia)

**WSD** = World Service Delegate

**WSM** = World Service Meeting

**Figure 9 AA Acronyms & Terms**





# AA GUIDELINES: KEY

GUIDELINE NO	CONTENTS
GL-01	Suggestions for Leading Beginners' Meetings
GL-02	AA Conference-Approved Literature
GL-03	The General Service Representative
GL-04	Information on Alcoholics Anonymous
GL-05	Australian General Service Structure Simplified
GL-06	Regional Forums
GL-07	Public Information & Co-Operation with Professional Community
GL-08	Court & Similar Programs
GL-09	AA Answering Services
GL-10	Armed Services
GL-11	Relationship Between AA and Al-Anon
GL-12	Central Service Offices
GL-13	Clubs
GL-14	Conferences and Conventions
GL-15	The National Convention
GL-16	Treatment & Correctional Facilities Committees
GL-17	For AA Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field
GL-18	Carrying the Message to the Hearing-Impaired Alcoholic
GL-19	Local Committees Co-operating with the Professional Community
GL-20	Use of AA's Trademarks and Logos
GL-21	AA and Industry
GL-22	Suggestions for Members Wishing to Visit Correction Centres
GL-23	Workshops
GL-24	AA Co-Operation in Research & Non-AA Survey Projects
GL-25	Public Information: Convening Dinners / Luncheons
GL-26	Operation of the National AA Website <a href="http://www.aa.org.au">www.aa.org.au</a>
GL-27	Process for Changing AA Service Documents
GL-28	How a Conference Topic is Developed
GL-29	Speaking at Schools
GL-30	PI&CPC and T&CF Coordinators & Forums
GL-31	Presenting AA Television Community Service Announcements
GL-32	Setting Up Local AA Websites
GL-33	Treatment Facilities Guideline
GL-34	AA Child Safe Guideline
GL-35	Remote Community Committees