

GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE TOPICS 2024

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AUSTRALIA

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Introduction

These are the Topics that will be discussed and voted on by Conference in November 2024.

These are usually distributed via the Area Delegates to the GSRs who then in turn ensure their group members are aware of the Topics and have discussed them so that their GSR be informed of their Home Group's Group Conscience on the Topics when they attend their Area Assembly. Doing this means that they can be part of an informed discussion there. This in turn allows the Area Delegates to be informed with the Group Conscience of their Area on each topic when they take part in the General Service Conference.

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. (The Australian AA Service Manual – p61).

See Concept III on “Right of Decision” for a full explanation.

The Conference Steering Committee will aim to provide the Conference Topics Document by the end of July each year. This will give GSRs Area Delegates (and) two months to organize group conscience discussions and Area Topic Assemblies. This timeframe is suggested as Conference Committee meetings are scheduled to take place starting in early October.

TOPIC #001/2024: (Creating a 2/3 Delegate voting majority at Conference)

Creating a 2/3 Delegate voting majority at Conference while respecting Concept IV (Right of Participation)

In any future AA Australia General Service Conference where Delegates make up less than two thirds majority of overall voting members:

- On any vote where all delegates vote the same way, this is to be considered the equivalent of a mathematical 2/3 voting majority.

2/3 voting majority of Area Delegates at Conference is a long-held desire of the Australian fellowship, with multiple topics being put up in previous years to achieve it; all of which have failed. Why? Commonly, the suggestion is to remove votes from the other voting members of conference, which of course conflicts with Concept IV, AA's Right of Participation. Bill W himself warns against this:

'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' – C4 Essay.

As such, to achieve a 2/3 Delegate majority, a fresh and more spiritual approach is required; one that doesn't erode C4 – one of AA's foundation principles.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

From the get-go AAWS (US/Canada) has had a 2/3 majority of Conference Delegates. Given we based our service structure on their model, it follows that a 2/3 majority of Delegates might be beneficial for us too. However, we would need 30 Area Delegates to achieve it. Right now, we only have a possible maximum of 24. It has been many years since all Areas in Australia have been able to send a Delegate to Conference. It's time AA Australia started to 'live life on life's terms'. We can create a 2/3 majority of delegates *in spirit*, even if not mathematical.

As such, all we need to do is accept that, no matter how many Area Delegates turn up to Conference in any given year, if they all vote the same way, then this can be considered as *spiritually equivalent* to an actual 2/3 Area Delegate majority.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

Perhaps in time, member appetite will for general service will increase to the point where we achieve 30 Areas (bearing in mind we have 2 more Areas than we did 5 years ago).

Until then, we can consider any time Area Delegates vote 100% the same way at Conference its considered a binding decision on the Board. By the way this seems to be the sole stated reason for AAWS having 2/3 Delegate majority (*ref: pp40 AAWS Service Manual*), so in doing what is proposed in this topic, we achieve the same outcome - just in a different way.

How can voting be done? 2 suggestions:

- Using a different coloured 'Yes' voting ball for delegates, than for other voting members. Currently I believe a single colour is used.

- Allowing Area Delegates to always vote prior to other voting members, thus allowing for their vote to be cast and counted separately.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

AAWS and many other AA Conferences around the world enjoy *all* their Areas being active. This leads to a complete set of Delegates turning up at Conference, representing 100% of the fellowship when big decisions are made. Surely this only assists the alcoholic who is still suffering. They are at the heart of our Primary Purpose, as should be every Area Delegate vote.

In AA Australia we are currently not so fortunate. Many groups currently lack an appetite for General Service, and perhaps a less-than 2/3 Area Delegate voting majority contributes to such member disinterest. Perhaps members are thinking “Why participate in General Service if my Delegate’s vote matters less than it would in other Conferences?” Overcoming this issue, while fully respecting our democratic Right of Participation, may serve to create more opportunities for selfless participation in service...and that may well lead to less drinks being picked up.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Zero cost, other than potentially buying a specific set of different coloured balls for Delegates to use for voting at Conference.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Ironically enough, I am writing this topic within [REDACTED] – an Area without a functioning Committee or Delegate. As such, I am on my own, without a District or Area Assembly to consult with. I literally hope this topic goes some way to improve this situation.

Notes:

TOPIC #002/2024: (2/3 Majority)

The 2/3 majority Area Delegate issue again – can we be inclusive and democratic?

Use this Topic to consult the fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous Australia to see if there is need for a National Group Conscience on this again at Conference.

Permit all AA members the chance to be informed rather than being told that it is needed. Find out if is a need to proceed with divisive discussion on an issue that may not be viewed as an issue when the fellowship are allowed a chance to consider and view our literature for themselves.

If a bigger topic needs to be created to fully inform and we must wait until 2025 to do it right then that is good thing and best for AA as a whole to make sure everyone is having opportunity to consider it.

If the delegates return with a no vote, then conference can move on from time consuming nitpicking process debates and get focused on helping develop things that will save alkies.

The Concepts exist to guide us. Let's use this one.

From Concept 12

The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA Tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power....that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, sustainable unanimity,....that it never perform acts of government, that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain **democratic** in thought and action.

As a former delegate I have seen for myself the time-consuming and disunity effects of this topic when it gets brought to conference when the topics ask for it to be solved. Never have we the members actually been asked as a whole if it is even something we all want addressed.

I think that if this topic is discussed through the proper channels of communication via delegates and GSRs and groups conference will know if the members of AA want the time of their trusted conference servants spent on this. Isn't that truly democratic?

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

I attended conference when this came up before and now it is back it seems with articles on our members' website – which all have flaws.

Having asked around not many actually seems aware of the ratio issue or to care much when it is explained.

When members hear that conference are potentially spending a lot of time discussing a solution to a problem that has never happened it puts them off general service. The US/Canada illustrate this well and write "historically the voting ratio has never been important, since no issue has ever divided opinion along the lines delegates opposed to other conference members." This is also true for the 60 odd years of Australia Conference.

When topics appear aimed at addressing a problem new delegates and the main members might think every topic is reliably a big problem and they work in the solution. They may not be aware that it is possible that the problem has only been raised by a small number and needs to be discussed to see it even merits conference time.

Our founders' writings have been changed and interpreted many ways down the years in many countries and at many conferences – always for the good of AA and saving alcoholics. Conference works here in Australia- at helping get alkies recovered – so why muck around with it? We need to get more people involved!

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

If the members across Australia are informed of the issue clearly and referred to the right areas of literature then they can through the group conscience, Area conscience inform the Conference of their thinking and ask conference to act on their behalf which is the role of conference after all.

People writing articles or in previous years sending topics only comes from them – a small number. Let's get the group conscience of the majority and act on that.

No need to proceed with divisive discussion on an issue that may not be viewed as an issue when the fellowship are allowed a chance to consider and view our literature for themselves.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Conference time can be spent on making decisions that impact members rather than arguing pointless procedures.

Unity will be preserved. More people will participate in a focused message carrying service structure.

AA grows and more alkies get sober and live life.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Nil

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Consulted with other ex-delegates and members and they support a real democratic approach to AA.

Notes:

TOPIC #003/2024: (Cost Equalisation Guideline)

The General Service Board suggests creating a Cost Equalisation Guideline.

The Board suggests that a Cost Equalisation Guideline is agreed on to ensure that the expenses of Conference and Board meetings are fairly divided among Areas in a clear and consistent and equitable way.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

There has been inconsistent practice in Conference levies over the years, and uncertainty over what Conference has previously decided about Conference levies. The attached Guideline is an effort to consolidate decisions made by Conference on this issue over many years into one document.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

The Conference create a Guideline along the lines of the attached draft.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

1. It will provide clarity and consistency in how Conference levies are issued.
2. It could help Groups and Areas to keep tabs on how much money is being spent on Board meetings and Conference and help them make more informed decisions about allocation of resources.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

None.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Supported by the Board.

ATTACHMENT – COST EQUALISATION GUIDELINE

Conference and Board Meeting Cost Equalisation Guideline

The cost equalisation scheme was adopted at the 1981 Conference and is intended to cover the cost of Conference and Board meetings. These costs are the responsibility of Areas.

The cost equalisation scheme is based on the actual costs of Conference and Board meetings, adds CPI for the previous financial year and divides that by the number of participating Areas.

Areas not contributing to the cost equalisation scheme cannot be seated at Conference, however Areas experiencing difficulties can be given special consideration at the discretion of Management Group. Requests for special consideration should be made as early as possible by sending an email to gso@aa.org.au

Cost equalisation payments to be split into four payments to be made in November, February, May and August.

Notes:

TOPIC #004/2024: (Update GL-07 PI/CPC in the Guidelines)

There is scope for sections to be added on Professional Awareness, the Internet (Facebook), where to find information and general updates from information raised at the 2024 Public Awareness Forum and PI/CPC newsletters and Professional Conferences and Luncheons

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

There is more experience to be added in our guidelines and expand on the Internet and Professional awareness.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

Collate from coordinators and those doing all the PI/CPC and add to the Guidelines through forming a Working group from Conference and our National Forum in November 2024.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Make easier for new coordinators to get access to important tools to reach the alcoholic and the 3rd person who have contact with the still suffering.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Nil.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Raised at the General Services Committee meeting supported.

Notes:

TOPIC #005/2024: (Change name from CPC to PA)

Change name of 'Cooperating with the Professional Community' to 'Professional Awareness' (CPC to PA)

The Board is in agreement for the Topic to be decided at Conference and if accepted by conference will be conducted in accordance with GL-27. Other guidelines will be updated during the upcoming Document Review process.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is simplifying its terminology by replacing the term 'Cooperating with the Professional Community' with 'Professional Awareness'

This can emphasise mutual understanding, education, and destigmatisation of alcohol addiction.

By promoting transparency and respect for professional boundaries, AA aims to enhance support for individuals seeking recovery.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

The term does not reflect the actual relationship between AA and the Professional Community in most cases except as described in Guideline 24.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

Change name of 'Cooperating with the Professional Community' to 'Professional Awareness' (CPC to PA).

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

"Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is suggesting simplifying its terminology by replacing the term "Cooperating with the Professional Community" with "Professional Awareness."

Changing of the title to Public Information and Professional Awareness (PI & PA) should enable the members have more clarity over what they are doing in working with the Professional Community.

More work will get done, hopefully leading to better informed (about AA) professionals which will help them guide more alcoholics that they meet into the rooms of AA.

This can avoid any confusion where we do actually Cooperate with professionals as described in Guideline 24.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Nil. Existing literature will remain the same until updated in due course.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Yes agreed to by the Trustee Services Committee and the General Service Board.

Notes:

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TOPIC #006/2024: (Flow Chart for PI Material)

Public Information (PI) and Professional Awareness (PA) flow chart for development and approval of PI/PA material.

For groups, districts and areas to be given a clear flow chart for the development and approval of new PI/PA material.

A conference working committee to develop a flow chart for development/approval fo PI/PA material. The flow chart to be in the spirit of 'Flow Chart for Development of an AA Pamphlet' from Section 11 'AA Literature' of the Service Manual.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

AA groups, committees, districts and areas would benefit from direction from the Conference on whether they have the ability to develop PI/PA materials themselves, or whether Concept II suggests that this should be done at Conference level.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

Stated above.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Clarity on this topic will help ensure that the integrity of the AA message remains intact when producing PI/PA materials.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Minimal administrative costs – may become an addition to the Public Information & Professional Awareness Guideline No GL-07 in the future.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Due to time constraints, unable to bring the topic to group, district, or area.

Notes:

TOPIC #007/2024: (World Service Delegate's vote)

Ratio of Delegate to non-Delegate Conference Members - World Service Delegate's vote

The General Service Board recommends revising our structure and updating our service manual and all other relevant service documents to align with our founders' original intent, and our own long stated ideal that delegates comprise at least two-thirds of Conference members.

To help achieve this the Board further recommends that while continuing to welcome with gratitude the ongoing participation and valuable contributions of the World Service Delegates at Conference, we transition away from the two World Service Delegates continuing to have vote at Conference (to take effect after the current WSDs appointees rotate out, as they accepted their positions under the current arrangement).

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

When AA's founders designed the AA service structure, they stipulated that at least two-thirds of Conference members should be delegates. In Australia we have expressed this as an ideal in our service manual but have never achieved it. The fellowships in the UK, USA / Canada and New Zealand all operate with a ratio of no less than two thirds majority of delegates. In the US Canadian structure "Trustees at Large" are members of the General Service Board and have a range of additional duties in addition to attending World Service meetings. In the UK and NZ World Service Delegates do not vote at Conference

This ratio issue has been a source of ongoing disunity within our fellowship for at least 31 years, with numerous topics coming before Conference and being referred to the Board. For example, in 1997, the Board acknowledged the issue and the necessity for action. There have also been topics asking for this issue to be addressed in 1982, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017. These can be reviewed in the "Key Conference Resolutions" resource on the AA Members Website.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

In the topic. Currently we have up to 15 possible non delegate voting positions at Conference, these are: General Service Trustee x 2, Class A Trustees up to 4 (currently 2), Eastern, Southern, Western, Northern, North East, Central Region Trustees, World Service Delegates x 2 and GSO Manager.

We have 22 possible delegate seats available at Conference. If all non-delegate voting positions were filled it would require 30 delegates to meet the minimum 2/3 ratio. Based on current numbers, and the fellowship's experience in establishing new areas, it is unlikely that there will be the required number of delegates for many years.

If the above proposal is accepted, it would reduce the total number of possible non area delegate voting positions at conference from 15 to 13. If the Topic relating to Class A Trustees was also accepted by Conference this would bring the number of possible non delegate votes at Conference down to 11, or exactly one third of possible votes at Conference.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

1. It will help resolve a long-standing source of disunity.
2. It will demonstrate that we are committed to achieving our stated ideals.

3. We will continue to benefit from the valuable contributions of our World Service Delegates.
4. Area Delegates will be closer to having voting rights at Conference in “reasonable proportion” to their responsibility consistent with Concept 4. Our founders stipulated that the Delegates proportional vote at Conference should be no less than two thirds.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

None.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Supported by the Board.

Notes:

TOPIC #008/2024: (Class A Trustee numbers)

Ratio of Delegate to non-Delegate Conference Members - Class A numbers.

The General Service Board recommends revising our structure and updating our service manual and all other relevant service documents to align with our founders' original intent, and our own long stated ideal that delegates comprise at least two-thirds of Conference members.

With deep gratitude for the dedication and invaluable contributions of our esteemed Class A Trustees, the Board proposes an adjustment to our Service Manual and Charter and other relevant documents, reducing the maximum number of Class A Trustees from 4 to 2.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

When AA's founders designed the AA service structure, they stipulated that at least two-thirds of Conference members should be Area Delegates. In Australia we have expressed this as an ideal in our service manual but have never achieved it. The fellowships in the UK, USA / Canada and New Zealand all operate with a ratio of no less than two thirds majority of Area Delegates.

This ratio issue has been a source of ongoing disunity within our fellowship for at least 31 years, with numerous topics coming before Conference and being referred to the Board. For example, in 1997, the Board acknowledged the issue and the necessity for action. There have also been topics asking for this issue to be addressed in 1982, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017. These topics can be reviewed in the "Key Conference Resolutions" resource on the AA Members Website.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

In the topic. Currently we have up to 15 possible non delegate voting positions at Conference, these are: General Service Trustee x 2, Class A up to 4, Eastern, Southern, Western, Northern, North East, Central region Trustees, World Service Delegates x 2 and GSO Manager.

We have 22 possible delegate seats available at Conference. If all non-delegate voting positions were filled it would require 30 delegates to meet the minimum 2/3 ratio. Based on current numbers and the fellowship's experience in establishing new areas, it is unlikely that there will be the required number of delegates for many years.

If the above proposal is accepted, we would reduce the total number of possible non delegate voting positions at conference from 15 to 13.

If the Topic relating to the vote of World Service Delegates was also accepted by Conference this would bring the number of possible non delegate votes at Conference down to 11 or exactly one third of possible votes at Conference.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

1. It will help resolve a long-standing source of disunity.
2. It will demonstrate that we are committed to achieving our stated ideals.
3. We will continue to benefit from the valuable contributions of our Class A.
4. Delegates will be closer to having voting rights at Conference in "reasonable proportion" to their responsibility consistent with Concept 4. Our founders stipulated that the Delegates proportional vote at Conference should be no less than two thirds.

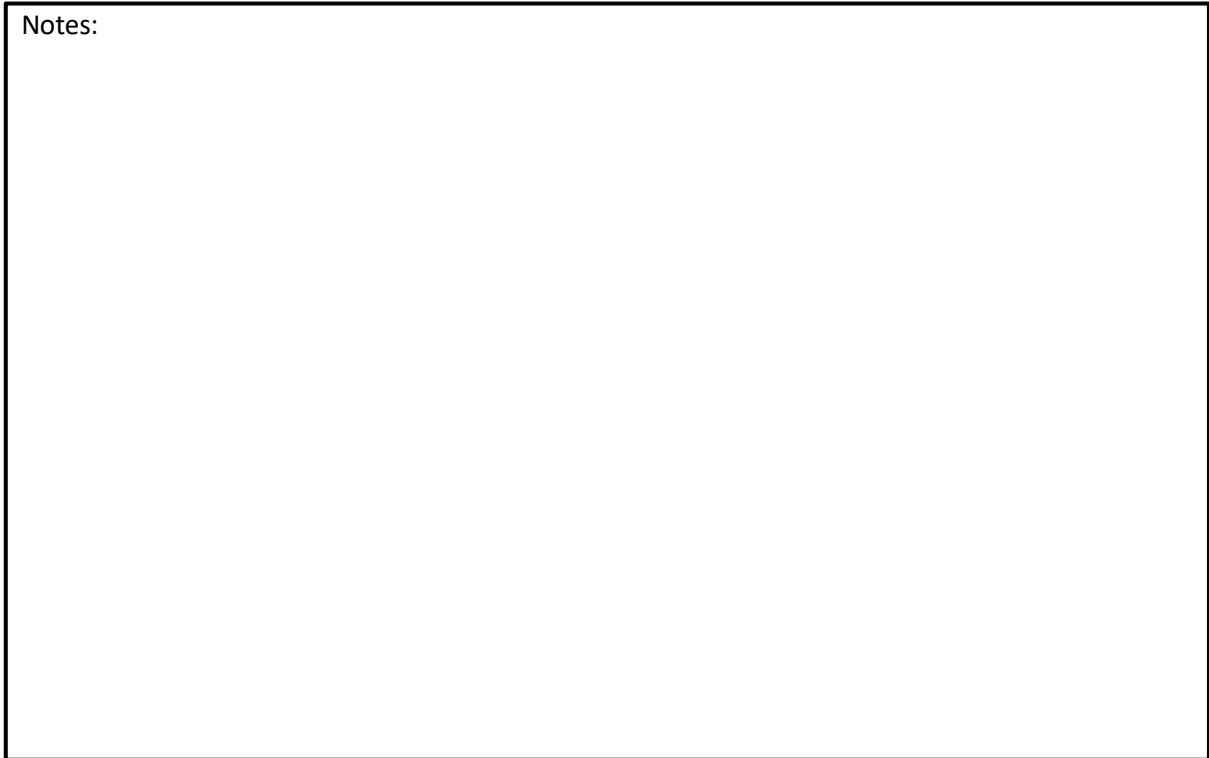
WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

None – In fact it would save money on additional Board and Conference Travel and accommodation costs.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Supported by the Board.

Notes:

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TOPIC #009/2024: (Accessibility Guideline for AA Australia)

Conference to create an accessibility guideline.

Conference to create or adapt from the US version, an Australian guideline for accessibility, to help inform AA Australia of this important aspect of carrying the message.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

Currently we only have US resources to work off, I believe it would be helpful to have our own guideline with Australian literature resources.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

The solution is outlined above.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Accessibility is a relatively newish aspect of AA service work. Almost every time the subject is raised, I hear someone say 'what is accessibility?' This guideline will help better inform the fellowship & members carrying out service work on what Accessibility is & how it can impact the message being carried.

Having an accessibility guideline sitting within our (Australian) guidelines makes the topic more accessible to Australian AA members.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Minimal if any at all.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Topic raised at Area C assembly Sunday 19/5/24, motion to support the topic was supported unanimously.

Notes:

TOPIC #010/2024: (Add upside down triangle)

Structure chart of the upside down triangle be put back in the Service manual with the Groups at top of chart followed by the Districts, Area Assemblies, Delegates at Conference and the GSB at the bottom to show that groups have complete Authority at Conference as written in Concept 1.

Alcoholics are visual people and seeing the diagram of the upside down triangle can help our members see our structure much clearer and the path for topics and the Authority the groups have for Conference.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

Chapter 1 in the US manual, introduction to the General Service Structure S16.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

Add back in the Australian Service manual to explain our conference structure and a understanding of our topic process.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Will better help many members to understand the role of groups, conference and the General Service structure which will bring more unity being informed.

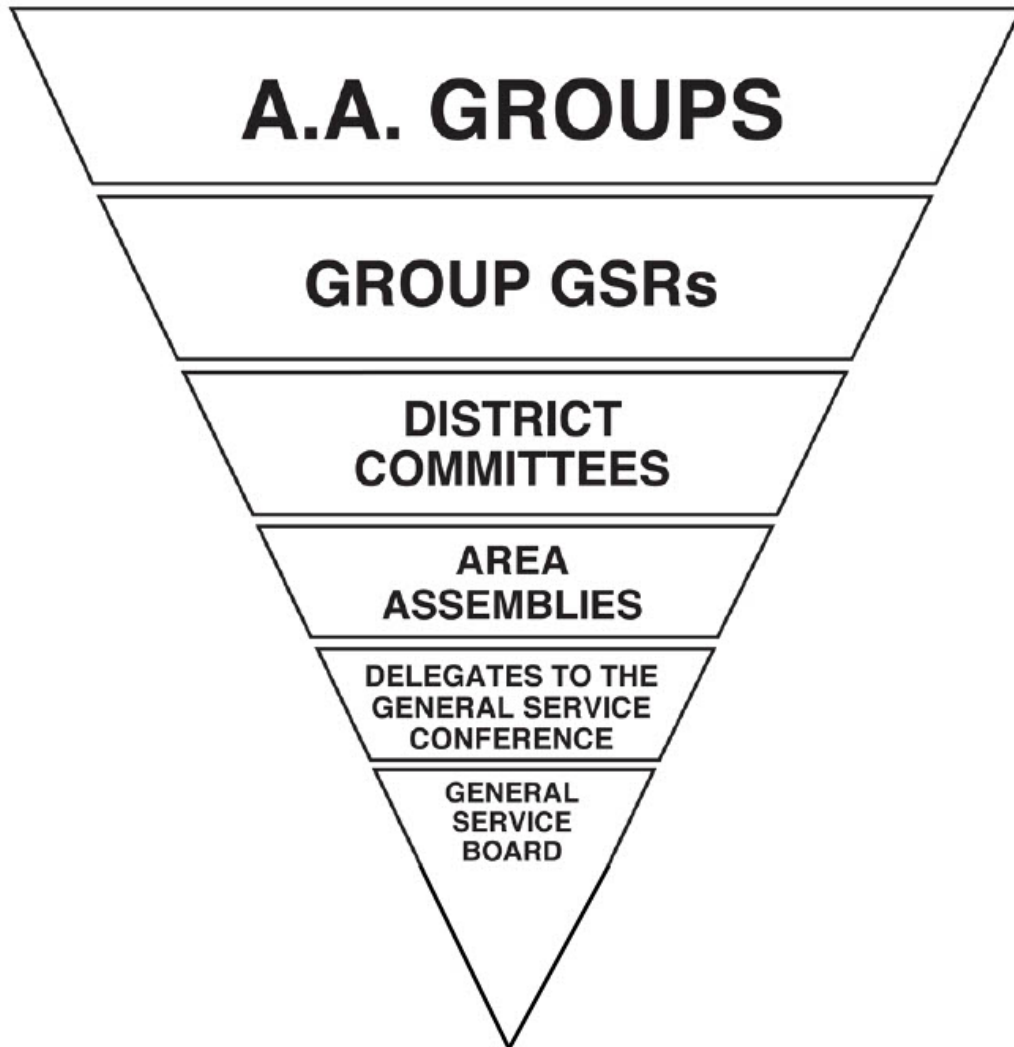
WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Nil

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Supported by members.

STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE



Notes:

TOPIC #011/2024: (Accepted Literature)

Having a new category of Conference 'Accepted' Literature.

Conference to consider a new category of literature to stand beside *Conference Approved* literature. A category that indicates literature has been assessed by a conference committee and accepted or designated as "official".

We need the ability to endorse or accept literature (posters, PI, cards etc.) for national use and circulation without everything needing to go to conference and take a year.

A Conference Committee could be given the authority to effectively sign off on submitted materials ensuring they meet guidelines, traditions etc. and allow them to be shared nationally with AA backing on the members website or GSO website.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

Lots of members/groups/areas/districts are developing really useful posters and flyers and other collateral to do PI and CPC and to attract alcoholics to AA. Many of these would be really great to circulate nationally.

This can be done by submitting a topic and seeking conference support. Sometimes through the complexity of doing that and the time taken is off putting and members don't follow up and do it.

It can also be done by WhatsApp groups and other informal means. This means inaccuracies etc. could be spread around.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

A conference committee who can assess these things submitted to them and give them an AA Australia 'ok' and put them on the website for others to choose from would be very useful.

This would make this type of literature and collateral AA Australia approved and would no way take away from or dilute conference approved which would remain for the important business of creating new pamphlets and leaflets and books and the like.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Members and groups and entities will have a broader choice of materials available for carrying the message and PI purposes that they can be sure meet the guidelines and traditions and requirements of AA.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Negligible

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Notes:

TOPIC #012/2024: (Online Meeting Guideline)

Supporting the growth and effectiveness of the Australian AA Fellowship through authentic online meetings listings.

The Board to refine the criteria for listing online meetings on the national website to ensure it fulfills its intended purpose of supporting the growth and effectiveness of the Australian AA fellowship.

The issue is that alcoholics use meetings.aa.org.au to find Australian meetings, both in-person and online. However, the national website includes international and overseas online meetings.

These international meetings reduce the incentive to create Australian meetings, as they compete for attendees, listing times, and often request 7th Tradition contributions from Australian members, diverting resources away from local services.

The idea is to establish a workable, clear and objective criteria for listing online meetings, to ensure that meetings on the national website are genuinely part of the Australian fellowship. This will support the growth and effectiveness of the Australian AA community to help alcoholics get sober and stay sober.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the national website was inundated with requests to list online meetings. Due to the urgency, there was no time to create a fair and objective method to ensure listed meetings were Australian. Consequently, many international and overseas online AA meetings are now listed alongside Australian ones, reducing the incentive for new Australian meetings to form.

Attempts to restore the meeting list to its original purpose have used insufficient criteria: 'hosted in Australia' (ambiguous), requiring an Australian suburb (easily circumvented), and 'meetings originating in Australia' (ineffective for online meetings). Efforts to remove international meetings have led to disharmony and relisting, as international meetings can meet these criteria.

Until a fair, clear, and objective criterion is implemented, this issue will persist, reducing the website's effectiveness in supporting the Australian fellowship.

Notably, meetings.aa.org.au already links to aa-intergroup.org/meetings for those seeking international meetings.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

Only allow online meetings to be listed on meetings.aa.org.au if they are exclusively listed on websites with a '.au' domain. Examples include meetings.aa.org.au, aameetings.org.au, aatimes.org.au, and any other '.au' intergroup or CSO list.

This criterion is clear and objective, making it easier to manage. It avoids the problem of trying to define what an Australian online meeting is, while remaining completely fair and unbiased.

Listings violating this policy can be easily identified by searching for their Zoom ID (or other identifier) in a search engine to determine if they are also listed internationally.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

- Stronger local support network for alcoholics needing immediate help and resources, and ensures urgent advice is accurate and informed of local services.
- Compliance with local regulations and laws, including the scope of the GSB's public liability insurance and the Australian Member Protection Policy.
- Direct connection with the local fellowship leads to higher attendance and engagement at local events, workshops, conventions and increased opportunity for service.
- Supports members to contribute financially to local AA services, maximising the Australian fellowship's capacity to carry the message effectively and ensuring we remain self-supporting.
- More incentive for the creation and growth of Australian online meetings, ensuring alcoholics looking for Australian meetings find them.
- Supports development of geographically closer support networks, making it easier to form connections and find sponsors or sponsees.
- Maximises access to culturally relevant recovery resources and support for alcoholics in regional and remote areas of Australia.
- Fosters a sense of fellowship, belonging, and community among members, crucial for the effectiveness of the AA recovery program.
- Increased opportunity to promote and distribute Australian AA literature, more relevant and impactful for local members.
- Simplifies listing management, ensuring accurate, up-to-date meeting information, reducing the administrative burden on local service bodies and trusted servants.
- Stronger PI/CPC opportunities and partnerships with local organisations and professionals.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Nil

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Based on discussions with Australian alcoholics that attend online meetings and trusted servants that administer local meetings lists.

Notes:

TOPIC #013/2024: (Ratio of Delegate to non-delegate Conference Members)

The General Service Board recommends revising the wording in our service manual and all other relevant service documents to align with our founders' original intent.

The Board recommends that we make amendments to our Service Manual and other relevant service documents, including to the first paragraph under the heading “Who Conference Members Are” by replacing the words “more than two thirds” with “at least two thirds”. This would bring it into alignment with the original wording in the source documents written by our founders.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

When AA’s founders designed the AA service structure, they stipulated that at least two-thirds of Conference members should be delegates to ensure that there was a check on the accumulation of too much power. In Australia we have stipulated that delegates should ideally be “more than two thirds”, setting a higher threshold in our service manual but never achieving it. The fellowships in the UK, USA / Canada and New Zealand all operate with a ratio of no less than two thirds majority of delegates.

This ratio issue has been a source of ongoing disunity within our fellowship for at least 31 years, with numerous topics coming before Conference and being referred to the Board. For example, in 1997, the Board acknowledged the issue and the necessity for action. There have also been topics asking for this issue to be addressed in 1982, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017. These can be reviewed in the “Key Conference Resolutions” resource on the AA Members Website.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

In the topic, but simply changing the wording in our service manual relating to the delegate to non-delegate ratio at Conference (“more than two thirds”) to bring it in line with the original wording (“at least two thirds”).

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

It will bring us closer to resolving a long-standing source of disunity.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

None.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Supported by the Board.

Notes:

TOPIC #014/2024: (Trim the numbers of Trustees on the Board)

The Conference and the Board should look into sticking to Article 18 of Articles of Association of GSB, returning the General Service Trustee Role back to what is its main function – being responsible to the Board for running the GSO from a business point of view and that's it. AA recovery work and carrying the message issues work on behalf of the fellowship can then be done by trustees the membership selects to do them.

Return management group and the GSTs to the status of sub-committee reporting to the Board.

GSTs no longer on the Board as full members.

GSTs no longer vote at conference.

GSTs are self-nominating and not selected by the members like Regional Trustees are, they are supposed to be dedicated to this one job, and no more.

Because they have to be in Sydney allowing GSTs full Board memberships gives Eastern Region, Sydney over proportion of representation at Board level and conference.

Reducing this concentration of authority will be more equitable across the country and encourage people elsewhere to join services and not be run by Sydney.

Give people in other regions an equal chance to serve as trustee, not give Sydney a 3 times greater chance.

Reduce the numbers of Board members to delegates at conference.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

I have been thinking about this for a while as we have no Trustee here at all.

Our founders wrote a lot about not concentrating too much authority in one place or group in AA. Over the years we have moved away from this in Australia and should level the playing field again. GSTs are in place to do the office job; they are selected by the GSB to do that. They have no mandate to be part of decisions for the rest of us, that should be left to people who are elected.

The service manual is clear on their duties. It has been allowed to expand over the years of work in AA and has made the Board too big and Sydney too influential.

We need to look at making our Board and service structure work for us in modern times not be caught in the past of always doing things the same way just because.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

GSTs are no longer board members but report to the board as Management Group.

GSTs no longer vote at conference.

GSTs are instructed by conference and the Board and carry out the running of GSO and its services.

This will also mean that the conference delegate ratio moves nearer in favor of the delegates again.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Service roles are not too big

Can be seen clearly who is responsible for what and to who
Conference moves back towards the delegate majority
Saves many \$s by reducing board travel and accommodation
More people will join in service
More alcoholics can be helped
Alcoholics anonymous starts to organise itself as a modern organisation that works for the members and distribution of the populations that we have in 2024.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Money will be saved

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Notes:

Topic #015/2024: (Alcoholics Anonymous Australia, one united Structure)

The Conference task a Working Group to ascertain the need, relevance and support for uniting the Two Service Structures of Alcoholics Anonymous into one Structure.

The Working Group is a starting point to investigate the need, relevance and support of the idea of joining the current two service structures, CSO Structure, and General Service Structure as one united Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia Service Structure.

The Working Group would encourage participation of members of both Structures.

In the Spirit of Cooperation, engagement and consultation with CSO Committees, employees and Service members, similarly with all members of the General Service Structure and the greater Fellowship would be a given.

Based on the findings of the Working Group, a Report reflecting a Negative result to be presented to Conference 2025.

Should there be sufficient relevance, need and support, a report should be tabled at Conference 2025 outlining the proposed next steps with the idea of presenting a Topic to Conference 2026.

The outline of that Topic to be distributed to all parties for further discussion and ratification.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

In our changing environments, Alcoholics Anonymous Australia needs to be enthusiastic in adjusting to current and forecast changes. Our own 'Anvils of Experience' point to change and adaptability to meet what is best to carry the message.

A common experience throughout our Service Structures is the ongoing need to fill vacant service positions, the changing support of how contributions are distributed, and the totals being contributed.

The reality is that many members of our Fellowship choose not to be involved in either Service Structure.

Also, the possibility that many AA Meetings will be virtual - how will that reflect on our present Service Structures. Literature is completely 'Online'

Cooperation between the Service Structures is vibrant and strong in many parts of Australia with the Carrying of Our Message, our Primary Purpose. Feedback suggests that there is a genuine need to engage with this idea.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

This is a starting place – Consider the outcomes from the Working Group and apply those.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Carrying the Message more effectively.

Better pooling of resources.

Great ideas through open communication and experience.

Those in service work – seen to be supported.
Seen by Fellowship as an example of unity.
Makes sense to those outside AA.

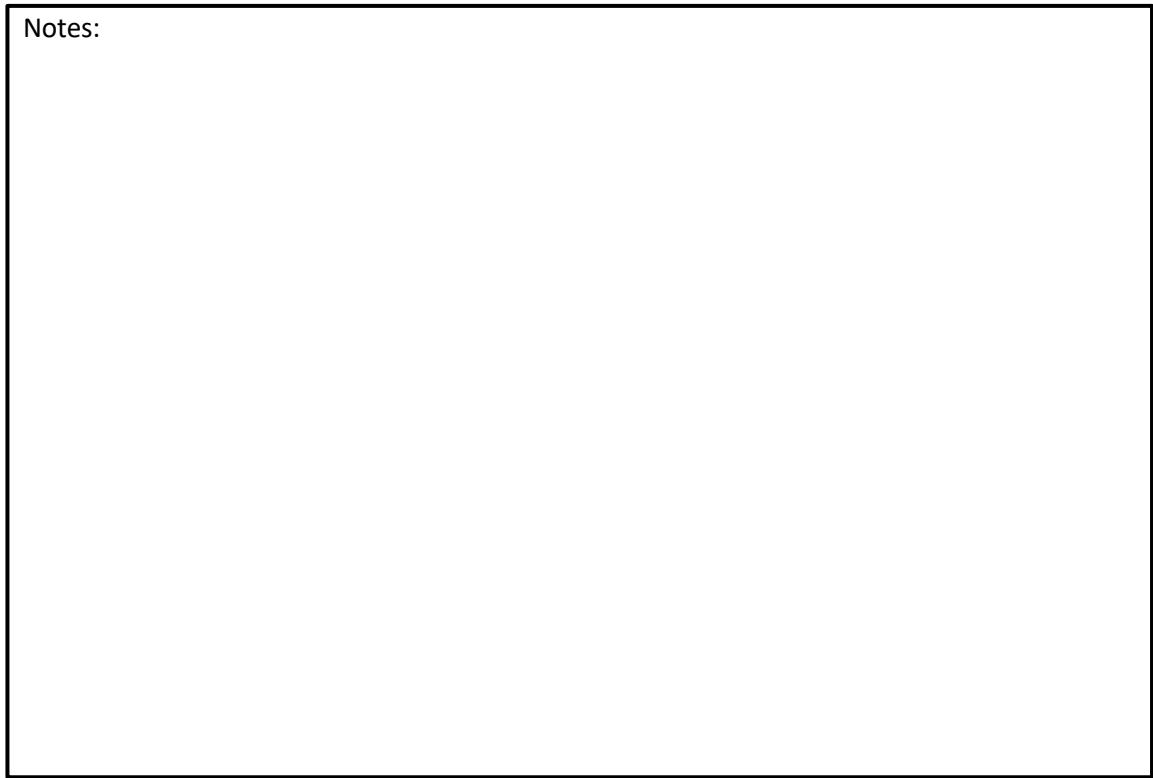
WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Time and application at this time

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

I have had general discussions with interested individuals not with my Group, District or Area.

Notes:



TOPIC #016/2024: (Correctional Facilities Book)

An anthology of stories from Australian members about Correctional Facilities.

Following on from the success of The Message Stick, a committee be formed to gather stories from members who have Correctional Facilities as part of their recovery story. Like our 2nd Edition Big Book and the Message Stick, the stories would have a distinctly Australian flavour.

Our GSO stocks books from the Grapevine who have successfully harvested the pages of the Grapevine to publish theme-based books. We have already proven we can also publish theme-based books.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

The 2nd Edition Australian Big Book proved that Australians will buy literature with an Australian voice.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

That a book be published with stories from Australian AA members who have encountered Correctional Facilities.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

The Grapevine books that are sold by the GSO are all US stories. This book would have Australian stories.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

From speaking with a couple of printers, a softcover 80-page A5 book would cost about \$4.20 to produce.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

This has the approval of the National Correctional Facilities Coordinator.

Notes:

TOPIC #017/2024: (Past Delegates and Trustees – Service Manual)

Suggested rewrite for the section on Past Delegates and Trustees in the Service Manual THE AREA PART 2 pg 15. See attachment.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?

The rewrite offers suggestion as to how past Delegates and Trustees can best be of use to AA and is in line with the Spiritual Principles contained in The Twelve Steps, The Twelve Traditions and The Twelve Concepts for world service, especially those of healthy rotation and participation in reasonable proportion.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTED SOLUTION?

See attached.

HOW WILL THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS OR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BENEFIT FROM THIS SUGGESTION?

Maintaining a healthy General Service Structure will preserve Alcoholics Anonymous for the Alcoholics still yet to be born. AA servants with experience can be useful in encouraging and supporting those new to General Service. Healthy rotation of leadership is one of AA's guiding spiritual principles. Leadership in AA ever a vital need essay in Concept 9 and written by one of AAs co-founders suggests AA needs leaders and what qualities AA leaders require.

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS SUGGESTION?

Nil.

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR GROUP, DISTRICT OR AREA TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THIS TOPIC AND, IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Multiple discussions with past Delegates and Trustee seeking guidance in the content of the rewrite.

ATTACHMENT – THE AREA PART 2 Pg 15

suggested re write

PAST AREA DELEGATES AND TRUSTEES CAN BE HELPFUL

AA has a wealth of AA experience in the form of past Delegates and Trustees that can be considered within the Area Structure. While the AA spiritual principle of rotation prevents Delegates and Trustees from succeeding themselves or from returning as a Delegate or Trustee; a role for past Delegates and Trustees can often be found that does not interfere with responsibilities of the current Area Committee and Delegate. Primarily past Delegates and Trustees are found actively encouraging and supporting those new to General Service. It is suggested that past Area Delegates and Trustees not hold office as GSRs, DCMs or Area Committee officers, but find other ways to become involved in Area service, at the request of Area Committees. It can be useful for past Delegates and Trustees to attend Area Assemblies and hold the position in the back of the room and share any history that may be sought and or useful to the Area Committee when invited to comment.

Past Delegates and Trustees might be asked to:

- Provide leadership and developing answers to various service or Tradition issues as needed.
- Chair Area sharing sessions.
- Conducting workshops or orientation meetings for newly elected GSRs.
- Chair Regional Forums.
- Support Area PI&CPC activities.
- Become ex-officio, non voting members of Area Committees.
- Be called in from time to time for consultation or for a special assignment.
- Hold the job in the back of the room as Institutional history on rare occurrences can be useful.
- Share lived experience of The Principles of the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for world service, in the form of workshops.

Some Regions hold regular Delegate meetings that invite past and current Delegates and alternates. The purpose of these meetings is typically to help new Delegates prepare for Conference and to strengthen the lines of communication among the General Service Conference, GSO, and the GSB and can be a valuable way of passing experience on to new Delegates.

Notes:

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