

AA Structure Review Plan



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Introduction

The 2015 Australian General Service Conference set up a Structure Review Committee of Delegates and Trustees to formulate a plan of how to conduct an inventory of the Australian AA Structure. This document is the Committee's suggested Structure Review Plan. Its research into the 2015 Topic is in the separate document titled Investigations.

The Structure Review Committee acknowledges that all AA members are part of a great whole and our common welfare comes first: universal respect is the key to our usefulness—principles before personalities. The Committee is thereby very conscious that any process that could result in any substantial change to the AA structure in Australia needs to be mindful that the three Legacies of AA are Recovery, Unity and Service.

Essential Functions for any Australian AA Structure

Any new structure must be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. The Structure Review Committee advises that any re-structure of AA needs to ensure entities exist to perform at least the following functions:

Public Information:

Australian AA needs to have a 'front door' where the public and national media can access our overall public relations and Non-Alcoholic Trustees as our spokespersons. GSO in New York also formally delegates to Australia responsibility to carry the AA message in Asia and Oceania.

AA Literature:

Some legal entity is required to hold the Australian copyright and protect AA trademarks as well as approve, publish and supply AA literature to members and the public. Please note carefully that carrying the AA message in Australia is substantially funded from profits made from the sale of AA literature.

Legal Entity:

Because AA must exist within the laws of the land, a separate legal entity must be the formal guardian of AA 'World Services' for Australia. It also has custodianship of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions within Australia. It needs to be legally empowered to act on its own responsibility, within the provisions of its charter and by-laws. These functions require some administrative support.

Australian Group Conscience:

The AA founders arranged for a single entity to have complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services. This would also require some on-going administrative support to coordinate or implement resolutions.

Public Liability Insurance:

Group office holders need the protection of public liability insurance.

Designing a simple national structure to best carry out these functions with neither gap nor overlap should be the primary focus of any process to review the AA structure in Australia.

Consultation Options

The general options to consult with all the Australian Fellowship include:

- a) A Topic to Conference seeking input from Australian Groups;
- b) A moderated online discussion amongst members over an extended period;
- c) Consultation between the General Service Board and Central Service Offices (including Richmond) then referring the matter to Conference; or,
- d) a special gathering of Fellowship representatives (endowed with a traditional right of decision) with responsibility to review the Australian AA Structure.

Concept I states that the final responsibility and the ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the 'collective conscience' of our whole fellowship.

Therefore, the Structure Review Committee contends that if Groups wish to make any change to the Australian structure, then there needs to be an Australian Collective Conscience within which God may express him- or her-self.

Representatives and Voting Rights

If Conference were to approve a special Australian Collective Conscience, the Structure Review Committee suggests the following types of representatives with voting rights would best ensure that all Australian Groups can be represented:

- i) One representative nominated by each Australian CSO, including Richmond;
- ii) Area Delegates to Conference;
- iii) Non-Alcoholic Trustees on the GSB;
- iv) Other voting Trustees on the General Service Board;
- v) World Service Delegates who have voting rights at the General Service Conference; and,
- vi) One representative of the General Service Office.

The Structure Review Committee expects that the number of CSOs, Areas and Trustees as at June 2016 remains more or less constant until the Collective Conscience convenes (i.e. no gaming of the numbers).

Suggested Program for Australian Structure Collective Conscience

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Day 1			Presentations on: Purpose of the Gathering Meeting Processes Key Structural Issues
Day 2	Presentations by Central Service Representatives	Presentations by General Service Representatives	Collective discussion & formation of Working Groups
Day 3	Working Groups Draft recommendation(s)	Collective Discussion of recommendation(s)	Vote on recommendation(s)

Process

AA Groups are autonomous and the primary source of authority for the Fellowship. Therefore, any process must involve Groups. Currently there are two established channels where Groups cooperate: Districts / Areas and Central Service Offices. This Structure Review Plan collectively refers to these two voluntary associations of Groups as 'Intergroups'.

If all Australian Groups are to accept any re-structure, interested members and AA entities must feel as though they have been involved in the process. Therefore, this Structure Review Plan suggests the following ten stages that seek to ensure that such an important decision is reached by discussion, vote and, wherever possible, by substantial unanimity (Concept XII).

- 1) Circulate Discussion Paper outlining current structure, its problems and options;
- 2) Members and Intergroups (CSOs and Districts / Areas) advise on any preferred structure;
- 3) White Paper circulated summarising the most popular structure(s) and listing any major issues to be resolved;
- 4) A series of Group get-togethers around Australia, preferably hosted by Non-Alcoholic Trustees or a friend of the fellowship with group facilitation skills;
- 5) Members and Intergroups (CSOs and Districts / Areas) consider their preferred structure and propose solutions to any identified issues;
- 6) General Service Board publishes its advice (including any relevant legal opinion);
- 7) Special Australian Structure Collective Conscience to meet with Intergroup (CSOs and Districts / Areas), GSB and GSO representation;
- 8) Any agreement to sit for one year of prayer and meditation and to permit any minority voice;
- 9) A final vote on any re-structure; then,
- 10) Implement any changes with a target commencement date of 1 January 2020 (half a century after the General Service Structure was adopted in Australia).

These stages are set out in the following timeline.

Date	Actions
2016 November	• Conference adopts Structure Review Plan for the Australian AA Structure
2017 February	• Structure Review Committee Discussion Paper circulated to the Australian Groups
2017 August	• Comments close on Discussion Paper
2017 October	• Summary of comments circulated in a White Paper to Australian Fellowship and in the Conference Folder
2017 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Service Conference to hold a half-day workshop on the comments (but <u>NOT</u> form a collective position) • Conference to consider a Topic that it is willing to transition to a new, more inclusive Collective Conscience for Australia (conditions may be attached, if necessary)
2018 Jan - Jun	• Non-Alcoholic Trustees or a friend of the fellowship host Group forums around Australia
2018 Jul - Oct	• CSOs and Districts / Areas (preferably jointly where co-located, or separately if they wish) to consider their preferred structure outcome
2018 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Service Board publishes its formal advice (particularly any opinion on the legal instruments) • General Service Board to advise if it is prepared to transition to a new structure endorsed by Australian Groups (conditions may be attached, if necessary)

Date	Actions
2018 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Structure Collective Conscience convenes (Conference does not meet in 2018). Threshold for any agreement is 75% of all eligible representatives in attendance for the vote
2018 December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any vote on structure circulated to Australian Groups
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any vote to sit without implementation for one year of prayer and meditation Any minority voice(s) circulated to representatives and Groups
2019 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Structure Collective Conscience to vote by post (75% majority again required; same membership as one year ago, although some representatives may have routinely rotated)
2019 December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final results circulated to Australian Groups
2020 January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of new Australian AA structure from 1 January 2020
2020 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Australian AA Collective Conscience replaces Conference as the group conscience of AA Australia

Budget and funding

The Structure Review Committee estimates that a national Structure Collective Conscience would cost \$78,433. The detailed calculations are set out in Attachment A. Please note that the 2014 Annual Conference cost \$47,000 and these Group contributions could go towards the structure gathering if Conference were not held in the same year.

The Concepts remind us that Groups rely on the power of the AA purse for their final effectiveness. Therefore, if the Groups want the Australian Fellowship to re-structure as a way of achieving Recovery, Unity and Service then they will vote with their prudent reserves. To put the full cost in perspective, it amounts to \$39 from each of the 2,011 Groups in Australia...and they have two years to save up.

Rather than set up a new financial structure for a one-off event, the Structure Review Committee asks the GSB to please consider paying for the venue (including basic conference equipment) and an independent facilitator. This would permit holding deposits to be paid and Fellowship funds to be audited. The table below suggests how costs could be met:

Venue & Facilitation	Travel & Accommodation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conference would invite donations from Groups, CSOs, Districts, Areas & members; Conference could ask the GSB to pay for the venue and facilitation costs; Fundraising efforts amongst AA members where the sole stated purpose is to host an Australian Structure Collective Conscience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each CSO would pay for their representative to attend; Areas would pay for their Delegates to attend (N.B. Conference levy would NOT apply that year); Areas may agree to cost equalisation to help distant Areas; The GSB would pay for Non-Alcoholic, Regional and General Service Trustees, WSDs and GSO Manager.

Should pledges fail to cover the venue and facilitation costs, 2017 Conference would need to resolve for any shortfall of venue or facilitator costs to come out of General Service funds. This would be offset from Conference agreeing NOT to convene in 2018.

Where

Any Australian Structure Collective Conscience should NOT be held in NSW or Victoria. Some preliminary research into suitable venues and costs of travel and accommodation should help decide between other major centres, including Canberra, as the best location. The Collective Conscience could even be held during University vacation to make use of campus facilities, including college accommodation, at a lower price for the Fellowship.

Facilitation

Any Australian Structure Collective Conscience should be chaired by a person experienced in facilitating large gatherings towards consensus. Note that some research has shown that women chairs usually achieve better outcomes if conflict is present. It would also be best to use someone who was completely independent: this could be a professional facilitator sourced from, for example, the Australasian Facilitators Network or an AA member from overseas...but not from GSO New York to ensure that body is not compromised by Australian processes.

Who does the work?

If 2016 Conference decided to proceed with this Structure Review Plan,

- Report, Charter & Service Manual Committee would be asked to advise on necessary changes to the Charter. (Redrafting the Service Manual would come later);
- Class A Trustees would be asked to host forums for Groups in each State; and,
- The General Service Board would be asked to formally advise on any legal issues that any re-structure would need to take into account.

Conference may extend the Structure Review Committee where continuity, relevant skills and significant experience of Central Service would be factors to consider.

The Committee could invite members who are neither Delegates nor Trustees to assist with the work. While some of these seconded people may be willing to donate their time as service, others may need, by prior arrangement, to be paid for professional advice in accord with Concept XI.

If an Australian Structure Collective Conscience were to occur, it may require an independent part-time Secretariat to coordinate the consultation process and logistics of the event. The Secretariat would cooperate with but function outside the GSO and other existing AA entities. Staff need not be members of AA and the function could even be contracted out to a commercial service.

Conclusion

The Structure Review Committee advises Conference that the Australian AA structure could be reviewed at a cost that is manageable by the Australian Groups. Should any review vote in favour of structural change, a new structure could be functioning from 1 January 2020; this would be half a century after Australia

adopted the North American model in 1970. Even if no change results, the Structure Review Committee believes the process outlined in this Structure Review Plan would be, after 46 years of the General Service Structure, a worthwhile exercise and recommends it to Conference.

ATTACHMENT A: Estimate of the Cost of a Collective Conscience

Suggested Costs for GSB

The Structure Review Committee asks the GSB to please consider paying for the venue (including basic conference equipment) and an independent facilitator. As part of the venue package, GSB also ends up paying for Saturday and Sunday sandwich lunches plus tea and coffee for all 61 attendees.

Having the GSB pay for the venue:

- solves the problem of the Groups finding the funds to pay deposits in advance;
- avoids having to create new but temporary AA bank accounts; and,
- ensures that expenditure is properly audited.

The table below suggests indicative overall GSB costs:

Item	Estimate
Hire of 3 Conference Rooms with equipment (includes tea, coffee and 2x lunches)	\$9,950
Independent Facilitator (Nominal Estimate for OS Travel and Accommodation)	\$3,000
Travel to Canberra for 12 Trustees, 2 WSDs and GSO Representative	\$5,839
Taxis & Transfers	\$1,200
Accommodation at University House for 3 nights	\$6,300
Breakfasts & Dinners x3	\$2,250
TOTAL	\$28,539

Suggested Costs for CSOs and Areas

Each CSO and Area needs to calculate its costs for the following:

- Return coach, train or airfares (or reimbursement for car expenses) from its location
- Taxi or transfers to and from airports
- Accommodation in Canberra for 3 nights
- Transit accommodation, if necessary
- 3 Dinners and Breakfasts.

The table below estimates the overall cost for all 46 CSO and Area representatives:

Item	Estimate
Travel	\$19,994
Taxi & Transfers	\$3,680
Accommodation	\$19,320

Item	Estimate
Breakfast & Dinners	\$6,900
TOTAL	\$49,894

To put that total in context, in the 2014–15 financial year, Areas paid \$44,009 in Conference Levies. This suggests they would be able to comfortably fund their total costs for a 2018 Collective Conscience if they agreed to cost equalisation.

CSOs would need to pay their own Delegate's travel and accommodation (or make their own cross-subsidisation arrangement amongst themselves).

Conclusion

These two estimates amount to a total of \$78,433 for 61 representatives to convene in Canberra.

As a cross-check, the 2014 General Service Conference cost \$47,043 for 32 attendees. At that rate per person, 61 attendees would scale up to \$89,676. The lower figure of \$78K can be explained because University House Hall can accommodate either 32 or 61 attendees and only two break-out rooms would be required.

Therefore, the Structure Review Committee concludes that the

ESTIMATED TOTAL COST for a Collective Conscience = \$78,433

Or, expressed another way, if all 2,011 Groups in Australia contributed equally to fund a Collective Conscience in 2018, it would equate to a contribution of

\$39.00 from each Group.

Assumptions:

- a) Canberra was selected for this indicative calculation; other options may be available
- b) Collective Conscience will convene in late November on a Friday evening, meet all day Saturday, Saturday evening, all day Sunday and conclude on Sunday evening
- c) 61 official representatives will attend
- d) University House at ANU was chosen for these calculations because it offers both conference facilities and accommodation
- e) A main room needs to house all official attendees comfortably
- f) Two break-out rooms might be needed on Saturday evening and Sunday morning for official attendees to work on particular matters referred by the Collective Conscience
- g) Accommodation is 3 nights at University House at \$140 per night
- h) Breakfast and dinner allowance is \$50 per day per person
- i) Economy return airfares were calculated from prices offered on Webjet for the last weekend of November 2016 from a set of origins that reflect the likely location of representatives from the 21 Areas and 25 CSOs around Australia. The calculation allows \$100 return for Sydney or nearby representatives to drive or catch the coach or train rather than fly.
- j) Taxi or transfer costs are estimated at an average of \$80 per representative.