

# THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL

## SECTION TWO

# THE AA GROUP



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# 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>							
1/1 Garnet St ROCKDALE NSW 2216 PHONE: 02 9599 8866							
<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><u>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.</u></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							