

# 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 District Committee Member, or DCM, plays a vital role in general service. While the GSR is the voice of a *Group*, the DCM is the voice of a *District*, and a District needs a leader. The GSRs will look to the DCM for guidance on being GSRs and serving their groups. They will look to the DCM to lead when forming an agenda for District activities. They'll want to be inspired and encouraged, but not told what to do.

The DCM usually has GSR experience and is elected by the GSRs of the District to be responsible for and to represent the District. They are also responsible for carrying the collective Group Conscience of the Groups in the District to the Area Committee. The DCM is a vital two-way communication link between the Groups' GSRs and the Area Committee, including the Area Delegate.

### Qualifications

Experience of the Fellowship suggests that a DCM ought to:

- ♣ Have a background in AA service work that preferably includes a previous GSR role
- ♣ Have stable sobriety of approximately four or five years.
- ♣ Be familiar with both the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts
- ♣ Have the time and energy to perform the role and serve the District well.
- ♣ Be able to lead a District while respecting the conscience of the District.
- ♣ Have an email address or other easy way of maintaining contact with GSRs and other members

Each district decides how to weigh these considerations when voting for DCM and alternate DCM.

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 DCM's term of office is two years and generally coincides with the terms of the GSRs and Area Committee officers, except for the Area Delegate. Some Areas, however, rotate half their DCMs each year and others still just allow DCMs to join the Area Committee from the date of they are elected.

The DCM is however 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 that : the DCM can be chosen from among the new GSRs or from among both the past and present GSRs.

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 - however, the District Committee decides on who can run and how the vote takes place

Here are some methods that may be useful:

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. All past and present GSRs and District Committee Members are eligible to run and vote or, 4 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

If a retiring GSR, able and experienced, has the time and enthusiasm they can I 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.

The 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'.)
- Reach out to Groups in the District who do not have GSRs, in order to connect them to AA as a whole.
- 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, e.g., that their agendas 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 subcommittee).
- 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 interDistrict 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 DISTRICT COMMITTEE

Note: As the number of Groups, members and geographical size of each District within our Areas and Regions varies greatly, District Committees can adapt these suggestions to suit their situation.

### COMPOSITION

A District Committee is typically composed of:

- The current GSRs from groups within a District
- The DCM elected by the District's GSRs
- The Alternate DCM elected by the District's GSRs

Many Districts establish additional positions to serve on the District Committee. These include:

- District Treasurer
- District Secretary

Current GSRs may be eligible to serve in these positions. This GSR however would still have only *one* vote at the District Committee Meeting or Area Assembly.

## VOTING

All members of the District Committee may have a vote on District matters and in District elections. The District can decide if the DCM and the alternate DCM may or may not have a vote. Eligible Committee members can only have one vote.

## SCOPE

The District Committee may undertake a number of activities, within their district. Depending on the District and also its proximity to a Central Service Office, these may include:

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.  
Running workshops, rallies and local district activities etc  
Ordering, selling and distributing AA Conference-Approved literature.

## THE DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEETING

The DCM usually chairs the District Committee Meeting. All AA members in the District may attend the meeting and participate but only District Committee Members as outlined above can vote on District matters when a vote is required. It is better to obtain a sense of the meeting if possible, rather than have a vote.

The DCM in conjunction with the District Secretary (and other Committee Members if required) may set the agenda.

Meetings are held monthly, bimonthly or quarterly intervals, whichever is deemed most effective by the Committee and the DCM.

A District Committee Meeting may include the following:

- DCMs report on committee activities since last meeting. The DCM also reports on news, issues, proposals and future events from the Area and GSO. It is also important for the DCM to keep the GSRs informed about Conference activities, and they may assist the delegate in reporting the proceedings of the General Service Conference, either by organizing report-backs or delivering the reports to their Districts in lieu of the delegate.
- Secretary's report.
- Treasurer's report.
- GSRs report on what's happening in their Groups and may also present ideas to the District.
- Activities e.g. Treatment and Correctional Facilities, Public Information
- Special reports - magazine, literature, convention, etc
- Sharing Sessions.
- Workshops