

The Message

SPRING 2013

AREA G

Sydney's Inner West, CBD and Eastern Suburbs

93 Groups holding 132 AA meetings every week

Live Sober.

Live Free.



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Why all this insistence that every A.A. must hit bottom first? The answer is that few people will sincerely try to practice the A.A. program unless they have hit bottom. For practicing the A.A.'s remaining eleven Steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic who is still drinking can dream of taking. Who wishes to be rigorously honest and tolerant? Who wants to confess his faults to another and make restitution for harm done? Who cares anything about a Higher Power, let alone meditation and prayer? Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry A.A.'s message to the next sufferer? No, the average alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, doesn't care for this prospect -- unless he has to do these things in order to stay alive himself.

Under the lash of alcoholism, we are driven to A.A. and there we discover the fatal nature of our situation. Then, and only then, do we become as open-minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be. We stand ready to do anything which will lift the merciless obsession from us.

Step 1, Alcoholics Anonymous 12 steps and 12 traditions.

MEDITATION ON “FUTURE”

‘The family may be possessed by the idea that future happiness can be based only upon forgetfulness of the past. We think that such a view is self-centered and in direct conflict with the new way of living.’ (*Alcoholics Anonymous* page 123)

‘You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are hundreds. High and low, rich and poor, these are future fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you will escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of “Love thy neighbor as thyself.”’ (*Alcoholics Anonymous* page 152)

‘The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because AA’s Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit— well symbolized by anonymity—is the foundation of them all. It is AA’s proved willingness to make these sacrifices that gives people their high confidence in our future.’ (*Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions* page 184)

Independent USA study into AA

A study of the behavioural changes arising from being a member of AA found that the Fellowship most helps its members in two ways:

- ❖ it brings together people to support each other in sobriety; and,
- ❖ it increases their confidence to survive social situations without a drink.

To tease out how AA works, the study simultaneously looked at the relative importance of various mechanisms such as: changes in social networks; maintaining motivation; confidence in the ability to cope with the demands of recovery; decreased depression symptoms; and, increased spirituality.

Apart from the key results listed above, the study also found that: *“greater participation in AA during the first three months of the study period was independently associated with more successful recovery over the following year.”*

A spokesperson for the study team, John F. Kelly, said: *“The results suggest that social context factors are key; the people who associate with individuals attempting to begin recovery can be crucial to their likelihood of success. AA appears adept at facilitating and supporting those social changes.”*

John F Kelly is director of the Addiction Recovery Management Service at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, and also Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

More than 1,700 people in nine centres in the USA participated in the study. Attendance at AA was voluntary and two other alternatives were offered.

Source: Sue McGreevey: *What makes AA work?* Harvard Gazette 12 September 2011
<http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/09/what-makes-aa-work/>



In an interview broadcast on ABC Radio National’s Health Report on 5 August 2013, John F Kelly added that the participants were followed for up to three years.

He noted different results for men and women. The study found that AA seemed to offer men a social network of sober friends so they could remove themselves from their drinking buddies. AA also gave men confidence to cope in high risk drinking situations.

The same was true of women, but only to about half the amount as men. However, women benefited more from AA improving their confidence to cope with things like depression, anxiety and anger without having to drink.

Source: Radio National Health Report Monday 5 August 2013
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/healthreport/alcoholism-and-alcoholics-anonymous/4865338#transcript>

Conference Approved, Not

Consideration of proposed literature items consumes a large proportion of Conference deliberations and effort behind the scenes. But it is very worthwhile: for example, since 2009, Conference has been putting together a new edition of the Big Book featuring Australian stories in the back. However, it won't be ready for release until 2015 which shows how long it can take to prepare a new item of AA literature and have it approved by Conference.

We are all familiar with the many items of AA literature that is 'Conference Approved', but what does Conference reject? Below are some of the literature items that the group conscience of AA in Australia could not see fit to approve.

The Promises

Conference has repeatedly declined to publish the promises (page 83 of the Big Book) in any other form, including banners and cards, because it says members are better served by reading them in the context of the Twelve Steps.

Who We Are

This proposed flyer failed to get approval because Conference believed that existing AA Conference approved literature already contains the same information.

Chairing AA Meetings

Conference reckoned that guidelines on chairing AA meetings were not necessary as the subject is covered in existing AA literature, particularly in the *'Australian AA Group Handbook'*.

AA Calendar

This idea came up in the early 1990s, and the GSO investigated the cost and development of such a publication. However, Conference considered that a calendar with a page for each month is an unnecessary item.

A Group's Responsibility

Conference considered a flyer dealing with 'a Group's responsibility' was unnecessary because the subject is well covered in the *'Australian AA Group Handbook'*.

Two Arms of Service

1992 Conference agreed with the need for an informative brochure about the two arms of service, General Service and Central Service, but sought a simpler format than the one submitted. 1993 Conference circulated a draft 'The Two Arms of Service' to Central Service Offices and Areas for further discussion with a view to producing a document acceptable to both arms of service. All replies were supposed to be presented to the 1994 Conference, but it disappeared without trace.

Alcoholics Anonymous and the Early Bottom Alcoholic

Conference declined to approve this proposed brochure.

Alcoholics Unplugged

Conference rejected the draft booklet 'Alcoholics Unplugged' because the facts were not from an identifiable source; there is too much emphasis on Christian religion; and, it addresses issues outside AA.

(cont'd)

Conference Approved, Not (cont'd)

Treatment Facilities Manual & Correctional Facilities Manual

1998 Conference recommended production of both an Australian Treatment Facilities Manual and an Australian Correctional Facilities Manual.

However, 2004 Conference cancelled the project because, by then, significant initiatives were being taken at Area and District level which precluded the need for National Manuals.

Tradition Three

Conference declined to produce a new pamphlet on Tradition Three: The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

The Concepts

Conference rejected a proposal to produce a pocket version of the Twelve Concepts.

3rd, 7th & 11th Step Prayers Card

Conference decided against a card featuring the Third, Seventh and Eleventh Step Prayers.

Recovery, Unity & Service

After a re-vote and Minority Voice, Conference finally rejected, by a vote of 20 to 10, production of an item on Recovery, Unity and Service.

Traditions Workbook

Conference declined to produce a 'Twelve Traditions Study Workbook' on the grounds that there is ample AA literature on the subject.

Australian AA Meetings Directory

1963 Conference asked for an Australian AA Meetings Directory as soon as possible. A quarter of a century later, Conference agreed NOT to print a national directory of AA meetings but refer members to 'AA Around Australia' where phone numbers are supplied for all service offices. Another decade on, Conference again recommended that the General Service Board produce a directory of all Groups and Central Service Offices. Finally, in 2007, Conference declined by a vote of 29 to 3 to print a national meeting list because of the difficulty of keeping it current. However, there is a database of meetings on www.aa.org.au

Conference Approved and Non-Conference Approved

Most interestingly of all, Conference rejected a proposal to produce a pamphlet explaining the difference between Conference Approved and Non-Conference Approved literature.

So how can you tell? Below is the registered logo that only Australian Conference Approved literature may carry.



Topics of Conference! ALL GROUPS!

Please see the aaservice website to access 2013 Topics of conference. All area groups get to vote on the topics at group conscience and the GSR to represent their voting at Area Assembly on Sunday October 20th 10am – 12 Midday at the Joseph Sargeant community centre in Prospect St, Erskineville.

Treatment and Correctional Facilities report.

Forensic Hospital

The Forensic Hospital meeting is a little different to other treatment facilities meetings in a number of respects. The personnel there make it very clear that it is not a correctional facility but a treatment facility; however, the people who are in the Forensic Hospital are there because they have committed a serious crime, but due to reasons of mental illness can't be tried or sentenced. The forensic Hospital is a high security area.

For AA members who are going the first time there are requirements, namely the usual 100 points of ID. In my case a drivers license and Medicare card were sufficient. An electronic fingerprint is then taken and a retina scan. There are now 12 regular attendees at the meeting that runs for 1 hour from 2:30 every Sunday. If there were 20 people all it would require is for each AA member to attend 1 meeting per month.

For more info pls email: areagtandcf@hotmail.com or call Chris S on 0404519465. Chris S – TandCF coordinator is rotating off as of this edition. Area G is grateful to Chris for his service. If interested in this position please email areagaasdney@gmail.com

Ted Noffs at Randwick

.....are looking for volunteers to speak every second Wednesday at 6:30pm. Please advise your groups. Contact person is Natalie from Baulkham Hills 0419 210 541.

RE-HAB TAG-ALONG.

Join Chris S from GSO and others carrying the message to still suffering alcoholic.

Further information: areagtandcf@hotmail.com or Chris S: 0404 519 465.

Sunday 20th October 7:30pm	Ward 64	Conference Room 1, Hospital Road Concord Near No.2 Entrance
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THE SERVICE EXPERIENCE.

THE MESSAGE spoke to Stephanie B about her recently completed rotation as the Chairperson of the Area G Public Information and Co-operation with Professional Community Committee.

What motivated you to take the position and what were the primary responsibilities?

Early on in my sobriety I got the message that to maintain a happy sobriety, I had to give "it" back, to carry the message to the sick and suffering. Therefore I don't say 'no' to AA, when I can say 'yes.' It keeps my alcoholic mind clearer. Now, I can't honestly remember how I got on to the PI/CPC committee except I took it over from another Erskineville Group member. And I imagine I must have put my hand up, or someone did that for me!

I chaired the bimonthly meetings for 2 years, and for 6 months before that I was a member. I saw the Chair role as one in which I would try to support any ideas that the Committee believed shared what AA does with the public. We supported the ideas with time, advice, experience and sometimes funds. And we were realistic. If someone brought in an idea and the Committee supported it, it was that person's job to run with it!

How did it help you to carry the message of AA?

It surprises me that there are still people out there that either haven't heard of, or don't know much about what AA is (and isn't). We put up a few good initiatives whose primary purpose was to introduce various members of the public to AA, to the message of hope that it offers. We circulated Doctor's Packs, Gratitude Cards in general circulation through the Post, Local Meeting Brochure drops and held a PI Lunch to share AA as a resource with the police, ambulance workers and nurses, people who would meet alcoholics through the course of their daily work.

What would you say to someone who has never done this type of service and is hesitant to get involved?

Although my actions are generally in the right direction, my thinking can still be backwards. I go into service opportunities with leaden thoughts like: "this will take up all my time and be painful," but it wasn't. My thinking is often wrong, and I got more back than I gave. Just do it, because it is love in action, and I want to pay back all the love that AA has shown me, and continues to show me.

What are the benefits of doing this type of service?

You get to meet the generous souls from all over town, and even around Australia that love AA, all trying to get AA out there into the hearts and minds of the communities in which we live. You get to be the message of AA to the public, and see their faces when they realize all that AA has to offer to the suffering that they see. That's pretty inspiring.

Area G Money

GSO (General Service Office)

Group contributions June to August:

Bondi Beach Sea Change \$262, Coogee Living Sober \$100, The Into Action Group \$300, Leichhardt Saturday \$200, Newtown Saturday Night Sober \$300, Paddington Saturday B'fast \$90, Paddington Shy Sharers \$390, Randwick Steps and Traditions \$300, Surry Hills Wed 6pm \$72, Vaucluse Tuesday Night \$140, Wesley Groups \$500. Total Area G: \$2,804.00

Donations to Area G from groups June - August:

Bondi Junction \$100, Rainbow Recovery \$16, Sea Change \$89, SNS Newtown \$100, Vaucluse Tuesday Night \$46, Paddington Sat morning \$30, Leichhardt Saturday \$100, Paddington Shy Sharers \$130, Wesley \$167.

Total: \$778

Contributions to General Service Board TBC
Treasurer maintains a prudent reserve.

CSO (Bondi Crypt Central Service Office)

CSO is above prudent reserve.

Volunteers are needed for the phone diverter service and Literature sales. Please contact CSO on 9389 6333 (office admin number) for more information.

*CSO wishes to offer funding to active sub-committees of Area G in order to better facilitate these committees in carrying the message of our fellowship to the wider community. It requires these sub-committees to submit written requests for approval by outlining:

- 1 - The goal of the project.
- 2 - The timeframe of the project.
- 3 - A breakdown of costs for the project.

AA Cards

\$1.50 each

Buy from CSO
the Crypt,
Bondi

6 Designs

A5 size

Blank Inside

Contact Details
on Back



LIVE SOBER. LIVE FREE.

WWW.AA.ORG.AU
02 9387 7788

Group Profile: The Rocks Breakfast Group.

“Solid Foundation. Rock Solid!”

If you come to The Rocks, expect to hear this in when someone declares they're a group member. This was penned by a visitor many moons ago and makes reference to certain passages in the Big Book, such as “Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place?”

Located within the sandstone basement of G'day Café on George Street, The Rocks is a structured group that focuses on recovery from alcoholism. Currently, it conducts 10 meetings a week in a variety of formats. From Monday to Fridays, meetings start 7am and centre around two readings – *As Bill Sees It* and *Daily Reflections*. The weekend begins at 8am.

Additionally, there are three night meetings, which all start at 6pm and are one hour in duration. Except for Friday night, which also features the above readings, Monday is a Beginners meeting. This includes a 20 minute guest speaker, AA question time and general sharing. Wednesday night is a Big Book study. A significant part of the group structure is the Group Conscience, which is held every three months. Group issues are discussed in various capacities, ranging from service position reports and rotation of secretaries. Service is encouraged and members have many opportunities to represent the group in other roles, such as Chairperson, Treasurer, General Service Representative (GSR), Central Service Representative (CSR) and Public Information (PI).

The group endorses sponsorship and offers temporary sponsorship to anyone wanting help with the Twelve Steps. There are approximately 50 group members, who come from a diverse cross-section of age, background and length of sobriety. They are certainly not a glum lot and had loads of fun to celebrate The Rocks' 20th birthday on the 19th September. They also run a Christmas meeting every year in the beer garden of the Orient Hotel. Of course, there is no beer.

Despite the structure we see today, the group had humble beginnings. A founding member, working night shift in the area, was finding it difficult attend meetings. He just happened to be eating at G'day Cafe at the time and thought the space below could suit a breakfast meeting. He approached the owners with this in mind and the rest is history. While it has taken time for the group to form and grow, its first meetings had support from other AA members, such as John R, who attended regularly and contributed to its tone and strength.

The appeal of the meetings was (and still is) its location and proximity to the city. This was ideal for International visitors or those working in the CBD. In addition, it was one of the few breakfast meetings around and that focused on the solution from alcoholism, rather than the problem. It has also been a good starting point for those in short term rehabs and detoxes.



Coming events

The National Convention

49th Australian National Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous at Adelaide, South Australia: April 17 to 21, 2014

<http://www.aaconventionadelaide2014.org/>

International Convention

2015 Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.

www.aa.org

51st New Zealand Annual Convention:

17-19 January 2014 at Dunedin

More info at www.aaconvention.org.nz



NEW SOUTH WALES:

The Byron Bay Convention 4th-6th October "Keeping It Simple"

Byron Bay Community Centre, 69 Jonson Street, Byron Bay

For registration and enquiries: byronbayconvention2013@gmail.com

Phone: 0478021158

Blue Mountains Rally at Lawson: 2nd-3rd November, 2013

Mid Mountains Community Centre - 7 New Street, Lawson

Forster - 22nd Annual Rally: 18th - 20th October at Camp Elim

12 km south of Forster - more info at aaservice.org.au

National Public Information and Cooperation with Professional Community FORUM - 26th & 27th October 2013

at Kogarah NSW

Kogarah Storehouse Cnr. Gray & Kensington Streets,
Kogarah NSW

Blue Mountains Rally at Lawson: 2nd-3rd November, 2013

Mid Mountains Community Centre - 7 New Street, Lawson

A weekend in the Triangle at Campbelltown: 23-24 November

At Maryfields Hall Narellan Rd, Campbelltown