

# Archive From:

## AA around Australia (GSO) August 1993

### Conference Theme, 1993

# “UNITY THROUGH RESPONSIBILITY”

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At the General Service Conference held in September 1992 for next year's Conference the theme UNITY THROUGH RESPONSIBILITY was suggested to the Conference by the Conference Agenda Committee and accepted by the full Conference.

In previous issues we have discussed the Conference Theme from the individual member/Group and Area Assembly/Conference perspective. We say how individual members learned to be responsible within the Group's structure, working towards the common good. We abandoned our will and began the task of “working with others” towards a common goal. “Working with others” may take the form of 12 step work, sponsorship, or acting as secretary, treasurer or the Group Chairman. It may be accepting the responsibility of sweeping the floor of the Group's meeting place, washing the dishes. It might be being the group member prepared to accept the responsibility to do the job not being done on the night. In this way if there was a job to be done there was always a member of the Group willing to serve the other Group members and visitors at the group's meeting.

In a word this “working with others” is called Service. It is putting myself out, doing something that I don't want to do, being responsible.

When we have learned to “work with others” within the Group they may elect us and give us the responsibility to be the General Service Representative (GSR). We saw that the principles learned at the Group also applied in the District/Area Assemblies. Once again “working with others” meant serving for the “oneness of purpose” to get the job done.

We saw how the Area Assemblies send a Delegate to the annual Conference held in Sydney on the 3rd weekend in September. The Conference is the Group Conscience of the Fellowship Australia wide. The Conference formulates policy for the future direction of AA in Australia. The Conference is not the seat of “Government” in A.A, they are there only to do the will of the Fellowship. Conference is a bit like an Annual General Meeting of shareholders. The delegates have the “proxies” to vote for members in their Area. ***The Group member tells the Conference what they want rather than the Conference telling the Fellowship what it wants.***

If the Conference is not the “**Government**” then it must be the General Service Board? Again no, ***the General Service Board is the servant of the Fellowship. The Board has two primary functions. Firstly the law of the land says that there must be somebody to take responsibility in the legal sense for the daily workings of the “business side” of AA. The “business side” is the printing and distribution of Conference Approved Literature. Because this part of AA is a commercial enterprise we must act responsibly within the larger community. Another part of this first function is the***

***custodianship of the Fellowship's Traditions. The Board is responsible to the Fellowship to remind those of us who in a flush of enthusiasm break our anonymity at the level of press, radio, films or TV. They also oversee the orderly PI work that we do in our communities and generate interest in our Fellowship within those communities.***

The second function of the General Service Board is one which I wish to address in this issue. This function is once again the one we learned in the Group Service. The General Service Board is made up of twelve members, four Class A Trustees non-alcoholics. They are members of the community who serve our Fellowship for no fee. They wish to help and carry the message of Hope where we as alcoholics cannot go. Then we have 6 Regional Trustees, alcoholics, one from each of the AA regions in Australia: -

The 6 Regions are: Western Region - all of Western Australia. Central Region - all of South Australia. Southern Region - all of Victoria, Tasmania and the Murray River border districts of New South Wales. Eastern Region - all of New South Wales (less the fore mentioned border districts) and the ACT, North Eastern Region - all of Queensland, Northern Region - all of the Northern Territory.

Finally there are two General service Trustees, also Alcoholics, from the Sydney region and experienced in commercial management. They assist the day to day running of your General Service Office. They also, with others, serve on the trustees Coordination and Review Committee to assist the progress of all committees in reaching the goals set at the Conference.

The Board meets three times a year, in February/March, July and at the Conference in September. As a Board they put into place the mechanisms to implement the Advisory Actions from Conference. Some of these Advisory Actions are the policy and direction which the Group Conscience of the Fellowship wishes for the General Service Board to implement. Others are requests from the General Service Office to action. How does this work? Who does the work?

The Area Assemblies through their Delegates at Conference direct the Board to do certain things (Advisory Actions). The Board decides how to do it, usually by accepting recommendations from one of its committees. The GSO then does the legwork. So the Area Assemblies are like groups of shareholders in AA. The Board is the Manager and the office is the Board's trusted servant.

Each service entity has the responsibility to carry out the direction given by the previous service entity. When this is in place and working we have within the Fellowship UNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

***In the opening address given in 1954 by Bernard B. Smith, non alcoholic Chairman of the North American Board of Trustees said, "We may not need a General Service Conference to insure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in AA that rebirth which brought us back to life.***

***We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must insure can never invade AA. We need it to***

*ensure AA against government, while insulating it against anarchy: we need it to protect AA against disintegration while preventing over integration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services. We need to insure that changes within AA come only as a response to the needs and the wants of AA, and not of any few. We need it to insure that the doors of the halls of AA never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to insure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.” The Australian AA Service Manual, p. 40.*

*When the Conference meets and keeps in mind the above sentiments the Conference is not a seat of “Power” or “Government”. Rather the Conference is a place where the welfare of others is uppermost in the minds of the Delegates, petty parochial views are put aside and the “Big Picture” is seen.*

The General Service Board, the General Service Office and the General Service Conference are the servants of the Fellowship. By 2/3 majority vote decisions are made which create the future direction of our Fellowship. That 2/3 majority voice which formulates the policy comes only from those Groups which participate at Area Assemblies. *It is therefore only a small part of the Fellowship which participates in the General Service Structure. Of the approximately 1700 Groups, less than 50% choose to have a voice at Area Assemblies.* As a Fellowship then we are not being either UNITED or RESPONSIBLE.

## A Member's Research – January 2012

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Today in 2012 there is over 1900 groups in Australia with 19 Delegates to Conference. On average, there are only about 15 GSR's participating in Area Assemblies around Australia. *This is an average figure based on hands – on research.* This means only about 285 groups participate in the National (General Service Structure.) This today shows that the voice in the General Service Structure is only about 15%.

## Where is the Victorian Office At?

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The Victorian CSO is in very positive shape, both in terms of morale and finances.

As you can all see, by the monthly financial mail outs to all affiliated Groups, AA Victoria is in a strong financial position. There is also a large nucleus of committed members working at their office; there is a strong sense of unity and commitment to our primary purpose despite any negative distraction and rumour.

In service to Alcoholics Anonymous,

Your trusted servants at your office ☺