

## Groups, Meetings, Public Liability and Dogs

The Area E Committee and GSRs' have been discussing AA members' understandings of Groups, Meetings, and issues of Public Liability insurance cover and 'Dogs' at meetings.

In all matters, AA members can be guided by the Three Legacies of AA: recovery, unity and service;

- the suggestions for Recovery are the Twelve Steps
- the suggestions for achieving Unity are the Twelve Traditions
- the AA principles of Service are expressed in the Twelve Traditions, Twelve Steps and Twelve Concepts, and enables our Fellowship to function and serve its primary purpose of carrying the AA message to all who need it and want it.

The quotes below on Tradition Four are from pages 146-7 of the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions written by Bill W. to share 18 years of collective experience within the Fellowship of how AA members recover and how our society functions. These quotes may assist AA members in their understanding of an AA group.

"... we had become sure that an AA group exactly like the individual, must eventually conform to whatever tested principles would guarantee survival. We had discovered that there was perfect safety in the process of trial and error. So confident of this had we become that the original statement of AA tradition carried this significant sentence [in Tradition Three] 'Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that as a group they have no other affiliations'.

This meant of course, that we had been given the courage to declare each AA group an individual entity strictly reliant on its own conscience as a guide to action. In charting this enormous expanse of freedom, we found it necessary to post only two storm warnings. A group ought not do anything which would greatly injure AA as a whole, nor ought it affiliate with anything or anybody else."

At page 140 of Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, Bill W. states that "Action to carry A.A.'s message is therefore the heart of our Third Legacy of Service" and then provides a simple answer of what 'service action' takes in.

The Australian AA Group Handbook is a suggested guide for setting up and running an AA group. Some of the issues contained in the Handbook for guidance are:

- AA's Single Purpose [Tradition Five (Long Form: Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity *having but one primary purpose*-that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers)].
- The importance of anonymity [Tradition Twelve]
- What is an AA group and what do AA group members do;
  - > most members meet in AA groups as defined by the long form of our Third Tradition
  - > In Area E, details of AA group meeting locations and times need to be notified to the Northern Sydney Central Service Office at St. Ives as well as the General Service Office of AA Australia at Arncliffe, in order that the AA group is registered, listed on the AA website and in AA meeting publications
  - > examples of where gatherings of AA members are AA meetings are also provided
- Suggested AA meeting procedure
- The AA home group
- Self-support [Tradition Seven]

- Trusted servants (AA group office bearers) needed; Secretary, Treasurer, General service representative, Literature co-ordinator, Central Service Office representative, Group Public Information representative
  - The principle of rotation
  - What happens at a group conscience meeting and what is an informed AA group conscience
  - Public liability insurance
    - > the Australian AA General Service Board has organised public liability insurance cover to protect AA members when carrying out their functions at AA Group meetings and activities throughout Australia
    - > where required, an AA group's office bearers may need to obtain particulars of the public liability insurance policy conditions and cover from the General Service Office of AA Australia at Arncliffe
- [Whenever public meetings (of any nature or for any reason) are held, the law says that the persons who organise such meetings have a range of legal liabilities in respect of the people attending those meetings, this is called "public liability" and the public liability insurance cover is intended to cover an AA group's office bearers' legal liabilities.]

In being responsible an AA group's office bearers ought to:

- inform both the Northern Sydney Central Service Office at St. Ives and the General Service Office of AA Australia at Arncliffe of their group's details; and
  - ensure that all conditions for the conduct of an AA meeting and activity are complied with.
- [The provisions of the public liability insurance cover, conditions for hire of some meeting venues and other requirements may exclude animals on the premises, particularly dogs other than accredited assistance dogs.]