

## **AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS**

### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA AREA INCORPORATED ASSOCIATION**

#### **WA AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE DELEGATE'S REPORT from AUSTRALIAN SERVICE CONFERENCE 3 – 5 May 2024 “Service Makes A Difference”**

Good morning and welcome everyone. Thank you for coming along today to participate in the information sharing as I present my report from the Australian Service Conference. The Delegate's role at this Assembly is as a conduit of information between AGSO and WA Area and vice versa. At Conference we were reminded that we were the voice of all members.

I was looking forward with excitement to attending the Australian Service Conference this year, having been nominated in my own right at last year's Away Assembly, for a period of three years.

I briefly considered that this time around at Conference may not be the same experience as I had previously, however I kept an open mind, to listen, learn and be ready to embrace and absorb as much as possible, all the information I was going to hear and I was not disappointed! Just as amazing!

On arrival at Melbourne airport I caught the Skybus into the City and wandered up to the AGSO with my trusty suitcase – first things first with a cuppa and catch up with AGSO staff and then to business where I was able to use a computer and follow up on emails and collect my folder. Many pages of 'light reading'.

The venue for Conference was held at Caroline Springs, a suburb around a 50 minute drive from the City. Accommodation was in a 2-bedroom, 2 bathroom apartment which was very comfortable, kitchen facilities, lounge/dining area where we held brief information-sharing together during breakfast time before starting our day at 9.00am, therefore making each moment count.

My preparation for Conference including familiarizing myself with various Reports from the eight other Delegate's, AGSO, General Secretary, Chairs of Selected Committees and Motions from the previous Conference in 2023 to list a few.

My Delegate's Report to Conference, a 5-10 minute verbal presentation on the theme of this year's Conference – “Service Makes a Difference” which will be an article for the Austra-Link together with other Delegates' theme talks, a summary of my full report, A Getting to Know you Session' where we were asked pre-determined questions on the highlights, challenges, successes of our experiences during the year.

This year was a first for a zoom in meeting for Al-Anon members to participate in the Friday night session of 'Getting to Know You". I had been invited to participate in the skit on the importance of having current meeting list details and what could happen when the information was not current. Despite a few technical glitches, feedback was great! My ad-libbing provided humorous moments.

#### **To Conference:**

Our day commenced on Friday with a 9.00am start and finished around 9.00pm and would sometimes finish around 9.00pm or later during the three day Conference.

Catering was either in-house and/or at a restaurant off-site. Ourselves and our dietary requirements were very well looked after.

Walking to and from the restaurants was a great idea - to be outside and exercise in the Melbourne weather which was very pleasant.

My focus was to learn as much as I could and remember so that I could present my Report to you with as much information as possible.

Personal conversations were limited as I was very keen to hear from other Delegates and AGSO and to discuss Al-Anon business on what works and what doesn't. An exchange of information and ideas and solutions for me to share with you, keeping in mind to take what we like and leave the rest.

Conference began with an acknowledgement and relevance of a bell received as a gift to all IAGSM (International AI-Anon General Service Members) from the Mexican Delegate. The Conference commenced at 9.00am sharp with the Steps, Traditions and Concepts read. Well wishes from members were received and read out including one from Cindy S.

A table card was in each Delegate's allocated table space with Information about speaking through the Chair, Ros. M. who reminded members about cross-talking, and that Agenda timelines would be kept as close as possible, however we were there to discuss and reason things out.

### **Australian General Service (AGSO) Structure**

The Australian General Service Office is headed by a General Secretary with assistance provided by Administrative Staff, volunteer Chairpersons of Selected/Advisory Committees, other staff and volunteers. These assistants handle the many and varied tasks associated with the efficient operation of our services.

#### **AGSO Members**

Helen G., General Secretary, General Service Board (GSB), IAGSM Delegate, Executive Committee

Ros M., Deputy Gen Secretary, GSB, Executive Committee

Tanya J., Chairperson GSB, IAGSM Delegate

Lyn W., Treasurer, GSB, Executive Committee

Lois A., GSB, Chair Archives Advisory Committee, Executive Committee

Gillian B., GSB, Chair Nominating Committee

Wendy E., Austra-Link Editor, Executive Committee

Dianne C., AGSO Finance Manager, Executive Committee

Sylvia S., Chairperson Public Information Committee, Executive Committee

David B., Chairperson Conference Committee Executive Committee

Celeste G., Chairperson Literature Committee, Executive Committee (absent)

Veronica A., Chairperson Alateen Advisory Committee, Executive Committee

Claire J., AGSO Literature Officer

Jenny A., Conference Co Ordinator (absent)

Jess D., AGSO Office Manager

#### **Conference participants:**

##### **Delegates:**

Judith B., Western NSW, Hilary B., Southern NSW, Dianne K., Nthn NSW, Rosemary L, Sth Victoria, Aileen W., Stand-in Delegate Nthn Qld, Sandy F., SA., Margariete H. Stand-in Delegate Nthn Victoria, Amy V., Sth Qld, Maureen S. WA.

**AGSO Members:** General Service Board: Tanya J., Chairperson of the GSB and IAGSM Delegate, Gillian B., Vice Chairperson of GSB and Nominating Committee Chairperson, Helen G., General Secretary and IAGSM Delegate, Ros M., Deputy General Secretary and Conference Chairperson, Lyn W., Treasurer, and Lois A. GSB member. Executive Committee: Sylvia S., Acting Chairperson PI Committee, Veronica A., Chairperson Alateen Advisory Committee, Dianne C., AGSO Finance Manager, David B., Chairperson Conference Committee and Wendy E., Editor Austra-Link. AGSO Administrative Staff: Claire J., Literature Officer, Jessica D. Office Manager, Conference Minute Secretary.

Apologies: Celeste G., Chairperson Literature Committee and Jenny A. Conference Coordinator

**Opening of Conference:** Ros M., Conference Chairperson Ros warmly welcomed all Conference members and read from Sharing From the Heart

The meeting layout of seating and tables were configured in an oblong shape with the top table consisting of Helen G. (General Secretary), Ros M. (Chair), Jess D. (Minute Taker) and Wendy E. (IT), responsible for PowerPoint presentations, typing up of Motions and relevant wording in Minutes, for accuracy of what was actually said and recorded. They were reflected onto a screen for viewing by all present.

### **Check on 2023 Conference Decisions:**

MOTION 1: That the Slate of Nominees for the General Service Board, Lois A., be approved.

As from the Annual Meeting of the Board 2023, Lois A. began her first year of a 3 year term on the General Service Board in her own right, having previously completed Helen G.'s term when she became the General Secretary.

### **General Service Board: Tanya J., Chairperson.**

We commenced the year in January 2023 with an informal meeting to review AGSO's Strategic Plan and decide on our goals for the next 12 months.

In 2023, the General Service Board (GSB), in its legal and financial capacity, took the following actions:

- Approved the AGSO budget for 2023.
- Accepted Jenny A.'s resignation from the position of Deputy General Secretary of the AGSO and Sustaining Trustee and appointed Ros M. to the position of Deputy General Secretary.
- Approved the Financial Report, the Financial Statements and the Independent Auditors Report for the year ending 2022.
- Agreed to use the Commonwealth Bank's CommBiz system to make electronic payments
- Approved local printing of the new daily reader B-34 'A Little Time For Myself' and set the sale price.
- Held a Special Meeting to accept a new Constitution which replaces our previous Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The General Service Board in its oversight capacity:

- Approved the Delegation of Authority Policy.
- Approved the Purpose and Duties document of the AGSO Finance Committee.
- Approved Guidelines G-7 AI-Anon/Alateen Participation in an AA Convention/Event and G-12 How to Start an AI-Anon Group in Australia.
- Approved Tanya J. as a Delegate to the 2024 International AI-Anon General Services Meeting subject to traditional approval at the 2023 ASC.
- Appointed David B. as acting Conference Committee Chairperson (February 2023) and then subsequently appointed into the role (May 2023).
- Approved Tanya J. and Steph M. as the AGSO representatives at the 2024 AA National Convention in Adelaide.
- Agreed upon a requirement for all GSB members and AGSO staff to obtain a Working With Children Check.

### *Other Activities of the Board:*

Various Subcommittees and Task Forces met during the year to deal with ongoing and specific projects, including:

- A new Property Lease and Relocation Subcommittee was formed to investigate possible future office space, due to lease expiry at the current premises in July 2024.
- Technology Subcommittee including Website Update: The new website was launched and office technology was reviewed and updated including and electronic cloud storage. Staff and volunteers have received relevant training.
- Strategic Plan: The Strategic Plan 2021-30 is regularly reviewed and updated, including a full day in August, with goals set, objectives added, and priorities established. It was extremely pleasing to see a number of these goals and objectives successfully achieved in 2024, particularly the updated website that included online literature ordering and credit card payment facilities.
- Group Registration: Investigation of all aspects of group registration, including procedures for Electronic Groups. Updated guidelines G-7 AI-Anon/Alateen Participation in an AA

Convention/Event and G-12 How to Start An Al-Anon Group in Australia were approved.

- Risk Management: The Board now has this as a regular Agenda Item to ensure important legal, financial, and health and safety issues are flagged.

**Discussion:**

Currently the Area Alateen Process Person isn't required to have a WWCC (or equivalent) however this will change when the Alateen Safety and Behavioural Guidelines are updated – hopefully later this year

**AGSO Strategic Plan: 2021-2030**

The 'What' to achieve the goals, and the 'How' to do so.

The Strategic Plan was introduced by Tanya J. (Chair General Service Board, IAGSM (International Al-Anon General Services Member) outlining the goals achieved:

**Conference Discussion 1. AGSO's Constitution:**

In 1980 the national body of Al-Anon Family Groups in Australia was incorporated as a company, Al-Anon Family Groups (Australia) Pty Ltd, with the members of the General Service Board as Directors, Shareholders and members of the company. was approved.

However, as company laws changed, several amendments were made to the Memorandum of Articles up to 2020.

AGSO was advised to change to a constitution instead of a Memorandum of Articles of Incorporation. Over the period of 2021 to 2023, a new constitution for Al-Anon Family Groups (Australia) Pty Ltd was finalized. They are now working on one supporting document, Guidelines for the Trustees, containing important procedures and information which is not covered in the constitution. A Special Resolution of the General Service Board was convened on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to adopt the new constitution, it was proposed and carried unanimously. The Australian Service Conference was asked to give its traditional approval to this change of the governing document of Al-Anon Family Groups (Australia) Pty Ltd.

**Nominating Committee: Gillian B.**

The Nominating Committee is made up of all members from the General Service Board. Gillian B. (Chairperson). The Committee met four times this year prior to the General Service Board meeting. The role of the Nominating Committee is to meet and discuss the current, 'potential' and 'future consideration' placement of members to the GSB and Selected/Advisory Committees. We identify any obvious vacancies, service positions due for rotation, and suitable candidates.

**GENERAL SERVICE BOARD:**

Ros M. was appointed as Deputy General Secretary and a Sustaining Trustee on the General Service Board in April when Jenny A. retired from this role.

Lyn W., Out of Town Trustee (OOTT), completed her 3 year term at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors in May 2024. The Nominating Committee sought a suitable member from any Area in Australia to fill this vacancy but was unsuccessful as at December 2023. Other prospective Board members were sought to fill the two vacant positions but unfortunately our efforts were unsuccessful.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE POSITIONS:**

David B. was appointed as Chairperson of the Conference Committee in April. Sylvia S. was appointed as Acting Chairperson of the AGSO Public Information Committee.

Stephanie M. completes her 3 year term as Chairperson of the AGSO Alateen Advisory Committee in April 2024.

**SLATE OF NOMINEES**

There is no Slate of Nominees for the General Service Board to submit for the traditional approval of the 2024 Australian Service Conference.

Members of the Board invite all Delegates to join them in searching for new members interested in service at the Australian General Service Office (AGSO). Nominations for service vacancies need to be received at the AGSO no later than 1st December 2024.

Update: Veronica A. has been appointed as the Chairperson of the AGSO Alateen Advisory Committee as of April 2024.

## **Discussion:**

Usually we only have one Out of Town Trustee however when we can't find a suitable In Town Trustee we can have two OOTT

### **General Secretary: Helen G.**

2023 was another exciting year at AGSO with some significant technological developments, several wonderful trips to Areas and Districts around Australia either in person or virtually, and the pleasure of working with such an amazing team of staff and volunteers in our office.

AGSO Staff and Volunteers:

Jenny A. was thanked for the incredible job she had done over the previous 12 years as Deputy General Secretary. Ros was appointed as the new Deputy General Secretary in March and is providing me with great support in addition to the PI tasks that are part of this role.

I attend the office regularly to connect in person with each staff member to check in with what I can do to assist them in their respective roles.

We have regular volunteers attending the office to help with sorting of Archives, Austra-Link collating, assisting Claire in the Literature Department or generally helping out where they can.

Jess continued to be an incredibly valued member of the team working closely with myself and Ros on many projects, providing assistance with other staff members, being a wonderful host to our VIP volunteers and visitors, as well as her usual management of the large number of emails and other correspondence.

The Executive Committee Orientation/Induction process has been updated to provide newer members of the Executive Committee clear guidance on their roles and responsibilities. At all levels of service it is important to properly prepare members with the knowledge and understanding of the scope of their role, expectations and obligations. This is reflected in the increased number of questions and concerns I receive about members holding service positions at an Area level and not fulfilling their responsibilities Areas:

There was quite a bit of travel in 2023 which started with a trip to Tasmania to be at the St Helens Rally and then the day after returning home, myself and Lois left for Cairns to start the North Queensland 'road trip' presenting three TEAM Events in Cairns, Townsville and Mackay with visits to several of the local meetings. It was a very busy time but an incredibly successful trip: even resulted in two members taking on service positions. Shortly afterwards, I attended the AA National Convention with AI-Anon and Alateen Participation in Perth which was also a huge success.

I also attended the Northern NSW Area Assembly in Port Macquarie in June. A busy but thoroughly enjoyable weekend and a good example of what can happen at face to face Assemblies where three vacant service positions were filled. I doubt this would have happened if the event was held online. I attended the majority of the Southern Vic Assembly online on the same day as I was asked to provide a demonstration of the new website to the Southern NSW Area Assembly. I also attended the North Queensland Assembly in person where members expressed their relief at the significant difference in atmosphere and spirit compared to the same event last year.

I was asked to facilitate a 'reset/refresh' meeting with as many members of the Southern Victoria Area Service Committee and the Association Committee early in the year where clarification and agreement about roles and responsibilities was discussed.

We asked the South Australia Area to host AI-Anon and Alateen participation in the 2024 AA National Convention in Adelaide on AGSO's behalf. Lois acted as the AGSO Liaison on the Planning Committee. Late in the year I attended the WA Area Election Assembly which was a great success with Maureen S. being elected to serve a term as Area Delegate in her own right. My travels also included doing a road trip with Maureen visiting many of their country Groups. We covered over 1000 kilometers and met many lovely AI-Anon members. A local member also arranged for myself and another very new member to be interviewed on ABC radio Perth which was broadcast throughout the whole of WA. One lady, who I had the privilege to meet, heard the interview and came to her first meeting on the following Thursday night.



Helen gave an overview of the role of AGSO staff and volunteers who provide an enormous amount of assistance with many and varied tasks, phone calls, archives, Austra-Link collating, helping out with literature or wherever they can.

At all levels of service it is important to properly prepare members with the knowledge and understanding of the scope of their role, expectations and obligations.

Travel to Groups and Areas including WA featured in Helen's report. We attended the Away Assembly in November and then undertook a 1350 km road trip visiting South-West Groups. An AGSO representative had not visited these groups previously. It was such a rewarding experience for all concerned, reassuring AI-Anon members that they are not alone, regardless of distance between and the importance of face-to-face meetings to build rapport and relationships, for members to be listened to and heard. We were able to have individual meetings on occasion with members which again very rewarding and grateful to be part of.

Travel far and wide is an important part of my role and one I take willingly.

### **Technology including website:**

Our technology plans continue to evolve and expand with some basic training sessions for staff and volunteers in file storage and the use of Microsoft TEAMS. After many months of hard work by our website designer and substantial preparation from many at the AGSO, the new website was launched on Thursday the 26th October, although this unfortunately wasn't without some significant glitches. The online literature store is a great success with consistent orders flowing in.

### **Lease renewal or relocation:**

Our current office lease ends in July 2024. Given the extremely low standard of management and maintenance we have received and the high vacancy rates in the city, considerable consideration was given to relocating. A report was also presented to the Board regarding the cost of purchasing some office space. It is important for us to regularly review the cost of purchasing vs leasing so our members can see we are committed to the ASC decision many years ago that if it was possible financially, we would consider buying our own property. Although it is pleasing that the current cost of office space has reduced significantly, this isn't a reality for us at the moment.

The Board agreed to commence a commercial property search which will accommodate AGSO and Victorian Southern Area offices. We are working with a commercial leasing consultant who is offering his services pro bono.

I am honored to be trusted to hold the position of General Secretary for the Australian General Service Office and am indebted to the amazing team of staff and volunteers who help make my job a pleasure.

### **Updates/ Discussion / Questions:**

- Will there be another Membership Survey – Yes next year.

Is it possible to have time zones on the meeting information on the website? – Will ask the website developer.

### **Deputy General Secretary: Ros M.**

I started working with Jenny A., the previous Deputy General Secretary, learning this job on 1st March 2023 and officially became the Deputy General Secretary on 16th April 2023. I would like to thank Jenny A. very much for all her support and patience.

Minutes: I set up the zoom meetings and take the minutes and distribute them for the Executive Committee and the Literature Committee meetings and assist with the Public Information Committee (PI) meetings. I also take the minutes for General Service Board meetings which is face to face on a Saturday 4 times a year. It's great to be doing a face to face business meeting. It allows the conversations where we talk together and reason things out to happen much more naturally. Contact Emails: I answered the contact emails that came in through our old website. These were often 12th Step queries, or at times members looking for meetings or asking for AGSO's help in finding something. There were 193 contact emails during 2023 from our old website. This is much lower with the new website. We believe that the website itself is providing the answers for people searching for help from AI-Anon.

Strategic Plan: I wrote the notes to summarise our Strategic Planning Day held in August before our GSB meeting. I also updated our progress for our February GSB meeting.

PI Committee: We were very sorry to hear of dear Cheryl's passing. She had recently completed her term as the PI Committee Chairperson. She helped me a lot both personally and with understanding Public Information.

My work with the PI Committee includes:

- Attending the bi-monthly PI Coordinators meetings. These are for sharing ideas and providing support.
- Social Media: Liaise with Belinda G., Erin K. and the PI Committee, to help with developing a process for Facebook and Instagram updates. In 2024 the PI Committee wishes to review how we can best use these platforms for AI-Anon's benefit especially given the information we received from WSO that we can only repost their posts without any changes and cannot use any of their images for our own posts. They informed us that the cost of licensing images outside of the USA was exorbitant.
- Membership Survey: Developed answers to the 194 questions that were asked by the membership at the end of the Membership Survey. These were grouped into topics that included: Changing the Steps/Traditions including how to read them out, references to God, Gender specific language, updating CAL, Sponsorship, Service, Sharing, 3 year terms, Public Information, Anonymity and more. Working with the General Secretary: My role as the Deputy General Secretary means I need to be aware of and understand much of what Helen is involved in. A few of the things I've worked on with Helen include:
  - Liaising with a PHD Student, Clare Rushdon, who was developing a survey on how other people's drinking or drug taking affects them.
  - Visiting potential new office space.
  - Reviewing, with others, the 2023 Conference Summary.
  - Discussing the website such as the best places to put links and documents, and different wording.
  - Initial discussions of the Groups Records database.
  - Developing policies and occupational health and safety in the office.
  - Budget issues and Conference Equalisation amounts.

#### **Questions/Discussion:**

- Can any member around Australia help with the production of Spread The Word? - Yes
- Members can't develop their own Guidelines. If a new one needs to be developed or one updated – please contact AGSO.

#### **Public Information: Sylvia S.**

Cheryl C. completed her three- year term in May 2023 (but remained as a member of the committee) and Sylvia S. commenced in October. Sadly, Cheryl passed away in November. Her presence, knowledge and energy are sadly missed. She was an inspiration to us all. The PI Committee of six (6) meet monthly on zoom, planning and passing on the message of hope. LinkedIn: Our network of professionals on LinkedIn has continued to increase. The site has 6000+ followers. We send out invitations to specific sections of the professional community to link with AIAnon Australia each month. Work is in progress developing webinar presentations for our LinkedIn professionals. The WSO is interested in what we are doing with LinkedIn, they are amazed at the success we've had.

Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube: Work to optimise these resources continues. Note: AGSO Social Media posts can be shared but not added to (pg. 128, Social Media – Individual Members 2022-2025 AIAnon/Alateen Service Manual).

Downloadable Posters: There are two Alateen, and four AI-Anon posters available for download on our Australian website. The QR code with our website address has been added to the posters. We received permission to rebrand using the Australian website information and QR code anything that WSO has on their website.

Community Service Announcements (CSAs): We have 8 radio Community Service Announcements available in MP3 format ready to download and send to radio stations with the accompanying Letter of Introduction.

TV advertising: Research was done into the cost of paying for TV advertising. During the day will cost \$25,000 for 2 weeks for Melbourne only. A National campaign would be around \$60,000. Another option is BVOD which is catch up TV. This would cost about \$15,000 for Melbourne only or around \$40,000 nationally. The other option is radio, where we could do a great campaign for around \$10,000 for 2 weeks or a national campaign for around \$30,000. However, the advice we have received from advertising experts is that we would need to have the campaign to go over several months to be effective. AGSO has decided that this level of expenditure is not viable at this stage.

Visibility of Al-Anon Family Groups at Major National Conferences: During 2023, we had a local member present a session called 'Supporting Families Living with Alcoholism to Support Treatment Outcomes' at the A-Z Addictions Conference on the Gold Coast in May and another local member attend the Stop Domestic Violence Conference in Hobart in November. Attendance at these conferences helps the name of Al-Anon Family Groups become more widely known and understood in the professional community. The Board has approved \$3,000 for the 2024 budget to attend three conferences a year in relation to domestic violence, addiction, and mental health.

Media Releases: Our 2024 budget includes money to send out three media releases a year via MediaNet. The August one last year focusing on Alateen got a substantial response rate from journalists. We were asked to do two radio interviews as a result of this media release.

#### **Questions/Discussion:**

- Do we pay for LinkedIn? – No
- Can Area PI Coordinators send their Area PI reports to AGSO for inclusion in the Spread the Word? - Yes
- Can we use our Instagram and Facebook platforms for communicating with members around Australia/World? No, these accounts are for attracting new members to Al-Anon. Not for member to member communication.
- How long does an Area PI piece last? For as long as the Area wants. But when a new one starts the old one needs to be retired.
- What is the process for getting our TV ads shown? A local TV station can be contacted and given the 'key' numbers for the relevant ads (these are available from AGSO). If the TV station chooses to play the ads, we pay for the transfer of the file to their system. If an ad is shown it is good for members to contact the station saying how great it is so they may choose to play it again so that we keep the file in their system and not pay for each time it is transferred.
- What does the PI Committee do in relation to Alateen? Every press release and LinkedIn post mentions Alateen and a dedicated press release for Alateen is done in August every year.

#### **Lone Members Coordinator: Lois A**

- Most Lone Members are living in WA, SA and Northern Territory with many Areas now having no Lone Members.
- It's difficult to ascertain how many on the list are current as only a few ever reply to emails from us at AGSO.
- Three new Lone Members were added to the list in 2023.
- We have many Al-Anon members who attend meetings who act as Lone Member Contacts and maintain regular communication with those who wish to have this service provided. They share the experience, strength and hope they get from meetings with their Lone Member. If anyone would like to help as a Lone Member contact please contact AGSO.

#### **Questions/Discussion:**

- Can Alateen members be Lone Members – Yes



## **Archives: Lois A.**

- The AGSO Archives consist of digital records (mostly 2012 to present), paper records (including correspondence and minutes), audio recordings, souvenirs from significant Al-Anon Alateen events Australia-wide and from international events such as International Al-Anon General Services

Meetings (IAGSM) and Al-Anon International Conventions. The collection is a comprehensive source of original documents relating to the history of Al-Anon Family Groups including Alateen in Australia since 1951 which is more than 70 years of our collective experience, strength and hope.

- The most common requests have been for information regarding the starting dates for groups with an upcoming anniversary planned.
- Storage of files and folders was reorganised.
- Scanning of paper documents to digital files progressed slowly but will speed up now that office relocation is happening.

### **Questions/Discussion:**

- Is there a guide on what Areas should be saving? Yes, G-30 Area Archives Guideline, but each Area can have their own policies on what they keep or not.
- NNSW lost all their Archives in the fire. Anyone with any materials relating to NNSW please pass them on.

## **Treasurer: Lyn W.**

Individual donations were \$22,000 below budget when the October Appeal Letter was sent out, which was very concerning, but by November the literature sales were 10% above budget, which helped to balance the budget a little. Large donations received from a couple of Areas (passing on excess reserve funds) have covered many of our expenses during the last year or two. We will need to find a way to cover those expenses once the Area reserves return to normal levels (six months expenses for an Area and 12 months for a General Service Office), but we trust that members and our Higher Power will provide the funds. We needed to draw from our own Reserve Fund during this year but are hopeful that in future this trend will be reversed.

I've carried out the usual tasks, such as writing Appeal Letters, reviewing finance reports and passing information to and from the Finance Committee, the Executive Committee, and the General Service Board (GSB). I worked with the Finance Manager and others on tasks such as keeping finance procedures up to date and providing information that helps the Board make sound decisions about larger expense items and strategic planning items.

No questions or discussion.

## **Conference Discussion 2: Area PI pieces: background**

Delegates were asked to email our current Area PI piece to the PI Chair for discussion at Conference. I emailed and also took a hard copy of the poster of a girl with her head in her hands and a flyer with "tear-off slips" and the national AGSO phone number.

The feedback for the poster was very positive and a couple of Areas expressed interest and a willingness to purchase the posters for their Districts. It may be considered as a national PI piece. A huge thank you to the previous WA Area PI Committee who worked very hard to develop the poster.

Guideline GX-7 Definitions of Public Information Items provides a definition of PI pieces as opposed to flyers and meeting lists: 'An Area Public Information piece: Each Area in Australia and in the World Service structure is allowed to have one locally produced item (poster or leaflet or card) for Public Information purposes. This may be a poster or item describing the purpose of Al-Anon Family Groups and encouraging potential members to attend a meeting. Area contact information can be included. Approval is required by AGSO and the WSO.' All Areas are free to utilise any of the PI materials that AGSO produces without requiring approval. Areas can only have one PI piece at a time.

The WSO manual under Outreach Publications—AIS/Area pg. 123 quotes:

“... the WSO extends permission to Al-Anon Information Services or Area World Service Committees for the production of only one publication for public outreach for distribution solely within their area of service, reserving the right to review the publication before printing and distribution in order to preserve Al-Anon’s public outreach message.”

**Questions/Discussion:**

- AGSO would like to keep a record of what Area PI pieces Areas currently have.
- Some Areas don’t know what their current piece is.
- Clarification provided on what the piece can be i.e. a pull up banner, poster, card, etc., that is produced within the Area, not a flyer for an event or a meeting list.
- All Area PI pieces need to be approved by AGSO – this ensures the message is consistent.
- If the new piece is using an image or poster produced by WSO, then permission is needed by WSO if the image or information is changed.
- All Areas are free to use any of the current AGSO or WSO pieces without permission. But they can’t be altered.
- GX-7 needs to be updated to provide more clarification.
- If an Area piece is suitable for national use it may be approved as an AGSO piece which any Area could use and it wouldn’t then constitute an Area PI piece. Our PI piece with the girl with her head in her hands was well received and Areas are able to purchase that flyer from our Literature Coordinator
- Can a QR code be included that goes straight to the Alateen page? – Yes, but we would rather newcomers go to the homepage to see other information available.

**Conference Discussion 3: Social Media, Facebook Accounts, and Trademark**

**Background:**

Did you know that there is only one Facebook account for Al-Anon Family Groups in Australia that is managed by AGSO? Individual members or Groups cannot create a Facebook account that uses the AlAnon or Alateen name. In addition, our World Service Office (WSO) has licensed trademarks on our logo, CAL and other images and information. There are legal restrictions on what we can use, distribute, and display. We will learn how members can use spiritual principles to help protect Al-Anon’s name and message of hope.

**Questions/Discussion:**

- It is ok to screen share the Preamble, Steps, Traditions etc. for online meetings.
- It is not ok to change the wording of the opening, closing, Preamble or the Steps or Traditions. This includes changing the gender or description of God.
- Great article in the Austra-Link last year about outside issues and link in the members section of the website about reading the Legacies out aloud.
- Screen shots of CAL are ok if only for the duration of the meeting. Not allowed to be emailed or put in the chat. WSO policy – now on the bottom of all Group registration forms.
- Welcome to Country is an outside issue – no place in an Al-Anon meeting. Not a reflection on the worthiness of the cause – Tradition Three and Five – primary purpose and the only requirement.

Anything else could dilute the Al-Anon program.

- Our Facebook pages are not a platform for members to post opinions on their recovery.
- It’s ok to share or like a post but not divulge you are a member of Al-Anon.

. 1 Unity, T 2. Trust, T3. Singleness of Purpose, T7. Self supporting, Step 12. Carrying the message.

## **Finance Manager: Dianne C.**

### **Achievements**

- Moving to TEAMS software to access and update documents
- Streamlining of information and systems management
- A balanced budget during a challenging period. We are extremely grateful for Areas passing on

their excess reserves. Without these, our financial situation would have been much more dire.

- Investment in the printing of B-34 A Little Time for Myself – A Collection of Al-Anon Personal Experiences well worth while with great sales to date
- Whilst individual donations are down, increased literature sales through the introduction of online purchasing on the new website and sales of the new book assisted in the provision of a net income for the year ended 31st December 2023 of \$2,966
- The Finance Committee had a Budget Task Force meeting in February to prepare the budget.
- Our audit was completed in March 2024 without issue.

The audited reports were presented to the Australian Service Conference.

The draft 2024 budget was presented to the Australian Service Conference and discussion was held around the expectation of expenses such as an imminent office move affecting our ability to budget for a surplus.

### **Questions/Discussion:**

- Do we get GST refunded? – Yes
- What was the \$60,000 for? This was a Term Deposit that matured and we needed to withdraw it to pay for the printing of the new book and other expenses at the time.
- It's ok to utilise the Term Deposits – that's what they are there for and we hope in time we can replenish them.
- Why didn't we make a donation to WSO? At the time we were in deficit. This will be reviewed again later in the year.
- A Finance Table Card was considered as an idea to help with improving members' understanding of the need to donate and ultimately increase donations, however Conference decided not to progress with this idea at this stage.
- Many ideas about how to improve donations, i.e. increasing fundraising to pre-pandemic levels, having a laminated card in the basket for members to have the bank account information, or a template for sharing on the screen in online meetings, selling merchandise i.e. pens etc.
- A webinar on Finances could be developed by AGSO for all members.  
I suggested if it would be possible for the Finance Committee to produce a card which lists all the payment details for donating including AGSO bank details, Give Now etc. so that we have the information to circulate to members so that they are able to donate easily. They have agreed to do so.

### **Website:**

The website continues to be monitored and updated with continuous improvement and is very easy to navigate the various and clear functions and contains a wealth of Al-Anon/Alateen information. Suggestions from members are welcome. I encourage you to check it out!

**Question:** Is it possible to have time zones on the meeting information on the website?  
AGSO will ask the website developer.

## **Conference Discussion 4: Registration of online meetings:**

### **Background**

Over recent years we have seen the emergence of many online meetings, which has been wonderful for making Group meetings available to more members and potential members than ever before. We know that many face- to-face meetings quickly converted to an online format, however many other online meetings have been created that weren't connected to a registered Al-Anon Family Group. We often get enquiries about online meetings that we have no contact details for, which makes it difficult to confirm if the correct information is provided on the website. Let's discuss how we can work together to ensure that records of all current online meetings are registered, updated and maintained. This is why I circulate the Group Update form so that our records remain as current as possible.

### **Questions/Discussion:**

- Hybrid is classified as any combination meeting
- AGSO only takes meeting change information from Areas not individual members.
- There is a difference between online Group and an online meeting. A Group is registered with AGSO. One group can have a multitude of meetings attached to it, but only one GR.
- AGSO needs to work with Areas to cross check the list of meetings to ensure they are connected to a registered Group, and if not, for them to register with AGSO.
- Every registered Group needs to have at least two members who are not also members of AA (so the Groups has someone who is eligible to be a GR).
- AGSO should have the contact details of at least two members for each registered Group

### **Conference Committee: David B.**

The Conference Committee oversees the planning and coordination of the Australian Service Committee each year. It prepares the Conference Agenda, compiles Workshops, allocates Delegates to chair specific Conference sessions, creates the Conference Summary for distribution and reviews all the Australian Service Handbook' for updates.

Planning for 2024 Conference themes, workshop ideas and Agenda items for this year's A.S.C. were requested in late 2023 and recommendations from the suggestions received were presented to the Board in November for approval.

Communication with all Conference members throughout the 2023 year included welcome letters to newly elected Area Delegates, the Equalization amount, Conference Agenda, Theme and Workshop and requesting an Annual Conference Report for the year January to December 2023..

*Background:* My allocated Select Committee for the next two years is the Conference Committee.

Towards the end of the year I inform the members about the Australian Service Conference planned for the following year and ask for suggestions on themes/ topics at an Area meeting and also place a request in the Reporter. There needs to be a submission as to why the theme or topic was suggested. The Conference Committee prepares and offers suggestions to the Board. I have sent a couple of suggestions already and I begin preparing my report for the next year's Australian Service Conference towards the end of the year.

### **Alateen Advisory Committee: written by Steph M., presented by Veronica A.**

Alateen Awareness Month in August 2023 was a huge success with the highlight being a national open online Alateen meeting. Over 60 members attended including approx. 12 teenagers, many of whom were happy to share or read some Alateen literature. It was a great opportunity for members, including many parents, to experience the amazing benefit of teens attending Alateen. We are planning to make this an annual event.

As a result of a press release with a focus on Alateen, we were also given the opportunity to be interviewed by two radio programs to talk about Alateen. Thanks so much to Veronica A. who was happy to make herself available at very short notice and I was also given the privilege to participate in an interview.

WSO have created an Alateen Electronic Feasibility Strategic Plan Project Team to investigate how best to integrate online Alateen safely into our structure. They are also planning to develop minimum standards for electronic Alateen meetings similar to the Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements developed in 2003. The WSO will have more information after the World Service Conference in April 2024 and hopefully be able to share their discussions with us just before our Conference in May. We currently have 4 face to face Alateen meetings (1 hybrid) and 2 online meetings.

Southern Vic Area has held some 'pop up' meetings in venues co-located with AA meetings over the school holidays.

Helen has continued to attend the Victorian Southern Area Child Safety Policy Subcommittee and we are hopeful of developing an updated national template for Child Safety Policy to be distributed to Areas after approval by pro bono lawyers. The new Child Safety Policy will be reflected in an updated version of the national Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements which need to include online meetings.

#### **Questions/Discussion:**

- Is the renewal of Alateen Sponsor registration always the 1st May? – Yes
- Queensland's Blue Card is the equivalent to a Working with Children Check in other states.

#### **Literature: Celeste G. (presented by Claire J.)**

- Best-selling books in 2023: B-34 A Little Time for Myself, 690, B-16 Courage to Change, 342, B-22 How Al-Anon Works, 191, B-27 Hope For Today, 142, B-24 Paths To Recovery, 127, B-6 One Day at a Time, 105.
- Best-selling pamphlets in 2023: P-6 Freedom from Despair 1681, P-14 So You Love an Alcoholic, 967, P-48 Understanding Ourselves and Alcoholism.
- Best-selling large pamphlets (Booklets): P-92 Reaching For Personal Freedom 144
  - Public Information items: S-17 and S-19, 20 Questions, 2328 and 2362, S-4 Information for the Newcomer 2180, M-76, Unhappy House Bookmark, 2616, M-12 Just for Today Bookmark 1134.
    - Eleven items were reprinted in Australia in 2023 including the new daily reader B-34 A Little Time for Myself.
    - Nine items discontinued including Audio CDs, Radio CSA CDs (now can be downloaded as MP3 files), Literature in Translation items deleted from AGSO Price List.
      - Many items have been made available for download from our website under member resources.
  - Items updated:
    - G-12 How to Start an Al-Anon Group in Australia - Update complete
    - G-7 Al-Anon Participation in an AA Convention – Update complete
    - P-46 WSC Conference Summary (annual distribution) – Reinstated in 2022
    - AGSO Literature Committee met monthly. Jenny A retired and Ros M joined the committee.
    - P-24/27 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual 2022-2025 became available at the start of 2023. Each group is advised to have a copy of this plus the Australian Service Handbook 2021.
      - B-06 One Day at a Time and B-04 The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage both had new introductions developed to help members see these books from an historical perspective
      - M-82 Just For Tonight Alateen bookmark was launched on 1st Sept 2023.
        - Much hard work was completed by Claire to create literature graphics, shipping information, etc. and to prepare each Area's Literature prices and postage rates so that the new website offers the option to buy literature directly from the website.
        - Because the e-commerce system connected to the website will only accept one bank account for payment via credit card, the decision was made to create a 'clearing' bank account. The orders and the payments are received by AGSO who then forwards the order and the payment to the relevant Area so that the local Area Office/Literature Distribution Centre can distribute the literature orders in a timely manner.

The new literature ordering system via the website has resulted in \$15,000.00 in sales being recorded with AGSO.

Free downloads are available and they are listed in our newsletter.

Table cards are available on-line under "Member Resources" P 117.

The Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual 2022-2025 – Each Group is advised to have a copy of this book, together with the Australian Service Handbook 2021.

**Questions/Discussion:**

- Who decides what literature is discontinued? Sometimes WSO discontinues, sometimes AGSO; depends on the item.

**Austra-Link: Wendy E.***General*

The following wonderful support ensures timely production and adherence to the principles of the program within Austra-Link's pages.

- Pre-printing of labels and regular volunteers Pat and Carol S. in the office have helped speed up our print/collation days.
- Editorial committee: Maree C., Maria W., Mary D., have been efficient and marvelous. A great support and very committed to Austra-Link.
- Final review by Lois A. and Helen G. is always accurate, timely and encouraging

*Production and Circulation*

- 205 subscribers to the e-version of Austra-Link distributed via Mailchimp
- Approximately 380 hard copy versions produced each issue
- Website no longer appropriate for download of full issues, but a sample Austra-Link is available with links to subscribe.
- New database should further streamline procedures.

*Content*

- Flow of shares has been more constant than previous years. This may be due to increased awareness through the website and ease of communication through the contact page. May the flow continue unabated.
- Shares are always very welcome and constantly sought. Area Delegates are urged to spread the invitation to contribute shares and encouraged to write articles for Austra-Link on their experience of service or any aspects of their AI-Anon recovery.

**Questions/Discussion:**

- Reminder that the Austra-Link copy that gets sent free to every Group belongs to the Group, not the GR or the CMA. (Contact mailing address)
- Important to still provide hard copies for those who want them, need to be inclusive.
- Austra-Link is a service tool, not a source of income.

***Gender Neutral Language:***

Gender Neutral Language has been discussed in depth at all levels of AI-Anon Service. The Policy is contained in the AI-Anon/Alateen Service Manual 2022-2025. AI-Anon World Service Charter Article 3-d. P228. "No changes are to be made in the AI-Anon or Alateen Traditions, the Steps, the Concepts of Service (except descriptive text), or the General Warranties of the Conference Charter (Item 12) without written consent of three-quarters of the AI-Anon Family Groups'.

Members can believe what they like and call their Higher Power/God whatever they like, but when reading the legacies, it is very important they be read as written.

As our co-founder, Lois W. once said 'We realized if the Steps were altered once, they could be altered again and again. Their meaning and power might be lost.. " Therefore, for the unity of worldwide AI-Anon, all members and groups are asked to honour the Legacies as written, as they reflect the informed group conscience of AI-Anon around the world.

**Newsletter Guidelines:**

The Newsletter Guidelines will be reviewed in due course. What is the purpose of the Area newsletter? – to communicate with the groups

***The 2023 World Service Office (WSO) Conference Summary***

The WSO summary is available for purchase at the cost of \$20.00. A copy is available in the office for your perusal. There is a wealth of information including sharings, one of which was read out by the Chair at Conference.



**AGSO Finance:**

Donations consist of 70% of AGSO's income and literature sales account for 30%. Unfortunately donations are down this year by around \$20,000.

It was suggested that an information sheet be created by AGSO displaying the various payment methods which can be used for donations. I am happy to report that it is on a list of tasks by AGSO.

As a reminder that Areas need only an ample reserve which is six months' funds in their account. Groups only need 3 months.

AGSO are very grateful for Areas passing on their excess reserves. Without them, their financial situation would have been much more dire.

Investment in the printing of the B-34 "A little time for myself" – A collection of personal experiences – has been well worthwhile with great sales to date.

**Things to consider:**

Birthday donation – how many years/months/days have you been in AI-Anon?

The Appeal letter which is circulated quarterly, listing the services which AGSO provide  
Dispel the myth – We do not live in poverty – use the reserve for AI-Anon as a whole.

**Setting up a bank account:**

AGSO will provide a template of a letter outlining the Not for Profit status if banks require it to open a Group or District bank account. Most banks also require a set of Minutes detailing full names of at least three signatories and a copy of our Constitution.

**Mythbuster:** Passing the donation basket – if a newcomer is in the room, they are a new member as soon as they walk into the room, therefore don't say "No need to donate".

To complete my very rewarding Conference weekend on the theme of "Service Makes a Difference", I attended the AGSO Board meeting on Monday held in the wonderful city of Melbourne.

In closing, I experienced abundance over the weekend with listening, learning, knowledge, humour, understanding and opportunities to network with other Delegates to share similar experiences and find solutions. To also acknowledge the very hard work with limited resources that the General Service Board, Executive Committee and AGSO staff provide for this wonderful weekend of education and information about AI-Anon as a whole.

Grateful thanks for the opportunity to attend and participate in the Australian Service Conference as the WA Area Delegate - a wealth of information and knowledge gained to endeavour to equip myself as a channel of information between us.

Heartfelt thanks also to all members of the Australian General Service Office (AGSO) for the commitment, love, wisdom and willingness demonstrated to me during the weekend, to share experience, strength and hope.

The following excerpt is from the June edition of the Austra-Link

**News and Views from AGSO**

Congratulations and thanks... to all members who attended the 2024 Australian Service Conference.

In 1975 Melbourne was chosen as the place for future Trials and Permanent Conferences. It is a positive technical advance that by using online platforms we can welcome members from everywhere on this vast continent to join in with our Friday night "Getting to Know your Conference Members' session.

This year was a delightful event, and the skit devised by Tanya J. emphasising the importance of accurate and up-to-date meeting lists, was well received.

Despite some technical glitches which impacted the experience of some on-line participants, it was great to have so many members attend. We'll continue working to improve the connectivity for all participants.

The theme was “*Service Makes a Difference*”, and this certainly evident over the days of the Conference. Over the coming months *Austra-Link* will include the talks on the theme for members to read and enjoy.

Delegates from all of our 9 Areas, members of the General Service Board, Executive Committee and AGSO staff reasoned things out and talked things through across three busy and productive days.

We can be assured that our fellowship is in safe and loving hands.

In Service  
Maureen S