

AREA D WORKSHOP

THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (AND ALTERNATE)

INTRODUCTION

SECTIONS

1. At a personal level
2. Plan of action

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your desire and willingness to serve AA. Welcome to learning more about your role and responsibility as the GSR or alternate GSR of your home group.

This document is an induction pack for GSR's of Area D in the Southern Region. It offers a starting point for your personal and general service needs. It is not a substitute for the service manual or any other personal or service literature. It is a basic reference to these.

Our hope is that you will offer your insight and experience in the ongoing development of this document by attending the annual Induction Workshop for GSR's and alternate GSR's.

As Bill Wilson said when members gushed about the benefits of sobriety and service,

“PASS IT ON”

SECTION 1 – AT A PERSONAL LEVEL

ROLE

The following is a summary from the Australian Service Manual on the GSR. (p 32-33)

NEEDS (Essentials)

- To be a good listener
- To be an information gatherer
- A keen interest in AA as a whole
- A willingness to serve AA

USUALLY HAS

- 2 to 3 years continuous sobriety
- The ability , time and resources for future responsibilities
- An awareness of the responsibilities required

LEARNS

- About the 3 Legacies

IS REQUIRED TO (These are basic and you may do any, all, or more depending on your home group and its members)

- Attend Group Conscience meetings
- Encourage support of any of the many Central Service Offices or Intergroups
- Inform their Group of agenda items discussed at district or area meetings

- Be aware of group members feelings on current AA issues and convey this to district meetings and area assemblies
- Participate in the planning and activities of district and area
- Reports back to group for the benefit of those who could not attend
- Remain a vital link of communication between the group, district and area.
- Pass on an understanding of the "AA Group Handbook".
- Advise the group about National Office services

That is the role of the GSR and Alternate GSR as describe in the Australian AA Service Manual. We will now look at the personal responsibility of an individual who holds in trust the position of GSR or Alternate GSR for their home group.

RESPONSIBILITY

I am responsible

When anyone, anywhere

Reaches out for help

I want the hand of AA

Always to be there

And for that

I am responsible.

The declaration of responsibility has been put on a banner that hangs at most of the meetings I attend. Do you know where it came from?

Based on the responsibility declaration the personal role of the GSR and Alternate GSR in the AA Australian Service Manual could be summed up as

THE REQUIRED

THE USUAL

THE LEARNING

THE ESSENTIAL

The practice and level of each will be different for each individual but can be summarised as a Responsibility R.U.L.E

REQUIRED – Attend home group meetings and group conscience, know about inter groups, attend district and area meetings and participate in their activities, become a vital link of communication and report back to home group (as distinct from group conscience), learn and teach the AA Group Handbook and be familiar with National Office services.

USUAL – continuous sobriety, time ability and awareness

LEARNING – 12 and 12, AA Comes of Age, Group Handbook, Pamphlet on AA How AA Tradition Developed

ESSENTIAL – listening, information, interest and willingness

The USUAL and LEARNING are most important to the individual

The REQUIRED and ESSENTIAL are most important to the common welfare

SECTION 2 – PLAN OF ACTION

WEEKLY – Attend Home Group. p15, AA Group Handbook

MONTHLY – Attend Group Conscience. p33, AA Group Handbook

QUATERLY – Attend District Meeting and Area Assembly. p27 AA Group Handbook

GRADUALLY – Sobriety, Maturity, Awareness, Knowledge

Attendance becomes participation as the **USUAL** and the **LEARNING** becomes the **REQUIRED** and **ESSENTIAL**. Then the hand of AA is truly there.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS (The Long Form)

Our AA experience has taught us that:

Tradition One

Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

Tradition Three

Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Tradition Four

With respect to its own affairs, each AA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect AA as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

Tradition Five

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.

Tradition Six

Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to AA should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An AA group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to AA, such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the AA name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, AA managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside AA – and medically supervised. While an AA group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An AA group can bind itself to no one.

Tradition Seven

The AA groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Australian AA Service Manual Section M12 6th Edition 2004 6 Then, too, we view with much concern those

AA treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated AA purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

Tradition Eight

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional.

We define professionalism as the occupation of counselling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Special services may be well recompensed. But our usual AA Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for.

Tradition Nine

Each AA group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a fulltime secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our AA General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our AA Tradition and the receivers of voluntary AA contributions by which we maintain our AA General Service Office at New York^{**}. They are authorised by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the AA Grapevine^{****}. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in AA are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles: they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

Tradition Ten

No AA group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, express any opinion on outside controversial issues – particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

Tradition Eleven

Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think AA ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as AA members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

Tradition Twelve

And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

Reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous pages 563-566

AREA D

March 2015

Area D is one of four geographical Areas in Victoria. It is bounded by the Yarra River to the east and the south through the city of Melbourne and from Alexandra across to Seymour, Heathcote and up to just under Bendigo (now with Area B) across the north. From Bendigo down to Maryborough and Ballarat and Geelong on the western side and back to Melbourne to just below Healesville and then back up to south of Alexandra again on the eastern side (see map).

There are five Districts which make up Area D:

Ballarat District - which comprises 14 groups.

Calder District – which has 36 groups (some of the city groups have formed their own Inner City District and do not participate in Area D - these are not included in the group count).

Geelong District - which has 19 groups

Plenty Valley District – this district is non-operational and contains 12 groups

Western Suburbs District - which has 20 groups.

Wyndham District - which has five groups.

Each District has a District Committee Member (DCM) who has a place on the Area D Committee and attends the Area D Committee meetings - which occur about a month before each Area D Assembly to set the Agenda and discuss any other matters which need to be presented to the member GSRs.

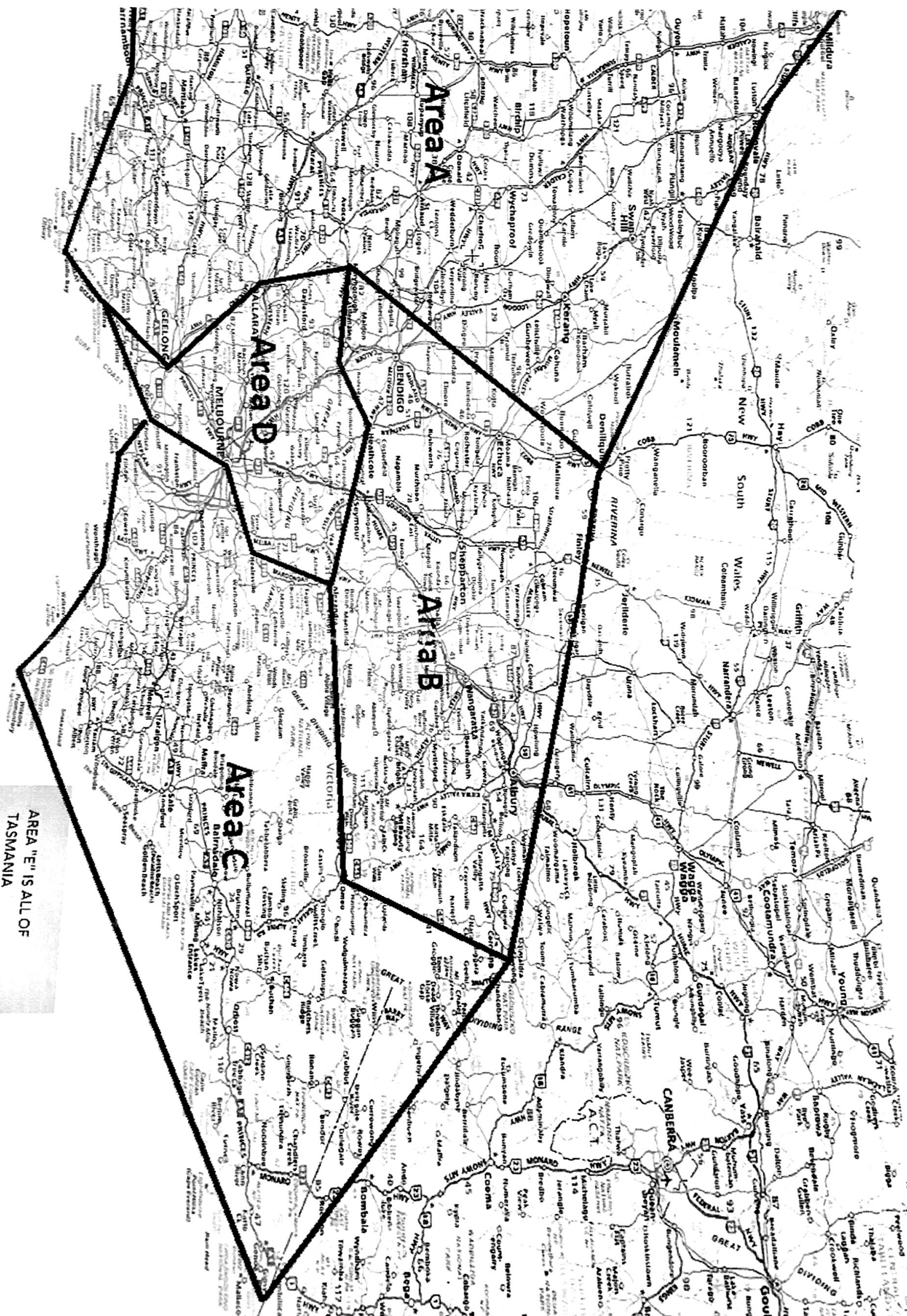
Some groups have more than one meeting attached to them. Some groups have moved with Bendigo to Area B (eg., Kyneton). It is up to the Group Conscience which District they belong to and sometimes new Districts form where they feel a need arises.

GSRs are the individual group representatives who vote on behalf of their groups at all motions presented at Area Assemblies. Most times the group conscience advises their GSR on how to vote - however, if a GSR is presented with additional information at an Area Assembly which changes the whole outlook of the group conscience decision - the GSR has the option to vote in a different manner and then must explain to their group why his or her vote was changed.

Any decisions reached at Area Assemblies are then taken by the Area D Delegate back to National Conference and the General Service Board for their attention and action.

Hence the group conscience is filtered up to National level via our Delegate and then finally to World Service Level by our Australian World Services Delegate. This is true democracy at work where even the minority voice is has a say.

NOTE: It is one vote per participant. Some people hold more than one service position - however, they can only vote once per motion. For example, an individual may be a GSR for a group and hold another position such as DCM for a District – they may wish to sign in under each position – but still can only vote once.



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GSR Checklist –

- ☐ Attend District and Area meetings and participate in their activities
- ☐ Attend Group Conscience
- ☐ Inform Group of District and Area agendas
- ☐ Report back to Group
- ☐ Advise Group about National Office services
- ☐ Be aware of Group members feelings on current AA issues and convey them to the District and Area
- ☐ Remain a vital link of communication between Group/ District/ Area
- ☐ Encourage / support Inter Groups
- ☐ Pass on understanding of AA Group Handbook
- ☐ Learning of Traditions and AA Comes of Age

Check those you are already able to do and those that you may need to become willing to do or others you may need to ask for help with.

Remember to Keep it Simple and all you need is to be Willing, Open and Honest.

THE GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

QUALIFICATIONS & DUTIES

The *General Service Representative* (GSR) is the link between the Group and AA as a whole and is probably the most important single factor in the whole AA structure. The GSR represents the voice of the *Group Conscience*, reporting the Group's wishes to the Area through the District Committee Member (DCM) and to the Area Delegate through Area Committees and Assemblies, from where it is passed on to the Australian General Service Conference. *Whatever authority there is in AA is vested in the Group Conscience, and is then conveyed by the GSR and/or the DCM to the wider AA community.*

Usually, the prospective GSR has two or three years of continuous sobriety in AA and has time available for District meetings and Area Assemblies. Because the GSR may become a Committee Member or an Area Delegate, the Group should consider whether a candidate has the abilities, the time and the resources for such future assignments. In order that a Group may make an informed decision in electing their GSR, they should be aware of the responsibilities the job carries. An effective GSR needs:

1. to be open minded and a good listener;
2. to be an information gatherer;
3. a keen interest in AA as a whole;
4. a willingness to serve AA.

The General Service Representative (GSR) is his/her Group's mail contact for the Australian National Office of AA (NOAA) in Sydney. The GSR receives the newsletter "AA Around Australia" in order to keep her/himself and the Group abreast of AA activities at national and international level.

Beyond that, the GSR keeps National Office supplied with changes of officers, meetings, venues etc. It is the GSR who fills out the annual *Group Information Sheet*, essential for the AA Directory and for National Office mailings.

The GSR knows what material is available from National Office, eg *Guidelines*, bulletins, films, tapes and kits, etc. and advises the Group of new literature announced in the pages of "AA Around Australia". It is the GSR's responsibility to make sure the Group is informed of the availability of *Conference Approved* pamphlets and books. The GSR needs to learn as much as possible about our *Traditions and Concepts* and should be familiar with the books "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" and "AA Comes of Age" together with the publications "The AA Group Handbook" and "AA Tradition - How it Developed".

The General Service Representative is also the Group's contact for the DCM and the Area Committee, so that he/she can be kept informed of forthcoming activities and additional information coming out of National Office.

The GSR is required to attend the Group's Group Conscience Meetings and is usually involved in the Group's activities, such as the *Group Donation Plan*, the *Birthday Club* and *The Action Club*, all of which go towards the support of National Office. (S/he is equally interested in encouraging the Group to support the Central Service Office.)

The GSR also informs his/her Group of agenda items to be discussed at District meetings and Area Assemblies and makes sure s/he is aware of Group feelings on current AA issues and conveys this to those meetings and Assemblies.

The GSR participates in District and Area Service Meetings and often helps with planning, advance registration and publicity for Area get-togethers and Conventions. Following these events, the GSR reports back to the Group for the benefit of those who could not attend. *This reporting back is extremely important, as the GSR is the vital communication link between AA and the Group.*

The GSR has a good understanding of "The AA Group Handbook" and assists new Group Secretaries and Members to use it. When a new Group is forming, the GSR nearly can be a great help in advising them about National Office services.

ELECTIONS

The GSR serves for two years and is elected at a Group Conscience meeting, which may be held specially for that purpose if the Group prefers. To emphasise the need for care in selecting the GSR and the importance of the GSR's work in the District and Area, it may be helpful to borrow one (or more) of National Office's videos, and/or invite a seasoned District Committee Member to lead a special question-and-answer session.

An informed Group will enjoy a well-planned special meeting - it will emphasise the meaning of the hand of AA reaching out to bring the Group closer to the Fellowship as a whole.

There should be written nominations from the floor, then written ballots. A simple majority is usually sufficient for election; however, if there is likely to be a close vote, the Group should agree beforehand to have a second ballot with only the high-scoring candidates in the running. If two candidates then tie, or the second vote is not a 2/3 majority, the two names are placed in the hat and one is drawn.

This is a simplified version of the Third Legacy Procedure (see Section 12 for full version) for use at Group level if preferred.

THE ALTERNATE GSR

In case a GSR is unable to attend all District and Area meetings an Alternate GSR is needed. The Alternate GSR is elected at the same time as the GSR.

It has been found by some Groups that the alternate GSR can make an excellent PI (*Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community*) representative, rather than just being a stop-gap for the GSR.

REMINDER!

The GSR may be in line for election later as DCM, Area officer or as Area Delegate. Are your candidates qualified in terms of experience and time available? If a GSR is subsequently elected as DCM, it is suggested that the Group be invited to elect another GSR, as experience has shown that holding both positions simultaneously is likely to be too heavy a load for one person.

NOTIFICATION:

As soon as your GSR is elected notify your Area Committee and/or DCM and include full contact details.