

Overview:

We welcome you all especially GR's (Alt GRs) who are our voting members.

Extraordinary circumstances (Worldwide pandemic!) continue to impact the VSA fellowship. VSA had booked a face-to-face Assembly for 19 June 2021. With uncertainty around Melbourne lockdown limitations our VSA Service committee took a unanimous decision on 5 June to cancel Robert White Hall and arrange plan 'B' ie: Assemble using "Zoom" technology.

Thank you to all trusted servants and members for your co-operation, collaboration and inspiration!

Since November last year; transitioning to "normal" has been a challenge especially in Melbourne. Thankfully a few meetings continued throughout all 'lockdowns' and many face-to-face meetings did resume across Victoria and Tasmania (with some glitches on the way!) Powerful guidance from the collective Higher Power has helped members adapt, practice good will and lovingly support each other to maintain Al-Anon Family Group connections.

Our theme for June 2021 Assembly is "Building relationships through Service". This follows on from the single Agenda item at Australian Service Conference (30 April-1 May). Delegates had met prior to conference and discussed common concerns and share solutions from their areas. With limited time the Conference decided Areas are better placed to encourage participation and raise awareness.

VSA Assembly is a wonderful forum to share the message with Group Representatives and District Representatives and members. Member support is key for demystifying and building and maintaining representation to gain good communication flow at all levels and healthy "Links of Service".

From: *Al-Anon / Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27.....page 22)

"We keep Al-Anon's gifts by sharing them with others. This sharing makes Al-Anon the vital, forward-reaching fellowship it is. Our great obligation is to those still in need. Leading another person from despair to hope and love brings comfort to both the **giver and receiver.**"

Healthy Groups are a mainstay for members; face-to-face and electronic meetings guided by the 36 spiritual principles of our Al-Anon program. As part of "obedience to the unenforceable" much valuable information can be readily found in a number of ways:

1. Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P24/27)
2. Guidelines (Website: al-anon.org.au)

Each Group is autonomous; consistency and attraction is enhanced where safe spaces exist to attract members new and old to keep coming back. We all have opportunity to practice Awareness, Acceptance and Action in support of our fellowship 'One day at a time'.

Remember: Differences of opinions are good; confrontation unacceptable.

Al-Anon Traditions and Concepts of Service are wisely devised and guide us all to talk things over and reason things out with someone else. The spiritual nature of our program can be a powerful antidote for those affected by the family disease. Restoring faith and trust; often hand in hand, we learn to use and embrace the tools of the program.

Principles above personalities encourages gentle acceptance of differences to support individuals. Each member being free to consider what is right for them. Little by little many of us feel free to try

new ways of being and giving back to uncover a range of gifts. When I got Busy, I got Better (P-78...page 15) "I'd accepted the position because another member had said that it provided an incredible opportunity to learn more about Al-Anon." Experience reveals service helps members find balance, achieve growth, self-worth and connection on a journey of recovery.

Someone famously stated 'no man is an island'; together is better on this journey of recovery. Keep it simple while practicing progress not perfection. Each member who 'keeps coming back' can find peace and happiness, whether the Alcoholic is drinking or not. From my humble observation the possibilities are endless and in my mind we continue to evolve and change over time. We are all different and there are many ways to contribute in Al-Anon. While this may change over time; something magical happens as members feel welcome to give of their best and they are good enough. Amazingly, supported learning and embracing of our program offers wonderful recognition and ultimate growth of self-worth.

In my final year as VSA Delegate; it has been a privilege to be one of many trusted servants who guided by a collective Higher Power continue to support well established proven path to recovery and embody the resilient nature of our Al-Anon Family Groups.

Together as members we can make a difference simply by attending meetings. This wonderful fellowship with a fabulous 70 year history continues to offer valuable learning and support. Looking back on my own journey of personal growth has been consistently interleaved with saying 'yes' to service opportunities afforded me since my first Al-Anon meeting 12 years ago. Early on my service roles and participation in Al-Anon meetings and activities kept me busy and helped me to detach from the active disease in myself and my home. Surrounded by members who understood, supported and loved me when I didn't even like myself.

Today, it is always progress not perfection encouraged by those who travelled the path before me. I am so grateful to members for their kindness and loving support which helped me believe and build confidence and has taught me valuable lessons; including to actively listen and learn.

Slowly, changed attitudes uncover the individual and unique gifts of members, often hidden prior to undertaking this wonderful program of discovery. Together let's continue to build upon foundations formed by many trusted servants; created by members united by Al-Anon. This legacy continues and creates a rich tapestry honoured within our Al-Anon fellowship. Abundant support, growth opportunity to not only survive but thrive into the future together.

Cooperation, collaboration and inspiration is found through accepting responsibility for our humble contributions given back through service. As we grow in recovery we find opportunity to help never members to understand and offer encouragement to be involved in our fellowship. Links of service in Al-Anon are strengthened through participation and each area including the Victorian Southern Area is dependent on the goodwill of our members. A GREAT WAY to grow, gain knowledge of self and build wonderful relationship skills for living. HP blessing us all to know we are worthy of unconditional love.

Confirm Melbourne will host AA National Convention (with Al-Anon/Alateen participation) over Easter in 2021. Victorian Southern Area to form a sub-committee. Exciting time ahead for VSA Members.

SHORT SUMMARY OF 2021 AUSTRALIAN SERVICE CONFERENCE
Australian Service Conference 2021
April 30th to May 1st 2021

THEME: Cooperation, Collaboration and Inspiration

VENUE: Quest Conference Centre, Caroline Springs, Victoria

FORMAT: Conference members attending in person and via Zoom (Hybrid)

CONFERENCE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Area Delegates:

Sue I., Victorian Southern Area, Lynne C., Northern Vic Area, Dianne K., Stand-In Delegate, Northern NSW Area and Sue H., South Qld Area, were present in person.

Gina R., Southern NSW Area, Jacqueline O., Western NSW Area, Virginia C., North Qld Area, Lola W., SA Area and Belinda B., WA Area, were present via zoom.

AGSO Members:

General Service Board:

Grace L., Chairperson of GSB, Helen G., Conference Chairperson, Lois A., General Secretary, Tanya J., (IAGSM Delegate), Maree C., Nominating Committee Chairperson, Jenny A., Deputy General Secretary, Lyn W., Treasurer.

Executive Committee:

Cheryl C., Chair PI Committee, Stephanie M., Chair Alateen Advisory Committee, Aileen C., Chair Literature Committee, Ros M., AGSO Finance Manager, Janel B., Digital Strategy, Wendy E., Austra-Link Editor.

AGSO Staff:

Claire J., Literature Officer, Conference Minute Secretary.

One AGSO member was present by zoom: Stephanie M., Chair of Alateen Advisory Committee, living in SA.

OPENING OF CONFERENCE: Helen G., Conference Chairperson

Greetings and good wishes from past Conference members and from various Area Committee members were read to the Conference members.

Special welcome to:

First Year Delegates: Belinda B. (WA), Sue H. (Sth Qld), Lynne C. (Nth Vic), Dianne K. (Stand-in Delegate, Northern NSW)

AGSO members new to Conference: Janel B. (AGSO Digital Strategy), Stephanie M. (Chair Alateen Advisory Committee), Cheryl C. (Chair PI Committee), and Helen G. (GSB).

VOTING MEMBERS:

Nine Area Delegates plus four General Service Board members: Grace L., Chairperson, Tanya J., Vice Chairperson, Lois A., Secretary, and Lyn W., Treasurer.

CHECK ON 2020 CONFERENCE DECISIONS: Jenny A.

Two main items which needed action from AGSO were:

1. Motion 8: That AGSO forms a subcommittee to investigate a translation of the two daily readers *Courage to Change* and *Hope for Today* so that the assignation of the male pronoun is changed to gender-neutral when referring to God and report back to Conference 2021.

A subcommittee from Southern NSW Area created a sample of suggested changed text for the two daily readers so that God or Higher Power is not referred to as He or Him. This text was forwarded to the WSO in late 2020 and an answer was received from the International Coordination Committee that this revised text would not be approved. The WSO suggested that members who have suggestions to alter text in Conference Approved Literature should write directly to the WSO Literature Committee.

They also suggested that members who want sharing with non-gender-specific language included in published material send their efforts to the WSO Literature Committee for inclusion in new books and pamphlets. Unfortunately the deadline for submissions to the new daily reader the WSO is producing closed in mid-2020.

As revised text for these daily readers would not be approved it was considered pointless for AGSO to form a subcommittee for this purpose.

2. AGSO was asked to support registration of Australian online meetings with AGSO.

AGSO was informed during 2020 that the World Service Conference in 2021 would consider a change of policy to register online meetings as AI-Anon groups and make provision for them to be connected to the service structure. It was also advised that this change of policy would include the option for online meetings to be registered as groups with international General Service Offices if they wished. No action from AGSO was needed until 2021 after the WSC.

Helen G. was appointed as an International Representative for Australia at the 2021 World Service Conference in April where the issue of registration of online meetings was discussed. Helen informed the Conference of the discussions and result of the vote at the WSC. Online meetings can now choose to register as groups with the WSO or with their local International General Service Office.

As Australia follows the policy of the World Service Conference this issue was discussed at this Australian Service Conference and a decision was made that online meetings hosted in Australia can now register as a group with AGSO and that Areas can arrange for these groups to be included in the service structure.

GENERAL SERVICE BOARD: Grace L.

- A special meeting was held to alter the By-Laws to allow decisions to be made by electronic meetings.
- At the Annual Meeting of Board after the Conference Helen G was appointed to the Board, officers of the Board were elected and the Executive Committee was appointed.
- Many extra Board meetings were held during 2020 in addition to the regular quarterly ones and the Annual Meeting after the Conference. Many decisions between Board meetings were also necessary in this very unusual year.
- A subcommittee of the Board worked on the Strategic Plan review and a new version was created for 2021 to 2030.

- The Board oversaw progress on the update of the Australian Service Handbook bringing it into line with the new World Service Handbook.
- Help was sought from Justice Connect to engage a law firm to help us update the incorporation documents for Al-Anon Family Groups (Australia) Pty Ltd.

2021 Update:

- A subcommittee will be formed with Tanya J as chair to arrange for a celebration of Al-Anon's 70 Anniversary in Australia on October.
- Lois A., General Secretary, gave notice that she will retire this year. A Board Subcommittee was appointed to advertise the position and select a candidate for the General Secretary position.

Questions:

Q. Where is the update of the website at?

A. The brief is a very complex task to prepare. It is agreed that the meeting search needs to be modified so that searches locate the closest meetings in the country as well as the cities. Also a simpler method of purchasing literature is needed. Lots of members have ideas but we need help to create a proper brief.

Q. Why did AGSO not create a subcommittee to look at changing the gender-specific language for God in the two daily readers?

A. The material in CAL is copyrighted and cannot be altered without permission of the publishers, the WSO. There was no point in creating a new AGSO subcommittee for a task that would not be possible.

Australian Service Handbook, we removed all the gender-specific pronouns which have been causing irritation to many members. We have power to do this because AGSO is the publisher of this book.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Maree C.

- A new Chair of the Literature Committee is Aileen C. since early 2020.

GENERAL SECRETARY: Lois A.

- The COVID-19 Pandemic was the major event for the year which impacted the fellowship Australia-wide and the operations of AGSO very badly. But Al-Anon teaches us to look for the good. We are much better at technology now than we used to be with service meetings and Al-Anon meetings all conducted online for a major part of the year in Victoria and for a smaller time elsewhere in Australia.
- Since late March 2020 the office was operating with most services being done remotely. The main aim was to ensure that our AGSO services continued. The pandemic forced the Board and the AGSO staff to think in different ways and create new methods to ensure that services to members, groups and Areas continued.
- Although the meetings information on the website is not perfect, it is now a lot better than it was before the pandemic struck. The website displayed the electronic meeting information as the number of online groups exploded. Later, lists of meetings which had resumed face-to-face were displayed in states. The meeting search section also had to be kept up to date showing whether the group was open or temporarily closed.

Victorian Southern Area Delegate's Report
Assembly June 2021

- I had the office phone switched through to me at home for months and the number of Twelfth Step calls was pretty high considering the vast majority of calls should have come through the 1300 number to the Areas. We assume calls to the Area Offices through the 1300 number increased too. We know many people were suffering and they found the number to call as well as the meeting information. A big increase was seen in email communication to AGSO – many of these were prospective members asking for help.
- The staff and volunteers were amazing, showing flexibility and willingness to put in extra hours each week. My sincere thanks go to them for this.
- Technology: NBN connection was delayed to late in the year due to the lockdowns. We called in a technology professional to solve ongoing issues with our computer network and to ensure the new NBN connection worked with our phone and computers. The use of social media was increased to inform the community about Al-Anon Family Groups. Improvements were made to the website to display extra information and to make ordering literature easier. It was not possible to arrange the planned major upgrade to the website.
- The production of Austra-Link continued each month with only 2 editions unable to be produced and posted as hard copies. Digital editions were produced every month. Other member services provided were forwarding Forum Subscriptions to the WSO, processing Austra-Link subscriptions, supporting Lone Members, ensuring Public Liability Insurance cover for all groups was renewed, and ensuring the national 1300 number was working effectively linking callers with the local Area Office. Service queries from groups and members were answered or referred to local Area service members.
- We thank Areas who keep AGSO up to date regularly with group and meeting information: Time, Date, Venue, Group mailing address, Group email address, temporary closures (especially during COVID-19), and changes of venues after opening up again. This is important so that meetings can be found by newcomers and current members alike. An email address for every group is important. AGSO sends out Appeal Letters and the e-newsletter "*Have You Heard?*" to keep groups and members informed.
- The National Convention in Toowoomba last year had to be a virtual event. At first I doubted this event would be possible, but as Al-Anon says, "Keep an open mind". The Toowoomba-based AA Planning Committee and the Al-Anon Planning Committee had a dream. Their dream came true with a very enjoyable weekend of virtual meetings and other very interesting, innovative online entertainment being provided. Congratulations to the South Qld members who believed in their dream!
Communication with Areas: This was once again a favourite part of my role at AGSO. E-mail and phone contact with the Area Delegates was good; we received minutes and newsletters from all Areas; I was invited to several Area Committee meetings by zoom and to an Area Assembly in North Qld Area via zoom.
- The Delegates helped to provide an effective channel for communication between AGSO and the Areas. They initiated movement of information through the links of service to the groups and members.
- International Communication and Events: Communication with the WSO was regular with both Member Services (Literature purchases, Forum subscriptions) and with the Associate Director International, Kerri K.
Arrangements were made to participate in the IAGSM in its revised virtual format in October with Tanya J and Lois A representing AGSO.

- It has been a privilege to serve the Australian fellowship as the General Secretary of our Australian General Service Office this last year and for all the years since taking over from Beryl S. in 2001. I feel that it is the right time for me to retire and hand the role over to someone else who can receive all the benefits that I have been so fortunate to receive. I thank everyone at AGSO, the members of the Board past and present, staff, members of AGSO committees and volunteers for their support for me and for their dedication to serving the fellowship.

Thank you to all the members in the groups, districts and at Area level who have given me such warm and loving support and friendship. We are all part of such a large and loving Al-Anon family, not related by blood, but by the language of the heart. When you call, email or visit, and you are so appreciative of the work done at the Australian General Service Office, you make my heart sing!

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Jenny A.

- The closure of the office for extended periods forced all staff to work from home. Fortunately my new laptop and new NBN internet connection helped with this. As with all staff many more hours each week were necessary during lockdowns.
- I was a member of the Covid-19 Response Committee which assisted in maintaining the delivery of services to members including planning and hosting the online Australian Service Conference. All this was extremely challenging but with the help of my regular online Al-Anon meetings was able to keep my sanity and a degree of serenity.

Questions/Discussion:

Q. Are all groups receiving the electronic communications from AGSO and from their Area?

A. It is possible to use settings in email programs to find out if email sent has been opened. Janel will explore feedback information possible from Mail Chimp distribution platform. If AGSO does not have accurate and current email addresses for groups then members are missing out on information. If Area Offices don't have up to date email addresses for groups then members are missing out on local communication through the links of service.

The issue of incorrect meeting information causing disappointment for newcomers and current members alike was discussed. It is very important that groups realise they must inform the Area Office of changes and that the Areas regularly update AGSO on changes so that meeting information on the website is accurate.

FINANCIAL REPORTS: Lyn W., Treasurer, and Ros M., AGSO Finance Manager

Treasurer's Report:

- Lyn W. appointed to the role of Treasurer in May 2020.
- AGSO Appeal Letters for June and October 2020

Financial Analysis year ending 31/12/2020:

- The audited Financial Statements were unfortunately not available from the auditor for the Conference so we are using the actual figures for 2020 as shown in the 2021 Budget document. There may be some slight variations when we receive the final figures.
- 2020 was a very unusual year where accurate predictions were impossible.

- Once the Pandemic began the budget was revised as it was envisaged that income would be severely reduced with groups being closed for an indeterminate time.
- The original budget predicted a loss of (\$2266) and the revised budget predicted a loss of (\$8634). However surprisingly we finished with a substantial operating surplus of \$117,807. This enabled us to replace \$50,000 borrowed from the Reserve Fund in previous years.
- Income: The Contributions total was expected to be \$112,500 due to meetings being closed and the possibility of a much reduced level of donations. However the large number of online meetings established resulted in members responding very generously to the fellowship's financial challenges by donating electronically. Areas donated excess funds to AGSO and the level of individual member donations was double the predicted amount.
- Literature sales were well above the expected target which was also unexpected. Members in zoom meetings found they needed their own copies of the literature so sales increased.
- Other sources of income: A large refund was received for Land Tax which AGSO had paid over the last 5 years incorporated in rent charges. This credit, \$29,438, was used against the current rent charges. Several bequests were received: \$10,400. Interest from Reserve Fund investments was lower than usual as interest rates were so low.
- Pandemic measures to provide economic relief for non-profit organisations and businesses including refunds of GST and PAYG Tax payments to the ATO and JobKeeper payments to staff for two quarters were received. When the first lockdown began and was predicted to last at least 6 months, it was thought that as meetings would be closed income would be severely impacted and our reserves could be depleted by two thirds.
- Expenditure was greatly reduced. Many events were cancelled or held online avoiding travel and accommodation costs. Freight was lower as fewer orders in and out. Cleaning, postage, stationery, copy charges were reduced. Media release costs reduced as fewer releases occurred; website upgrade couldn't be organised; the Conference was online with lower cost; no travel costs for Board meetings; electricity charges were lower.
- Some expenditure items increased in cost including technology subscriptions, phone costs including diversion of office calls, and increased calls to 1300 number.
- Expenditure items included amounts set aside annually for staff long service leave entitlements, accrual of other leave entitlements.

2021 Budget

When explaining 2020 income and expenditure items Ros explained the reasoning behind the 2021 Budget estimates for each item. The 2021 Budget target for contributions is close to the actual amount received in 2020. The reason is that experience has shown that the membership responds best when a higher target is set and the reasons for the higher target are explained to the members. Abundant thinking is encouraged. The 2021 Budget was approved.

Questions/Discussion

- It was requested that the list of services provided by AGSO be provided with the Appeal Letter so that members can see why money is needed. This list has accompanied the Appeal Letter in the past and was found useful.

- The efficiency of sending the Appeal Letter by email was discussed. 500 sent out, 292 were opened. Ideas to improve the success rate of the distribution of the Appeal Letters were discussed.
- The revised X-21, Seventh Tradition pamphlet, was discussed which includes suggestions for groups to manage distribution of their funds. This is available free to groups.
- Suggestions for fund-raising activities for groups, districts and Areas were discussed.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE:

- The Conference Committee is responsible for the planning and coordination of the Australian Service Conference, preparing the Agenda, compiling the workshops, allocating Delegates to chair sessions, creating the Conference Summary, and it reviews the Australian Service Handbook preparing any updates necessary. Lois A has represented the Conference Committee at Executive Committee meetings. The Calendar of Events in the Purpose and Duties document guides activities throughout the year.
- The text for the new version of the Australian Service Handbook, incorporating many changes made to the latest World Service Handbook, was not completed for this Conference but the Board was given discretion to handle any final changes needed.
- Agenda for 2021 ASC was prepared with options for an electronic and a hybrid format.
2021 Update:
Covid-19 conditions allowed for a face to face conference to be organised with some electronic participation.

2021 Version of Australian Service Handbook:

- It was decided to delay printing to allow time to adjust the text so that gender-specific pronouns were removed when referring to GRs, DRs, Area Delegates and Alternates. A sample of the text including new cover and layout was presented for conference members' consideration.
- All approved of the removal of gender-specific language.

Questions/Discussion:

- More discussion clarified that publications which AGSO produces can be changed to delete gender-specific language but publications of the WSO are the business of the WSO. Members can ask the WSO directly if they have suggestions for changes.
- It was suggested that the Australian adaptations of the Guidelines be reviewed and gender-specific language be removed.

AUSTRA-LINK REPORT: Wendy E.

- Editorial Committee consisted of Barb C., Grace L. and Maree C. and met monthly during the year. Barb C. retired from the committee in November. Barb was thanked for her dedication over the last few years. New members, Maria W. and Mary D, were welcomed to the committee.
- Thanks to all members who send in their very valuable sharings throughout the year.
- I am fulsomely grateful to all for their assistance with production and also grudgingly grateful to Princess Toshiba for deigning to churn out *Austra-Link* with only occasional lapses in performance— well actually have you heard the one about death and taxes? Add photocopier

hissy fits to the list of things you can count on in life. The printer certainly makes sure we never assume all will go smoothly, but goodness triumphs over evil in the end every month.

- Email subscriptions: Local 120, International GSOs 47. Some groups have requested a digital copy rather than a hard copy. The pandemic has resulted in groups using email communication more to distribute the digital copies of Austra-Link to their members. Digital copies can be downloaded from the website.
- Hard copies mailed out: Groups 346, Subscriptions 40, Loners 49, Area Newsletter Coordinators and Offices 18.

PUBLIC INFORMATION INCLUDING DIGITAL STRATEGY: Cheryl C. and Janel B.

Increasing interest from members around Australia about Public Information resulted in reminders and suggestions being added to the minutes. For example:

1. 11 spot Radio Announcements are available in CD format to send to Radio Stations. CD-1 is listed on Literature Price List/Order Forms at no cost.
2. Are you receiving "*Have You Heard?*" the electronic Newsletter from your AGSO? Contact the AGSO and ask to be added to the distribution list.
3. Read "*In the Loop*", the electronic Newsletter from the World Service Office and the UK Newsletter which can be found on their websites for more Public Information ideas.

With permission from outside community organizations and councils:

4. Information about Al-Anon Family Groups and contact details can be listed on community websites and lists of available community services.
5. The description of Al-Anon Family Groups and contact details can be included in Newsletters produced by other organizations.
6. Al-Anon speakers can be included at community resource presentations.

Highlights:

- **Open Letters:** After seeing the updates produced by the South Queensland Area the wording and format of the Open Letters were reviewed.
- **Spread the Word:** June-August edition 2020 was not produced due to COVID restrictions. *Spread the Word* was included in "*Austra-Link*" and uploaded to the website 3 times last year.
- **Public Information Calendar:** As supplies ran out it was decided to review and update the Calendar giving it a fresh look.
- **A How-To-Do-It Service Tool Guide for Public Information Activities** is available in hard copy for no cost and has been uploaded to the website. This publication is listed on the AGSO Literature Price List/Order Form as PI-02
- **Media Releases:** There were two in 2020, January and October.
- **Lifeline Presentation:** Cheryl presented a one-hour Presentation and Workshop at Lifeline in Victoria. The content of this presentation has been written up and passed to Areas, encouraging them to contact Lifeline, a state based organization.

Current Projects Involving Digital Strategy:

- **Social Media:** Al-Anon has a presence on Facebook, 577 followers, Instagram, 97 followers, YouTube, 24 subscribers.

- **LinkedIn:** A new project has started using LinkedIn to reach Professionals in the community. Janel B. took the role of Digital Strategy and is driving this Public Information activity using social media. The AGSO Public Information Committee will share this information with Areas, as at this stage, communication with Professionals through this media platform is very successful.

Lessons learned to date: This platform is about inviting professionals to connect with the CEO of Al-Anon Family Groups Australia to inform them about Al-Anon and Alateen's services. It is a professional corporate networking site which can be useful for us to spread information to inform professionals in the field of alcohol and drug services.

There is much potential for the future in the use of this and other digital resources to make Al-Anon Family Groups more visible.

Questions/Discussion:

- Janel was asked for details about the LinkedIn project. We have made contact with 158 professional counsellors in alcohol and drug services. This is an Australia-wide project to engage professionals using LinkedIn networking.
- Janel also outlined details of Facebook, Instagram and YouTube platforms containing Al-Anon and Alateen content. This is a very successful way to make Al-Anon more visible.
- Helen G. advised that the WSO is starting a new project using LinkedIn. But Australia has tried it first!!
- A question was asked on how to get on the distribution list for AGSO e-newsletter, *Have You Heard?* Email AGSO and you will be added to the distribution list. Each group who has an email address receives a copy.
- The March 2021
- AGSO Appeal Letter was sent to every group by mail chimp. It is also on the website for downloading in the members section.

ALATEEN REPORT: Stephanie M.

- During 2020 there was no Chair of the Alateen Advisory Committee but Ann S., a member of the Executive Committee acted in that role. Stephanie M was appointed just before the 2021 Conference.
- Early in 2020 when Covid-19 lockdowns started face to face Alateen meetings had to close. The Alateen Coordinator from Victorian Southern Area consulted with the WSO to work out a safe way for an online Alateen meeting hosted by registered sponsors in Melbourne. A procedure was established where interested Alateen members or their parent emailed the Area Alateen Coordinator and both the Alateen member and the parent or guardian were interviewed by two sponsors and the safe procedures for conduct on the Alateen meeting by zoom was explained.
- The Alateen members were registered to attend these zoom Alateen meetings. Emails were sent to the newly registered Alateen members giving access details for the meetings on Friday evenings. Quite a large number of Alateen members were registered and participated throughout the year.

Questions/Discussion

- Stephanie spoke of her excitement at taking the role of Alateen Committee Chairperson. She shared some of the successes of the SA Alateen zoom meetings.
- All agreed that the success of online Alateen meetings with the stringent safety protocols was very pleasing.

Literature Report: Aileen C.

- Best-selling books: B-16, Courage to Change 430 copies; B-22, How Al-Anon Works 302; B-27, Hope for Today, 190; B-6, One Day at a Time 183; B-24, Paths to Recovery 170; B-26, Living Today in Alateen, 190.
- Best-selling pamphlets: Detachment 2651; Are you troubled...20 Questions, 2360; Information for the Newcomer, 1885; Freedom from Despair 1834.
- New Items: X-24 Keep the Focus on Al-Anon Tablecard; PI-02, How to Do It Service Tool Guide for Public Information Activities; S-21 Seventh Tradition (Australian adaptation).
- Items under review: PI Calendar, X-14, A Brief History..., all Open Letters.
- Literature Committee meetings: Met most months using zoom.
- Spring into Summer Special Offers sold well.

Questions/Discussion:

- Query asking if more digital literature is available. The WSO website offers many items of literature in digital format and shows links for purchasing these via third party vendors.
- The WSO has to balance the need expressed by members for more digital literature against the need for International structures to obtain a good percentage of their income from the sale of regular literature.
- Any Al-Anon literature sold by Amazon is pirated stock or stock on-sold to Amazon. The WSO does not sell to Amazon. So for the welfare of the fellowship members are encouraged to buy from their local Area Offices.
- Sales of literature in Australia increased because of demand from members attending online meetings. Measures are continuing to make ordering from the website easier for members.

2021 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE: Helen G., Australia's International Representative

- Conference Theme was *Moving Forward with Unity, Courage and Perseverance*
- Five full days – online format
- 115 Delegates including 67 Area Delegates, 27 WSO staff and volunteers including Board of Trustees
- Agenda included: Task Forces, Policy Discussions, Serenity Prayer in different languages, Breakout sessions, Virtual Tour of Stepping Stones, Reports from WSO and Conference Delegates, Presentations from WSO
- Alateen Just for Tonight bookmark to be developed
- New Daily Reader on diversity hopefully released by 2023 International Convention in Albuquerque
- Online meetings will now be registered as Al-Anon Groups with the WSO or with their local International General Service Office. They will then be part of the service structure.
- 70th Anniversary celebration Sat 10th July 2-4pm as a virtual event
- Projects for the year include: New Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual
- Most projects need labour rather than capital

REGISTRATION OF ELECTRONIC MEETINGS IN AUSTRALIA:

The Australian Service Conference voted that electronic meetings hosted in Australia can register as groups with AGSO from now on. The Areas can work out a way for the newly registered electronic groups to fit into the Area service structure.

Questions/Discussion:

- Clarification of the new policy on allowing electronic meetings to register with their General Service Office (in our case AGSO) as AI-Anon groups:
 - Each international structure will agree to a method of registration and linking the groups to the present service structure. During the pandemic emergency there is no compulsion for an electronic meeting to be registered as a group.
 - Most temporary electronic meetings in Australia are linked to a registered group which is part of the present service structure.
 - Australian Meeting policy has always allowed one registered group to have two or more meetings (on different days, at different times, face to face and electronic). They have one GR who represents the group, (this GR is the voice of members at all meetings of the group).
 - It is suggested that electronic meetings decide whether they wish to stay as part of the registered group they originated from or to register as a separate AI-Anon group with its own GR and other office bearers.
 - It is not compulsory for current locally based electronic meetings to register with AGSO. They can, if they want to, continue as they are for now.
- Literature: If members have suggestions for changes to Conference Approved Literature the WSO is the place to send these ideas as it is the WSO which holds the copyright. The WSO Literature Committee is always planning new literature items and reviews current publications, for example, the decision to add an introduction to ODAT and Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage.
- Alateen: The issue of safety concerns around Australian based Electronic Alateen Meetings having international Alateen members attending was discussed at length. The WSO thinks there is a risk of litigation if any safety incident were to happen.

AUSTRALIAN SERVICE CONFERENCE DECISION ON SAFETY RISK FOR ALATEEN ONLINE MEETINGS:

A Thought Force of the GSB was formed to investigate the issues of litigation risks caused by having international Alateen members attending Australian based electronic Alateen meetings. It will report back by June 1st 2021.

MATTER OF CONCERN FROM NORTHERN NSW AREA REPORT:

- During discussion after the Northern NSW Area report it was agreed that the actions of the Area Association Committee in disregarding the decisions of the Area Assembly regarding appointment of members to the Association Committee and in refusing to keep the Assembly and the Area Service Committee sufficiently informed and involved in financial matters of the Area were of grave concern to the Conference.
- The efforts of the Assembly, the Area Service Committee, AGSO General Secretary, and the General Service Board to seek an opportunity to discuss concerns with the Association Committee have failed.

- It was decided that the Conference would express concern that the Association Committee of the Northern NSW Area is contravening Al-Anon spiritual principles and is harming the fellowship as a whole.
- Several suggestions were offered by Conference members for the Delegate for Northern NSW Area to take back to the Area Assembly.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE: Grace L.

- The review and update of the Strategic Plan was the work of a subcommittee of the General Service Board established in 2019. The subcommittee worked at the task throughout 2020 and finished in 2021 when the Board approved the updated Strategic Plan.
- The subcommittee used the 2019 WSC Summary's outline of the WSO Strategic Plan as a model to redesign our Australian plan. Also we took some terms from the Strategic Plan of other outside organisations.
- We worked on the theory that strategic planning is the responsibility of the Board and carrying it out is the responsibility of the AGSO staff.
- AGSO committees and staff were asked to do a SWOT analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats – and give this information to the subcommittee.
- Also we attended webinars to help us in our task. Bill P. was an original member of the subcommittee and he is thanked for his major contribution to the structure and the focus of the Plan.
- The Board devoted a whole meeting to thoroughly examining the draft of the updated Strategic Plan. Some adjustments were made and it was then adopted by the Board in April 2021.

Discussion/Questions

- Delegates expressed positive comments on the plan particularly the part for improving the website.
- A query was put asking where the members fit in with this Strategic Plan. Helen explained that previous Conferences have had input to the needs of the fellowship in earlier versions of the Strategic Plan. This latest plan includes benefits for members e.g. ease of purchasing literature, website, etc.
- It was suggested that the Delegates include some information about the AGSO Strategic Plan to their Assembly which will be passed on through the links of service.
- What is a Strategic Plan? Most organisations and businesses have a Strategic Plan to describe what they want to achieve in the next few years. They look at where they are, where they want to go – looking at the big picture. This one takes us from 2021 to 2029.
- The Strategic Plan includes strategies for making Al-Anon and Alateen more visible, better known to professionals, more accessible to newcomers.
- A pictorial depiction of the Strategic Plan was created by Tanya and Helen for distribution to the Delegates.

International General Services Meeting (IAGSM): Tanya J and Lois A.

A summary of interesting information from presentations and comments that were submitted during the days of this gathering was presented by Tanya and Lois.

Interesting discussions arose on how structures adapted to the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic, how structures can ensure the groups, districts and Areas provide the optimum service for their members, Public Information ideas, Leadership Skills which aid Conflict Resolution, Big Questions such as registration of electronic meetings and a proposal that International Structures should have voice and vote at the World Service Conference.

Helen G. was given Conference approval as the IAGSM Delegate for 2022 to 2024.

70th Anniversary Celebrations

After some discussion it was proposed that a 70th Anniversary celebration organised by AGSO would be scheduled for October 10th and Area celebrations could follow throughout October.

CONCLUSION OF CONFERENCE:

Helen G. thanked all members for their participation in the Conference saying: "It has been an incredibly successful Conference, some great discussions, some emotional things tackled and we've done that with "Cooperation, Collaboration and Inspiration".

I think the work done by our Delegates is amazing. I am incredibly proud to work alongside you all."

Brief thoughts from retiring Conference members were given: Jacqueline O., Western NSW, Gina R., Southern NSW, Dianne K., Northern NSW, and **Sue I., Victorian Southern Area.**

Helen G. conducted a farewell for Lois A., attending the Conference as General Secretary for the last time. Several members shared their thoughts on this occasion.

As time was short a single spiritual concept sharing replaced the traditional Spiritual Concept Meeting.

The Conference closed with the Serenity Prayer.