

Virtual Area A Guidelines- Version 1

Table of Contents

1. Guideline Context	2
2. Virtual Area A scope	3
3. Assembly attendance and voting rights	5
4. Assembly business and agenda	7
5. Assembly types and annual calendar	9
6. Assembly procedures	11
7. Voting and elections	14
8. Officers, Standing Committees, and service documentation	17
9. Assembly Finances	19
10. Technology and information management	21
11. Public Information and Professional Awareness (PIPA)	23
12. Amendment and maintenance of this guideline	24
13. Adoption, commencement, and definitions	25
14. Safeguarding, conduct, and definitions	26
<i>Appendix A: Virtual Area A Safeguarding Policy</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Appendix B: Virtual Area A Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Appendix C: VAA Minority Reports Procedure (Concept V)</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Appendix D: Third Legacy Procedure (VAA online adaptation)</i>	<i>38</i>
Amendments	40

1. Guideline Context

1.1. Purpose

Virtual Area A (VAA) is an Area Assembly within the Australian general service structure. Its purpose is consistent with the Australian General Service Conference Charter, clause 6, which states that Area Assemblies convene for the election of Area Committee members, from which are elected Area Delegates to the Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, and that Area Assemblies are concerned only with the general service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Accordingly, VAA exists to conduct Area Assembly business for Australian online groups within the general service structure, including receiving and considering group conscience through General Service Representatives (GSRs), electing officers, and setting VAA service direction so that VAA may participate effectively in the Australian general service.

1.2. Basis

These guidelines are written in line with the Twelve Concepts for World Service, with particular regard to Concept X, which states that every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, and that the scope of authority should be clearly defined. The intent is to:

- clarify who may decide what, and within what limits
- ensure that trusted servants can fulfil their responsibilities without unnecessary delay
- protect groups and the Fellowship from overreach, confusion, or centralisation of power
- promote accountability through clear reporting and review processes

1.3. Relationship to other AA guidance

These guidelines sit alongside, and do not replace:

- the AA Traditions and the Concepts
- the Australian AA service manual, Conference Charter, Guidelines, and Conference Advisory Actions that apply to VAA
- any VAA guidelines previously approved by the VAA Assembly

Where there is conflict, the spiritual principles of AA, and applicable Australian AA service guidance, take precedence.

1.4. Nature of these guidelines

These guidelines are not bylaws and do not create legal authority. They are a service tool that expresses the collective conscience of VAA as a general service entity, and may be amended by the VAA Assembly in accordance with the amendment process in this guideline.

1.5. Place of Virtual Area A in the Australian service structure

Virtual Area A (VAA) is an Area Assembly within the Australian general service structure. Unlike geographically based Areas, VAA is not situated within a Region. Accordingly, VAA does not have a direct linkage through a Regional Trustee in the way that geographically based Areas do. VAA's service connection sits through the Trustees' committee structure as described below, while remaining concerned only with the general service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous in Australia (per Conference Charter clause 6).

1.6. Relationship with National Remote Communities and the Trustees' Services Committee

When VAA was established, it was placed under the auspices of the Trustees' Remote Communities Committee (a standing committee of the General Service Board at that time). This helped define a clear service interface so that VAA's service activity complemented, rather than duplicated, other service efforts.

National Remote Communities is now situated under the Trustees' Services Committee. VAA maintains an active service relationship with National Remote Communities to support aligned general service outcomes, particularly where VAA's work intersects with national remote communities priorities (for example, public information and professional awareness activity supporting remote communities initiatives). The National Remote Communities Coordinator has a standing invitation to attend VAA Assemblies, and the VAA Delegate and Alternate Delegate have a standing invitation to participate in the National Remote Communities working group.

VAA hosts the National Remote Communities webpage on the VAA website.

2. Virtual Area A scope

2.1. Core principle

Authority is delegated to VAA for the purpose of carrying out service responsibilities. Authority is not held for its own sake, and is never intended to govern groups. VAA supports and coordinates general service participation for Australian online groups, and operates in cooperation with the broader Australian general service structure.

Where liaison is required, VAA acts through the Trustees' committee pathway and National Remote Communities interface described in sections 1.5–1.6, to maintain clarity of service authority and corresponding responsibility, and to avoid double-headed executive direction and duplication of services.

2.2. What VAA does, and does not do

VAA does:

- provide a practical and accessible pathway for Australian online groups to participate in general service
- conduct Assemblies to hear group conscience (through GSR participation), elect trusted servants (including a Delegate to the Australian General Service Conference), and set VAA service direction
- coordinate service work through officers and committees, within defined authority limits
- maintain service communications and information systems required for VAA functioning (for example, Assembly notices, documentation management, and meeting hosting arrangements and website)
- support collaboration with other service bodies where appropriate, in a spirit of unity

VAA does not:

- direct, manage, or police the internal affairs of AA groups
- impose requirements on groups beyond what is necessary for participation in VAA assemblies
- act as an authority over fellowship group conscience

- make commitments on behalf of AA Australia as a whole unless specifically authorised through the appropriate service pathway
- concern itself with matters outside the general service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous (per Australian General Service Conference Charter, clause 6)

2.3. Levels of service authority and responsibility

To match service authority and corresponding responsibility, VAA service authority is exercised at three levels.

A. VAA Assembly (primary service authority)

The VAA Assembly is the primary service body for VAA. It holds authority to:

- set VAA service direction through informed group conscience
- elect trusted servants (including a Delegate to the Australian General Service Conference)
- approve, amend, or rescind VAA operating guidelines and service policies
- approve budgets and financial policy, including material changes to financial controls
- establish, dissolve, or materially change standing committees and their scopes
- decide matters that materially affect VAA's service direction, scope, or operations

B. Officers and committees

VAA officers and committees are delegated authority and responsibility by the Assembly to carry defined responsibilities between Assemblies. Delegated authority:

- is exercised within defined scope and limits
- implements Assembly decisions and progresses agreed service work
- does not create policy unless explicitly delegated by the Assembly for a defined purpose and timeframe
- is accountable to the Assembly through reporting and review

C. Administrative authority (housekeeping and implementation)

Administrative authority is exercised as delegated by the Assembly and recorded in Composition, Scope and Procedure (CSP) documents and relevant Assembly minutes. It is ordinarily coordinated through the Steering Committee.

Administrative authority includes:

- implementing Assembly decisions
- maintaining service records, contact lists, and access controls
- issuing routine notices and communications required for Assemblies and committee work
- minor updates that do not change policy direction

Administrative authority does not include:

- making new policy
- changing role scope or committee scope
- committing VAA funds outside Assembly approval

2.4. Delegation requirements

Delegations of service authority and responsibility are recorded so that it is clear and reviewable.

When the Assembly delegates to an officer or committee, the delegation is recorded in Assembly minutes and, where applicable, in the relevant job descriptions and CSP documents. A delegation states:

- the responsibility being carried
- the authority granted, including limits
- any financial approval thresholds
- consultation expectations
- reporting requirements and review timeframes
- escalation pathways where a matter exceeds delegated authority, becomes contentious, or may set precedent

2.5. Matters that return to the Assembly

Unless explicitly delegated, the following matters return to the Assembly:

- creation, removal, or material change to an officer role or standing committee
- changes to VAA guidelines, service policies, or decision-making procedures
- material changes to financial controls, signatory arrangements, or approval processes
- actions likely to set precedent for VAA policy
- matters materially affecting VAA's relationship with other service bodies

2.6. Urgent matters between Assemblies

Urgent matters are handled within delegated authority.

Where a timely decision is required to protect VAA operations or meet an external deadline, an officer or committee may act within delegated authority. Where the matter is material, unusual, or may set precedent, the trusted servant:

- consults with relevant officers (and committee where applicable) where practicable
- records the decision and reasons
- reports the decision to the next Assembly, or sooner where appropriate

2.7. Right of Appeal and Petition (Concept V)

Concerns about the use of delegated authority may be brought to the Assembly.

Any voting member who believes delegated authority has been exceeded may request that the matter be placed on the Assembly agenda. The Assembly considers the matter in the spirit of informed group conscience.

VAA preserves minority rights by:

- providing a clear pathway to raise concerns and request review
- allowing decisions made to be reviewed through the Assembly
- ensuring adequate notice and background for material decisions
- applying substantial unanimity for important decisions

The specific Minority Report process is set out in Appendix C.

3. Assembly attendance and voting rights

3.1. Purpose

This section defines voting participation in the VAA Assembly and clarifies categories of Assembly attendance.

3.2. Assembly attendance categories

Attendance falls into the following categories:

- Voting members (vote and may make motions)
- Non-voting attendees (may speak by invitation of the Chair, but do not vote and do not make motions)
- Observers (attendance without speaking rights unless invited by the Chair)

3.3. Voting members

VAA has three categories of voting members.

A. General Service Representatives (GSRs) of participating groups

In line with the Australian General Service Conference Charter, clause 5, the Assembly is composed of the elected General Service Representatives of AA groups desiring to participate. Accordingly, the GSRs of registered Australian online groups constitute the Assembly for VAA purposes and are eligible to vote.

Each participating group exercises one vote through:

- its elected GSR, or
- an Alternate GSR where appointed and the GSR is unavailable.

B. Officers

VAA officers are voting members by virtue of Concept IV (Right of Participation).

For VAA, the officer voting members are:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Delegate

C. Standing Committee Chairs

Standing Committee Chairs are voting members by virtue of Concept IV (Right of Participation).

For VAA, Standing Committee Chair voting members are:

- Public Information and Professional Awareness (PIPA) Chair
- Technical Chair

A member who holds voting eligibility in more than one capacity exercises a single vote (Section 7.3).

In line with the Australian General Service Manual, an alternate votes only when acting in place of the regular member and the regular member is not present.

3.4. Registration and active participation

VAA group registration is conducted annually.

A group is actively registered when it attends the Assembly through a GSR or Alternate GSR (or indicates an intention to do so). Registration resets at the

commencement of the first Assembly of the calendar year, and registration for the year is based on attendance at that first Assembly.

The Assembly maintains a current register of participating groups for the purposes of notices, quorum, and voting.

3.5. Rights of voting members

Voting members:

- participate in discussion as recognised by the Chair
- bring motions and amendments in accordance with Assembly procedure
- vote on motions
- request that matters be placed on the agenda in accordance with the agenda process
- request review of the exercise of delegated authority in accordance with section 2.7
- refrain from voting on assessments of past performances (section 6.11)

3.6. Non-voting participants

Non-voting participants may include:

- VAA committee members who are not present as a GSR for a registered group or members of the Steering Committee
- trusted servants from other service bodies attending for liaison
- invited guests relevant to VAA service business
- Alternates attending alongside the regular position holder

Non-voting participants may be invited to speak by the Chair to assist informed group conscience. They do not vote and do not bring motions. (see section 5.2C regarding attendance at the Topics for Conference Assembly)

3.7. Observers

Observers are welcome. Observers do not vote and do not bring motions. Observers may be invited to speak by the Chair where it assists the Assembly to become informed.

3.8. Chairing, order, and recognition to speak

The Chair facilitates participation so that discussion remains orderly and focused on general service business.

The Chair:

- recognises speakers and manages the speakers list
- sets reasonable time limits to support fair participation
- calls for clarification where discussion becomes repetitive or outside scope
- invites relevant non-voting participants or observers to speak where it assists informed group conscience

3.9. Quorum and voting thresholds

Quorum is two-thirds of eligible voting participation. Voting thresholds and procedures are set out in this guideline.

3.10. Minority rights

Minority rights are protected through VAA's review and appeal safeguards (section 2.7), the Minority Voice procedure following a vote (section 6.10), and the Minority Report process (Appendix C).

4. Assembly business and agenda

4.1. Purpose

This section sets out how VAA forms an agenda, receives business, and conducts Assembly business in an orderly manner consistent with informed group conscience.

4.2. Scope of Assembly business

Assembly business concerns the general service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia (per Conference Charter clause 6). Business outside this scope is not taken up by the Assembly, except to note it and refer it to an appropriate service pathway.

4.3. Agenda formation

The agenda is prepared by the Steering Committee and issued to registered groups with reasonable notice.

The agenda ordinarily includes:

- opening and welcome
- confirmation of quorum
- approval of previous minutes (or note of circulation)
- reports (GSRs, officers, committees, Delegate)
- approval of office bearer and standing committee chair reports
- matters arising
- new business
- old business
- elections (where scheduled)
- close

4.4. Submitting agenda items

Agenda items may be submitted by:

- GSRs (or Alternate GSRs acting for a group)
- Steering Committee members
- standing committee chairs
- the Delegate (including Conference-related matters)

An agenda item submission includes, where practicable:

- a clear description of the matter and the decision sought
- background sufficient for informed group conscience
- any options considered
- any proposed motion text (where a decision is sought)
- any financial impact, including a cost estimate and whether budgeted
- any time sensitivity and required deadlines

4.5. Timeframes and late items

Agenda items are submitted by the published deadline for the Assembly.

Late items may be accepted at the discretion of the Chair where they are urgent, time-sensitive, or necessary for informed group conscience. Where a late item is material, the Assembly may:

- receive it for information and return it for further work, or
- postpone it to a later Assembly to allow groups time to consider it.

4.6. Reports

Officer and committee reports support informed group conscience and accountability (Concept III).

Reports are:

- circulated with the agenda where practicable
- received at the Assembly and recorded in the minutes
- used to identify matters requiring Assembly direction or decision

4.7. Decision items and motions

Where a decision is required, business is framed as a motion.

Motions are:

- stated clearly and recorded in the minutes
- decided in accordance with Assembly procedure and this guideline
- accompanied by any necessary implementation notes (who will act, and by when)

4.8. Returning items for further work

The Assembly may return an item to a Standing Committee, a delegated officer, or an ad hoc subcommittee established under a Standing Committee where additional information, consultation, or drafting is required.

A returned item records:

- what further work is required
- who is responsible
- the expected timeframe
- when the item will return to the Assembly

4.9. Recording decisions

Minutes record:

- attendance and confirmation of quorum
- motions and outcomes
- key decisions and delegations of VAA authority
- action items, responsible parties, and timeframes

Delegations of authority are recorded in minutes and, where applicable, reflected in the relevant CSP document or job description

4.10. Housekeeping items

Housekeeping items may be grouped and taken together where they do not change policy direction. Housekeeping items remain subject to Assembly review. (section 12.3)

5. Assembly types and annual calendar

5.1. Role of the Assembly

The Area Assembly is the mainspring of the Conference structure and the democratic voice of the movement expressing itself. VAA Assemblies are concerned only with the general service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous (Conference Charter clause 6).

Assemblies are the responsibility of the Steering Committee and are conducted by the Chairperson.

5.2. Annual cycle

VAA holds four Assemblies each calendar year:

- the Election Assembly
- two General Service Assemblies
- the Topics for Conference Assembly (Closed)

A. Election Assembly

The first Assembly of the calendar year is the Election Assembly. It is the first Assembly after the previous years' General Service Conference and its primary function is to receive the Delegates' report from Conference, receive the Treasurer's annual report approve an annual budget, and to elect VAA officers, committee chairs, and alternates.

The Election Assembly is scheduled prior to 1 February each year and newly elected trusted servants take office on 1 March. Elections are conducted in accordance with Section 6.

B. General Service Assemblies

The two Assemblies following the Election Assembly are General Service Assemblies. They are scheduled approximately quarterly, with timing set to align with the Conference calendar and key deadlines, including:

- an Assembly convened prior to the 1 May deadline for submission of Conference topics
- an Assembly convened mid-year to enable discussion of that year's Conference topics and to support group conscience consideration within participating groups

General Service Assemblies may include additional sessions designed to stimulate interest and participation in general service, including:

- sharing sessions, where members contribute ideas and criticisms about what is best for AA in Australia in relation to general service affairs, without the expectation of debate or defence of views
- general service workshops, where a trusted servant presents on a general service topic and fields questions to support informed participation

C. Topics for Conference Assembly

The final Assembly of the calendar year is the Topics for Conference Assembly. It is convened in late October, prior to the delegate's attendance at Conference committees, to enable GSRs to carry group conscience to the Delegate regarding that year's Conference topics prior to Conference.

The Topics for Conference Assembly is convened as a closed Assembly to support open and frank discussion among voting members. Attendance is limited to VAA

voting members (Section 3) and any non-voting attendees invited by the Chair for a defined purpose. Observers do not attend unless invited by the Chair.

D. Special Assemblies

A Special Assembly may be convened between scheduled Assemblies where required to address urgent or time-sensitive matters within VAA scope.

A Special Assembly is convened by the Steering Committee and conducted by the Chairperson. A Special Assembly may also be requested by five registered groups, with the request submitted to the Steering Committee for scheduling.

A Special Assembly:

- is convened by the Steering Committee and conducted by the Chairperson
- is limited to the stated business on the notice and agenda
- is subject to the same quorum, voting, and procedure requirements as any Assembly
- is not used to replace routine Assembly business except where required by urgency or external deadlines

Notice and agenda are circulated to participating groups with as much notice as practicable.

6. Assembly procedures

6.1. Purpose

These procedures support orderly discussion, informed group conscience, and clear decisions.

6.2. Chairing and order

The Chair facilitates discussion and decision-making and maintains order.

The Chair:

- recognises speakers and manages the speakers list
- applies reasonable time limits
- rules on points of order and procedure
- states motions clearly before discussion and before the vote
- ensures outcomes are recorded
- ensures respect for minority rights

6.3. Bringing business to the floor

Assembly decisions are taken by motion.

A motion:

- is moved by a voting member, ideally a GSR (or alternate-GSR)
- is seconded by a voting member
- is stated by the Chair before discussion proceeds

6.4. Discussion

Discussion addresses the motion and remains within the general service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous in Australia.

Discussion continues until the Assembly is ready to decide. Where discussion becomes repetitive or no longer advances informed group conscience, the Chair calls for a decision.

6.5. Sense of the meeting (straw poll)

The Chair may take a sense of the meeting to assist discussion and process.

A sense of the meeting is used for matters such as:

- whether the Assembly is ready to proceed to a vote
- whether an item should be postponed, returned for further work, or received for information before a formal motion is framed
- which of several options the Assembly prefers before wording a motion
- whether additional information or group conscience consultation is required before a decision
- time and process matters (for example, whether to extend discussion, reorder agenda items, or take a short break)

A sense of the meeting:

- may be taken by show of hands or other visible indication suitable to an online Assembly
- is not a decision and does not replace a motion and vote where a decision is required

The Chair states clearly when a sense of the meeting is being taken and, where relevant, summarises the outcome before proceeding.

6.6. Amendments

An amendment modifies a motion to clarify intent or improve the proposal.

An amendment:

- is moved and seconded
- is decided before returning to the main motion (as amended, if carried)

6.7. Withdrawing a motion

The mover withdraws a motion with the consent of the seconder. Where the Assembly has substantially progressed discussion, the Chair seeks the consent of the Assembly before withdrawal.

6.8. Postponing or returning an item

These options are used where the Assembly is not yet ready to decide, including where additional group conscience, information, costing, drafting, or committee work is required, or where an item is being noted for information only.

The Assembly:

- postpones an item to a later Assembly, or
- returns an item for further work in accordance with section 4.8, or
- receives an item for information only

6.9. Voting and substantial unanimity

Voting is conducted in accordance with this guideline.

For important decisions, the Assembly acts in the spirit of Warranty Four: decisions are reached by discussion and vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.

Where the voting threshold is unclear, the Chair may propose, and the Assembly decides, whether substantial unanimity applies in accordance with section 7.8.

Quorum is confirmed before votes are taken. A vote taken without quorum is not valid.

6.10. Minority Voice and re-vote procedure

After a deciding vote, the Chair calls for Minority Voice. Minority Voice is offered to those who voted against the majority. Abstentions do not speak to Minority Voice.

Minority Voice is limited to new arguments or materially clarifying information. It does not repeat material already put to the Assembly.

After Minority Voice is heard, any voting member who voted with the majority either:

- moves to re-vote on the original motion, or
- prepares a new motion.

If a re-vote is moved and seconded, the Assembly returns to the motion, reopens discussion as required for informed group conscience, and proceeds to a fresh vote.

6.11. Voting on past performance

To protect the integrity of informed group conscience, trusted servants avoid voting on matters that constitute an assessment of their own past performance (for example, acceptance of their own report), consistent with the guidance in the Concept IV essay.

This restraint does not prevent a trusted servant from:

- presenting their report
- answering questions to assist the Assembly to become informed
- voting on motions that go beyond assessment of their own performance and are required for Assembly business

The Chair may remind the Assembly of this principle where relevant.

6.12. Closing debate

Debate is closed by motion.

A motion to close debate:

- is moved and seconded
- is decided immediately

If carried, the Assembly proceeds directly to vote on the motion under consideration.

6.13. Recording outcomes

Motions, amendments, outcomes, and action items (including responsible parties and timeframes) are recorded in the minutes.

6.14. Summary of Assembly Procedures

Type of motion or procedure	Second required	Open for discussion	Vote required	Voting threshold	Minority Voice offered
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Main motion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Simple majority or substantial unanimity (section 7.8)	Yes
Change of voting threshold	No	No	Yes	Simple majority	No
Amendment to a motion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Simple majority	Yes
Postpone an item to a later Assembly	Yes	Limited	Yes	Simple majority	No
Return an item for further work	Yes	Limited	Yes	Simple majority	No
Receive an item for information only	Yes	Limited	Yes	Simple majority	No
Close debate (end discussion)	Yes	No	Yes	Simple majority	No
Sense of the meeting (straw poll)	No	Limited	No	Chair's discretion	No
Minority Voice	No	No	No	Not applicable	Not applicable
Motion to re-vote after Minority Voice	Yes	No	Yes	Simple majority	No
Elections	Ballot	Limited	Yes	Simple majority	No
Election of Delegate and Alternate Delegate	Third Legacy Procedure	Limited	Yes	Substantial unanimity	No

Notes:

- Minority Voice is offered after a deciding vote to those who voted against the majority. Abstentions do not speak to Minority Voice.
- All elections are by anonymous electronic ballot and are conducted without personal nomination (Conference Charter clause 7).
- The Third Legacy Procedure applies only to the election of the Delegate and Alternate Delegate.
- Where the threshold is unclear, the Assembly may set the threshold in accordance with section 7.8.

7. Voting and elections

7.1. Purpose

This section sets out quorum, voting methods, voting thresholds, and election procedures for VAA Assemblies.

7.2. Quorum

Quorum is two-thirds of eligible voting participation.

Quorum is confirmed at the commencement of the Assembly and before any vote. A vote taken without quorum is not valid.

7.3. One member, one vote

A member who holds voting eligibility in more than one capacity exercises a single vote.

7.4. Proxy voting

VAA does not permit proxy voting. Votes may be cast by eligible voting members, present at the time of the vote only.

7.5. Voting method

Voting is conducted in a clear and auditable manner suitable to an online Assembly.

Voting is taken by one of the following methods, as determined by the Chair:

- a counted vote using the meeting platform's polling or voting function or 3rd party application
- a counted vote by show of hands where the subject matter is of lesser significance

The method used is recorded in the minutes.

7.6. Ordinary decisions (simple majority)

Unless a higher threshold applies under this guideline, motions are decided by a simple majority of votes cast.

7.7. Important decisions (substantial unanimity)

For important decisions, the Assembly acts in the spirit of Warranty Four: decisions are reached by discussion and vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.

For VAA purposes, substantial unanimity is two-thirds of votes cast.

7.8. Decisions requiring substantial unanimity

The following decisions require substantial unanimity:

- adoption, amendment, or rescission of this guideline
- establishment, dissolution, or material change to the scope of a Standing Committee or job description
- material changes to VAA financial controls (including signatory arrangements or approval processes)
- decisions that materially alter VAA's service structure, representation, or decision-making procedures
- decisions that materially affect VAA's relationship or service interface with other service bodies (including via the Trustees' committee pathway or National Remote Communities interface)

7.9. Chair proposal on voting threshold

Where the appropriate voting threshold is unclear, or where the matter is significant and may set precedent, the Chair may propose to the Assembly that the decision require substantial unanimity (two-thirds of votes cast). The Assembly decides the threshold before debate proceeds to a vote. The basis for the proposal is recorded in the minutes.

7.10. Election Assembly

The first Assembly of each calendar year is designated the Election Assembly, consistent with Australian general service practice.

7.11. Election methods

In line with the Australian General Service Conference Charter, clause 7, Area Committee members are elected, wherever practicable, by ballot without personal nomination.

For VAA, elections are conducted by anonymous electronic ballot that can be screen shared to the Assembly for transparency and auditability. A show of hands is not used for elections. The election method used is recorded in the minutes.

Elections other than Delegate and Alternate Delegate are decided by simple majority of votes cast.

7.12. Third Legacy Procedure

The Third Legacy Procedure is used only for the election of the Delegate and Alternate Delegate, in accordance with Appendix D, without personal nomination.

All other elections are conducted by anonymous ballot in accordance with section 7.11 and the relevant Assembly procedure.

7.13. Voting in elections

Voting eligibility for elections is the same as voting eligibility for Assembly business (Section 3), subject to the “one member, one vote” principle (Section 7.3).

In line with the Australian General Service Manual, an alternate votes only when acting in place of the regular member and the regular member is not present.

7.14. Terms of service

Terms of service for GSRs, Area Committee members, and Delegates are set by the Conference Charter (clause 8).

For VAA purposes:

- General Service Representatives (GSRs) and Alternate GSRs: serve two-year terms. Terms are concurrent with Steering Committee member terms. Groups elect their own GSRs and Alternates and are encouraged to align with this term for consistency within the Conference structure.
- Steering Committee members: serve two-year terms, concurrent with GSR terms. For VAA, this applies to elected Steering Committee service positions other than those covered by the three-year Delegate and Alternate Delegate terms.
- Delegate and Alternate Delegate: serve three-year terms.
- PIPA Chair: for VAA, the Alternate Delegate is nominally the PIPA Chair. Accordingly, the PIPA Chair position carries a three-year term consistent with the Alternate Delegate term.

Terms commence in accordance with section 5.2A (office taken on 1 March following the Election Assembly)

Rotation and re-eligibility are addressed in section 7.17.

7.15. Alternates

To support continuity of service, VAA elects alternates for key service positions.

Alternates are elected at the Election Assembly at the same time as the relevant officer or Standing Committee Chair and serve the same term as that position.

Alternates may be elected for:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Standing Committee Chairs

In line with the Australian General Service Manual, an alternate votes only when acting in place of the regular member and the regular member is [unavailable, conflicted, or unable to fulfil the responsibilities of the position], subject to the “one member, one vote” principle (Section 6.3).

7.16. Vacancies between Assemblies

Where an elected position becomes vacant before the position holder has completed their full term of service, the elected alternate for that position assumes the position and carries the full responsibilities of the role until the next Election Assembly.

When acting as the position holder, the alternate exercises any voting participation attached to the position, subject to the “one member, one vote” principle (Section 7.3).

An election for the position is held at the next Election Assembly, in accordance with Section 7.

Where a position becomes vacant and no elected alternate is available, the Steering Committee determines an interim arrangement to maintain continuity of service and reports the arrangement to the next Assembly. Any interim arrangement does not confer voting eligibility unless and until confirmed by the Assembly.

7.17. Rotation

In line with Warranty One, VAA observes the principle of rotation as a protection against too much service authority being vested in any individual, and to support broad participation in general service.

For VAA purposes, rotation applies to all elected positions.

A. No re-election to the same position

A member who has served in a position is not eligible to be elected to that same position again. This applies whether the term was completed in full or only served in part.

Service in a position includes service as an elected alternate who assumes the position under section 7.16.

B. Delegate and Alternate Delegate

The Delegate and Alternate Delegate do not succeed themselves. A member who has served as Delegate or Alternate Delegate is not eligible to be elected to that position again.

C. Past Delegate voting participation

In the spirit of rotation, a past Delegate does not take up a VAA voting member position after completing their term as Delegate. Past Delegates may be invited to

assist VAA through consultation or special assignments on an ex officio, non-voting basis, as determined by the Assembly or Steering Committee.

8. Officers, Standing Committees, and service documentation

8.1. Purpose

This section defines VAA officer roles and Standing Committees, and establishes the service documentation used to record delegated service authority and corresponding responsibility for both:

- individual service positions (role descriptions), and
- Standing Committees (CSP documents).

8.2. Officers and trusted servants

VAA conducts its service business through elected trusted servants.

Officers:

- carry defined service responsibilities
- exercise delegated service authority within defined limits
- report to the Assembly to support accountability and informed group conscience

8.3. Standing Committees

VAA conducts its ongoing service work through the following Standing Committees:

- Steering Committee
- Public Information and Professional Awareness (PIPA) Committee
- Technical Committee

Standing Committees:

- are established by the Assembly
- carry defined responsibilities on behalf of VAA between Assemblies
- act within delegated service authority and corresponding responsibility
- report to the Assembly at each Assembly, or as required by the Assembly

8.4. Steering Committee (role and function)

The Steering Committee coordinates VAA service business between Assemblies and supports continuity of service.

The Steering Committee:

- prepares Assembly agendas and supports Assembly administration
- coordinates the implementation of Assembly decisions
- supports service communications and recordkeeping
- coordinates across Standing Committees where required
- manages urgent matters within delegated authority and reports to the Assembly

Administrative authority is ordinarily coordinated through the Steering Committee (section 2.3C).

8.5. Service documentation

A. Role descriptions (service positions)

Role descriptions apply to individual service positions, including:

- Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer
- Delegate and Alternate Delegate
- Standing Committee Chairs and their alternates
- other elected or delegated service positions as determined by the Assembly

Role descriptions:

- define the position purpose and responsibilities
- state delegated service authority and limits
- state reporting expectations
- support continuity of service and handover on rotation
- are approved and maintained under Assembly authority

B. CSP documents (Standing Committees)

Each Standing Committee operates under a Composition, Scope and Procedure (CSP) document approved by the Assembly.

A CSP document:

- records the committee's purpose and service responsibilities
- records delegated service authority and corresponding responsibility, including limits
- defines composition, internal procedure, and reporting
- supports clarity, continuity, and accountability between Assemblies

8.6. Role description required contents checklist

Each role description includes, at minimum:

- position title and purpose
- responsibilities (what the position is responsible for)
- delegated service authority and limits
- reporting requirements (to the Assembly and, where relevant, to a committee)
- liaison expectations (including Trustees' committee pathway and National Remote Communities interface, where applicable)
- term of service and rotation reference (Section 7.14–7.17)
- handover requirements (records, access, continuity notes)

8.7. CSP required contents checklist

Each CSP document includes, at minimum:

- name and purpose of the committee
- service responsibilities
- delegated service authority and corresponding responsibility, including limits
- composition (positions, eligibility, term and rotation expectations)
- Chair and key roles (including any delegated officer roles within the committee)
- subcommittees (whether permitted, how established, reporting expectations)

- decision-making procedure within the committee (including how decisions are recorded)
- financial authority, including any expenditure limits and approval pathways
- reporting requirements to the Assembly (frequency and format)
- records and document management expectations (where records are kept and access control)
- liaison pathways (including Trustees' committee pathway and National Remote Communities interface, as applicable)
- review cycle (how often the CSP is reviewed, and how changes are proposed and approved)

8.8. Establishing and changing role descriptions and CSP documents

Role descriptions and CSP documents are approved by the Assembly on adoption.

Material changes to role descriptions or CSP documents return to the Assembly. Housekeeping updates that do not alter scope, authority, or responsibilities are reported to the next Assembly and recorded in the minutes.

8.9. Ad hoc subcommittees

A Standing Committee may establish an ad hoc subcommittee to complete a defined task within the committee's scope and delegated authority.

An ad hoc subcommittee:

- is established under the Standing Committee's authority
- has a defined task and timeframe
- reports through the Standing Committee to the Assembly
- does not create new policy and does not exceed the committee's delegated authority

8.10. Vacancies and continuity

Vacancies are handled in accordance with section 7.16.

9. Assembly Finances

9.1. Purpose

This section sets out VAA's financial principles, controls, and reporting to support transparency, accountability, and prudent stewardship of Seventh Tradition contributions.

9.2. Financial principle

VAA acts in the spirit of Warranty Two: sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, is VAA's prudent financial principle.

9.3. Prudent reserve

The Assembly sets and reviews the prudent reserve target from time to time. The method used to define "ample reserve" may be amended by the Assembly as required, consistent with Warranty Two.

9.4. Self-support and use of funds

VAA is self-supporting through the Seventh Tradition. VAA accepts contributions from individual AA members and Australian AA Groups.

Funds support VAA general service functions, including:

- Assembly operations and communications
- maintenance of the VAA Website
- approved public information and professional awareness activity within VAA scope
- payment of the annual Conference levy
- other service purposes approved by the Assembly

9.5. Annual budget

A budget is prepared annually and presented by the Treasurer to the first Assembly of the calendar year for consideration and approval.

The budget:

- supports planned service activity for the year
- includes provision for a prudent reserve in the spirit of Warranty Two
- includes provision for the annual Conference levy payable to the General Service Board
- is reviewed and amended by the Assembly as required

9.6. Conference levy

VAA pays the annual Conference levy to the General Service Board. The levy amount is determined from time to time by Conference. The levy supports delegate participation at Conference and is included in the annual budget.

9.7. Banking and authorisation controls

VAA maintains a bank account with multiple signatories.

Transactions require two approvals in accordance with VAA financial controls as set by the Assembly.

As long as an expense has been forecasted and approved by the Assembly then any office bearer can cover the expense with a credit card and be reimbursed (upon providing an invoice/receipt). In the case that an office bearer does not have sufficient funds on their credit card to do this, an invoice can be provided to the Treasurer and the money paid to the person who needs to make the payment prior to purchase. These will be decided on a case by case basis.

VAA does not use:

- a credit card
- PayPal or digital wallets where a single person can authorise transactions

9.8. Expenditure approval and delegated limits

Expenditure is approved in accordance with the budget and Assembly decisions.

Where expenditure is not budgeted, or where expenditure may set precedent, the matter returns to the Assembly unless specific delegated authority exists and is recorded.

Any delegated financial authority:

- is recorded in Assembly minutes and, where applicable, in the relevant CSP document
- states limits and approval pathways
- is subject to Assembly review

9.9. Financial reporting

At each Assembly, a financial report is provided that includes:

- income and expenditure since the previous report
- current account balance
- reserve status against the prudent reserve principle
- material variances from the approved budget
- any significant upcoming financial commitments

9.10. Records and transparency

Financial records are maintained in a manner accessible to VAA members as defined in Section 3.3.

Financial decisions, approvals, and reports are recorded and retained in accordance with VAA records and document management practices.

10. Technology and information management

10.1. Purpose

This section sets out VAA's technology and information management practices to support continuity of service, accessibility, security, and effective Assembly operations.

10.2. Information and recordkeeping

VAA maintains service records in a manner that supports transparency, continuity, and auditability.

VAA's service records are maintained in Google Drive as the managed repository. The Secretary is responsible for recordkeeping in collaboration with the Technical Chair, including controlled access and continuity on rotation.

Service records include:

- Assembly agendas and minutes
- registers required for notices, quorum, and voting
- officer and committee reports
- budgets and financial reports
- current role-holder contact details
- role descriptions, CSP documents, and approved guidelines

Records are retained in a managed repository with controlled access.

10.3. Document management and version control

VAA maintains a document management system suitable to an online service entity.

Document management includes:

- clear file naming and version control
- controlled access based on service role
- removal of access when a trusted servant rotates out

- protection against unauthorised editing or deletion
- a clear pathway for publishing current versions of approved documents

Where practicable, key governance documents are maintained as single source of truth documents.

10.4. Access control and security

Access to VAA systems is managed to support security and continuity of service. The Technical Chair is responsible for access control and security settings, consistent with Assembly-approved controls.

Minimum expectations include:

- role-based access
- secure password management and handover on rotation
- use of shared accounts only where required and authorised by the Assembly
- prompt access removal when service ends
- secure storage of essential access information for continuity, consistent with Assembly-approved controls

10.5. Assembly meeting hosting and platform management

VAA Assemblies are hosted in a manner that supports orderly business and informed group conscience.

VAA does not maintain its own Zoom account. Assemblies are hosted using a host group's Zoom account by arrangement, with a registered group donating use of its account for the duration of an Assembly.

The Technical Chair (or delegated technical host):

- manages meeting platform settings for Assemblies
- supports orderly participation
- supports voting processes, including anonymous electronic ballots and screen sharing where required
- liaises with the Chair to ensure meeting settings support the Assembly's requirements, including election processes
- records and reports any material issues affecting Assembly operation

10.6. Voting technology

Voting technology is selected and used to support confidentiality, transparency, and auditability consistent with this guideline. The Technical Chair is responsible for voting technology administration and support.

Where anonymous electronic ballots are used:

- the voting method is explained before the vote
- results are capable of being verified by the Assembly (including screen share of results)
- the outcome is recorded in the minutes

10.7. Communications and distribution

VAA maintains service communications channels to support notices, distribution of minutes and reports, via an email distribution list of VAA members, the VAA website, and VAA WhatsApp notifications

Communications are managed by the VAA Secretary to support clarity of information and avoid multiple competing sources.

10.8. VAA Website

VAA maintains a website as an official information channel for participating groups and members seeking VAA service information.

The website:

- hosts the current version of VAA-approved guidelines and governance documents as directed by the Assembly
- provides practical information relevant to VAA general service participation
- is maintained in accordance with AA principles, including appropriate confidentiality and anonymity protections

The Technical Chair is responsible for maintaining the website, with content updates coordinated with the Secretary where the content relates to official records, approved documents or notifications.

10.9. Technology support and continuity

Technology support is provided to VAA trusted servants to enable participation and reduce barriers to service. The Technical Chair is responsible for technology support and continuity planning

Continuity is supported by:

- written handover notes for key systems and processes
- documented standard operating procedures for Assembly hosting and voting
- regular review of platform settings and access control
- progressive improvement of tools and processes consistent with Assembly decisions

10.10. Review

Technology and information management practices are reviewed as required by the Assembly to ensure they remain fit for purpose, secure, and consistent with VAA's service responsibilities.

11. Public Information and Professional Awareness (PIPA)

11.1. Purpose

This section sets out how VAA undertakes Public Information and Professional Awareness (PIPA) work within VAA scope, and how PIPA activity is aligned with the broader service structure.

11.2. Principle and scope

Local and Central Service structures provide local services, including local Public Information activity. General Service committees maintain the link between groups and the Conference structure, and address matters affecting AA as a whole, including AA Public Information policy and AA's relations with professionals.

VAA PIPA work remains within the general service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous in Australia and is managed to avoid double-headed executive direction and duplication of services (Concept XI).

11.3. Delegated authority and accountability

PIPA activity is carried through delegated authority recorded in Assembly minutes and the relevant CSP document.

PIPA decisions that materially affect scope, policy, budget, or service direction return to the Assembly.

11.4. Alignment through National Remote Communities

VAA does not undertake PIPA as a separate VAA activity. Where VAA undertakes PIPA work, it does so on behalf of National Remote Communities, through the service interface described in sections 1.5–1.6, so that the activity remains aligned with AA's general service purpose and concerns AA in Australia as a whole.

This coordination supports:

- VAA's alignment with Australian general service
- avoidance of duplication of services or encroachment into service responsibilities of groups, central and local service entities, or face-to-face areas and districts

The National Remote Communities Coordinator has a standing invitation to attend VAA Assemblies. The VAA Delegate and Alternate Delegate have a standing invitation to participate in the National Remote Communities working group.

11.5. Use of funds

PIPA expenditure is approved in accordance with the annual budget and Assembly decisions (Section 9).

Unbudgeted PIPA expenditure returns to the Assembly unless specific delegated authority exists and is recorded.

11.6. Records and reporting

PIPA activity is recorded and reported to support transparency and informed group conscience.

Reporting includes:

- activity undertaken since the previous Assembly
- expenditure against budget
- outcomes or reach where measurable
- recommendations for continuation, revision, or cessation of initiatives

11.7. Review

PIPA activity and processes are reviewed as required by the Assembly to ensure alignment with AA principles, service purpose, and the broader service structure.

12. Amendment and maintenance of this guideline

12.1. Purpose

This section sets out how this guideline is maintained, amended, and kept current.

12.2. Status of this guideline

This guideline expresses the collective conscience of VAA as a general service entity. It supports continuity of service and informed group conscience. It is not a legal document.

12.3. Housekeeping changes

Housekeeping changes are administrative updates that do not alter:

- service authority and corresponding responsibility
- scope, policy direction, or decision-making procedures
- financial controls or approval processes
- the structure or composition of elected positions (including officers, Standing Committee Chairs, and alternates), or the requirements for role descriptions or CSP documents
- voting eligibility, quorum, or voting thresholds

Housekeeping changes may be made to keep the document current (for example, correcting typographical errors, updating role titles where already approved by the Assembly, or updating references and links). Housekeeping changes are reported to the next Assembly and recorded in the minutes.

12.4. Material changes

A change is material where it alters scope, authority, procedure, financial controls, voting, or service structure.

Material changes:

- are presented to the Assembly with sufficient notice and background for informed group conscience
- are recorded in the minutes
- require substantial unanimity (two-thirds of votes cast) (section 7.7)

12.5. Process for proposed amendments

Proposed amendments are submitted as agenda items in accordance with Section 4.

A proposed amendment includes:

- the proposed wording (or tracked changes)
- the purpose of the change
- the reason the change is required
- any consultation undertaken or required
- any flow-on effects to CSP documents or other procedures

12.6. Review cycle

This guideline is reviewed in the final year of the Delegates' service commitment to ensure it remains fit for purpose and consistent with Conference Charter guidance, the Concepts and Warranties, and VAA Assembly decisions.

The Assembly determines the timing and scope of reviews.

12.7. Consistency with role descriptions and CSP documents

Role descriptions and CSP documents operate under this guideline.

Where a role description or CSP document becomes inconsistent with this guideline, the document is updated or the matter returns to the Assembly for decision.

13. Adoption, commencement, and definitions

13.1. Adoption and commencement

This guideline is adopted by the VAA Assembly by substantial unanimity (two-thirds of votes cast).

On adoption, the guideline takes effect immediately unless the Assembly specifies a different commencement date.

The adoption decision, including the voting outcome, is recorded in the minutes.

13.2. Transitional arrangements

Where adoption of this guideline requires updates to service documents, registers, or procedures, the Assembly records:

- what must be updated
- who is responsible
- the timeframe for completion
- when updates will be reported back to the Assembly

13.3. Publication and currency

A current version of this guideline is maintained on the VAA website and made available to participating groups.

The date of adoption and the date of last revision are shown on the current version.

14. Safeguarding, conduct, and complaints

14.1. Purpose

This section confirms VAA's safeguarding and complaint-handling arrangements for VAA activities.

14.2. Safeguarding policy status

VAA maintains a Safeguarding Policy adapted from the AA Australia Safeguarding Policy. In the event of inconsistency, the AA Australia Safeguarding Policy is the authoritative reference.

The Safeguarding Policy applies to all VAA-sponsored activities, including Assemblies, committee meetings, and any other VAA-hosted events or communications. The Safeguarding Policy is set out in Appendix A.

14.3. Responsibility and liaison role

The Steering Committee holds primary responsibility for safeguarding within VAA-sponsored activities and for addressing safeguarding complaints within the scope of VAA service.

The Delegate acts as VAA's Safeguarding Liaison and is the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns and for coordinating the initial steps of the Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure.

Where the Delegate is unavailable, conflicted, or the subject of a complaint, the Alternate Delegate acts as Safeguarding Liaison. Where both are unavailable or conflicted, the Steering Committee Chair appoints another qualified Steering Committee member.

The Safeguarding Liaison coordinates the process. Final decisions rest with the Steering Committee.

14.4. Formal complaints and safeguarding procedure

VAA maintains a Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure aligned with the AA Code of Conduct and the Safeguarding Policy. The Procedure governs how safeguarding concerns and formal complaints are received, assessed, managed, and resolved. The Procedure is set out in Appendix B.

14.5. Confidentiality and records

Safeguarding and complaint records are managed with strict confidentiality and stored securely in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

Assembly reporting is procedural only and does not include identifying details.

14.6. External authorities and immediate risk

Where there is immediate risk of harm or potentially criminal behaviour, members contact emergency services or relevant authorities as appropriate. Such action is consistent with AA's Traditions where taken to protect safety.

14.7. Warranties and limits of authority

VAA safeguarding and complaints processes are maintained in a manner consistent with the Warranties and Traditions.

In particular:

- Warranty Three: No member is placed in a position of unqualified authority over any other. Decisions are made through an accountable process with checks and balances, including the use of a Review Panel, the right of reply, and the right of review of process.
- Warranty Five: Actions taken are protective and proportionate, not personally punitive, and are managed to avoid public controversy through strict confidentiality and de-identified reporting.
- Warranty Six: VAA does not perform acts of government and does not govern AA membership. Safeguarding actions relate only to participation in VAA-sponsored activities and eligibility to hold VAA service positions, and are taken to protect VAA's common welfare and functioning (Tradition 1).

Appendix A: Virtual Area A Safeguarding Policy

This policy has been adapted from the Alcoholics Anonymous Australia Safeguarding Policy for application within Virtual Area A. In the event of any inconsistency between this policy and the AA Australia Safeguarding Policy, the national policy shall be regarded as the authoritative reference.

Purpose and foundational principles

The Virtual Area A (VAA) Steering Committee affirms that:

- The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
- VAA has a duty of care to all people participating in VAA services, including Assemblies, committee meetings, and any other VAA-sponsored activities.
- All people, regardless of length of sobriety, age, gender, race, religious beliefs, family or social background, health conditions, disability or impairments, sexual orientation, or gender diversity, have equal rights to protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- AA's Traditions do not excuse or protect people engaging in unsafe or illegal behaviour.
- Any activity taking place in a VAA setting, whether in a virtual meeting, event, or other VAA-related forum, is subject to the same laws and regulations that apply outside the meeting.
- Addressing unsafe or illegal behaviour, including restricting a person's access to VAA events or contacting appropriate authorities, when necessary, is consistent with AA's Traditions.
- Just as AA groups are autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA, VAA's Steering Committee has the primary responsibility for safeguarding within VAA activities and for addressing complaints that arise within the scope of VAA's service.

Scope of the policy

This policy is intended to assist VAA in managing incidents that occur within VAA's service activities, including but not limited to:

- Sexual harassment, bullying, or abuse.
- Criminal, sexual, financial, or other offences.
- Threats of, or actual violence, or verbal, emotional, or social abuse.
- Cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual, or gender-based discrimination, or hate crime.
- Coercion or exploitation.
- Abuse of power.

Bullying – repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group that creates a risk to health and safety.

Harassment – any form of behaviour that is unwanted, offends, humiliates, or targets a person because of that person's sex, pregnancy, ethnicity, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or carer's responsibilities.

These types of incidents can result in:

- mental and physical harm to affected people
- civil or criminal sanctions for individuals or the Fellowship
- community anger, reputational damage, and negative media attention for VAA
- disruption to VAA services
- decreased unity and morale among members
- inability to attract new members or groups
- damage to our common welfare

Tradition 1 states: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity." Safeguarding in VAA activities is of vital importance to both the Area's common welfare and the personal recovery of its members.

How VAA addresses safeguarding issues

The Steering Committee of VAA holds primary responsibility for safeguarding within all VAA-sponsored activities, including Assemblies, committee meetings, and any other events or communications undertaken in the name of VAA.

Safeguarding Liaison role

- The Delegate will act as VAA's Safeguarding Liaison, serving as the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns and coordinating the initial steps of the Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure.
- If the Delegate is unavailable, has a conflict of interest, or is the subject of a complaint, the Alternate Delegate will assume this role. If both are unavailable or conflicted, the Steering Committee Chair will appoint another qualified Steering Committee member.
- The Safeguarding Liaison's role is to coordinate the process and protect the wellbeing of all parties, not to decide the outcome of a complaint. Final decisions rest with the Steering Committee.

All Steering Committee members and VAA service position holders should be familiar with:

1. This policy
2. The VAA Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure (Appendix B)
3. The AA Code of Conduct and national Safeguarding Policy

Contingency planning

- The Steering Committee may establish and periodically review contingency plans to respond to safeguarding issues.
- This may include incorporating safeguarding reminders into opening statements for VAA-hosted events or meetings.

Workshops and awareness

VAA will hold periodic workshops or training sessions to ensure that all trusted servants are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and the processes for reporting and managing incidents.

What action can be taken?

Personal action

- Any VAA participant who experiences behaviour they believe is inappropriate has the right to address it directly with the person involved, if they feel safe doing so.
- The recipient may seek support before doing this from their sponsor, another trusted member, or the Safeguarding Liaison.
- No member is obligated to have direct contact with the person whose behaviour they find unacceptable, especially if it may be unsafe.

Steering Committee action

- If a personal approach is inappropriate or unsuccessful, the matter should be referred to the Safeguarding Liaison, who will initiate the Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure.
- The Steering Committee may take immediate safeguarding measures, including:
 - temporarily restricting an individual's participation in VAA events
 - adjusting access settings to prevent harassment or disruption
 - appointing additional support to ensure the safety of affected members
- The Steering Committee will determine any longer-term actions once the complaint review is complete.

Referral to outside authorities

- If behaviour may be criminal or there is immediate risk of harm, members should call emergency services (000 in Australia).
- The Steering Committee or Safeguarding Liaison may recommend reporting to the police or other appropriate agencies.
- Such action is fully consistent with AA's Traditions and does not breach anonymity when taken to protect safety.

Examples of possible actions following review

- mediation between parties
- formal apology

- temporary or permanent removal from a VAA service position
- temporary or permanent exclusion from VAA events or meetings
- referral to outside authorities where required by law

Guiding principle

In accordance with Tradition 1, all actions taken under this policy will be guided by the need to protect the wellbeing of members and the functioning of VAA, while applying fairness, proportionality, and respect for all involved.

Record keeping and confidentiality

VAA recognises that safeguarding and complaint records must be managed with the highest level of confidentiality to protect the privacy and wellbeing of all individuals involved.

Storage

- All complaint and safeguarding records will be stored securely in a password-protected digital folder accessible only to the Delegate, Alternate Delegate (when acting as Safeguarding Liaison), and Steering Committee Chair.
- Physical records, if created, will be stored securely under the control of the Delegate.

Access

- Access to records is restricted to those directly involved in managing the complaint.
- Sharing is strictly limited to safeguarding purposes or legal compliance.

Confidentiality

- The identity of the complainant, respondent, and any witnesses will always be protected, except where disclosure is required by law or is necessary to ensure safety.
- Assembly reports will never include identifying details.

Review

Records will be periodically reviewed by the Steering Committee to identify patterns or repeated incidents.

Retention period

Records will be retained for a minimum of seven years from closure of the matter, in line with the national AA Safeguarding Policy.

After the retention period, records will be securely destroyed.

Transfer of custody

When a Delegate, Alternate Delegate, or Steering Committee Chair rotates out of their role, all safeguarding and complaint records will be securely transferred to their successor.

References

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- the AA Code of Conduct
- the national AA Safeguarding Policy
- the VAA Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure (Appendix B)

Appendix B: Virtual Area A Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure

This procedure outlines a recommended course of action following the submission of a formal complaint to the Delegate (or Alternate) acting in their capacity as Virtual Area A Safety Liaison. This procedure is to be used in conjunction with the Virtual Area A Safety Policy (Appendix A).

Purpose

To provide a fair, timely, and confidential process for addressing formal complaints involving alleged breaches of the AA Code of Conduct or VAA Safeguarding Policy, ensuring the safety, dignity, and unity of the Fellowship while maintaining VAA's ability to function effectively.

15. Principles and limits (Warranties and Traditions)

This procedure exists to protect the common welfare of VAA service activity and is applied in a manner consistent with the Warranties and Traditions.

- No unqualified authority (Warranty Three):
No individual decides outcomes alone. The Safeguarding Liaison coordinates process steps. Findings are developed by an appointed Review Panel. Final decisions rest with the Steering Committee acting as a body, with procedural safeguards including the right of reply and the right of review of process.
- Non-punitive and non-controversial (Warranty Five):
Actions are protective and proportionate and are not personally punitive. Confidentiality is maintained and Assembly reporting is de-identified to avoid public controversy and protect all parties.
- No acts of government (Warranty Six):
This procedure does not govern AA membership or group autonomy. It governs only participation in VAA-sponsored activities and eligibility to hold VAA service positions, to prevent acts that might injure AA as a whole and to protect VAA's ability to function (Tradition 1).

Step 1 – Lodging a complaint

- Complaints are submitted in writing to the Delegate (or Alternate Delegate if the Delegate is the subject).
- Include:
 - date(s) and time(s) of incident(s)
 - description of behaviour and relevant policy breach
 - any supporting evidence (emails, screenshots, documents)
 - names of witnesses (if applicable)

Step 2 – Acknowledgement and initial safety check

The Delegate (or Alternate Delegate) will:

- acknowledge receipt within 48 hours
- assess for:
 - immediate safeguarding or safety risks (per Safeguarding Policy: call 000 if urgent)
 - whether temporary action is needed (for example, suspension from service pending review)
 - preservation of evidence, if safe to do so
- confirm that no retaliation or victimisation will occur for raising the concern
- bring the complaint to the Steering Committee (in the absence of the subject of the complaint, if they are a member of the Steering Committee) as soon as practicable

Step 3 – Notification of respondent

Where it is safe to do so, the subject of the complaint will be informed as soon as practicable after the initial safety check has been completed.

Initial notification will include:

- the general nature of the allegation (for example, the type of behaviour and the setting in which it is alleged to have occurred)
- the relevant policy or Code of Conduct provisions allegedly breached
- assurance that they will have the opportunity to respond fully during the investigation
- an instruction not to contact the complainant or potential witnesses about the matter
- information about the process and their rights, including the right to a review of process after a decision is made

Initial notification will not include:

- the complainant's identity (unless already public and disclosure is safe and agreed)
- all evidence or detailed witness statements

Supporting material will be shared at the point of seeking the respondent's formal written response during the investigation, to enable a fair response while protecting confidentiality where required.

Step 4 – Appointment of review panel

An impartial Review Panel may be formed as an ad hoc subcommittee of the Steering Committee comprising:

- one Steering Committee member not involved in the matter
- one Delegate from another Australian Area or currently serving Trustee
- one GSR from outside VAA

All panel members declare conflicts of interest before commencing.

Step 5 – Investigation

The Review Panel will:

- gather information from the complainant and any witnesses as required
- provide the respondent with sufficient detail of the allegation(s) and any relevant supporting material to enable a fair response (while protecting confidentiality where required)
- invite a formal written response from the respondent within 7 days, including any relevant evidence and nominated witnesses
- interview the complainant, respondent, and witnesses as required
- assess information against definitions in the AA Code of Conduct and VAA Safeguarding Policy, including:
 - bullying
 - harassment
 - discrimination
 - abuse of power
 - threats, violence, coercion, or exploitation
- where illegal conduct is suspected, recommend reporting to police or relevant authorities

Step 6 – Findings and recommendations

The Review Panel will produce a confidential report for the Steering Committee, including:

- summary of complaint
- findings of fact
- recommended actions (for example, mediation, apology, service suspension or removal, exclusion from meetings)

Step 7 – Decision and implementation

The Steering Committee will:

- review the panel's report in a closed meeting
- make decisions by substantial unanimity
- provide written outcomes to complainant and respondent, with clear instructions for any required actions

Decisions focus on safeguarding measures and service participation boundaries within VAA scope and do not determine AA membership or impose personal penalties.

Step 8 – Follow-up and monitoring

If actions require further review (for example, reinstatement or mediation outcomes), a timeline will be set (usually three months) for follow-up.

The Steering Committee will monitor compliance. Failure to comply may result in further action.

Step 9 – Confidentiality

- Information is shared only with those directly involved in managing the complaint.
- Records are stored securely for seven years in line with Safeguarding Policy retention guidelines.

Step 10 – Assembly reporting

The Steering Committee provides the Assembly with procedural updates only. No identifying details or specifics of the complaint are disclosed.

Step 11 – Right of review

Either party may request a review of whether the procedure was followed within 14 days. The review is conducted by a Trustee or Delegate of the original Review Panel and Virtual Area A where practicable. The review considers procedure only, not a re-hearing of the facts.

Appendix C: VAA Minority Reports Procedure (Concept V)

Purpose

A Minority Report provides an orderly process for a VAA member to appeal a decision under Concept V (Right of Appeal). It exists to ensure minority rights can be upheld while supporting unity, clarity of procedure, and informed group conscience.

Eligibility

Any voting member of VAA (as defined in Section 3 of the Guidelines) may lodge a Minority Report.

Where a matter falls outside VAA scope or relates to broader AA service processes, it is handled through the appropriate AA Australia and General Service Office pathways rather than through this procedure.

Decisions that may be appealed

A Minority Report may be lodged in relation to:

- a VAA Assembly decision, or
- a material decision of the Steering Committee or a Standing Committee made between Assemblies, where the minority believes the decision:
 - exceeds delegated service authority, or
 - may set precedent, or
 - materially affects VAA service direction, policy, finances, governance, or external service interfaces, or
 - raises significant Concepts, Traditions or unity concerns.

Safeguarding concerns and complaints are handled under the Safeguarding Policy and the Formal Complaints and Safeguarding Procedure and are not progressed through the Minority Report process.

Lodgement and notice

A voting member lodging a VAA Minority Report provides written notice to the VAA Secretary, stating that they intend to appeal a decision to the VAA Assembly under Concept V.

The notice includes:

- the decision being appealed (including date and context)
- a brief statement of the basis of appeal
- the relief sought (for example: reconsideration, rescission, amendment, or return for further work)

Distribution timeframe

The Minority Report and any supporting background are submitted in writing at least 30 days prior to the VAA Assembly at which the Minority Report is to be heard.

The VAA Secretary distributes the Minority Report and background by email distribution to VAA voting members as soon as practicable, and in sufficient time for informed consideration.

Presentation at the Assembly

The Minority Report is presented before the start of deliberation on Committee and Officer reports and other business.

Time limits apply:

- the minority is given a maximum of three minutes to present the appeal
- the majority is then given a maximum of three minutes to present the majority view

The Chair manages this item to support clarity, fairness, and focus on the decision appealed.

Motion to decline to debate

The discretion to debate a Minority Report rests with the VAA Assembly.

After the Minority Report is presented, the Chair asks whether there is a motion to decline to debate the Minority Report.

A motion to decline to debate:

- is made without comment
- requires a second
- is not debatable
- requires a two-thirds majority

If the Assembly debates the appeal

If the Assembly decides to debate the appeal, it proceeds as a motion relating to the appealed decision (for example: to rescind, amend, reconsider, or return for further work).

The Chair states the motion clearly, and the Assembly proceeds in accordance with the Assembly procedures.

Records and confidentiality

The Minority Report and the Assembly's disposition are recorded in the minutes in a manner consistent with VAA recordkeeping and confidentiality practices.

The Minority Report is distributed to VAA voting members by email. It is not published on the VAA website.

Appendix D: Third Legacy Procedure (VAA online adaptation)

Purpose

The following purpose statement is reproduced from the Australian General Service Manual:

AA's Third Legacy Procedure is a special type of electoral procedure, used primarily for the election of Area Delegates, Regional and other Trustees and International Delegates, where more than one candidate is nominated. It is considered to be unique to AA, and at first glance, appears to introduce a strong element of chance into a matter that should depend solely on the judgement of the majority. In practice, it has proved highly successful in eliminating the influence of factions or parties. A second-place candidate who may be extremely well qualified, but without early popular support is encouraged to stay in the balloting rather than withdraw.

For VAA purposes, the Third Legacy Procedure is used for the election of the Delegate and Alternate Delegate where more than one candidate is nominated.

It must first be established

- That the candidates are eligible and willing to stand.
- That the right to vote has been established.
- If the election involves appointing an Alternate position, it should be decided in advance whether the runner-up will be that Alternate or whether this will be by a separate election.

Procedure

1. The Chairperson of the meeting will take charge of the proceedings.
2. Two scrutineers are appointed, preferably from among those not eligible to vote. The scrutineers will take charge of the electronic ballot process.
3. The names of candidates are displayed to the Assembly (for example, via screen share).
4. The vote will be displayed against the names of candidates.
5. The first candidate to receive two-thirds of the total vote is elected.
6. All ballots are secret.
7. Written ballots are cast in the traditional way (one choice to a ballot), collected and given to the scrutineers to count; the tallies are then displayed to the Assembly. For VAA, this is conducted by anonymous electronic ballot, with the scrutineers confirming the tally.
8. If no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote at the first ballot, a second ballot is held, duplicating the first.

9. If no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote at the second ballot, any candidate having less than one-fifth of the total vote is withdrawn automatically except that the two top candidates must remain. In the case of a tie for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.
10. A third ballot is then held with the remaining candidates. As for the second ballot, if no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote at the third ballot, candidates with less than one-third of total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except that the two top candidates must remain. In the case of a tie for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.
11. A fourth ballot is then conducted as for the second and third above.
12. If no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote, the Chairperson establishes by formal motion (with seconder), on a majority show of hands, whether to hold a fifth ballot or go straight to selection by lot (see step 14).
13. If no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds of the vote in the fifth ballot, or if the Assembly has decided to drop the fifth ballot, the choice will be made by lot.
14. In the final round, the choice is made by lot using a random selection method suitable to an online Assembly (for example, a random draw tool). The scrutineers enter the names of the remaining candidates into the online tool and conduct the draw via screen share to preserve visibility of the process to the Assembly. The method used is stated and recorded in the minutes.
15. That candidate is then the Delegate or Alternate Delegate, as applicable.

Amendments:

Amendments to Virtual Area A Guidelines First Draft

6th June 2026 as per VAA Steering Committee Meeting for Guidelines.

1.3 Relationship to other AA guidance Delete: Where there is conflict, the spiritual principles of AA, and applicable Australian AA service guidance, take precedence.

4.3 Agenda formation Add: approval of office bearer and standing committee chair reports

3.6 Non voting participants Add (see section 5.2C regarding attendance at the Topics for Conference Assembly) at the end of 3.6.

9.7 Banking and authorisation controls Add: As long as an expense has been forecasted and approved by the Assembly then any office bearer can cover the expense with a credit card and be reimbursed (upon providing an invoice/receipt). In the case that an office bearer does not have sufficient funds on their credit card to do this, an invoice can be provided to the Treasurer and the money paid to the person who needs to make the payment prior to purchase. These will be decided on a case by case basis.

12.6 Review cycle Add: in the final year of the Delegates' service commitment

14.7 Warranties and limits of authority Delete: Where conduct may be criminal or there is immediate risk of harm, members and trusted servants may contact appropriate authorities. Such action is consistent with AA principles where taken to protect safety.

Housekeeping items identified

- Page 1 amend numbering of pages after alterations including Appendix A 28, B 32, C 36, D 38. Added Amendments 40
- 4.10 add (section 12.3) reference for description of "housekeeping"
- 6.14 Threshold edit 7.8
- 7.14 Terms of service. Rotation and re-eligibility edit 7.17

Assembly #03 19/07/2026 Virtual Area A Guidelines Second Draft is to become Virtual Area A Guidelines (Version 1) approved.