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Alcoholics Anonymous Australia Newsletter for Professionals

Australian Women AA Members make historic 12 Step trip to India

In 2005 at the international Convention in Toronto, the international delegate for India, Pushan, was sharing at the opening meeting. At the end of his share he spoke of the plight of female alcoholics in India, and made an impassioned plea for females all over the world to visit India to pass the message of hope and recovery for the women in India. In 2008 the Chairman of the General Service Board in India was invited to share at the National Convention. Once again he talked about the predicament of female alcoholics in India. There had been some talk at Board meetings about how to pass the message to the women in India, but no firm decisions could be made. It was not until Valerie, manager at the Australian General Service Office and Shrikanth, Chairman of the Asia Oceania Service Meeting met in 2011 in Chandigarh that a plan emerged. Australia would aim for 100 women to help pass the message to female alcoholics in India. We received an invitation and the full support from the General Service Board in India to proceed with a plan. The Australian Conference approved the project in November 2011. The endorsement for the plan was also given by the International Delegates for India at the World Service Meeting in New York 2012.

After thirteen months of meetings and organization, the trip became a reality when we arrived in New Delhi on the 13th January 2013. The Travel Agency we used did an amazing job for us. It would have been a logistical nightmare without their help.

We arrived in Delhi quite late at night and were wholeheartedly welcomed by members of the Fellowship as well as the Chairman of the General Service Board in India. Upon arrival, we were presented with the programming for the next four days. Organizing 70 or so women to attend four or five different institutions from 3 different hotels was a challenge, however with the help of

the Fellowship in Delhi we managed to get to where we were meant to go. The organisation was put into place and at the very last moment the Indians would rearrange everything. It presented us with the perfect opportunity to work our programs. By the end of our trip we ceased to be surprised by the unexpected changes and adjusted accordingly. We are grateful to the Fellowship in India for keeping us very busy. We were welcomed in each city with enthusiasm. We

attended Hospitals, Universities, Medical Colleges, Police and Judiciary, as well as rehabilitation centres for women.

Press interviews were arranged at local Press Clubs as

well as phone interviews. In most cases the press respected the anonymity of the members. Our Class A trustees were kept very busy and did an excellent job. Institutions visited in New Delhi were: Lady Harwin Medical College Kamla; Nehru College; Gargi College and Jamia Hamdard University. There was also a meeting with Police and Professionals at Aiwaina.

Institutions visited in Kolkata were: Medical College; Workshop for Women; Press Club and a Public Information Meeting. Institutions Visited in Chennai were; Stella Maris College for Women, Sharmila College of Nursing, Madras School of Social Work, Social Work students at Loyola College and TTK Hospital

There were a number of highlights on the trip and most impressive was the number of judiciary who attended a Public Information meeting in Bangalore. The Chief Justice forcefully encouraged them to attend the

meeting after a member in Bangalore sat down with him and simply told his story.

The KEM Hospital meeting for de-addiction with the guest of honour, Aamir Khan. Mr. Khan is a Bollywood superstar and social activist. He hosts his own show focusing on social issues.

Last July he focused on alcoholism, its effects and recovery through Alcoholics Anonymous. Within half an hour of airing the AA website had crashed and the phone lines recorded

8,000 missed calls. The members in India manned the phone lines for 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, accepting help from members in the Middle East countries. Aamir Khan has committed to air a program focusing on the plight of the female alcoholic in India. Institutions visited in Bangalore: Ambedkar Medical College; Temperance Board; Christ University; Banjara Academy; Carmel Convent; Nimhans Hospital; Police; Judiciary; Press Meeting; AA Meeting. Institutions Visited In Mumbai: Rehabilitation Centres; State Minister for Social Welfare and de-addiction.; Rizvi College; SNDT College of Social Science; Tata Institute of Social Sciences; Public Awareness Meeting at "Dharavi"; Press Conference; Radio Talk Show; AA Meetings. There was also a visit to General Service Office of AA India. Alcoholism in India is seen as an illness for men and a moral issue for women. The purpose of this trip was to help break down those barriers by way of information and attraction.

The Fellowship in India does wonderful Public Information Programs and the Fellowship there is well respected by the Professional Community.



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Meet the Board: Class A Trustee Louise Dunne

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia is the chief service arm of the Australian General Service Conference and is essentially custodial in its character. It consists of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic trustees. In seeking candidates for non-alcoholic Trustees (Class A) the Board looks for men and women with a proven track record in their own fields, a demonstrated interest in Alcoholics Anonymous and some experience in working with AA and its members. Louise Dunne is a recent appointment as a Class A trustee and is already proving to be a great asset to the Board. Louise is currently working as a Clinician on an Adult Drug Court Team and is also working with an Alcohol Magistrate Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT) team. Louise first came into contact with AA when she was working as a clinician at a mental health unit and realised they didn't have

enough services to meet the needs of people presenting with alcohol issues. She decided to contact the General Service Office of AA, initially to get some resources to put out for people to help themselves to. AA responded by asking a member to contact Louise to work out a plan how AA would be able to help. Louise noticed significant changes in clients that took up the AA program, "the first thing is that people were actually talking about their drinking - having a member of AA come and share their experience seemed to encourage people to open up". "The second change was that people started identifying, often for the first time, that their

drinking might be the cause of many of their problems; and thirdly people who were attending meetings seemed to recover from their mental health difficulties quicker". Louise believes that in Alcoholics Anonymous "people can directly identify with someone else who has the same problem" and "people benefit hugely from the ongoing support through meetings, sponsors and helplines - something that most services, counsellors or even family can't offer the alcoholic". Most importantly however, AA offers hope from people who have 'been there and done that' and a solution to alcoholism. Before coming into contact with AA, like many professionals, Louise believed AA was associated with a religious organisation. Asked if that perception has changed she replied, "completely! I understand there is a spiritual focus in AA but it is open to interpretation for any spectrum of beliefs, not focusing on one religion or one belief system". Louise is motivated by the stories of people in recovery and inspired by the people she meets in her duties as a Trustee. The recent trip of Australian women to India was such a case. She was able to speak on behalf of AA to media outlets and newspapers without breaking any anonymity and hear the stories of Indian women in recovery and the particular problems they face there

...most importantly it offers hope, people see a way out of their predicament and the promise of a better life from people who have "been there, done that"



Louise sees the fellowship of AA as dovetailing neatly into the professional field of addiction, with the ongoing support, sense of community and network of meetings across Australia providing necessary daily tools for living. There can sometimes be obstacles for professionals when considering AA involvement; these include misconceptions about AA or at times managers having to consider policy, procedures and insurance. Once those

obstacles are overcome however I believe there is great benefit for staff and clients alike. Louise sees Alcoholics Anonymous as a resource for the professional and is keen to utilise any support in the community that might help her clients. She realises that AA is not for everyone but it should be considered as an option along with everything else available. During her time on the Board Louise would like to foster a stronger relationship between AA and the team she currently works on, as well as spreading the word that AA is a viable treatment option. Taking the time to listen to the stories of members, reading some of the literature and finding out what AA is really about has made all the difference to Louise in her professional capacity to offer informed options to her clients. "Taking the time to listen to the stories of

members, reading some of the literature and finding out what AA is really about has made all the difference to Louise in her professional capacity to ensure her clients can make informed decisions. "There's a lot of evidence that AA works, just not in the clinical sense; when you look at the number of people AA has helped in the 70 years since it started and the way AA changes people's lives, there is overwhelming evidence that AA works".

How Can A.A. Help You?

Would you be interested in having an A.A. presentation at one of your professional gatherings? Or would you like information about recovery from alcoholism in A.A.? If so, please contact

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