

THE MIXER

THE AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

‘THE POWER OF CHOICE’

I drank or substituted things for Alcohol for about 31 years, and I was in and out of AA for 18 years, from the age of 26. From my very first meeting I knew damn well that I was one of you. I identified deeply with the speaker and I actually felt very positive that I was finally taking a step to do something about my drinking. Unfortunately, when I got home and read the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* which the old timer had given me at the end of the meeting, my deeply held prejudices kept me from seeing that the solution to my problem would be in the Steps.

Well, I grew up around drinking, and from the age of 15 drank for the effect. Meaning I always drank quickly and pretty large quantities. My first drunk I drank to excess at a friend's place when his brother picked up a case of beer. We both vomited a lot and I tried to sleep in a field in the winter time in a small Canadian city, which can result in death or lost digits, but managed to get home when it looked like a poor choice. I do not remember ever being interested in a few social drinks. I would often not pick up a drink at all if there was no opportunity to tie one on. From the beginning Alcohol could be troublesome, but it seemed to allow me to party in an extreme kind of way. I liked the over the top. The rocket fuel effect. Dream bigger dreams and scale greater heights, a bit like Bill spoke about. By University a couple of key factors kicked in for me: on the day I arrived I turned legal age; and I was also away from home and the watchful eye of my family. So basically there were no brakes at all when it came to drinking by that time. I felt like I was simply a hard partier and everyone seemed to do it, but I always seemed to be the one drinking a little bit (or substantially maybe) faster or a little bit more (or substantially, probably) in terms of quantity than the rest of the crowd.

Because of alcohol I was always scrambling to get things done. I drank many times when I was supposed to be studying, or completing assignments during my school days, and then would be forced to work all night to complete them or pass a test. Though I told people I was an alcoholic from the first year at University, I don't know how I really felt about it. I was not as bad as a couple of blokes I knew and generally I could get passing grades though I was always broke. In my very first job I drank steadily for 4 years and probably was only saved from being fired by the fact that I stayed inside the union rules that the place of employment had. [Continued on p. 2]

Note: *The Mixer* can be accessed online in PDF form at the website, www.aamixer.com.

1-4	THE POWER OF CHOICE
2	CONTENTS; STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
4-5	HEAD
5	HEARD AROUND THE TRAPS
6-7	A NEW WAY
7-9	THE AGE OF MIRACLES
9-11	SERVICE AND SHOWING UP
11-12	GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE
12	AA PREAMBLE

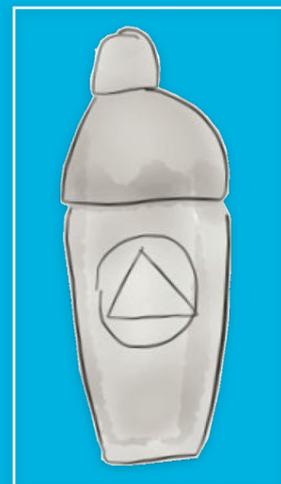
I always used my allotted sick leave (all 20 days of it) and I had a bad habit of taking leave at the last moment instead of giving two weeks notice. I had some lectures from my boss and finally, after a second arrest for DUI about 6 years after my previous conviction, I tried AA for about 6 or 9 months and strung together enough sobriety to clear my head and move on to a better job. Though I did not realise it at the time, I was not really sober because I would substitute other things for alcohol whenever I stopped drinking.

During my second job I enjoyed what I was doing and kept sober for months at a time, but I was always substituting these other things for alcohol. I know now that whenever I was 100% clean from mood altering things the obsession would return, and before I really even knew what I was doing I was off to the races again drinking. Every time I picked up alcohol I was rapidly, i.e. within days or weeks, at least as bad as I was before, if not worse. When I was arrested for that third time I entered an outpatient treatment program for 18 months, but I think it was more to keep everyone off my back and to help influence the courts; and I began drinking whenever I could during business travel. On conviction, I lost my license for two years and was given a three-year probation, and part of my probation was that I must abstain from alcohol. However, I used to start to drink in the airport bars whenever I was leaving the country on a business trip. Hiding behind menus in case I might see

The Mixer Statement of Purpose

The Mixer, for “people who normally would not mix” (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 17), is a forum for AA members in Australia to share their experience, strength and hope with each other, that they may stay sober and help others to recover from alcoholism.

Stories are collected by a volunteer Editor in each Area, thus ensuring a voice for all AA members around Australia; and these Area Editors form an editorial group conscience for the magazine, together with the General Editor and technical and design team. We, the editors and other volunteers contributing service to *The Mixer*, try to practice the AA principles in our work, being guided by the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts. All contributions present the views of the contributors, and do not represent the AA Fellowship as a whole.



someone who knew me, like a cop or a probation officer.

The drunk-a-log goes on for about another 10 years; however, the big lesson for me during this period is this. Somewhere during this period, I progressed to the point where I lost the POWER of choice. Where I seemed to at least be able to stop for months at a time on my own in all my previous years, I could no longer do that. I bounced in and out of AA frequently, but I just could no longer find the desire to really want that thing that sober people in AA had, and I could not get to that place until I hit a bottom. I was never able to go more than a week or two without a drink. Usually no more than a day if I could get away with it. I was lying to everyone. Most people in my life thought I was not drinking, as I was only drinking during business travel; but I was always on business travel.

After losing a job I was back in AA, and had a good sponsor and got through the 12 Steps, only to go out again for 17 or so months after about 4 months of sobriety. I had drunk on my first business trip. I simply was not ready to fly off and be on my own where no one knew me. I just did not fare well at that time in my life: whenever I was able to pop up where no one knew me, I would have to drink. I couldn't follow the advice of my sponsor and I would always eventually cave in to the obsession.

At the end of that 17-month period I was completely beat again, and thank the POWER I gave AA another shot and tried to work the 12 Steps again to the best of my ability. This time it seemed to stick, one day at a time. Oh, ya, it was after I had lost another job, so I had time to do AA and work the steps with my sponsor, who had been laid off a few months before I came back in. This guy had a similar history to mine and had been watching me go in and out for a couple of years. We did step work every day and I progressed rapidly. My last drunk had been a big one. Almost two weeks of drinking in a hotel room in Manila without eating. I was very sick, and I had had a moment of clarity in that room. I knew I had never followed the 12-Steps process as well as I possibly could (that is an understatement) if I followed the directions in the Big Book. I knew for my daughter's sake at least (she was four at the time) that it would be hard to fess up and say AA does not work if I had never actually tried it the way it was written. I knew I owed it to all our lives to try it one last time.

I had to learn a lot about myself during this period, and I had to learn to actively make changes in all areas that are risky for me. I knew I had to close all doors that previously I would keep open a crack. I began by always saying I don't drink, I have a health condition that does not allow me to take alcohol, at any time I was asked. I went from a guy who did not believe a good portion of what I read in the 164 pages, back in 1990 at the time of my first meeting, to a guy who is quite all right with most of it. I simply had to choose my own concept of the POWER, and that has changed to a POWER that is beyond concept for me. It is a POWER that has evolved for me over 8-plus years.

I had to get busy helping others and talking to others in hospitals and schools etc., which is something I did not do at all previously. I had to learn to be grateful for all of the many blessings I have had in this life, no matter how fantastic or trite that

seemed. I had to learn to take nothing for granted. I had to learn to stop judging others and to silently say to myself, “there but for the grace of the POWER go I”, a lot! I had managed to get to Step 3 in two weeks, about the same time I could sleep through the night and eat solid food. I was done with 4 and 5 within two and half months, and I made my list and started making amends before four months. During the early amends process I had my first incidence of some phenomena of POWER that I do not go into details on any more. It simply gave me the impetus to go further and I did. I was visiting guys in the hospital and dragging guys from hospital to meetings within 6 months and sponsoring at 10 months. All things I needed to do to change. I honestly believe now that I cannot think myself into a new way of acting. I had to act myself into a new way of thinking.

Now fast forward. I got sober in 2008 and since the end of 2015 I have been travelling to Australia for business almost quarterly. When I used to spend time in Australia back around 2004 to 2007 I would make brief sojourns into the office and then drink heavily in my hotel room in Alexandria near the airport in Sydney. I saw nothing of the beauty of the place. Since 2015 however a different man is here, and that guy likes to do meetings and share the message, and I take the opportunity to sightsee and go for long walks as I do it. I have my own version of doing pages 84 to 88 of the Big Book every day, and I try to reset quickly whenever I am disturbed. I see miracles daily and I see almost as much wreckage. At least 4 of the men I personally worked with, including 1 relative, have all died of the disease since I got sober. We hear of many more. I try to the best of my ability to incorporate the principles into every nook and cranny of my life. I do the daily Steps 10, 11 and 12 activities to the best of my ability. When I go to a meeting I try to share that this program works. That you can escape drinking and you can have the obsession removed and keep it removed. I learn my spiritual condition, which my sobriety is built upon, by checking myself against Steps 10 and 11. If I do have some life event happen that catches me off guard, I am on the phone right away chatting about it to friends in the program or my sponsor or even my long-term sponsees. There is no hierarchy here, the book is the textbook, we just share our experiences with it.

(Signed, Happy Joyous and Free (the vast bulk of the time ;-))

HEAD

Scenario 1 . . .

You're driving along and once again your life is in tatters. Shredded threads of disgusting behaviour interwoven to make yet another 'morning after the night before' of misery. You swallow hard, trying to keep the bile down until you can find a toilet bowl to hover over, and continue driving for the safe haven of home. The voices in your head are shouting stories of disgust and self-loathing. “You're not deserving of anything remotely good anyway, you pathetic loser. You truly are a twisted, disgusting, publicly naked, privately violent, sick, drunken little NOTHING.” You have learnt to hate these

'morning after' type days. It's when the voices are at their strongest ... and loudest. It's deafening in there at these times, and you find yourself overcome with the emotional paralysis that says those voices are right. You've drunk yourself, yet again, into the old familiar territory of self-humiliation and the ugly side. Of course, you make yourself all the usual promises of not doing that / going there / or drinking that much again, but you know it's futile. Deep inside you know that the most likely scenario is that, even before this day is over, you'll be back into it again. So you surrender to the hopelessness of it almost instantly.

Later, when the inevitable happens and you're standing at the bar ordering your drink, the barman says, "What's your poison, darl?" You tell him your preference and momentarily ponder the word 'poison' in your mind. But you know the moment the liquid caresses your throat, the voices will stop. That quiet space in your mind is more urgent than anything. You drink, at any hour, at any place, for exactly that reason. And even more importantly than that, is that after a few minutes of idle chatter with the bar's other drunks, those people you're drinking with, they will nod with their silent knowing and understanding.

Scenario 2 . . .

You're driving along and all is well in your life. You've just spent the morning having coffee with your friend and discussing the blessings of your life, your love, your health and your happiness. You feel pretty good. Excellent, in fact. Almost too good to be real ... and then it happens. Right out of the blue from left field, the 'voice' shouts, "No, you are NOT. You're NOT good enough or deserving of these things. You're a pathetic LOSER, remember? You are a twisted, disgusting, publicly naked, privately violent, sick, alcoholic little NOTHING."

The 'voice' has been doing push-ups again. It happens sometimes. While you're cruising along enjoying the positive progress, it's back there, gaining strength, just waiting to catch you off guard. And it did just now. It got you when you had a moment of complacency. Within milliseconds it has regained its control of your mind and is sending you deaf on the inside. Then, without warning you are overcome with the paralyzing fear that the voice is right. That you're not deserving of good things. You're not even mildly special. You're rubbish ... and sooner or later the person you love more than anything will find out the ugly truth about you. So instead ... you pray. You pray for the voice to shut the hell up and leave you alone. You know the importance of prayer. And you know that as soon as you can you will meet with a fellow sufferer. One who is on the same path as you. One who has a mind similar to your own. And even more importantly than that, is the person you meet with, will nod with their silent knowing and understanding.

HEARD AROUND THE TRAPS

"TRUST: To Really Use Step Three."

"You can tell an alkie - you just can't tell 'em anything"

A NEW WAY

Today, my name is Trevor and I am an Alcoholic. It is pretty simple for me, the Big Book tells me what to talk about: what it was like, what happened, and what it is like now. I remember in the early days I would sit in the meetings and think about what I would say if I were asked to share, I would then do the share, sit down and think about what I should have said. If I do what the Big Book tells me, I get to be present and actually listen to what is being shared by fellow members.

I was one of those social drinkers: I would drink with anybody that would drink with me. If nobody was available I often drank with my dog. Needless to say, that I loved booze; the taste, the texture, everything about it. I have a friend in the fellowship who often shares that she couldn't stand the taste. At the end of the day it doesn't matter because we both drank for effect, that effect was to avoid the realities of life. I was a young man that always felt different to what I imagined other people felt. I left school at 14 and went straight to work.

By the time I was 15, I was drinking whenever I could get hold of it. That was also the time that I stopped growing up. I was to spend the next 23 years faking being an adult. I was 32 by the time I walked through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous. I went because I was in trouble with alcohol; and I remember listening, for whatever reason, to a man talk about what AA had done in his life. That man was doing a public service talk at St Vincent's Hospital. I was there to get my licence back for the fourth time. I don't recall what he said, what I did remember was the passion that he shared with us in that room.

I would love to be able to say that I stayed sober from my first meeting but that's not what happened. It took me 3, maybe 4 years to stop drinking: I honestly don't remember, as it was many years ago. What finally stopped me was not a massive drunk, it was the inability to feel anything positive. I was in my second marriage, had 3 children, and had lost the ability to love and care about my own family that I had been blessed with. I was in the rooms for 3 and a half years before I was to reach my own personal rock bottom. That was to end up in O'Connor House; a rehab. It was in there that I realized I had never taken responsibility for anything in my entire life. For many years in the fellowship I was a deaf know-it-all. The truth was that my entire life was run on ego and pride and I refused to ask anyone for help. My recovery truly began when I asked another man for help; and he was to show me the Program as it is in the Big Book.

The fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has given me more life than I ever imagined. That doesn't mean there hasn't been pain: hurt is a reality of life. What has changed is that today I can deal with it. In recovery I have lost both my parents, two marriages, and a sibling. The difference being that today I can handle many things that would have kept me drunk. Out of all that I've learnt, the one thing that I believe with all my heart, is that God loves me and wants only the best for me. That my wants always cause me pain; and that is like written in stone. That my needs will always be met;

sometimes fast, sometimes slowly. Thank you to all the people of Alcoholics Anonymous, who not only gave me a New life, but gave me a whole new way of being.

(Trevor P.)

THE AGE OF MIRACLES

It takes almost no effort for me to remember the day that I arrived at the 'jumping off' place. I could not conceive of ever drinking again, yet I could not conceive of *any* way that I could stop. I (thought that I) had tried every way. I (thought that I) had applied every possible way to stop myself from drinking into blackout, passing out and the all too familiar humiliation. I had always wanted to drink 'like other people'. Now I just wanted to stop drinking altogether. But how?

I was desolate. I felt no hope. I felt only fear and desperation. I didn't know at that time what glorious lessons I was learning. I didn't know that I had found a rock bottom that would be the solid, hard, and unmoving place on which I would build my sobriety.

On that day I could see no positives. It's a miracle that I had enough hope left to make a phone call to a Drug and Alcohol counsellor. I had seen that counsellor a couple of times in the past, and truly believed that I had convinced her that I was okay and would be able to deal with my 'drinking problem' on my own. My pride had not let me admit that I had more than a problem. My pride had me believing that I could deal with it. Of course the D&A counsellor had heard it all before and wasn't surprised when she received my desperate call that day. She suggested that I attend rehab.

I think that I stopped breathing. My mind froze. My reality shifted forever. Rehab. Me. It has come to that. This is who I am.

I experienced many miracles that day. I know, without a doubt, that it is by the Grace of my Higher Power (whom I now call God), that my life took a turn on that day, a new direction that started at the moment that I accepted that I really was in a mess and I needed help. My First Step was completed without me even knowing it.

I remember my first drink. 40 years later I still recall the physical reaction that I had to it. It was like taking off a too-tight jacket. Suddenly I could exhale. I could relax. I had always been a people pleaser, always on high alert that someone might not like me or accept me. It was a matter of security. That drink took all of the anxiety away, albeit temporarily.

Years later, as a teenager, I hung around with other teenagers who were binge drinkers. We would drink too much on a Saturday night, usually ending the night with vomiting and blackouts. I loved the drinking. It felt so good to 'go with it', to stop denying my need. I didn't like the next day, though, remembering the loss of control, the bad choices I'd made, the loss of dignity ... the shame.

Shame became a constant companion. I grew accustomed to feeling every form of fear, like anxiety, shame, guilt, and self-loathing. I knew that my misery was linked with alcohol, but I loved drinking and had no idea how to manage it.

Over the years my friends started to moderate their drinking, their behaviour, and their lives. I could not, for the life of me, work out how. I spent hours thinking about it. I watched others. I compared myself to them in detail. I worked, but I never had any money. I was given a good education but I was getting nowhere at work. I was young but I never had any energy. I had a loving and supportive family but I had no love or sweetness in my heart. I had goals and dreams, but I couldn't stick with any plans. So the resentments started.

I found new friends, friends that I could go out with and not be judged. These friendships weren't lasting. I just wasn't comfortable with the lifestyle. My life was a constant paradox. I was baffled by it. It wasn't acceptable to me, but I couldn't change it.

More and more I became a recluse, sitting at home drinking on my own. I had a boyfriend whom I only saw on the weekends. He didn't seem to mind my drinking. He never commented on it. So I accepted the half-hearted relationship that we had. I told myself that I was lucky to have him, lucky that anyone would have me. We ended up marrying. Surprisingly, when my marriage ended, it was by my choice. I had started to reject the lies and the dishonesty that living life as a functioning alcoholic demands. I could no longer accept a marriage that accepted my alcoholism. We had both ignored my drinking for more than 2 decades, pretending that it wasn't a problem. In return I ignored his behaviours. I was never going to get well in that environment.

So, at 45 I found myself in rehab.

And on the first night I attended a Women's AA meeting.

Our reading from the *Daily Reflections* book that night, the 6th May, 2013 read: "The real tests of the situation are your own willingness to confide and your full confidence in the one with whom you share your first accurate self-survey ... Provided you hold back nothing, your sense of relief will mount from minute to minute. The dammed-up emotions of years break out of their confinement, and miraculously vanish as soon as they are exposed. As the pain subsides, a healing tranquillity takes its place." (*Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions*, p. 62).

I was stumped. My mind was unable to give the words any meaning. I kept looking at the word 'miraculously'. When it came time for me to share, all I could think to say was that I didn't believe in miracles. The ladies all grinned, some laughed out loud. I looked around me. These ladies were articulate, and calm, with nice haircuts and funky clothes, and they were so gentle with me. There was no sense of them living half-lives, as I thought they surely must. They were sober and whole ... and clearly very happy.

After the meeting I opened my mind a little, just a crack, but enough to entertain the possibility that there might be a Power greater than me. At that moment I had a spiritual awakening. The love, the forgiveness, the Salvation and the Glory of God came rushing into my cold and empty soul. I was carried upwards with the sudden feeling of worthiness and hope.

Since that day my health has grown in every way.

I have experienced many challenges in my sobriety. I've worked to make them all count because I seek emotional maturity. I pray so that I may be spiritually healthy. I

have a confidence in God to guide me every day. Sometimes I still fall into my ego trap of self-pity. I always know that the way out and upwards is to pray and to express love, not fear. But sometimes I sabotage myself. These times remind me to be humble and gentle with others, especially the newcomers in the rooms who don't yet believe in miracles.

I now know what a miracle is, and that I am one. And you can be too, if you just open yourself up to the idea. Just the tiniest bit of open-mindedness is all you need to turn it all around. It worked for me. And it can work for you too. Try it, I dare you!

(Jacky, Rutherglen.)

SERVICE AND SHOWING UP

In early days of recovery when I joined AA, the people that seemed to have what I wanted all seemed to sound a single note - that single note being that if I was the type of alcoholic that required spiritual help, to have a successful recovery and a happy life I would need to focus on three things: recovery, unity and service. Service has been such a large part of my recovery. I have always been grateful for being surrounded by members who have always strongly encouraged the third legacy. Without it I know I would not still be sober today.

It was suggested to me very early on that I needed to get involved in service straight away. Service commitments throughout my sobriety have got me to meetings when the unity side failed and I felt like isolating, or when I felt really good and didn't think I needed a meeting or any recovery that day. I cannot count the amount of times I only went to a meeting because of a service commitment, to have a pivotal moment occur in my recovery that would have never happened had I not shown up.

It was pointed out that if nobody was willing to do service an AA meeting would not be able to run. There would be no cake, no coffee, no literature, no one to open up, resulting in no place to get sober with other alcoholics. I couldn't have seen then how being of service would help dramatically change my life and allow me to be part of things I would have never got to be part of otherwise.

In the beginning I had service commitments at every meeting I went to, as it gave me a reason to be there, gave me something to do when my head was racing uncontrollably, and gave me a place to hide when I had nothing to say. Initially I did things that I felt the safest and I had complete control over like doing the dishes, set up and clean up. I can still remember how hard it was for me to do things like going to get the literature, being treasurer, greeting, chairing a meeting for the first time. These things taught me basic skills though, from how to say hello to strangers and make them feel welcome, to being responsible for a group's money. I was encouraged to learn about the traditions and get involved in committees such as for New Years Eve and National convention events. I started to learn how to be responsible, reliable, to show up and be accountable. My self-esteem and confidence began to return as I and others began to trust and rely on me.

As I slowly worked my way through all the service commitments at group level, then the position of GSR at my home group became available, which I decided to take on. It was a very hard time to be involved in the service structure due to all the controversy going on. I can remember wanting to quit the role after my first Area meeting. My local District was still functioning very well though. The district decided to look at it as an outside issue, stuck to the primary purpose of helping other alcoholics, and stayed out of the controversies. I remember saying to an experienced member about this, that it reminded me that, without people to fill these roles, AA could not function, as people in and out of the rooms who need help would not be able to find us. There would be no phone line, websites, literature, banners or meetings books. Without group cooperation, individual groups would not have enough money to advertise or print anything, and members would miss out on service opportunities that teach us so much, build our self-esteem and keep us sober. I started to see that, without the service structure, AA would not continue to function.

I'm so glad I did not leave and completed my term as GSR, as it was one of the things that helped change my life. When the DCM position came up for rotation I wanted to nominate, but 2 years in the service structure at the time had been very draining. However, after much consideration I decided I was not ready to leave. Being involved at this level of service can be very hard but also has the most growth. It honestly taught me to grow up.

I have learnt so many things about other people, but especially about myself. It has pushed me well outside my comfort zone, taught me how to deal with conflict, different opinions, and to have tolerance and compassion for others. I started to be able to have my own opinions and beliefs and give others the right to theirs a lot more effectively. It is certainly character building when you feel strongly about a topic and issue and the vote goes against you. I had always been willing to contribute if it suited me, was done my way, and if I could do it alone. If not, I would usually choose not to participate at all. Being on a committee meant I had to start to let go of these attitudes and see that the group was more important than the individual.

I started to see that, to feel like I belong, I need to contribute equally. I finally understood that if I do not contribute in my relationships, in organisations or life in general, I will always feel like I don't belong, that I am not part of. It also makes it very hard for others to respect me or want to spend time with me if I am not willing to contribute. Previously I had struggled to do tasks with others, to do things together or to accept help. I had no choice as DCM: I had to learn to ask for help and advice or else I couldn't have been able to do the role effectively. I began to realise that if I don't let others contribute and offer them the right of participation, not just in tasks but also in my life, they can never feel part of and we can never develop a relationship. Letting people contribute in my life, share my problems, showing them my defects as well as my attributes, and asking for help, were such an important way of learning and connecting with others.

Service has taught me how to be reliable, responsible and how important it is to show up and be accountable. It has slowly built up my self esteem and confidence by being able to commit to things, to be reliable, be responsible. It has also taught me how to make a commitment and turn up even if something more exciting comes up. I cannot count the amount of times I have felt great and didn't need to spend time with other alcoholics, to have everything fall apart the next day. Or when things have been so bad I wanted to just sit home and isolate. But just because I had a service commitment, I showed up.

(An AA member, sober today)

GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE: BACKGROUND ON *THE MIXER*

The Mixer came about as a result of Topic #002 at the 2015 Conference, proposing a national magazine for the Australian fellowship of AA. The background for this Topic was that, while the Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship in Australia established a national General Service Conference in 1971 which has since acted as the group conscience voice and decision making body for AA in Australia, we have not had a national publication analogous to the *Grapevine* (aside from the *Antenna* [1981-1991]) but only state-based publications in certain areas only; leaving the Australian AA Fellowship as a whole without its own 'meeting in print' (we have had the long-serving, GSO-produced newsletter, *AA Around Australia* - <http://www.aa.org.au/members/aa-around-australia.php>). The Topic was approved in principle at the 2015 Conference but passed back to the General Service Board for discussion; and then at the 2016 Conference, a one-year trial e-magazine was approved, as a 'feasibility study' for how the magazine might work; which is to be reviewed at the 2017 Conference.



The name, *The Mixer*, derives from that short, telling sentence in the *Big Book* (p. 17): "We are people who normally would not mix". "How best to live and work together" (*Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions*, p. 130) has been from earliest times a fundamental challenge for members of AA. The word 'mixer' thus has several meanings that we think are relevant to us alcoholics in sobriety, for example: a non-alcoholic drink; a means for mixing different things together; and someone with the ability to socialise. The logo, designed by an artist member, is a stylised representation of a cocktail mixer, symbolising the name of the



magazine and the way in which we mix together within AA and as sober members of our wider societies outside of AA. We feel that having a national 'meeting in print' is an important way for AA members to mix together our diverse stories of alcoholism and

sobriety, and so to try to carry our message of identification, unity and recovery to alcoholics who still suffer.

When *The Mixer* was first proposed, we had the vision of a forum for members around the far-flung regions of Australia to share their experience, strength and hope, a distinctly Australian AA voice (including expats overseas, as in the 1st edition; and members who visit us from overseas, as in the current edition). The letter below from a member, received as feedback on the 1st edition of *The Mixer*, appears to us to sum up this vision:

“I am reading this in a shack on the edge of the Nullarbor in South Australia. It is a long way from the nearest meeting. The arrival of The Mixer was an unexpected treat. Lucky me, please accept my grateful thanks.”

In AA, we are not professing theory: we are talking about our actual experiences of alcoholism, and of recovery in AA; and we share our stories in our own style of language. This is why the stories within this and the previous edition of *The Mixer* are so important to our Fellowship: they share, for our time and place, in ‘the language of the heart’. As the early members wrote in the Big Book: “Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail” (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 89). And of course, when we try to carry our message to others we help to ensure that we stay sober and happy ourselves. We look forward to reading your contribution!

AA PREAMBLE ©

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc. Reprinted with permission.