

For AA Around Australia

Modernising One of the oldest CSOs in NSW

As with our sobriety – we change or die. The same is true of groups or organisations. Our thanks for the spirit of service and people who contributed those thousands of hours over the last fifty plus years to keep this service alive. Some share that the office started at the Trade Union Rooms on Railway Square at Wollongong Station in 1956.

The South Coast Alcoholics Anonymous Service Council was established in Wollongong in 1975 – one of two satellite offices under the NSW Service Council wing. The other being Newcastle. This CSO serviced this region and surrounds, such as the Southern Highlands, well. Many volunteers over the first 45 years extended the hand of AA by providing a walk-in office, answering phone calls, setting up a website, running local activities, supplying literature and supporting local groups.

By 2020 the world had moved on. Covid had come, volunteers were in shorter supply as they were for many good causes, not just AA. In the early 2020s, the Executive Committee started a process of reviewing the office procedures and giving the whole place a “spring clean”. By the end, 26 boxes of archives were packed (and kindly accepted by the National GSO Archive Team). Budgets were tightened to meet changing times. Financial and other feedback to local groups were improved.

Reaching Out for New Volunteers

Late 2023, the Service Council established a Rally Subcommittee to give newer enthusiastic AA members a project to focus their energies and be of service to the wider AA community. In doing so, the Council committed seeding funds with one CSO Executive member and subcommittee reports linking the Council and the Rally group. This dedicated team have worked diligently to create an experience that has not happened here for 20 years, the last one being at the PCYC in Ajax St Wollongong over the 24th to 26th March 2006.

Read more about the Wollongong Rally here below.

Updating the Constitution for Incorporation

As Bill W explains in The Language of the Heart, when AA groups start to provide “business” like services and interact with formal legal community bodies, it is advisable to incorporate. The two main reasons being that it gives the public reassurance that the service is adhering to government requirements that protect the community and its operations and limits its management committee members personal liability should some unforeseen problem arise.

The 2024-25 Committee spent many hours matching the existing constitution with the Model Constitution proposed by the NSW Department of Fair Trading. This was to ensure that the groups continue to direct the service, whilst introducing membership for individual AA members. The inclusion of the AA Preamble, Steps, Traditions and Concepts of Service

and acknowledgement of the General Service Structure leaves the way open should there be broader changes in the future.

New Name

Along with the constitutional changes came our new name – **Illawarra and South Coast Central Service Office Inc.** The application for approval was granted on 2nd July 2025. This is not an easy process. There are lots of administrative and other tasks involved. Changing name, even if only adding “incorporated”, forces lots of updating of all aspects of the offices functioning. Major ones are applying for a new ABN, new bank accounts, advising suppliers and working through re-applying for charity status.

New Premises

From its start in the early days, even upstairs in a pub, The Grand Hotel on the corner of Keira and Burelli Streets, in the late 80s to early 90s, the South Coast AA Service Council has had the benefit of a below market rental for the past 20 years, upstairs in an old building in Fairy Meadow. This location too served the fellowship well. However, with new ownership came the new lease proposal with the rent to be quadrupled. A six-month period followed by the Committee examining all options possible – of which there were few that the Council could afford. The outcome was a very small office space, chosen because of its location to public transport, centrality and parking for cars and again budget. God’s will it’s hoped when only one option presents itself that meets those requirements.

Whilst it has its problems, members visiting the new office all comment on how cosy and inviting it is. Our office volunteers Tim and Deb have done a magnificent job in organising the space, adjusting to new technologies, such as being able to take credit/debit card payments from purchasers, and new office procedures.

Another Subcommittee – PIPA

Moving forward with trying to spread the service work to more volunteer, the CSO at its quarterly November association members meeting, established a Public Information and Professional Awareness Committee. This in part, is recognising that if our CSO is to remain relevant in today’s world, it can no longer remain focused on just its role of selling literature to local groups. Paper based information is being converted to online and AA even competes with some of the huge multi-national book suppliers.

The PIPA Subcommittee’s first task is to survey local groups to gain feedback as to their priorities for PIPA outreach. This survey has been distributed in paper form around the meetings as well as online. The results will be collated and used for planning after the February Rally.

Updated Website

Heaps of information has been added to the CSOs website, along with the change from a DOT.com.au to a DOT.org.au. More information about above, and what the Illawarra And

South Coast Central Service Office Inc. are up to see our Local News page, nested under for Local AAs. Or visit <https://www.aawollongong.org.au/news>

“Sobriety by the Sea” Rally Wollongong NSW

Join us for the Illawarra AA Rally “Sobriety by the Sea”, held from 6–8 February 2026 at the Wollongong Surf Leisure Resort.

This special weekend brings together members, families, and friends from across the region for a celebration of recovery, connection, and fellowship. With inspiring meetings, shared meals, live entertainment, and a relaxed coastal setting, the rally offers a welcoming space to recharge, reconnect, and strengthen the bonds of our recovery community. Al-Anon will also be attending, making this a truly inclusive event for all.

Everyone is welcome — come for the meetings, stay for the fellowship.

Thank you,
Illawarra Rally Team

Registration & Inquiries: 0426 552 392

Buy Tickets: <https://events.humanitix.com/wollongong-aa-rally/tickets>

E: illawarra.rally@gmail.com

More information – *especially about One Day Options*

W: <https://members.aa.org.au/event/wollongong-aa-rally-sobriety-by-the-sea/>

Note: for catering purposes, help by booking online.

Saturday night dinner: Closes 31st January 2026