



## Welcome to AAWAA

Getting it done together



## WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

0930 - 1100

(1h, 30 m)

### All about AAWAA



- As you know, there is a 'workshop' element to each session, but before we get there ...
- Allow me to provide a bit of an orientation to AAWAA: who we are, how we came about, how we operate.
- This is just one model of working
- We are still developing and refining it and trying to build
- Trying to figure out our structure and way of operating

### All about AAWAA



- We would be interested in your feedback on how we go about things or your suggestions for improvement
- We'd also be interested to hear about other groups and how they operate, so feel free to share!

### Background



- We didn't come from nowhere. AAWAA's formation took over five years.
- WAAC idea in late 2017
- WAAC launched in on 1 May 2018 on May Day :)
- Initially 3 Ps:
  - Pornography
  - Prostitution
  - Patriarchy
- Eschewed gender ideology, too hard, but on the radar

### Background



- Met monthly, small groups, for 18 months
- Conducted surveys of women's current status re
  - Rape culture, hypersexualised advertising, manosphere, women and the justice system, women's condition in other countries, feminist and women's history, media handling of MVAWG
- COVID-19, lost our venue, went into abeyance
- Got inquiries late 2020
- Re-vamped as WAAC 2.0 in early 2021

## Background



- Again, just a small group, but we were able to get focus
- Decided to go public as gender critical
- Wrote our manifesto
- Wrote our FAQs
- Did WAActions, gained some members
- But needed to find our direction and style
- This took 2 years
- Lots of flailing about on social media, posting outrages
- Started to get known

## Background



- Had an approach from women in Tasmania late 2022, liking our model, started WAAT
- Made good connections through IWD BM in March, 2023
- [REDACTED]
- Phone convos, started QWAA
- NOW we could have an AAWAA, mid 2023
- Built the other groups with SAWAA and AAWAA coming on board together, then WAAV, then eventually, just recently NSWAA

## Guidelines



- Once we had AAWAA first and most essential was to have a set of guidelines so women knew what they were getting into
- They laid out
  - General principles and structure
  - Consensus and expectations for behaviour
  - Recruitment and vetting
  - Social media and action guidelines
  - Handling grievances

## Our model



- This gave us a model, clear focus, and protocols
- Women's liberation groups committed to the protection and advancement of women and girls on the understanding that sex is a biological fact with material consequences for females living under patriarchy.
  - Gender identity
  - (Hyper-) sexualised advertising
  - Pornography
  - Prostitution and sex trafficking
  - Reproductive exploitation
  - Control over reproductive rights/sovereignty

## Our model



- Serious, sensible, with good standing
- Uses fact and evidence, reason and rationality, courtesy and compassion to make our case.
- Point out where current and established frameworks and obligations designed to protect women and girls are being eroded, undermined, ignored, and/or disregarded.
- We engage with those who have legislative authority, political accountability, and social responsibility for the safeguarding, protection, and advancement of women and girls.

## Our model



- We are not aligned with the left, right, a particular religious perspective, or a particular belief system.
- We are, however, an alliance of individual women, each with her own individual standpoints and views, working together on issues that affect women and girls. We recognise and respect each woman's autonomy, boundaries, and comfort levels.
- Each chooses for herself what she wants to be involved with, how, and to what degree.

## Our model



- Affiliate groups do not work in competition with other groups; rather, AAWAA welcomes opportunities to work collaboratively with others on matters of joint significance.

## Structure



- AAWAA as national umbrella body
- Local WAAs come under AAWAA
- We try to operate primarily as AAWAA if it lends weight to a matter
- If a submission or letter, etc., is better coming from a local group, we operate that way
- In any case, we all work together, regardless of which state or group we are in

## Structure



- Only WAAC Inc is incorporated – to allow us a group that can bring/defend legal matters
- The other groups are not affiliated
  - Flexibility
  - Less admin (insurance, finances, tax, reporting)
  - Allows anonymity

## Principles for behaviour/values



- Act in good faith
- Act with good will
- Behave well
- Work on the principle of charity
- Exercise compassion

Simple!

## Activism strategies



- Twofold:
  - Write targetted submissions and letters to those with authority, duty of care, power
  - Legal, quick, effective in-person actions (banner drops, placard-holding, etc.)

## Leadership & stucturelessness



- It was clear from the outset of AAWAA that we needed structure, focus, coherence, and direction
- Which is why the guidelines are so helpful – they keep everyone on the same page, something to refer to
- FAQs and Manifesto are also useful in communicating to new members and making sure they can agree with it

## Leadership & stucturelessness



- Initially it just seemed a matter of management and logistics, making sure stuff happened
- But then became clear that leadership was required, that is direction, planning, execution, and review
- This is not always easy when women are socialised to not step forward in leadership roles
- Although our structure is fairly flat, especially within and between groups – including between AAWAA and the affiliate groups – we have still needed leadership at the AAWAA level

## Leadership & stucturelessness



- This has looked like having one or two Women providing or channelling direction and gently making sure we stay true to our values
- It has also looked like occasionally having to be firm about what we stand for and how we express ourselves
- This has to do with developing and applying personal qualities, knowledge, skills for influence and inspiration

## Our current structure



- Our model is based on teamwork that recognises different
  - Personalities, pre-dispositions, preferences
  - Skills, knowledge, expertise, experience, talents
- So, we have
  - Generalists and specialists
  - Deckhands
  - Strategists
  - XO
  - Skipper

## Collaboration, coalition, & co-operation



- None of our groups work in competition with each other or in competition with non-AAWAA groups
- A key principle for us is the sharing of relevant information where we can or where we have it
- We also want to co-operate as much as possible with others to support their goals, not just ours, if in alignment
- At some stage we will need to think about forming some sort of executive

## Collaboration, coalition & co-operation



- We try to collaborate in writing, where that works for groups or writers
- Where possible, we prefer to send items in coalition from like-minded groups (feminist and LGB groups, for example) and so we seek endorsements from others
- We also want to co-operate as much as possible with others to support their goals, not just ours, if in alignment

## Reputation



- This is something that we have built over six years, starting with WAAC
- We had some wobbly patches, but have each time been able to re-focus and refine

## Reputation



- Women who come to us know they will be treated with respect, courtesy, compassion, understanding non-judgement, charity
- Fairness, honesty, sincerity
- We aim to be friendly, helpful, polite
- And yes, we even aim for a degree of affection amongst ourselves :)

## Reputation



- We build this through public engagement
- Submissions and letters
  - Polite, courteous
  - Build trust with the engaged party
  - *Very* careful attention to tone
  - Conciliatory, where necessary
  - Avoid argumentativeness, antagonism, sarcasm
  - No personal attacks
  - Assume good intentions, benefit of the doubt

## Reputation



- Social media policy
  - Play a straight bat
  - Push, don't pull, i.e., only tweet outwards
  - Don't bait, don't troll
  - Don't respond to comments unless it's a direct question
  - Never respond to a troll or engage in any kind of inflammatory conversation or a conversation that has escalated in any way
  - No personal attacks

## Keeping it all together



- This is where the rubber hits the road
- A lot of it has to do with keeping focus and not getting side-tracked
- Easy to respond to every latest outrage – and there are A LOT
- Challenge is to create, nurture, build
- Need to acknowledge women's different life experiences
- How to manage differences of opinion in the service of a clear, focussed goal

## Keeping it all together



- Do need to be vigilant for conflict
- Need to manage conflict
- Watchful for destruction
- Under no illusions that AAWAA will last forever
- Is currently fit for purpose, it seems
- But that will change
- When to step back
- When to step in
- When to step out



1010 - 1045  
Karen  
Group discussion

## Introductions and orientation



- Introduce yourselves to each other: where you are from, background, interests, whatever.
- What drew you to the summit?
- What are you expecting to get out of the summit? Make some notes and re-visit them at the end of the summit if you like.

## Outreach, group-building, and focus



- What experience do you have in this already?
- Finding women for your action group. How many is too few?
- What model would you want to run with?
- Are there existing groups that you could join?
- What principles/values are important?
- What would be your focus?

## Structure, teamwork, leadership



- What kind of structure is necessary?
- Identifying individual strengths and preferences
- Sharing the load: admin, planning, research, writing, organising, etc.
- When do we need leadership and how does that look?
- How do we go about decision-making, strategy and planning, discipline.

1045 - 1100  
Report-backs

