



## AAWAA Affiliate group guidelines

### 1. Overview

AAWAA is a peak body that co-ordinates national-level activities on behalf of our affiliated women's alliances and that also represents those alliances in national and international matters. All members of our affiliated women's alliances are by default members of AAWAA and all our members are women.

### 2. Affiliate groups

AAWAA affiliate groups are 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.

We fight against patriarchy and how it is expressed through anti-woman, oppressive structures and ideologies such as

- Gender identity
- Male violence against women and girls
- Misogyny
- Prostitution and sex trafficking
- Pornography
- Reproductive exploitation and the denial of reproductive rights/sovereignty
- Sexualised advertising and media

Our groups prioritise being seen as serious, sensible organisations with good standing that use fact and evidence, reason and rationality, courtesy and compassion to make our case. We act based on these qualities to 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.

We are not aligned with the left, right, a particular religious perspective, or a particular belief system. We are, however, alliances of individual women, each woman with her own 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.

AAWAA does not work in competition with other women's groups; rather, AAWAA welcomes opportunities to work collaboratively on matters of joint significance. AAWAA affiliate groups and members are encouraged to sign the [WDI Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights](#).

Read our [Manifesto](#) and [FAQs](#) for more information.

### 3. Organisation status, membership, and decision-making

AAWAA is a peak body that consists of an incorporated body, the Women's Action Alliance Canberra Inc (WAAC, the founding group of AAWAA), and non-incorporated affiliate groups. WAAC Inc provides AAWAA with an avenue to pursue formal complaints within the legal and regulatory systems. Our other groups — including AAWAA itself — are not incorporated, are not associations, and do not have charity status. This general structure allows for flexibility and anonymity.

Each group has a local representative who engages with AAWAA at the national level (sometimes referred to as 'AAWAA National'). How representatives are chosen at the local level is matter for individual groups, although a fair and open process of selection is expected. Any member of any AAWAA affiliated group can join the AAWAA National WhatsApp group.

AAWAA has an executive committee and affiliate group representatives are, by default, members of the committee, although this role may be delegated. The executive committee makes and executes decisions at the national level in day-to-day operational matters such as administration; meetings; recruitment; resource allocation; the collection and disbursement of funds; our engagement with the public; managing discipline and handling complaints; internal communication; guideline development, and so forth. The AAWAA Executive Committee is also responsible for developing the broader strategic direction of the organisation. Read our [AAWAA Executive Committee Guidelines](#) for more information.

The broader AAWAA membership is invited to provide feedback and comments on significant (as opposed to 'day-to-day') AAWAA submissions, letters, and similar, as well as on notable changes to these guidelines and other governing AAWAA materials and processes. If members of the broader AAWAA membership wish to dispute any decisions or decision-making process, they should raise the matter with their affiliate group executive committee member who will bring the matter to the attention of the executive committee.

If a group's representative or proxy does not attend any executive committee meetings over the course of a year, then that group shall be considered to be in abeyance until such time as the group becomes active again and a representative can attend meetings.

### 4. Affiliation

Some of the benefits of affiliation are

- Independence in what we focus on locally, but the ability to combine where it would give us more power as a group nationally
- National-level co-ordination through the peak body
- Ability to co-sign under one, national banner – which gives more weight to national and international submissions, letters, campaigns, etc.
- Shared co-ordination of resources
- Sharing of workload
- Consistent branding
- Advice, support, connection, networking
- Sisterhood

Affiliate groups and group members agree to what is laid out in this document, paying particular attention to

- Agreement on the main points in our [Manifesto](#) (about prostitution, pornography, reproductive exploitation, gender identity, reproductive rights, advertising, etc.).
- Agreement on general approach (i.e., we are serious, sensible organisations of good standing that engage with those in authority in a good-faith way).
- General agreement on what we do and do not target (e.g., we target those with duty of care for and accountability to women and children, but we do not waste our time on trying to either convert the converted or capture the already captured).
- Agreement on acceptable behaviour when representing the organisation, when interacting with the organisation as an individual, or when interacting with other individuals either within or outside the organisation.

## 5. General principles for behaviour

In our communications and in our relations with those seeking engagement with AAWAA or with an AAWAA affiliate group, group members endeavour to

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

## 6. Consensus

What counts for, and what is needed for, consensus will vary from group to group and will depend on participation and 'activeness' levels amongst group members, and so consensus is an internal matter.

At the AAWAA level, however, where a matter or item is to be endorsed or supported by all affiliate groups, agreement is requested from all groups at the representative level and where the representative has conferred with her WAA. If the representative has not been able to elicit any responses from the group's members, then the representative can act on behalf of the group. If the group as a whole does not respond to a request for endorsement or support, then the matter or item will be considered endorsed by a majority of other groups. If one or more groups do not want to provide endorsement, then the option remains for a matter or item to be endorsed only by the remaining groups and those groups must be listed. This said, consensus is our goal.

Affiliate groups are at liberty to support or sign off on matters or items on their own behalf on the understanding that those matters or items embody the spirit, principles, and guidelines set out in the current document. If there is any doubt as to whether something is a bit iffy at the affiliate group level, then the affiliate group is encouraged to seek advice and input from the AAWAA Executive Committee. As always, common sense and flexibility should guide groups in such matters.

## 7. Recruitment and vetting processes

Members need to be vetted at some level, for obvious reasons. The following levels of vetting should apply:

1. *Personal relationship*. If there is already a personal relationship established between members, then that should serve as a suitable vet.
2. *Checkable profile or history*. If a woman has an established and active social media profile or similar, then the AAWAA affiliate group can consider approaching the woman to see if she would be interested in learning more about the group. If the woman is interested in establishing contact, then she can be asked to share her phone number

and a representative of the affiliate group can call her (making sure the representative's phone number is not identifiable when making the call), suss her out, and then suggest a face-to-face meeting. A face-to-face meeting should then be had in order to finalise the vetting of the woman's credentials.

3. *Unsolicited contact.* If the affiliate group receives an unsolicited contact via DM or email or similar, then the group should ask the contactor to share her phone number so that a representative of the affiliate group can call her (making sure the representative's phone number is not identifiable when making the call) and suss her out. If a contactor is unwilling to share a phone number, then it may be an indication that she is not genuine and/or is phishing. If she does share a contact number, then a face-to-face meeting should be suggested. A face-to-face meeting should then be held in order to finalise the vetting of the contactor's credentials.

## **8. Guidelines for sending a communication from an AAWAA affiliate group**

If sending a communication from an AAWAA affiliate group, it needs to

- Be focussed around the liberation, protection, and/or advancement of women and girls
- Be based in your state, city, or region. Groups may choose to write submissions for other jurisdictions and then have them sent from the group in that jurisdiction, but such submissions and the general approach and argument should be discussed first with the affiliate group in the affected jurisdiction.
- Be fact- and evidence-based
- Be reasoned and rational
- Adopt a charitable tone and be courteous

Things to avoid

- Statements that can't be backed up
- Statements based on emotion
- Sarcasm, hectoring, and hyperbole

Needless to say, if it comes from or represents AAWAA or an AAWAA affiliate group it needs to be legal.

## **9. AAWAA social media guidelines (when representing AAWAA or an affiliate group)**

Preference should be given to engagement with groups and organisations with good standing over engagement with individuals, and with Australian groups and orgs before those from overseas. Some basics:

- Play a straight bat.
- Push, don't pull, i.e., only 'transmit'. Once it's sent, move on, nothing to see here. Similarly, don't like, love, or similar other people's posts or comments.
- Don't respond to comments unless it's a direct question – and even then consider whether a) it needs to be answered at all, or b) it would be better to answer the question via DM. Prefer direct messaging over public correspondence.
- No re-posting or promoting of material posted by men — find and promote women's communications, instead.
- 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.

## 10. Guidelines for actions

Public actions take time to plan and organise and so need to be effective in terms of profile- and issue-raising and, where appropriate, visible. Actions conducted by an AAWAA affiliate group must be:

- Legal
- Safe
- Properly planned, scoped, and risk-managed
- Recce'd, where necessary
- Profile- and issue-raising
- Clearly messaged
- High-visibility, where possible and appropriate (i.e., must capture a good number amount of onlookers)

## 11. Internal collaboration and communication

How this is run depends on each group; however, the security and privacy of the group and of individual members must be a priority. Here is how WAAC Inc works, as an example:

1. WhatsApp is used for a 'community' with three groups:
  - WAACchat. General chit-chat, sharing, observations, outrages.
  - WAACmin. Collaborations, business, meetings, admin, docs we are working on, requests for comment, endorsement requests from AAWAA; planning for public actions such as banner drops, protests.
  - WAAC public servants. Specialist discussion on APS matters.
2. Google Workspace is used for
  - Email
  - Document sharing and hosting
  - Collaborative writing, e.g., submissions and letters

## 12. Grievances

Grievances need to be promptly dealt with within AAWAA and affiliate groups and must not be aired publicly. Direct and internal lines of communication exist at different levels and must be used over indirect or external expressions of protest or opposition.

- *Individual grievances.* Grievances between individuals should be dealt with privately between the parties involved. Such matters should not be allowed to affect any other parties.
- *Group-level grievances.* Grievances internal to each individual affiliate group should be handled internally. Members who feel that they can't support the AAWAA model or guidelines should remove themselves from participation in the group; if a member does not excuse herself, then she can be asked to leave before her access to group-level documents and communications is rescinded. Group members are welcome to contact the AAWAA Executive Committee for advice on how to handle such grievances.
- *Intra-group grievances.* Grievances that arise between groups or between an individual and another affiliate group should be raised at the AAWAA Executive Committee for resolution.

If a current AAWAA member group feels it can no longer support the guidelines and principles laid out herein, the matter should be discussed and any agreed-upon changes to the guidelines made. If no changes are agreed upon, the member group should leave of her own accord.