

HISTORY OF N.A. IN AUSTRALIA

When a member from Melbourne got involved in another 12-step program in 1974, he came across the name of Hazelden and wrote to them for their catalogue. While going through the catalogue he found out about N.A. He ordered a little N.A. white book. It was during an illness in 1975 and 1976, while in the hospital, that the member realized just how little there was in Melbourne for the addict who wanted to get clean and stay clean. There were only methadone programs for heroin addicts and very little for anyone else.

Some months previous to his stay in the hospital, he had given the white book to a friend who he knew would be interested in getting N.A. started in Melbourne. He contacted the friend to discuss starting an N.A. meeting. By this time he had literature from the W.S.O.

They contacted two ex-Sydney members of N.A. who now lived in Melbourne. The two members told them about N.A. in Sydney, and how they differed from meetings of the other fellowship. In N.A., they said, the members concentrated on how they felt, not what they did, and recovery was talked about much more.

In August 1976, the four members started the "South Yarra" group at the Fawkner Park Community Health Center, with seven members in attendance. From the start, the theme of the meetings was recovery. They all knew how to use drugs, they all knew the effect they had on them. The primary thing they were all interested in was how to stay clean, how to cope with life without the use of drugs, how to handle unpleasant feelings and emotions--in other words--how to get better.

At the first anniversary of the group on August 20, 1977, there were 60 people in attendance. N.A. also had a P.O. Box and telephone number by this time.

By 1981, meetings had also been started in Belgrave and Carlton. The Belgrave group had been having articles in the local newspaper, The Knox Sherbrooke News, on a regular basis.