



CRA BULLETIN

Issue 9 – 22 February 2005

CRA BRANCH RESTRUCTURE

The following proposal was submitted to the National Executive in February. After full discussion the proposal was supported by the National Executive. It will now be placed on the agenda for each of the branch AGM's in March.

If you have any comments you want to make about this proposal, make sure you attend your branch AGM.

REMIT:

At the 2004 Conference, a remit was passed *“That the National Executive review the structure of the Association to ensure that members receive maximum benefit from belonging to this Association”*

The remit contained a note that *this remit recognises that some branches are struggling to elect sufficient branch officers for their committees. Therefore branches are unable to fully carry out their function of keeping members informed and providing networking opportunities. Traditional forms of communication are not getting the Association message through.*

COMMENT:

The official minutes of branch meetings support this note, showing poor attendance and little business at many of the meetings. It appears that many of the meetings are held merely to qualify for their capitation grants from the National Office.

In addition to this remit, there was another remit requiring the introduction of a continuing education scheme to raise and then maintain the quality levels of all Structural Repair Centres. Under the current structure it appears that few if any, branches would be able to implement this scheme.

Restructuring the branches does **NOT** mean that they will be wound up. On the contrary, the branches will play a critical role in conjunction with the National Office. They will remain as the CRA's recognised agent in their district, but they will not have to assume the time-consuming duties they currently undertake.

Restructuring recommendation: The recommendation has two key focus areas, meetings and financing.

1. Meetings:

It is proposed that each branch will have 3 formal meetings each year. These will be held in March, June/July, and October/November. Each meeting will have a specific focus as follows:

- The March meeting will be the Branch AGM as at present and will elect a Chairperson, and a Delegate to the National Executive. This meeting could also provide an educational or business information theme for the benefit of members.
- The June/July meeting will be designed to meet members' needs under the continuing education scheme and its content will count towards meeting members' obligations under this Scheme.
- The October/November meeting could also meet members' educational needs and will invite branches to formulate their Remits for the following year's Conference. Developing remits before Christmas will allow National Office time to evaluate each remit and return to the Branch in March if necessary before the remit is submitted to Conference. This will benefit members by allowing all remits that are agreed at Conference to be implemented immediately.

These meetings will be organised and funded by National Office. Some Branch meetings are partly or fully funded by sponsors at present. This will be supported and encouraged.

Branches will be encouraged to organise social events throughout the year in addition to these meetings. Some branches do this really well, and it is my personal observation that the branches that regularly enjoy social events seem to be better attended and better organised than those that don't bother.

2. Financing:

(a) Proposed changes:

The following changes are proposed to Branch funding and current financial reserves:

- Branch funding currently is predominantly comprised of capitation funding each year, and bulk fundraising from organising the National Conference every 8th year. Under the new structure, capitation funding will be retained in the National Office.
- Funds raised from the annual conference will also be retained in the national office accounts. Members from all around the country help generate Conference surpluses and this proposal will ensure that all members will get the chance to benefit from the surpluses.
- It is further envisaged that all Reserves or current bank account funding held at present by branches will also be transferred to the national office accounts, with the exception of a small amount (say \$2,000 per branch) which can be retained by branches.

Funds raised by branches from social events will be retained by the respective branches for whatever purposes they decide.

(b) Proposed benefits for members:

Under the proposed structure members will benefit in several ways:

- The funds that are transferred to national office will **NOT** be applied to the general running of the Office, but will be applied to the education of members, keeping members better informed, and providing them with better networking opportunities as identified in the note to the remit. This can be guaranteed by the annual budget of the CRA showing that the budgeted costs of administering the office are covered by the budgeted income from subscriptions etc, as at present.
- In most branches the main area of expenditure is honoraria to elected officials. This will not be necessary after the restructuring. There will still be areas where Branch members incur expenditure working on behalf of the national office, or as its agent. Fair and reasonable expenditure in these cases will be reimbursed.
- Another ongoing benefit will come from the organisation of the annual conference. This will be co-ordinated through National Office, but will still rely on voluntary and paid support (particularly from branch members) for it to succeed. Conference surpluses will also be applied only to members' education and information needs, in the same manner as the funding transferred from current reserves.

Voluntary support from branch members for the conference when it is held in their area will be essential to ensure that it is run at a profit, and surpluses generated will help keep the costs of subsequent education courses to members at the lowest possible levels.

CONCLUSION:

At present, there are tens of thousands of dollars sitting in bank accounts around the country doing nothing for the CRA members that helped put it there. The proposed branch structure will mean that this money will be able to be used to benefit all members and help improve the professionalism and the financial viability of their businesses at the same time.