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Dear Scouting Friends,

As we start the New Year and new decade, I thought you might be interested to hear from Scouts NSW, of which you are a valued supporter.

We had a very successful year in 2019, in which we saw membership growth and a lift in community recognition for our brand and the value of our contribution to society.

We proudly launched our new brand, and we issued our bold, ambitious Strategic Plan, which is directing our priorities and the way we invest for the future. Many of the initiatives we set out in the Plan are already underway, including a new leader recruitment drive, a Member Experience survey, advertising on national radio and in cinemas, and increased recognition for our amazing volunteers.

But as I write this, we are in the middle of an unprecedented national crisis. And members of our own Scouting family are experiencing horrific, personal tragedy. I've been in touch with Scouting volunteers who have suffered losses and their stories are heartbreaking.

Emergency services, fire-fighters and charity workers are providing round-the-clock support. Indeed, the defence of our precious, fragile land is being sustained almost entirely by volunteers. The stamina, dedication and sacrifices being made by our friends at the RFS and emergency services are simply extraordinary. Many also volunteer for Scouts NSW. They are true heroes.

More than 415 communities in New South Wales host Scout Groups, supporting close to 20,000 young people and adults. Just under half of our members live in rural and regional areas of NSW. We are therefore currently offering our Scout Halls to be used as evacuation centres; our campsites and Region Offices as coordination points for the RFS; and our alpine centre to support those evacuating the region.

I have also launched the [NSW Chief Commissioner's Emergency Relief Campaign](#). We're going to do everything we can to assist Scouting families who are being impacted by bushfires or drought.

For those of you who wish to donate money through our Campaign, we are asking you to direct funds to the [Family Support Fund](#), which helps young people facing hardship to attend their local Scout group. Your contribution is tax-deductible and will make a direct, meaningful impact. You can donate by PayPal, or with a credit card. If neither suits, you can transfer your donation directly to Scouts NSW (BSB 032 000 Account 001472). Please remember to give your details so we can issue a receipt, and add 'for the FSF'.

Our Family Support Fund is a fund designed by Scouts to be used for Scouts. We know that right now, our role in the community is more important than ever. The skills for life we instil in our youth members - resilience, confidence, initiative, maturity - are critical for those facing immediate crisis, but importantly, they also nurture the leaders of our longer-term future.

I will also be conducting a fundraising auction on Saturday 15 February during the Chief Commissioner's Council weekend meeting. Every dollar raised will go directly to assist bushfire and drought affected families. You might like to donate unique and attractive items or experiences for this auction. If we receive a sufficient number of offers, we will run an on-line auction as well. Please email me or call me if you'd like to donate or participate.

Our Rovers have also designed a fundraising badge, which we hope will become a collector's item. The special badge can be purchased after mid-February through our [NSW Scout Shop at Port Kembla](#).

Finally, we have provided a [list of practical suggestions](#) for our members who are seeking different ways to help. This list is not exhaustive, but it reflects the contributions from Scouting members with deep experience in emergency assistance.

I'm so proud of the generosity and community spirit I see within our NSW Scout volunteers. The courage and resilience I've seen across our membership is simply awe-inspiring. The very attributes we instil in our youth.

With your continued support, we can offer more young people the opportunity to join Scouts NSW.

Thank you for your support and for proudly wearing your 'Friends of Scouting' scarf.

Yours in Scouting,

Neville Tomkins OAM JP
Chief Commissioner
Scouts NSW Branch

If you wish to email the Chief Commissioner direct, his email address is Chief.Commissioner@nsw.scouts.com.au.

Child Safety in Scouting

Scouts Australia NSW is committed to operating as a child safe organisation and implementing child safe policies and practices in accordance with the elements of a child safe institution outlined by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse report entitled Creating Child Safe Institutions.

Remember

All suspicions, concerns or allegations about criminal matters or child protection matters should be reported directly to the Chief Commissioner, the Deputy Chief Commissioner (Youth Safety, Compliance and Support), the CEO or the Child Protection Officer at the NSW State Office.

To make a report use the online [child protection form](#), call 02 9735 9000 or email childprotection@nsw.scouts.com.au.

Imminent Danger

If a young person is in imminent danger, the matter should be reported directly and immediately to NSW Police on 131 444.

Where a report is made to the police, you should also subsequently notify the NSW State Office.

You've received this email as a member of Scouts Australia NSW, or through your email address being the contact email provided for a member of Scouts Australia NSW.

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