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The Kindness Contagion

"When life gives you lemons, use them to make lemonade", is an old adage to encourage optimism in the face of adversity.

From what I've seen over the past couple of weeks, Scouting Leaders are not just making lemonade, they're making lemon meringue pies!

And it's no surprise to see the remarkable resilience, creativity and thriftiness of our adult leaders come to the fore. They're finding new ways to practise Scouting that protect the safety and health of both youth and adult members alike. I've seen award ceremonies take place online, I've participated in virtual Scouting meetings and I've watched videos, and seen examples of practical challenges and badge packs to help keep youth members connected to Scouting from their homes.

And that's not all. Some Leaders are encouraging their Scouts to contact older relatives or those who may be feeling isolated, through voice or video calls, emails, letters and instant messaging.

Despite the uncertainty, the anxiety and the panic that we know has affected some members of the communities in which we live, our Scouting Leaders are demonstrating outstanding, positive behaviours. They are role models for our community. And through their actions, through their careful, considered and calm approach to this situation, they are helping others cope and they're encouraging others to follow suit.

Kindness, it turns out, is contagious!

The situation we now find ourselves in is simply extraordinary. And there is no universal or unanimous way of dealing with it.

At Scouts NSW, we will continue to do our best to follow the Government's guidelines. We are informing you of our response and priorities. But we are also empowering and trusting our Group and Section Leaders to implement local solutions that align to our priorities while making sense for you.

One of the most difficult parts of this pandemic is the uncertainty we are all facing. Uncertainty about how contagious and deadly COVID-19 is. Uncertainty about the economy. And uncertainty about our jobs.

Another is that misinformation is ubiquitous. While many people on social media have good intentions, as they speculate on how bad things might get, they may be inadvertently doing the opposite. The more we read, the more we are likely to take on their worry, and spread it.

While I know the majority of Scouting adults are handling this crisis with precisely the well-grounded realism that enables them to excel as leaders, there are other Scouters who need our support.

However confident you may feel about your ability to cope, please don't forget to look after yourself. Find time to switch off from the TV, radio or social media. Instead, spend that time doing activities that give you joy - whether it's reading a book, playing a game or building a Morse code oscillator - I'm sure the indomitable spirit of Scouting will help keep you fulfilled.

In the coming days, we'll be launching some virtual activities to enable you to stay connected to Scouting. We'll have a range of Youth program initiatives, as well as some fun challenges to keep youth (and adult) members supported.

I can't thank you enough for volunteering for Scouts NSW. I'm so proud of the amazing creativity, resilience and care you are sharing with those across your local communities.

Yours in Scouting,

Neville Tomkins OAM JP
Chief Commissioner
Scouts Australia (NSW Branch)

To contact the Chief Commissioner, please email chief.commissioner@nsw.scouts.com.au.

Some useful Scouting websites:

- Scouts NSW response to COVID-19: <https://www.nsw.scouts.com.au/members-services/health-and-safety/scouting-guide-to-coronavirus/>
- Scouts Earth Hour <https://www.scout.org/EarthHour> (28 March)
- Jamboree on the internet: <https://www.jotajoti.info/> (3-5 April)
- UK Scouts virtual activities: <https://www.scouts.org.uk/the-great-indoors/>

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.

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