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Dear Leader,

I am pleased to share a further update about face-to-face Scouts activities across NSW. From 1 June, Scout groups have been able to return to outdoors activities, thanks to further relaxations of restrictions by the NSW State authorities. As many of you know, camping grounds and caravan parks also re-opened, offering the opportunity to travel with our families across NSW.

From Saturday 13 June, the State authorities are allowing community centres to re-open, provided they apply the rule of 'one person per four square metres'.

This means Scout Groups will be able to meet in Scout Halls or community centres from 13 June.

In order to protect the health and wellbeing of our youth and adult members, we have taken a series of precautions.

Meeting guidelines

- Group Leaders (or Leaders-in-charge) must complete an online [COVID-19-safe plan](#) using the [COVID-19 guidance document](#) and have it approved by their Region Commissioner.
- Group Leaders should talk with their Section Leaders, Rover Units, Hall co-ordinator, (and potentially parents or their Group Committee) to agree the most appropriate approach for their Group.
- Rover Units should conduct an online [COVID-19 safe plan](#) using the [COVID-19 guidance document](#) for their Rover Den, if it is not situated within a Scout Hall.
- A suite of posters for your Scout Hall or Den is available on the Scouts NSW [Scouting Guide to Coronavirus](#) web page. We encourage you to download these and use them.
- The safe plan provides guidelines for physical distancing, which comply with the one person per four square metres rule, and prevent all physical contact such as hand-shaking and hugging. It also covers matters such as entry and exit procedures, hygiene, cleaning, contact tracing and attendance, food safety and Hall hire.

These guidelines have been developed to support our Groups and Rover Units so that face to face Scouting can return. I know for some of our Groups and Rover Units, you may need more time before you are ready to return, and I want you to know that we support the decisions that your Group makes. Many of our Groups continue to meet on line with great success. If you need some support with your decision making, I encourage you to reach out to your District or Region Commissioner to discuss your concerns.

Hall Hirers

Many Groups rely on the income from community groups and local businesses who hire out their local Scout Hall. The COVID-19 Task Force is finalising guidelines that will help inform your decisions about recommencing the hiring of your Hall. Your Region Commissioner will share these with Groups Leaders next week.

I'd like to sincerely thank the 130 Group Leaders who provided their feedback to the second Region Commissioners' short survey in the past two months. Your feedback was incredibly valuable to inform our COVID-19 Task Force on the priorities and actions to take that will instil confidence about returning to face-to-face Scouting.

Your feedback also highlighted that a small number of adult leaders are not yet able to risk returning to Scouting activities, due to their personal conditions.

Please continue to be respectful about everyone's individual choice at this time. We may not fully understand the circumstances of each of our volunteers, so let's respect their wishes.

Overnight activities

We are not yet re-opening Region Scout camps or re-commencing overnight activities. Region Activity leaders are able to run day-only activities under the guidance of the [Outdoor Council of Australia's COVID-19 plans](#), while continuing to follow standard Scouting guidelines, such as two deep leadership.

We are finalising our guidelines for Scout camp operators, and will share this information well in advance of any announcement.

Thank you

Finally, I would like to thank you for your continued support during these unusual conditions. It has been incredibly reassuring to see how positive, creative and realistic the vast majority of Leaders have been throughout the past months.

However, I should acknowledge there have been some frustrations bubbling up from time to time by a few individuals who are extremely keen to return to 'normal' activities. They have raised concerns about the different approaches being taken by other Scout Branches, by the Girl Guides, by other clubs, and some have even asked why we are not following the approach by schools across NSW.

The decisions we make at Scouts NSW are informed by the views of the majority of our front-line leaders - in particular, our amazing Group Leaders. Their feedback is treated with the highest priority by our Task Force, and we've been delighted that their opinions have not only been constructive, but they've also been consistent, regardless of whether they run a metropolitan or a country Scout Group.

My special thanks to you for your wonderful work as we return Scouting to our Halls and Dens.

With best wishes,

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.

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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