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### *What it takes to be a leader*

Dear all

This month, I'd like to talk to you about leadership.

At Scouts, one of the many valuable skills we teach to young people is how to be a good leader.

We also give adult volunteers the opportunity to build, enhance or refine their own leadership skills.

Most adults have some degree of experience as a leader when they join us. Some already lead teams of other adults in their workplaces; some have leadership skills from other voluntary work; there are also many people in Scouting for whom this is their very first experience leadership role.

I'd like to share some of my perspectives about what it takes to be a good leader.

And first of all, it's worth noting that good leadership is not always about the rank you hold, or the title you choose.

It may seem obvious, but the simple and agreed definition of a leader is that they have followers. They attract people who genuinely trust and respect them. The people for whom they're responsible feel safe, confident to speak up, and willing to go out of their way to help each other if asked.

There's also an interesting paradox here, because good leaders are also known to be good followers.

They work alongside their team, they ask and listen to what their customers want, they explore what's happening in the wider market and look for great ideas, and they try to think beyond their own lived experiences when making decisions.

Simon Sinek, a famous writer on leadership and strategy, explains that leadership is about building an environment in which there's a deep sense of trust and cooperation. He points out that you can't instruct someone to trust someone else. You have to create the conditions for the feelings to flourish.

After all, we have little control over the conditions in which we live and work. But we do have control over the conditions within our homes and within the organisations for which we work and volunteer.

#### **Good parenting**

Sinek draws a parallel with being a great parent. Parents want to give their children opportunities, education, discipline, confidence and resilience so they can achieve even more than the parent. This is what my wife, Jenny, and I tried to do for our three children. If a child has problems, the parent will coach them to help them through the challenge. A good parent would never blame a child, turn their back on them and moan to other parents about them.

Good leaders encourage their teams, recognise and thank them, and give them confidence to try again. Bad leaders operate in environments where people don't feel safe. They don't feel confident to speak up and offer new ideas. They don't feel safe to make mistakes. They spend their energy fighting to protect themselves from each other and don't trust anything from outside their group.

#### **Good leaders at Scouts**

If you're in a leadership role in Scouts, I encourage you to think about the environment you build.

Do you encourage everyone in your team to work together, do you coach them when they make a mistake, do you get them to focus on each other's strengths and talents, and what we're all here to achieve?

If you're not in a leadership role in Scouts, how do you feel about the team with whom you work? Do you feel happy, supported, listened to, and cared about? Is your leader a good communicator, who talks positively about other adults in Scouting, whether in neighbouring Groups, or working within your Region or State?

If you're not a leader but you think you have what it takes to be a leader in Scouts, then please think about talking with your Group Leader, your District Commissioner or your Region Commissioner. You may also wish to explore the vacant positions across the State here: <https://www.nsw.scouts.com.au/about/positions-vacant/>

We'd love to hear from you.

#### **Volunteering at Scouts**

We offer our adult volunteers support, advice, training and tools to enable them to build leadership skills. There are a huge range of different roles available from working within a Section to helping out at an Activity Centre to running the Hall bookings for your local Scout Group.

There's lots of information on our website about being an adult helper:  
<https://www.nsw.scouts.com.au/become-an-adult-helper/>

We're open to anyone. It doesn't matter about their age, gender, background or beliefs. It doesn't matter how much time they have available. We have lots of adults who offer an hour or two a week. They fit their contribution around their other priorities, such as their family, work, or their health.

As you know, every adult leader must stay up-to-date with their WWCC (Working With Children Check) and complete the relevant WHS and Child Safety training. These are mandatory requirements for anyone who volunteers for a youth organisation.

It's a great time to invite someone to join Scouts. During the last 12 months, we've grown to appreciate our local communities, our neighbours and the acts of kindness individuals show each other during the tough times. We've seen people step up to lead. These are the people we want and need in Scouts.

I encourage you to have just one conversation. Any one of us can ignite the spark in a new leader.

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](mailto:chief.commissioner@nsw.scouts.com.au).

*Scouts NSW acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout NSW.  
We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.*

#### **Youth Safety in Scouting**

Scouts Australia NSW is committed to operating as a youth safe organisation and implementing youth 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 youth protection form](#), call 02 9735 9000 or email [youthprotection@nsw.scouts.com.au](mailto:youthprotection@nsw.scouts.com.au).

#### **Imminent Danger**

If someone is in danger NOW, the matter should be reported directly to NSW Police on 000. Where a report is made to the Police, you must also subsequently notify Scouts NSW State Office.

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