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Great communicators and Living our Law

Dear all,

I want to firstly acknowledge the challenging past weeks as our daily lives have been restricted to handle an increase in COVID cases across NSW. Please take care of yourselves, your loved ones and your local communities. I encourage you to follow the health advice to protect each other from harm. And please reach out to others and check that they are OK during these extraordinary times.

Last weekend, we held our Annual General Meeting, and we released our Annual Review, with the theme 'Living our Law'. Our theme was reinforced throughout the event, highlighting how we strive to be respectful, do what is right, and in particular, to face challenges with courage.

Last month, I described the qualities it takes to be a leader. We are very lucky at Scouts NSW that we have attracted many outstanding individuals who have these qualities in abundance.

As you know, it is simply impossible to become a great leader without being a great communicator.

I hope you noticed the previous sentence didn't refer to being a great talker! A great communicator has very different qualities. They know the importance of listening, not just talking.

The best communicators understand their audience, and interact with them in a way that helps a message to be understood. Often, they speak to your emotions and your aspirations. They realise if their message doesn't resonate with their audience, then it won't be understood, much less championed.

Effective communication is vital to gain trust, align efforts in the pursuit of goals, and inspire positive change. When communication is lacking, important information can be misinterpreted, causing relationships to suffer and, ultimately, create barriers that hinder progress.

How we communicate

First, and importantly, at large organisations like Scouts, it's not feasible for me, or my leadership team, to talk with every single one of our thousands of members individually. That's why we use a suite of our 'owned' channels from the State, to reach you. Each has its own unique role:

- We use **Chiefs Chat** so I can deliver important strategic, behavioural or leadership messages, setting out my expectations for everyone across the organisation.
- We have our **Leaders News** bulletin, which shares general news and updates from across NSW, covering future events, new ways of working or program ideas for your Group.
- We have **GLU** (Group Leaders Update) to share information directly with leaders of formations and with District Commissioners.
- **Scouts Australia** also sends out a monthly newsletter, which shares nation-wide updates.
- **Our website** is the single source of all the information you need to know. If you're looking for guidance, tips, processes or information, this is the place to go.
- We also use official Scouts NSW **social media channels** to share timely updates, ideas or news: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Facts First

One of the most important attributes of good communicators is that they take the time to find out the facts before they communicate.

I'm often surprised to hear that our State uniformed team members, our State Service Centre or Region Office teams are dealing with questions that a simple website search could resolve. For example, the recent webinars on Sustainable Scouting prompted questions that were already well covered on our website. We've even had leaders tell parents to contact us with questions that leaders should be able to answer.

Of course we don't expect you to know everything about our organisation. You will never have the answer to every question you're asked. But it takes 2 minutes to check out our website, find the answer, and in doing so, you will have learned something new.

Social media behaviour

Facts are really important when you're dealing with social media.

We use these channels at Scouts for marketing purposes, and to expand the reach of our important updates. But it's unacceptable to see some of the trolling that takes place on Scout accounts, especially on Facebook. I'm sure you've seen comments on social media that, instead of being constructive, respond in a way that is negative or aggressive. Reasoning and level discourse don't seem to work.

Known as trolls, online bullies become increasingly confident. Most recently, trolls have prevented people from making good health decisions, discouraged people from following sensible advice, and they have even persuaded sensible Scout Leaders to sign petitions, by distorting or hiding the truth. They often dissuade subject matter experts from joining a conversation for fear of being targeted.

Never forget that trolls are people who type something they'd never dare say to your face. They lack the courage they see in others. How do you know if someone is behaving like a troll?

- They'll try to make you angry
- They act entitled
- They exaggerate
- They redirect the conversation using emotions or semi-truths
- They make it personal.

There are a few ways to deal with trolls. The best way is to ignore them. You could also share facts. Or you could block and report them. If you see someone from Scouting behaving like this, you should report them to someone from our State or Region team.

Leadership communications

As a leader in Scouts, I ask you to role model good behaviours on social media, and in your interactions with parents, young people and other leaders.

I encourage every leader at Scouts to use the opportunity of being in a leadership role to practise your communications skills and take the time to reflect on your personal style. At Scouts, we encourage scientific thinking – keeping an open mind to learn new opportunities, evolve, and learn. We don't want leaders with closed minds. I sometimes think they can be the single greatest limiting factor for our future success.

The way you interact with others, in public forums, on email, in person and on social media is one of the criteria we use for our recruitment, for our promotions, and for our Adult Recognition Awards.

It's also a way to gain the genuine respect and appreciation of your peers, and to become an even better leader in Scouts.

Please stay strong, stay safe and stay in touch.

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.

*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.

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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