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18 January 2022

A New Year - A Year of Action!

Dear all,

A very happy new year to you.

We are all looking forward to returning to some sense of normality after the turbulence of the last 18 months. Whether you're a leader, supporter, parent or young person, either at the start of your Scouting journey or a seasoned Scouter, you all deserve something to look forward to, opportunities to celebrate with friends old and new, and to feel optimistic about the future for our young people.

The long summer holidays often provide time for reflection and contemplation about what comes next. It's a time when many parents consider how to support their children to flourish and grow and become the best adults they can. Parents and young people want opportunities that provide adventure, action, new experiences, outdoors fun and skills that can't be taught in the classroom.

It's the perfect time for us to showcase the amazing world of Scouting.

We have so much of which we can be proud. We have incredibly successful Groups across the State, around the country and all over the world. We have brilliant adults from local communities volunteering their spare time to give young people the time of their lives. We have a unique and long-standing service for our customers, which has been proven to succeed.

You all have access to wide-ranging resources including accredited training qualifications. You can also find out about our [activity centres](#), [campsites](#), [training tools](#), [Program ideas](#), [Leader recruitment materials](#), [marketing tools](#), [grants and funding guidelines](#) and importantly, a wide range of [Child safety resources](#) to ensure we maintain the highest standards of child protection.

This year, we'll be taking action. We'll be able to hold more outdoors events for our youth members, and host celebrations without the need for Zooming. And we'll be improving the way we operate.

We welcome a new Chief Executive Officer, Carolyn Campbell, and a new Deputy Chief Commissioner (Operations), Greg Barnier. I am personally looking forward to working with each of them as we adapt our organisation to be fit for the future. They are members of our leadership team with Carolyn in charge of our State Service Centre and Greg overseeing our Regions. They'll both be important ambassadors for Scouts to help lift our profile.

As we look across our organisation and decide how to keep our Program and services contemporary and relevant to new generations of young people, we will be making some necessary changes.

We'll need your help to ensure we take the right actions.

One thing we've all learned over the past 18 months is the importance of facts. Using facts and data rather than myths and beliefs, has led to improved national healthcare, a more sustainable environment and a safer world. For Scouts, knowing and understanding the world we live in is both fun and spectacular. Scientific facts are the basis for much of our Program and the life skills we deliver.

I'm always interested in your ideas, and during the year, we'll be asking for your suggestions about various changes we'd like to explore to further improve the delivery of the Scouts Program, and to ensure greater support for front line Scouting. These could include how we can recruit more Leaders, how we can create a positive culture, or how we respectfully exit individuals who don't live by the Scout Law. But we ask that you focus on facts and evidence rather than personal opinions to help us make the right decisions.

We will also need a positive attitude to change.

In recent years, we've involved young people in our decision-making. We've also made sure we have diversity and representation. As a result, we've witnessed a huge improvement in our capacity to take good actions that have positive, enduring outcomes. However, there remain some members who are quick to criticize. Whether it's our new branding and logo, the new youth Program, 'youth leading, adult supporting', or selling surplus properties, I encourage us all to move on from the past.

I therefore ask you to reflect on your mindset as you experience the changes we need to make. I encourage you to look at the facts and the context, and please assume that we're always trying to do our best.

Finally, I'd like to thank my colleagues who volunteer on your [Board of Directors](#). They have set out a bold financial strategy that aims to keep Scouts NSW as a going concern long into the future. We are very lucky to be in such good hands. The quality of their work and the deep consideration they give every decision mean that our important front-line leaders can focus on their Sections and Groups, knowing they have a great team behind them. I can assure you the Board makes its tough decisions with the best interests of Scouts NSW as its primary and overriding consideration.

I've included a couple of additional updates below covering the Membership Experience Survey and some great tools to support your child protection efforts.

I look forward to joining you in a year of action!

Yours in service,

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

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

Taking action – on your views

The Membership Experience Survey we ran last year provided valuable insights into the opinions of our adult members. We've now run this survey for three years, and the results consistently reinforce that we are on the right track. We are very proud to see that, despite a couple of extremely challenging years, the things that matter most to us, are widely recognised by our members.

Statement	Agree / Strongly Agree		
	2019	2020	2021
I believe in the purpose and value of Scouts	94%	96%	94%
We create a safe environment for young people	92%	93%	93%
I am proud to be involved in Scouts	93%	88%	91%
I understand how my role contributes to the success of Scouts NSW	92%	92%	90%
Scouting in NSW is inclusive and people from any background can be comfortable to be themselves	83%	80%	86%
Scouts NSW compares well with other organisations in the opportunities it provides to young people	88%	82%	82%
I am confident Scouts NSW will make good decisions to keep everyone safe in a post-pandemic world	Not asked	Not asked	74%

We also recognise where a course correction is required. We received around 300 responses to an open question asking for suggestions on issues or actions that Scouts could take. The majority of these related to concerns about the billing system we implemented in 2021, and difficulties with Terrain, both of which we acknowledge have been problematic. Our State Service Centre team is prioritising improvements to annual billing in 2022 and we will work with Scouts Australia to enhance Terrain, as it is a national system.

There were also concerns raised by some of our frontline leaders that they need more direct support from District, Region and State volunteers and would like to know where to go for help. And finally, and very sadly, there were reports of poor behaviours by some adult leaders, especially relating to being able to resolve conflict. We will be taking action to review our culture this year and find ways to reach our aspiration of a positive and rewarding culture at Scouts.

Taking action – to keep young people safe

At Scouts NSW, our aim is to create an environment where every young person understands they have a right to feel safe. Youth protection is our number one priority and is everyone's responsibility.

Safeguarding Commitment Statement

"Scouts NSW is committed to safeguarding youth in our care.
Scouts NSW is committed to creating an environment where all our members feel safe, supported and protected."



While it's great that 93% of our members agree or strongly agree that we create a safe environment for Scouts, we'd like to see this at 100%.

We encourage all our leaders to use our Child Safe resources.

In collaboration with the Scouts Australia Youth Protection and Issues Management Team, I am pleased to share some valuable new resources called *Speak Up*. They aim to help children and young people understand their right to speak up when they feel unsafe, unhappy or unfairly treated. The *Speak Up* resources come in a [poster](#) and [leaflet](#) form and have been translated into ten languages – you can find links to all these language resources [here](#). And you can also find some good child safe resources on the Human Rights website [here](#).



Profile of the month

This month, I'm very proud to introduce you to Abbie Kelly, a 12-year old Scout from 3rd Broken Hill Sea Scouts, who has been awarded NSW Volunteer of the Year for 2021, as well as young Volunteer of the year.

Abbie also won last year's Broken Hill Young Citizen of the Year award. And in 2017, she was awarded the 3rd Broken Hill Sea Scout 'Joey of the Year' award. She is an all-round champion!

Find out more about her achievements [here](#).

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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