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Young People Taking Action

21 June 2022

Dear Leaders and Supporters,

At the start of this month, on Sunday 5 June it was the UN's **World Environment Day**. The United Nations runs special days throughout the year, to help galvanise and mobilise resources on important issues of concern. They work as a powerful advocacy tool.

The Environment is a topic of particular interest across Australia, following the recent Federal election, at which climate change was one of the major drivers of voter focus. In one of his first meetings, the new Prime Minister described the importance of transitioning to an economy built on clean energy and creating high-value jobs that help deliver it.



Young people are on the frontline in the fight against climate change as they will bear the greatest consequences of inaction. It's no surprise that young people are more aware of the climate crisis than older generations, and more engaged in responding to it. They are also playing an active role through making changes to their own lifestyles, such as choosing a plant based diet, or avoiding flying abroad, and raising their voices through activist movements. But when it comes to decision-making on these important issues, young people often lack a seat at the table. So they are making their voices heard.

Did you know that in 2020, a 25-year-old sued one of Australia's biggest super funds over its handling of climate change, seeking it to commit to net-zero emissions for its investments by 2050?

Or that a group of teenagers sued the Federal Environment Minister in May this year, to establish that the Government owed a duty of care to future generations on climate change?

Or that since 2018, roughly 10 million young people from 260 countries including Australia have joined in the Schools Strike 4 Climate Change and its sister movements?

What's important to young people is important to us. We can help to champion environmental protection, outdoors appreciation, resilience, courage and the confidence to speak up and be heard.

Since Scouting began, young people have been connecting with the outdoors, learning from nature and taking positive action for their local and global environments. It is crucial to keep the environment central to Scouting and to ensure that Scouts are a positive force for change. As we all know, part of the Scout Law and Promise is 'Respect for the environment'.

We see climate change as one of the biggest issues facing young people and we support action to mitigate the impacts.



Helping young people know more about the impact of climate change and how we can help make a difference can give them opportunities to think critically, develop empathy and show collaboration – incredibly important concepts in today's world where truth in media and social media is sometimes hard to find.

Every year, Scouts organise and participate in a wide number of environmental activities including erosion prevention works, energy and water saving projects, wildlife monitoring projects, tree plantings and environmental training courses. Many Scout Groups are also involved with national events such as Clean Up Australia Day.

As a member of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) we've signed up to take action through the Scouts for SDGs movement (SDGs are the Sustainable Development Goals, designed by the United Nations). If you've not heard of them, I encourage you to [find out more here](#).

We also have a [Sustainability Strategy](#), which provides some valuable guidelines for the way we operate, including:

- *Leading by example:* We will choose to demonstrate sustainability leadership in our own activities and on our sites.
- *Accountability:* Scouts Australia will be accountable for the environmental, social and economic impacts resulting from its planning, decision-making and activities.
- *Sustainable development:* Our program and operations will aim to meet the needs of the community without compromising the needs of future generations. Development will be in balance with the natural environment.
- *Live within ecological limits:* We will not use resources faster than the earth can replace, or create waste faster than the earth can assimilate.
- *Integration:* Environmental, social and economic considerations will be integrated into planning and decision making.
- *Precautionary principle:* If there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty will not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Our young people should have agency – or decision making - about their Scouting experience. And the topic of climate change, and how we make a positive impact, is one of the most valuable we can offer.

Take the time to encourage youth members to share their thoughts on how to address climate change, and find adventures or games to play that help build awareness, appreciation and excitement about the changes we can make that have an impact.

Helping tackle climate change is one of the most important legacies we can leave to the next generation.

Lord Baden-Powell said, "As a Scout, you are the guardian of the woods. A Scout never damages a tree by hacking it with his knife or axe. It does not take long to fell a tree, but it takes many years to grow one, so a Scout cuts down a tree for a good reason only – not just for the sake of using his axe. For every tree felled, two should be planted."

We can all make a difference.

Yours in Scouting,

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

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, CEO, State Commissioner (Youth Protection & Issues Management) or the Manager of Safeguarding Youth, Issues Management and Research at the NSW State Service Centre.

To make a report you may use the [online youth protection form](#), call 9735 9000 or email YouthProtectionTeam@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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