



Chief Commissioner of Australia

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Be Prepared...
for new adventure!

Monday 31st August, 2015

Dear Scouts of Australia, Parents, and Supporters,

I have some exciting news on the progress of our Youth Program Review (YPR). The YPR is looking at everything that takes place within the Scouting Movement - from the time our youth members join, some as young as six, to the time they finish as a youth member, some as old as 26.

Some of you have already been involved in the Review. You may have been asked to give your feedback on an aspect of our program, to complete a survey, participate in a focus group or lead a team. For your participation you have my most sincere thanks.

Almost 100 people have been working hard on reviewing the program and its many aspects. With more than a half of the review team under the age of 30, this is without doubt a review of the youth program conducted by and for youth, with the support of adults.

In looking to create a more inclusive Movement, the review teams have looked closely at ensuring that the Australian Scout Promise and Law remains a true reflection of our organisation and its members. Their task was to keep the foundations of its meaning, while using more contemporary language that would ensure all young Australians are comfortable making our Promise and living by our Law.

We want all our Members, from our youngest to our oldest, to understand and make the Scouting Promise - with one Promise for all Members as our goal.

Our research clearly tells us that there is a need for change to help Scouting grow and strengthen. This cannot be achieved without the involvement of you, our Members.

The review recommendations put forward the two options on page two of this letter for your consideration. Please reflect on the suggestions for new wording below, together with the attached document describing some of our research findings and the rationale for the recommended rewording.

I invite you to download the two full reports by our Review Teams from ypr.scouts.com.au/promiselaw, which outline in detail our research on the Fundamentals of Scouting and the concepts of Duty to God, Spirituality and Spiritual Development. They have been most enlightening in our pursuit of a Movement that is accessible to and embracing of all our members and the community.



After considering the research and your feedback, a final choice will be made by the middle of 2016. We want to know what you think. Which options do you prefer? Are there any words you would alter? Make sure to tell us why.

The Promise Option 1	The Promise Option 2
<p><i>On my honour I promise to do my best, Be true to my spiritual beliefs, Contribute to my community, And live by the Scout Law.</i></p>	<p><i>On my honour, I promise that I will do my best, To be true to my spiritual beliefs, To contribute to my community, my country and our world, To help other people, and To live by the Scout Law.</i></p>

The Law Option 1	The Law Option 2
<p><i>Scouts are friendly Scouts exercise honesty, fairness and loyalty Scouts are resourceful, responsible and trustworthy Scouts treat others and the environment with care and respect</i></p>	<p><i>A scout is honest A scout is trustworthy A scout is responsible A scout is considerate A scout is loyal A scout is caring A scout is friendly A scout is resourceful A scout is fair A scout is respectful to themselves, the community and the environment</i></p>

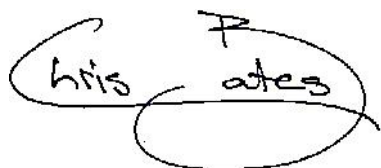
To leave your feedback, please go to the Scouts Australia Youth Program Review page at ypr.scouts.com.au/promiselaw. Consultation closes 31st December 2015.

If contacted by the media in regard to these or any other aspects of Scouting, please remember to follow your Branch media policy and simply refer them to your Branch or State headquarters.

I very much look forward to your comments on these options of the Promise and the Law, and which you prefer saying – have a go at saying them out loud!

Thank you for your continued support of the Scouting Movement.

Imagine the Possibilities,



Chris Bates
"Chiefy"
Chief Commissioner
Scouts Australia





A NEW APPROACH...

THE SCOUT PROMISE & LAW IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIA

The World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) identifies key requirements for member organisations like Scouts Australia: the purpose, principles and method of the Movement, as well as the Mission, Promise and Law – The Fundamentals of Scouting. There's been substantial feedback indicating the lack of relevance of some key fundamentals in current Australian society, especially concerning the Promise, Law, religion, spirituality, the role of the Queen of Australia, and Duty to God.

Scouting's Youth Programme is defined by WOSM. It is the totality of:

- What young people do in Scouting (the Activities)
- How it is done (the Scout Method) and
- Why it is done (the Purpose)

The time has come to review the Fundamentals for 21st Century Australia, to meet the needs of today's youth through Scouts Australia's Program.

WHY A NEW APPROACH?

Youth Program Review (YPR) research has found:

- The principle of 'Duty to God' is understood in many different ways throughout our movement.
- The differing social attitudes to 'the Queen' in our Promise resulted in two Promises. We need to consider how to unify our Movement with one inclusive Promise.
- There's little understanding of what spirituality and spiritual development mean in the Scouting program.
- Those members without religious beliefs are often uncomfortable making a Promise containing the words 'to my God'.
- Some language in the Scout Law is not used today, thus not fitting with our need to be contemporary. Words like 'thrifty' are not in the language of our youth. The way in which the Law is phrased is also open to review.
- The WOSM Youth Program Policy states that Scouting should be open to all, yet many feel our Promise and policy wording suggests we're not.



TO DO MY DUTY TO MY GOD

Scouts Australia is looking at the Duty to God wording in the Promise from feedback indicating:

- Individuals' personal lack of religion;
- Perception that the majority of Scouts do not subscribe to a formal religion;
- Concerns that others who do not subscribe to a formal religion are being forced into being dishonest when making the Scout Promise;
- Many parents prefer non-religious activities for their children and have expressed discomfort with the use of the word God.
- Some parents being confused about Scouts Australia's approach to spirituality or being unaware of it when their children joined.

Being willing to truthfully make the Promise is the main requirement of joining Scouts Australia. The spiritual development of youth members is undermined if members feel left out by their lack of religious beliefs. It is difficult to see how spiritual development can occur where some feel they cannot have an honest and open discussion about their beliefs.

There is a consistent view that membership of Scouts Australia should be open to everyone. Limiting membership on the basis of religious or spiritual beliefs is not supported by our members, does not serve any useful purpose, and is not in line with the values of the Scouting Movement. WOSM's own policy on the matter clearly supports this.

The World Scout Bureau describes four approaches to spirituality commonly used in Scouting which highlight that spirituality can take both religious and non-religious forms.

Membership consultations support:

- Finding alternatives to the words 'God' or 'religion';
- Focusing on words like 'beliefs', 'my beliefs' or 'spiritual beliefs';
- Using phrases such as 'living by', 'upholding' or 'exploring and developing' these beliefs.

Most felt that the term "spiritual beliefs" was more encompassing. It also allowed a broad range of views, yet was restrictive enough to focus on the specifics.

Criticism of "spiritual beliefs" included that some may equate 'spirituality' with 'religion'. Criticism of "beliefs" included misinterpretation, as people may 'believe' many things that are not related to spirituality.

Some argued for including 'a higher being' in spirituality definitions, however, about the same number explicitly noted their satisfaction that this term was excluded. Our consultations indicated that it doesn't appear that including a reference to a higher being is of benefit to an Australian Scouting definition of spirituality.

The YPR proposes that this definition for Spirituality be adopted in the national Policy and Rules, and program support materials:

Spirituality refers to the feelings or beliefs of a person regarding their purpose in life, connection to others and place in the world around them. These spiritual feelings or beliefs may change as a person develops and guide their actions throughout their life.

Scouting is perfectly placed as a non-religious movement to nurture spirituality in youth outside of the traditional formal religious setting.

It's hoped that with revised wording, the Australian Scout Promise can be truthfully made by all members and encourage, rather than stifle, discussion on matters related to spirituality and spiritual development.

Intersection between Spirituality, Duty to God and Spiritual Development

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OCCURS IN SCOUTING THROUGH:

- Exploring a connection with nature and the world around us
- Searching for meaning in life's experiences
- Learning about different religions and non-religious belief systems
- Learning about and respecting others spiritual beliefs
- Participating in Scouts' Owns, reflections or other activities

This allows young people to develop, question and refine their *spirituality*.

Through making the Scout Promise, members commit to 'being true to' their spiritual beliefs (*Duty to God*).

DO MY DUTY TO (THE QUEEN OF) AUSTRALIA

This phrase supports the principle of 'Duty to Others' in the Australian Promise.

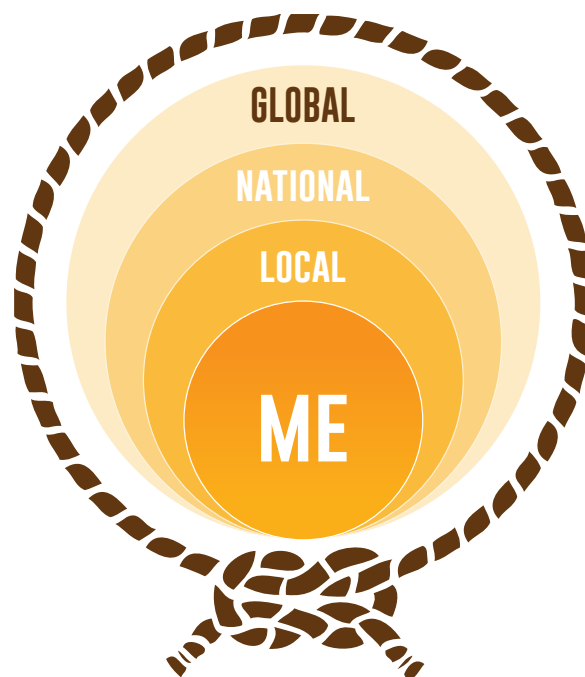
Doing 'my duty to the Queen of Australia' has been an optional part of our Promise for over a decade. With over 50% of survey respondents suggesting this phrase needs to change, and less than a 12% preference for this principle in the follow-up survey, we need to reconsider its place in the Promise, and whether providing options promotes the unity of our organisation.

To date, the phrase "to (the Queen of) Australia" has represented a member's role in (primarily) their local and national community. It was found that the broader Scouting community favours the phrasing "to help other people" when considering 'Duty to Others' in the Promise, and "to contribute to my community" as the next preferred option, similar to the modification made by Guides Australia in 2012.

Traditionally, 'Duty to Others' is also referred to in the Promise through a phrase referring to country. If the term 'community' is adopted, as above, it was suggested that there may not be a need to include words like 'world', or 'country', or 'Australia', as 'community' operates on so many levels.

The removal of direct reference of 'Australia' was also seen as recognition of the global nature of Scouting, and making the Promise more inclusive

for citizens of other nations. Anecdotal feedback suggested that in a global society, the youth of today can at times feel more connected to their peers in other parts of the world than they do to the country whose boundaries they reside within.



ONE PROMISE

The YPR has investigated the idea of just one Scout Promise for all members. Combined survey results highlighted overall support for this concept. Guides Australia follow this model, and have found it to be successful, noting leaders are required to work through the Promise with younger members, regardless of the complexity of the wording. They've found that

this unites their organisation, and enables smoother transitions between sections.

Feedback from Joey Scout Leaders suggested that their youth are currently isolated from the rest of the organisation because they don't share anything significant in common with other sections.

The Scouts Australia Youth Program Review asks for your feedback on these two options for a new Scout Promise:

SUGGESTED OPTION 1:

On my honour
I promise to do my best,
Be true to my spiritual beliefs,
Contribute to my community,
And live by the Scout Law.

SUGGESTED OPTION 2:

On my honour,
I promise that I will do my best,
To be true to my spiritual beliefs,
To contribute to my community,
my country and our world,
To help other people, and
To live by the Scout Law.



ONE LAW

The Australian Scout Law, just like the Promise, should be inspired by the original work of Lord Baden-Powell. Member feedback suggests only minor changes are needed, with the removal of the word 'thrifty' and further exploration around 'courage' being the two most significant considerations. The decision

was made to explore the concept of 'One Law' in conjunction with One Promise.

Current feedback suggests most members are satisfied with ten parts to the Law.

National public surveys tell us the top values Australian parents want instilled in their children:



Research shows there are alternatives to our existing format for a Scout Law. A different structure is worth exploring.

- Guides Australia have One Law: a series of seven statements used across all ages.
- Scouting Ireland builds on the Law as a youth member progresses through sections.

Venturer Scouts preferred the familiarity of the existing structure, whilst Scouts supported a shorter format and style. Feedback was mixed from the Joey Scout and Cub Scout sections, but Rover Scouts and Adult Leaders felt that with the changes proposed,

SUGGESTED OPTION 1:

Scouts are friendly
Scouts exercise honesty, fairness and loyalty
Scouts are resourceful, responsible and trustworthy
Scouts treat others and the environment with care and respect

a fresher style was required, particularly to avoid confusion between the current and proposed versions.

Values education is becoming increasingly common in school programs; youth are being exposed to complex concepts at a younger and younger age. As such, it was felt that the youngest youth members would be capable of exploring any values in any variation of a newly designed Scout Law, but that this would need Leaders to have discussions about the values on a regular basis.

The Scouts Australia Youth Program Review asks for your feedback on these two options for a new Scout Law:

SUGGESTED OPTION 2:

A Scout is honest
A Scout is trustworthy
A Scout is responsible
A Scout is considerate
A Scout is loyal
A Scout is caring
A Scout is friendly
A Scout is resourceful
A Scout is fair
A Scout is respectful to themselves,
the community and the environment

We now need the feedback of every member, parent, and supporter! This is not a vote for a new Promise and Law, however we'd like know if you would support one or the other, and if there are any changes you would make to the proposals.

Let us know your thoughts!

ypr.scouts.com.au/promiselaw

Here you'll also find in-depth papers that fully cover all the research and recommendations, including the sources of research, and analyses of surveys and forums.