



Scouts Australia National Youth Program Review



Research Report

Title	What are the burning issues that the members of Scouts Australia believe must be covered in the Youth Program Review?	YPR Paper No.	1
Report Author	Steve Tyas	Status	FINAL
Research Team	Brownsea Island Patrol, National Youth Council <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rowina Nathan (PL)• Harley Miles• Johnathan Morey• Sophie Allwright• Sophie Austerberry• Chantelle Cowley Chris Neilsen (NYC Chair) - Mentor Steve Tyas	Release Date	11 th January 2014

Executive Summary

A majority of the issues raised should not be a surprise as they have been difficulties experienced by members for many many years. Most have been looked at in the various reviews held over the years.

Some of the issues raised are not directly related to the youth program, however the organisation will need to take strong note of those especially that impact the youth program. Organizational structure, communication, and leader training are three common issues raised in this category.

The top 4 broad categories of burning issues were Leaders, Scouting politics, activities, and paperwork.

Introduction

In order to engage with all interested members of Scouts Australia, to gather their thoughts on what the Review should cover, we set about asking the questions:

What are the burning issues that the members of Scouts Australia believe must be covered in the Youth Program Review?

The initial research and analysis was completed by the Brownsea Island patrol of the National Youth Council. It was then passed back to the YPR Coordinating Team to finalise and add late input gathered from other sources, including responses to the draft report which was available for download from the YPR website.

Key Questions:

- What are the burning issues that the members of Scouts Australia believe must be covered in the Youth Program Review?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of our program as identified by both youth members and leaders?
- What are the questions our members would like answered by the review?

- What does Scouting think of Scouting?
- What does Scouting believe MUST NOT change?

Methods

Data was collated from a range of groups. There were 650 respondents to an online survey that ranged from Joeys through to Leaders of Scouts Australia. Discussions were held with all sections at Scout Groups that the NYC members could get access to. Other data came from Facebook statuses and ideas from Brownsea Island Patrol's 2012 initial scoping report were included. Queensland and Tasmania Joey Youth Forums also discussed this and feedback from Victorian Branch Youth Council has been included. Ideas were collected from the each of the Branch Commissioner for each section at the Joey/Cub and Scout/Venturer meetings in mid 2013.

After the draft report was placed online, a number of comments were left in response. They have been incorporated into this final report. Direct emails to the YPR email address or left in the online form submission have also been analysed.

All thoughts and ideas have been looked at, coded, and narrowed down to common themes and trends in order to guide the planning of future steps in the YPR plan.

Results

Online Survey:

Below is a breakdown of topic areas that people wrote about in the online survey. Topics are in percentage order.

- **Leaders 20%**

Leader issues include training, hierarchy, and personal qualities. Training issues include certification of leaders for different levels, increase training on behaviour management, E-Learning and offline training options. Leaders are unsure of the hierarchy and it should be mapped out. The structure of the organization needs to be relevant to the needs of the youth. Personal qualities of leaders include non-grumpy, nice, friendly, under 30.

- **Politics 17%**

Leader politics is a predominant problem, with many survey respondents wanting more democracy. A feeling that there are ill choices by leaders with power within groups at all levels seems to be a problem, along with unwillingness to follow policies. There is a need for improved communication skills between Leaders and from Leaders to parents. Having one national database and reduced administration procedures was suggested. People also said that the heavy insurance was deterring activities that should be a part of normal Scouting. A guideline of how to use funds may also be useful as often funds are put aside or used impractically. The need to have nationally controlled standards also appeared frequently.

- **Activities 16%**

The issues relating to activities in scouting as identified by the survey respondents are the growing need for qualified Leaders and the cost of activities. People thought that it should be easier to organize and get training for activities. Specific activities that people wanted included social and

adventurous activities. Activities need to be more widely available and advertised to everyone from all areas and sections.

- **Paperwork 12%**

The survey highlighted the need for less bureaucratic paperwork as it can be very restricting. Online form tracking and submission was suggested and paperwork should be streamlined nationally so that there is easier transition between States.

- **Scouting Traditions 9%**

There needs to be a clear statement on website that Scouts is open to all gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, ability, and other factors. We found that people are unclear on the values Scouts has and that they may feel discriminated against or uncomfortable. The Scout Law, promise and prayer should be reviewed, as many are put off by the direct references to God. Groups need to be aware of the 'reflections' booklet, which offers a substitute to traditional prayers for use at Scout's Own and similar functions. People have also questioned the old traditions of 'the ground howl' and 'bravo,' which may be out-dated.

- **Marketing and advertising 9%**

Our branding is great but the way it is reflected to the greater community needs to be improved. The survey depicted that Scouts often has an 'uncool' image or stereotype and that people weren't satisfied with current marketing. Advertisements need to show all of the sections and the brilliant exciting things we do, to give viewers a new perception of what the essence of modern Scouting is. Increased community involvement may also prove to be an effective way of drawing attention to Scouting, as personal connections are more engaging than ads.

- **Adult Training Issues 9%**

Issues that presented from our research includes greater training on Behaviour management, special needs training. Training needs to be presented at the same standard throughout different branches and regions. There needs to be greater leader support and the skills taught need to be modern and relevant. Also the need for rural access to leader training and the need for obedient leaders came up during our research.

- **Communication 6%**

Communication is an area needed to ensure the evolution of Scouting. Internally, we need to ensure that people receive the information at all levels, as there was an overwhelming response about lack of information getting to grass roots about every policy change and notification sent out. This needs to be improved. Our external communication needs to be positive and reflect the internal positivity that the organisation has.

- **Uniform 6%**

The three major concerns with uniform include its cost, the colour pants, and a women's fitted shirt should be made available.

- **Badges 5%**

In the survey results, some popular themes were the need for more badges and current badges to be updated. The consistency between the way different Scout Groups approve sign offs on badges was an issue. The amount of work required to earn a badge varies from Group to Group.

- **Nothing 5%**

5% said there was nothing they would fix with Scouts Australia.

- **Cost of Scouting 5%**

Scouting is perceived by members as a very expensive choice, with respondents wanting lower membership costs, and believing that there are ways that it could be made cheaper. Members thought there should be an online banking option. Also the cost of the uniform and the need to buy a new shirt for each section was a concern for many people surveyed.

- **Rovers 4%**

Rovers are the smallest section and people believe new and improved promotion would help to increase its numbers. Another concern was the strong drinking culture found in Rovers, which often becomes the main focus of a Crew, rather than the aims of Scouting. Many people also said there were problems with the linking process between Venturers and Rovers.

- **Cubs 4%**

Cub Scouts require more inter-sectional activities with other sections and also with other Packs. People would like to have more one-off badges, so that badges are more satisfying for Cubs with their attention span. Respondents also felt that there was a time conflict between boomerang work and achievement badges, and some packs have an emphasis on one or the other. Leaders had difficulty with being able to retain youth members. There were also thoughts that the jungle book should be either be removed or optional, there should be more interaction between packs, more learning resources, a badge plan for the boomerangs, and that there should be online pack management resources. They also thought that there should be more interaction between sections and more adventurous activities available to Cubs.

- **Venturers 4%**

Continued concerns for this section of Scouting include the need for better promotion. People feel that this could possibly be integrated into schools. Also the transition into Rovers is a major concern.

- **Joeys 3%**

Many people believe the starting age for Joey scouts should be 5. People are also worried about overbearing rules for the section. The need for more badges and more camps also came up in our research.

- **Facilities 2%**

A lot of Scout halls were built many years ago and people would like better facilities. People believe there should be support from Branch for grants and financial support for improved facilities including showers, toilets, kitchens, dens, and halls.

- **Scout Section 2%**

Issues that arose about the Scout section included the need to increase core Scouting skills in youth. Scouts want more freedom, which would be gained through full functioning patrol systems and Troop Council, which allow for youth involvement in the programs, decision making, etc. The green book should be updated and there were a few requests for more inter-sectional activities.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of our program as identified by both youth members and leaders?

Strengths of Scouts Australia

- Youth
- Leaders
- Activities undertaken
- Community engagement
- Skills developed
- Friendships gained
- Values of association
- Camps
- Learning by doing
- Volunteers
- Events
- Scouting History

Weaknesses of Scouts Australia

- Some Leaders
- Group Management
- Movement
- Communication
- Organisation
- Branch
- The general public's view of Scouting
- Program
- Paperwork
- Cost
- Politics
- Risk
- Bullying

What does Scouting think of Scouting?

- Things MUST change
- People are passionate about Scouting.
- Hierarchy nature of Scouting has gone too far
- Too much politics within Scouting

What does Scouting believe MUST NOT change?

- Activities
- Youth
- Fun
- Camps
- Promise
- Learning
- Friendships
- Outdoor
- Patrol System
- Scout Spirit

Conclusion

Members are eager to tell us what the issues are, very few gave any meaningful or realistic or well thought out solutions. A majority of the issues raised should not be a surprise as they have been difficulties experienced by members for many many years. Most have been looked at in the various reviews held over the years.

Some of the issues raised are not directly related to the youth program, however the organisation will need to take strong note of those especially that impact the youth program. Organizational structure, communication, and leader training are three common issues raised in this category.

Recommendations

Given the agreed to Key Priorities of the Scouts Australia Youth Program Review, it is recommended that, based on input from our membership, that the following issues need to be included in the Review:

1. The structure of the organization needs to be relevant to the needs of the youth.
2. Improved communication skills and tools between Leaders and from Leaders to parents & youth. Communication is an area needed to get right to ensure the evolution of Scouting.
3. Qualified Leaders in activity specialisations. Skills Recognition needs to be easy.
4. The role of adults in Scouting – recruiting and training the right people to implement the program well.
5. Clear understanding of Duty to God and Spirituality in our organisation.
6. Less restrictive paperwork, online form tracking and submission, national consistency for easier transition for member movements between states.
7. Communication of Scout values to the wider community.
8. The role of traditions and history, ceremonies, symbolic frameworks - grand howl, 'bravo', Jungle Book, are mentioned frequently.
9. How community involvement and service fits in today's Scouting– global, national, local
10. Consistency in award scheme expectations from group to group
11. Ensure a high level of Scouting skills
12. Build in leadership opportunities for young people, including leading younger sections, and leadership at the institutional level. Consider the place of leadership courses in our program.
13. Consider how we market our purpose etc.
14. Technology in Scouting – embrace devices? Ban devices? Get out and away from devices?
15. Find out from kids why they don't join Scouts
16. A program that considers the time commitments of leaders/adults - flexibility

Appendixes

1. Issues Brainstorm - Youth Program Teams (Section BCs) – April/May 2013 (attached)
2. Responses to draft report (below)
3. Website & Email feedback (attached)
4. Vic Branch Youth Council input – September 2013 (attached)



The National Youth Council is made up of Scouts, Venturers and Rovers from around Australia who discuss issues, present solutions and provide youth input to the running of Scouts Australia.

You can always e-mail the NYC on yoursay@nyc.scouts.com.au if there's an issue you think they should discuss. Also check out www.nyc.scouts.com.au and [facebook.com/ScoutsNYC](https://www.facebook.com/ScoutsNYC).

Appendix 2 – Responses to Draft Report

One issue of leader training for adventurous activities is that the process is too cumbersome for many leaders and too time consuming. With only a short period of service for many leaders they never get to this. Also there are only limited training courses to go on and if you can't meet that date you've missed that window. All of this leads to our youth members missing out – and let's face it. This is why they signed up for cubs and scouts.

I'd suggest an addition to the certification program where a leader can just volunteer at a group or an event which is supervised by an appropriate person – who can then assess the leader during the activity and sign off on their certification. This way there would be multiple opportunities for leaders to get certified in multiple locations. I also believe this gives a much better assessment of a leaders capabilities and experience in the context of actually helping run and activity – rather than just going through the motions in an adult class just to tick the boxes. There also needs to be a much faster and smoother recognition of a leaders past experience.

just reading the current newsletter, scouts aust seems to me to be obsessed with people, leaders and others gaining a lot of formal qualifications certificates etc when these qualifications really have no effect on our ability to be leaders and we do not want or need industrial or business certificates. I am of the opinion the the organisation is to busy becoming a RTO and losing its concept of an organisation supporting and helping youth.

“The consistency between the way different Scout Groups approve sign offs on badges was an issue. The amount of work required to earn a badge varies from Group to Group.”

^This is very true, I find it worrying that the badge process is becoming increasingly isolated. This is especially true in the venturer and rover sections where zvc and rrcs are being removed from the badge approval process.

I'm glad that activities has been highlighted as one of the major issues, but it is sad that community involvement and service haven't been.

The problem with the SIS10 activities is they are far more restrictive on who can do them then the old system. For example in the scouts section I had Prelim Bushwalking and Level 2 Cannoing and both of those where very useful for scouting activities, due to new SIS10 system kids in the scouts section can't do the training courses or lead these activities. SIS10 is a great opportunity for older members but it severely limits younger sections.

RE badge signoff – while we're to aim to 'do our best' I do extend our youth just that more – I know mine are pleased with their receivership of that piece of cloth. Posing questions about the area of wanted achievement really isn't difficult. They can do it! Consistency with some Leaders is WAY off the scale and these adults need to be questioned!. The senior Scouts I was speaking with was of grave concern as they were told that if they just turn up and complete the hike then they would receive their green cord/ASM. Take a look at how in depth the American Scouts have to complete their work and you know they really have had to research many ways to present their answers.

YPR Team, glad to hear that you are looking at overhauling the award scheme, that should be interesting.

Here's a suggestion for making the award scheme more consistent across sections: make the proficiency badges go through all of the sections, but have different levels like the cub system does. Each section could have a different starting difficulty level (so they can't do a badge that is too easy), but a cub/scout/venturer/rover could complete badges at higher difficulty levels. You could probably have overlap of starting difficulties between scouts/venies and venies/rovers.

I would add that whilst badges should be accessible to all members, their should be significant time and effort requirements, and some badges to challenge the more advanced members.

Also it sounds like different Regions also have different standards for ASM/Green Cord. When I did my green cord (2009), the region commissioner certainly required more than just showing up for the hike. If that is the case this is a far more significant problem. Perhaps part of the problem is that some groups are very isolated, allowing for significant variation in standard.