Scouts Australia
Youth Program Review

RESEARCH REPORT – 1-4

Title	Stage 1, Topic 4 – Mission, Aim, Principles, Method, Promise, Law: Initial Research	YPR Paper No.	1-4-1
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1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper brings together each piece of research completed by the team to contribute to understanding the needs and desires of Australian society for a Scout youth program, and therefore the contributing to the development of fundamentals of the Scout movement needed for 21st Century Australia.

All the data that this paper summarises is to be made available to the YPR Stage 3 teams to support their work. As such, this paper makes no recommendations, and is simply a summary of part of the work done in Stage 1 of the Scouts Australia Youth Program Review (YPR).

Nevertheless, some key points from the research can be highlighted:

KEY POINTS:

- Our current Laws are generally well-accepted. However, our members do not see 'being thrifty' as important, and there is a gap in our Laws in the general area of tolerance, inclusion, and fairness.

- Many of our members find the clauses of the Promise addressing one's God and the Queen of Australia problematic and would change them.

- Members choose to simply ignore those parts of the Promise and, to a lesser extent the Laws, which they do not feel are relevant to them.

- There's higher engagement with the 'ways' of Scouting (such as leadership opportunities and learning by doing) than with the 'trappings' such as uniform and award scheme.

- Learning styles within Scouting are highly kinaesthetic and practically based which provide valuable, transferrable life skills for these emerging generations (of youth).

- Scouting parents hold a strong value for Scouting – its values, its programs, its leadership approach, and its deep-rooted historical connections.

- Parents' desire for their children is for them to have fun, get into the outdoors, and do things they can't do at home.

- Honesty, respect, trustworthiness, responsibility, confidence, are the most significant values parents would like instilled in their children.

- Australian families have strong awareness and overall positive perceptions towards Scouts.

- In a world of superficial connections through social media, Scouting is a context which offers an authentic, relational, 'offline' community.
- Australia is increasingly culturally diverse and there is a challenge for Scouts Australia to reflect this increasing diversity.
- The social aspect of Scouts is a significant driver of recruitment and retention.
- Leaders need greater support and commitment.

2   INTRODUCTION

In order to help develop an understanding of the role of Scouting in Australia today and into the future, the YPR needs to compile background information about society's needs and beliefs about the fundamentals of Scouting.

The following key questions were asked: In twenty-first century Australia, what should be the Mission, Aim, Principles & Methods of Scouts Australia? What Promise & Law should the members of Scouting live by in 2020?

3   METHODS

To help us understand the needs and desires of both the current Scouts Australia membership, and the general public, four methods were used.

Initially, an electronic survey was developed for existing members of Scouts Australia. This survey had a good participation rate (690+ responses) resulting in good number of responses for all questions (over 500 individual responses for each question).

Secondly, a program for a small-group forum was developed for sessions with formations of existing Scouts at local Group and sectional levels. These forums were conducted by the research team with formations mainly from Victoria, although some youth were from other parts of the country.

To provide information about the needs and desires of Australians, an external research organisation, *McCrindle Research*, was engaged to develop and distribute surveys to parents of 6-18 year olds in the wider Australian public. To cross-reference with our internal beliefs, McCrindle also developed a similar survey of our existing members' parents within the same age group. In addition, McCrindle ran focus groups of current and former Scouts Australia youth members and their parents. These were held in Sydney.

Finally, an external research organisation (*BDRC Jones-Donald*) was engaged to provide insights into how the Scouting program has not met the needs of youth and their parents. Focus groups of former youth members (10 – 15 years of age), and their parents, were held in Melbourne.

4   BROAD FINDINGS

NEEDS & DESIRES OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY, OF SCOUTING

McCrindle Research's work comprised of three phases.

- **Phase 1:** Initial Exploratory Analysis – Qualitative Insights from Current and Former Scouts and Scout Parents
- **Phase 2:** Understanding the Needs and Desires of Australian Families for a National Youth Program
- **Phase 3:** Understanding the Factors Shaping the World of Generation Alpha and Generation Z

Key quote from Phase 1:

This research is a glimpse into the world that characterises Scouting members and their parents. It demonstrates that Scouting parents hold a strong value for Scouting – its values, its programs, its leadership approach, and its deep-rooted historical connections. Many Scouting families are involved with Scouts as a result of their own involvement as children, and their deep commitment and connection to Scouting is demonstrated through this report. Their desire for their children is for them to have fun, get into the outdoors, and do things they can't do at home – all in a safe, challenging, and encouraging environment. They recognise that elements within the Scouting program need to be adjusted and changed, but, at large, are supportive of its history, its values, and its close connection to local communities. They are participative and engaged, seeking to help shape the future of the organisation and its communication to the Australian public. (McCrindle Research, 2014 #1)

Key recommendations from Phase 2:

- Honesty and respect are the most significant values parents would like instilled.
- Trustworthiness, responsibility, and confidence next significant values.
- Parents and family most significant life-shapers, followed by friends and peers.
- Fun and social elements most important to young people, seeing kids grow and keeping them active most important to parents.
- Working with schools to engage new families.
- Providing transparency in fees to help Australian families engage firstly with Scouts.
- Enhance the positive values provided by Scouts in public communication and marketing.
- Respond to the desire that Australian families have to get their kids outdoors.
- The need for a focus on key family segments – single parent families and families with children with disabilities.
- Life skills, communication skills, and social skills most desirable skills to develop in children.
- Potential to hold the Scouts program on a weekly weekend day rather than weeknight.
- Australian families have strong awareness and overall positive perceptions towards Scouts.
- A range of factors provided for why both parents and children would discontinue their involvement.

(McCrindle Research, 2014 #2)

Key points from Stage 3:

<u>Strengths</u>

In light of the changing times and emerging generations which have been discussed in length in this study, there are a number of strengths in Scouts Australia's positioning and offering which have been identified. These are not limited to, but include the following:

- There is a strong desire from Australian families for children to be active and outdoors, which Scouting provides.
- Learning styles within Scouting are highly kinaesthetic and practically based which provide valuable, transferrable life skills for these emerging generations.
- Scouts Australia is strongly values-driven and connects young people with a sense of purpose and challenge which is bigger than themselves.

- In a world of superficial connections through social media, Scouting is a context which offers authentic, relational, offline community.

Weaknesses

In reviewing the current positioning of Scouts Australia, the following may be some challenges to be aware of:

- Whilst Scouts Australia has the strength of tradition, the challenge to remain current, relevant, innovative, and attractive to a media-savvy, fast-moving, sophisticated, informed generation of young people is ongoing.
- In a society of increased mobility affecting many areas of life, a program like Scouting which is built through long-term engagement by participants is a challenge when people are more accustomed to making short-term commitments.
- In a time-poor environment with increased extra-curricular options, there is not as much attention given to community programs like Scouting as in the past.
- Australia is increasingly culturally diverse and there is a challenge for Scouts Australia to reflect this increasing diversity.

(McCrindle Research, 2014 #3)

BDRC Jones-Donald research specifically looked at youth members' and their parents' reasons for leaving the program in the 10 – 15 year old age range. Key findings were:

1. The social aspect of Scouts is a significant driver of acquisition and retention.
2. Learning by doing is fundamental to the program and should underpin all Scout activities.
3. Some aspects of the method are outdated and need to be amended to foster retention.
4. There is substantial equity in the brand assets of Scouts, and these should be retained.
5. Leaders need greater support and commitment.

(BDRC Jones Donald, 2014)

The internal survey and forums developed by the research team asked the following questions:

- What does it mean to you to be a Scout?
- Why do you come to Scouts?
- What is the best thing about Scouts?
- What would you like being a Scout to mean in the future?
- What do your non-Scouting friends think it means to be a Scout?
- What does the general community say about Scouts?
- What does Scouting do for you and the wider community?
- What should Scouting do for you and the wider community?
- What do you want Scouts to be like in 20 years?
- What do your parents/children say about Scouts?

To get a sense of typical responses to these questions, these Wordles[1] give a visual picture:

Scouting in the Wider Community

Scouts in 20 Years

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[1] *Wordles* are 'word clouds' that give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. (www.wordle.net)

SCOUTING FUNDAMENTALS

The research team used the internal electronic survey and forums to gauge members' beliefs and understandings of Scouting fundamentals, and explored potential alternatives with members.

RELEVANCE OF CURRENT AND POTENTIAL VALUES

Respondents were asked about the relevance of various values, including the ten existing Scout Laws and fourteen other positive qualities. The chart below shows the percentage of respondents who specified a 4 or 5 (relevant or very relevant) for each value. Unsurprisingly, our existing Laws ranked highly; also unsurprisingly, *thrift*[2] was rated as relevant by under two-thirds of respondents.

It was interesting that *courage* was on the lower end of the scale, perhaps indicating that our members do not recognise that some Scouting activities (for example, participating in Gang Show, camping in winter, Venturer badge reports, etc) can require a significant degree of courage for some people.

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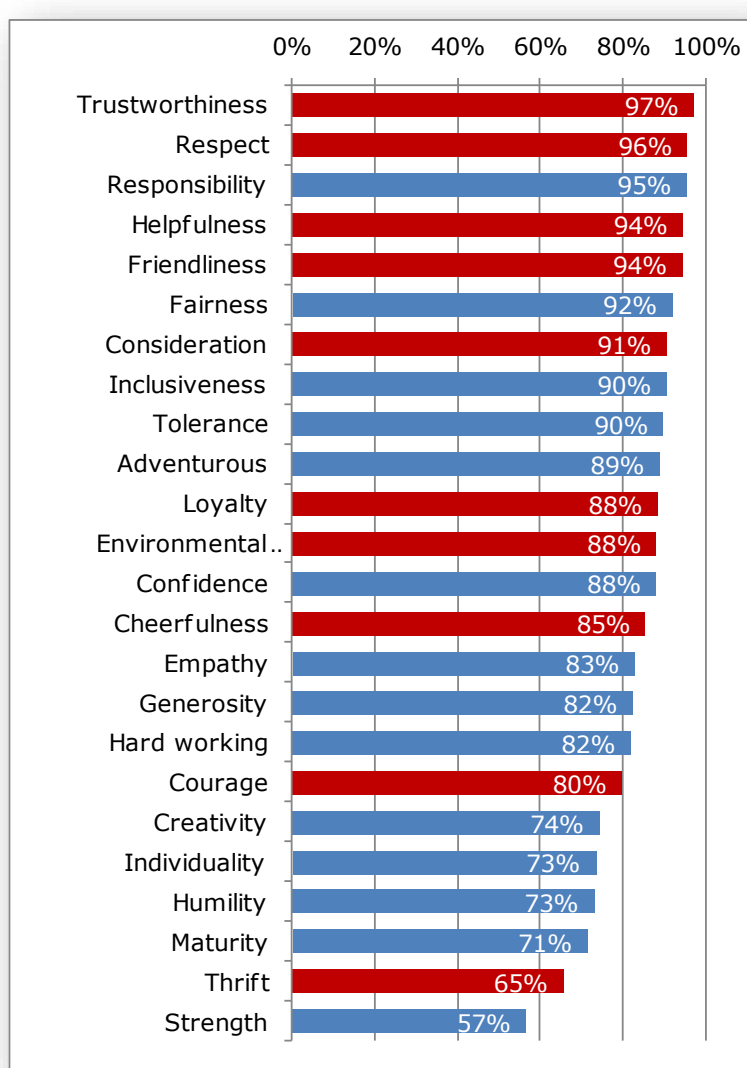
[2] According to Google Books' ngram viewer (https://books.google.com/ngrams), the word 'thrift' was used most commonly around 1920, but its use fell off sharply after about 1940.

RELEVANCE OF EACH CLAUSE IN THE PROMISE

Respondents were asked whether they would keep or change each clause in the current Promise, and if they proposed change, what they would change it to.

The clauses referencing doing one's best, helping other people, and living by the Scout Law received near-unanimous support. The clauses referencing honour and duty were less supported (92% and 91%), as was doing one's duty 'to Australia' (86%).

However, between them, the clauses 'to my God' and the optional 'to the Queen of Australia' barely received majority support.

Interestingly, the free-text field canvassing proposed changes was completed by a vast majority of people advocating change, which is unusual for a non-compulsory free-text question, indicating a high level of engagement with this question.
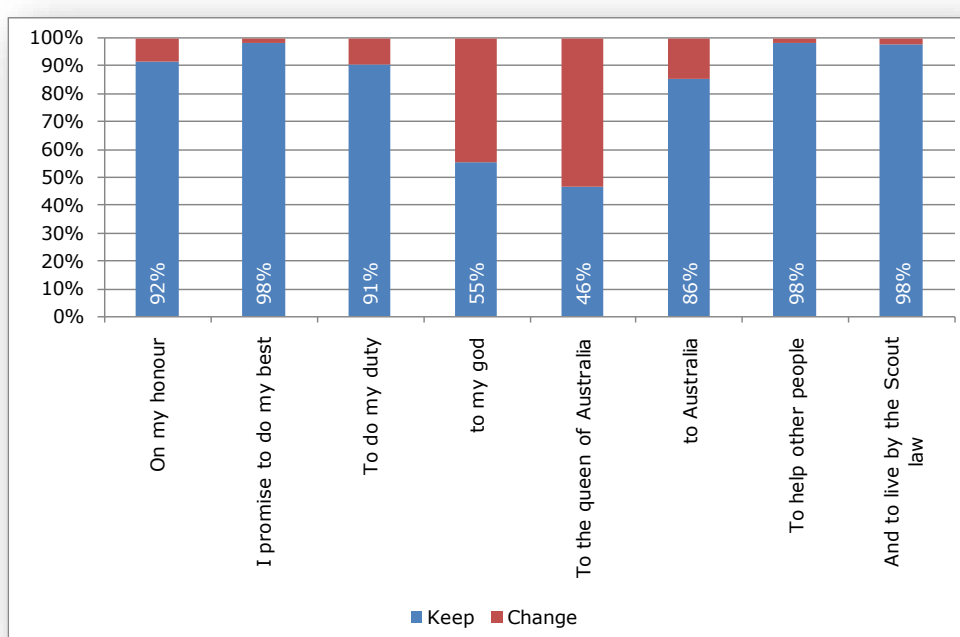
Amongst those who advocated change, there was very clear indication that duty to a god should be removed, much more so than a duty to the 'Queen of Australia'. Many suggested that an optional clause would be preferred for 'my God', as currently practised with '(the Queen of) Australia'.

A randomly-selected sample of ten answers is included verbatim below:

- *"spirituality is the aim of scouting, not religion. This needs to be expressed. Country of origin should be considered more generally"*

- *Leave out or make optional*

- *Remove the reference to god - irrelevant to most people.*

- *To the nation or commonwealth of Australia*

- *I don't think god should be in the promise or if it is it should be optional as the queen is. As is the case in the UK.*

- *"Duty to my God (optional).*

- *Duty to the Queen (optional, as currently is)."*

- *"I swear to do the best I can at all times
To keep myself physically strong and mentally awake
To develop myself and live by the Scout law"*

- *"to my god - to myself and others, to the queen of Australia - to Australia/to my country"*

- *I would just erase them, not necessarily replace them, I believe they have become redundant*

- *Remove duty to god. We live in a modern society where many people are of no faith. Allow scouting to recognise that.*

One of the more succinct proposals came from a Leader of Youth from Sunset Coast, WA:

> *"Leave out god and Queen. Just don't include them".*

DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU LIVE UP TO THE SCOUT PROMISE?

This question asked respondents to specify on a five-point scale from 'Not very well' to 'Very well' how they feel they live up to the Promise. As with many similar surveys, most people answered 4 ('Well').

The free-text field, however, revealed that when pressed many people say they simply ignore the parts of the Promise which do not accord with their personal values. For example:
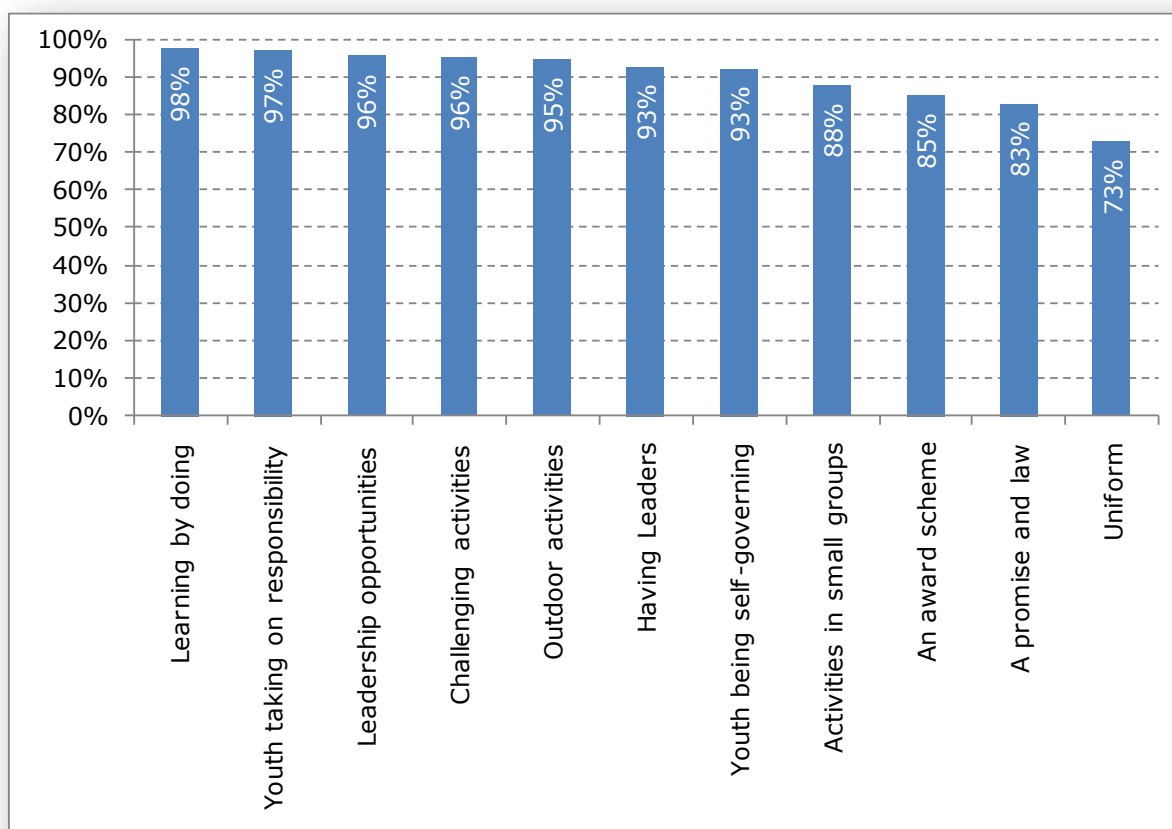
> *"Duty to 'my god' is meaningless to me .. you may as well ask me to do my duty to a hairdryer. It makes a farce of the promise"* (Leader of Youth, ACT).
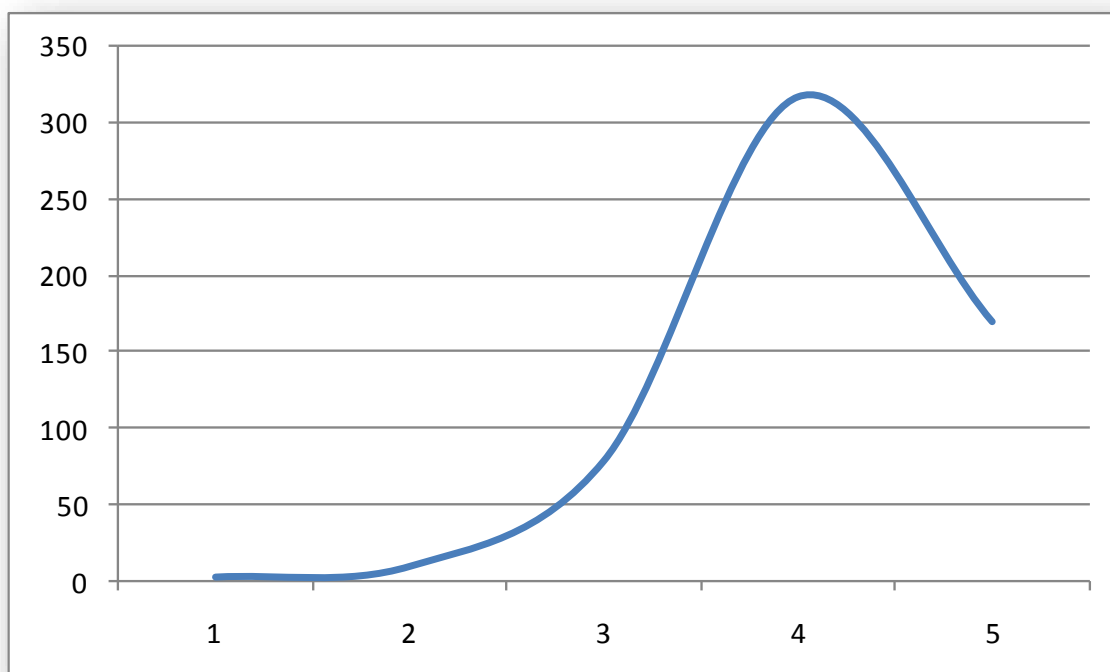
THE SCOUT METHOD

Respondents were asked to "Rate how important you think the following parts of Scouting are (1 is not important and 5 is very important)". The graph below shows the percentage of 'Important' and 'Very important' responses to each aspect.

It's clear that people feel practical methods and opportunities, such as learning-by-doing and 'young people taking responsibility', are more important than the symbolic aspects such as uniform, promise and law, and the award scheme.

Aspect	Percentage
Learning by doing	98%
Youth taking on responsibility	97%
Leadership opportunities	96%
Challenging activities	96%
Outdoor activities	95%
Having Leaders	93%
Youth being self-governing	93%
Activities in small groups	88%
An award scheme	85%
A promise and law	83%
Uniform	73%

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

All data and reports summarised in this paper are made available to the Youth Program Review Stage 3 teams to ensure their deliberations are well supported. This will be in addition to the research they elect to perform themselves to further develop their understanding of the needs, desires, and fundamentals of Australian Scouting.

- McCrindle Research Phases 1, 2, & 3 reports
- BDRC Jones Donald report
- Research Team's electronic survey raw data
- Research Team's forum sessions raw data

8   REFERENCES

BDRC Jones Donald. (2014). *Research to support strategies for retention of 10-15 year olds.* Available at: http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/bdrc-jones-donald-qual-report-scouts-05-08-2014-final.pdf

McCrindle Research. (2014 #1). *YPR Target Market Research.* Available at: http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/scoutsaustralia-ypr-mccrindle-2014-research-phase-1-1-5.pdf

McCrindle Research. (2014 #2). *Understanding the Needs and Desires of Australian Families for a National Youth Program.* Available at: http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/scouts-australia-ypr-mccrindle-phase-2-report-website.pdf

McCrindle Research. (2014 #3). *Understanding The Factors Shaping The World of Generation Alpha and Generation Z.* Available at: http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/scouts-australia-ypr-mccrindle-phase-3-report-website.pdf

9   APPENDICES

Raw data for Stage 3 teams to utilise (attached as separate files):

A.   YPR 1-4 Formation Forums - combined results
B.   YPR 1-4 Internal Survey - Raw Data - All Data
C.   YPR 1-4 Internal Survey - Raw Data - Adults
D.   YPR 1-4 Internal Survey - Raw Data – Youth
E.   Wordle Images From Forum Questions (PNG format)

These will not be distributed with this report. They are made available to YPR Stage 3 teams for analysis to support their investigations and discussions.