

YPR TARGET MARKET RESEARCH

INITIAL EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS:
Qualitative Insights from Current and
Former Scouts and Scouts Parents



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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Scouts Australia commissioned McCrindle in February 2014 to conduct initial research for the Youth Program Review (YPR).

This report presents the results of Stage 1, Phase A – a qualitative research approach interviewing current and former Scouts and their parents – to develop an exploratory overview of the key challenges faced by Scouts Australia as it embarks on the YPR.

This research provides a broad overview of elements that require further testing through broader qualitative and quantitative research. The results can, for example, be used to develop target market segments and create hypotheses to be tested through quantitative research that will, in combination with this initial research, provide answers to the Target Market Issues questions. The target market issues questions to be explored are as follows:

- 1. Describe the lives of Australian children, adolescents and young adults and the factors that might impact on their participation in Scouting.*
- 2. Describe the lives of Australian parents and the factors that might impact on their children participating in Scouting.*
- 3. What are the needs and desires of Australian children, adolescents and young adults today and what might those needs and desires be in 20 years' time?*
- 4. What are the needs and desires of their parents in relation to their children (as listed above)?*
- 5. List the developmental milestones of Australian children, adolescents and young adults by gender so that our program can be aligned to meet the needs of key developmental milestones.*
- 6. What are the significant developmental milestones that must be considered when creating the Scout program?*
- 7. When should we progress youth members to a new section?*
- 8. What type of youth members are attracted to Scouting?*
- 9. What are the values of our community today?*
- 10. What values and principles do parents want instilled in their children today?*
- 11. Who are our competition and what makes them successful?*
- 12. Create a detailed description of the youth we should be attracting to Scouting.*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Three double focus groups were conducted with both Scouts and Scouts Parents and held in Bella Vista, NSW. The timings and demographics of the groups were as follows:

Double Group 1: 11 June 2014

Former Scouts (7) and former Scouts parents (6)

Double Group 2: 11 June 2014

Older Scouts (Cubs and Scouts) involved more than 12 months (7) and their parents (6)

Double Group 3: 12 June 2014

Younger Scouts (Joeys and Cubs) involved less than 12 months (8) and their parents (8)

Scouting Parent Participant Characteristics

Former Scouts Parents

The Former Scouts Parents groups consisted of six parents. Four of the parents had more than one child involved with Scouting in the past.



- Parent 1: Two sons, one in Joeys and one in Cubs, left after 2.5 years
- Parent 2: One son who started in Joeys and finished at age 13
- Parent 3: Two sons involved with Cubs and Scouts
- Parent 4: Two sons involved in Joeys and Cubs
- Parent 5: Son and daughter both involved in Cubs and Scouts
- Parent 6: One son was part of Scouts for 3 years

Older Scouts Parents

The Older Scouts Parents group consisted of six parents whose children have been involved in Scouting for over one year. Interestingly, all of these had a daughter involved in Scouting.



- Parent 1: Son and daughter involved in Cubs and Scouts
- Parent 2: Son and daughter involved in Cubs and Scouts
- Parent 3: Daughter involved in Scouts
- Parent 4: Son and daughter both involved in Cubs and Scouts
- Parent 5: Son and daughter both involved in Cubs and Scouts
- Parent 6: Son and daughter both joined in Joeys, now in Scouts

Younger Scouts Parents

The Younger Scouts Parents group consisted of eight parents, with children having become involved in Scouting over the course of the last 12 months.



- Parent 1: Son started Cubs in 2014
- Parent 2: Son started in 2014, older son involved for 2 years
- Parent 3: Son started Joeys in May 2014
- Parent 4: Son started Cubs in 2014, older son in Scouts
- Parent 5: Son started Cubs in 2014
- Parent 6: Son started Joeys in 2014, older son in Scouts
- Parent 7: Son started Cubs this year, daughters in Guides
- Parent 8: Son in Cubs

Scouting Parent Participant Characteristics

Former Scouting Members



- Child 1: Grade 8
- Child 2: Grade 7
- Child 3: Grade 8
- Child 4: Grade 4
- Child 5: Grade 4
- Child 6: Grade 9
- Child 7: Year 7 (*Still goes to Scouts so his comments are included in older Scouts group*)

Older Scouting Members



- Child 1: Grade 8, Scouts
- Child 2: Grade 5, Cubs (*Former Scouting member so comments have been included in former Scouts group*)
- Child 3: Grade 8, Scouts
- Child 4: Grade 8, Scouts
- Child 5: Grade 5, Scouts
- Child 6: Grade 6, Scouts
- Child 7: Grade 6, Scouts

Younger Scout Members



- Child 1: Grade 5, Scouts
- Child 2: Grade 2, Cubs
- Child 3: Grade 4, Cubs
- Child 4: Grade 1, Joeys
- Child 5: Grade 4, Cubs
- Child 6: Grade 1, Joeys
- Child 7: Grade 2, Cubs

Scouting Troops Represented

Participants represented the Sydney North Region and Greater Western Sydney Region, belonging to the following Scouting troops:

Former Scouts & Parents	Older Scouts & Parents	Younger Scouts & Parents
1st Balcombe Heights Scout Troop	1st Blaxland Scout Troop "Dunphy"	2nd Baulkham Hills Cub Pack "Rumbriah"
1st Cherrybrook Cub Pack "Callicoma"	1st Castle Hill Scout Troop	1st Carlingford Joey Mob
1st Dural Cub Pack	1st Cherrybrook Scout Troop	1st East Ryde Cub Pack "Pioneer"
1st Kellyville Cub Pack "Darzee"	1st Dural Cub Pack	1st Greystanes Cub Pack
1st Kings Langley Scout Troop	1st Kings Langley Scout Troop	1st/2nd Harbord Cub Pack
1st Kings Langley Scout Troop	West Pennant Hills Scout Troop	1st Kellyville Cub Pack "Darzee"
		1st Murray Farm Cub Pack "Possum"
		1st Winston Hills Joey Mob

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Only occasionally in history do massive technological trends combine with rapid demographic shifts and huge social change and ongoing generational transitions so that within the span of a decade or so, society altogether alters. Today we are living in the midst of one such transformation.

--Social researcher, Mark McCrindle

In an era of increasing change, today's young people are shaped by factors unknown to previous generations. Today's 4.6 million Generation Zs are the students of today and leaders of tomorrow. They are truly the 21st Century generation, with the whole of their formative years lived in this century. They are sizable, digital, global, visual and social. Their lives are post-lifestage, their learning is post-linear and their careers post-structural.

They are the children of Generation X and so from parents to children we have seen a societal transition from colour TV to internet TV, from the walkman to the iPad, from structured classrooms to e-learning, from mass media to interactive campaigns and from command and control leaders to collaborative and empowering leaders.

In these times it becomes imperative for organisations to understand the times and shape the trends – learning how to best engage with the most formally educated, technologically literate, and materially endowed generation in history.

Scouts Australia is seeking to do just that.

As parents juggle increasingly multiple and complex role, face the rising cost of parenting, and have diminished confidence in parenting their children through tightening legislation and their children's technology advantage, Scouts provides an avenue through which children can engage with the activities their parents grew up with, creating a shared childhood experience.

Parents are at a cross-roads, redefining which traditional values they would like to pass on to their children while maintaining a level of social relevance with them. What Scouting brings is a global opportunity locally applied, timeless values delivered in a contemporary context, and youth development in a digitally saturated era.

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.

Scouting members themselves are engaged in their time at Scouts and love the time they spend with their troop. The weekly meetings are looked forward to by members and many don't want to leave. Scouting members recognise they develop many life skills at Scouts, develop confidence and resilience and build lasting friendships. Members are surprised by how many friends they have made during their time at Scouts, and appreciated the time they have to bond with them during activities and to meet new people they would not normally interact with.

Camping, hiking and campfires are activities loved by members, as Scouts is the only place where they feel they are able to learn these practical outdoor skills. Scouting members appreciate that they do not use technology while at Scouts as they feel this would dampen their experience. Throughout this research they communicated that Scouts is a valued part of their lives and is an experience they could not have elsewhere.

For a globally connected generation Scouting provides real-world cross-cultural, international interactions which showcase diversity strengthened through shared values and experiences.

This research validates the many strengths that Scouting has and through maximising and effectively communicating these aspects, Scouts Australia will be Australia's peak youth development organisation through the 21st Century just as it was throughout the 20th Century.

The Experience of Scouting Parents

COMMUNITY & SOCIETAL VALUES

Society's Values and Australian Identity

Scouting parents recognise that **many of the traditional values that characterised the culture of the society they grew up in are no longer present in today's society**. There is an ever-growing desire for parents to retrieve values embedded in the lives of previous generations.



What we need is quite old, really, old fashioned values. Things that we used to value now slip by the wayside, things are moving too fast and we need to go back to basics.



Respect is not there anymore. At the end of the day we live in a society with values and codes, but it's getting harder and harder for these to be enforced.



Respect, it's about ensuring we maintain a level of respect, with elders, peers, and even the kids themselves, which has been lost.



How many people walk on the left? Nobody walks on the left anymore!

Parents see **Scouts as a viable way through which young people can be reminded of the values that are important in society**, a program that is seen to strongly teach and embed Australian identity and ethos in addition to manners and social values.



I was very impressed with how Scouts started very strong in the Australian identity, and I would like to that to continue.



We need to keep the identity of who we are as Australians without losing those values.



Schools don't instil values – not as much as the old days.

Scouts have to be confident that the world is running head long into a digital future but people will soon turn back and realise they need this.

The Values that Parents want Instilled

The values that parents are looking to have instilled in their children through the educational and recreational activities that their children participate in, are as follows:

Please note in this word cloud, the larger the phrase the more often it was mentioned.



Parents recognised that the **instilling of traditional, old-fashioned values was essential to their child's developmental wellbeing**. The Scouting uniform was mentioned as symbol of respect through which young people could learn the respect for themselves, each other, and those older than them. Parents were actively looking for their children to get involved in the community and receive a broad life exposure that would teach them these traditional values.



The uniform is something that is good – focusing on the uniform gives a sense of pride in what they're doing. At the moment there is no respect for authority. If the kids can see that their leaders have uniforms and a process they have to respect, it will teach them that there are limits in life.

Anything that has a level of structure has to help – it's not everything, but you do get a chance to put some of those values into them, otherwise you've got no hope they'll turn out ok.



In Scouts they've gone back to when we were growing up, looking back instead of always looking to the future. It's helping them to think beyond themselves and onto other people.

It's about kids getting involved in the community – one of my sons, once a year they go and sing carols in the nursing home or go and push trolleys at the shops and people donate money to them, it's things like that. It's important to be part of society.

The Foundation of those Values

Scouts parents recognised that **Scouting's rich heritage provide the foundation of the values that are disseminated to young people through its programs today.** The program itself through its structure and goals provides children with the ability to learn life lessons and develop a strong value system.



I think it's the structure of the evening that is provided and the fact that they're told the Scout law from day one – there are rules for what they can or can't do.

The whole sense of community brings those values – the Scouts have to abide by the boundaries of the community in which they're in. When they understand the structure and the values of that community and respond appropriately week to week, it begins to sink in.

Connection with Christianity

Parents were asked how they felt Christianity was linked to the values disseminated through Scouting and whether they felt a link to the Christian foundations of Scouting should be continued into the future or the Christian expression removed.

Parents had mixed views on how Christianity should be communicated in the Scouting movement but were not overly concerned about the Christian elements involved. Rather, they felt that **Christianity provided a foundation of values and that the Christian elements such as the Scouting prayer should be accepted by newcomers as belonging to the Scouting expression.**



Australian identity is unity, acceptance, strong values and beliefs – everyone's expression of their own beliefs. I was disappointed when they went away with all the Joeys for a day and were about to start the prayer at the end when one of the Cub leaders said, "No we better not because there is another religion here." Identity is accepting how things were done in the past – you can't please everyone or say you don't do what you normally do because of someone else's beliefs.



I don't consider myself religious at all but I always say to myself that if everyone abided by the 10 commandments the world would be a better place. I can't see it being a barrier. Kids are the same all over the world and I don't think it should be a barrier.

Lots of parents who have different beliefs still believe that they should say prayer and are happy for people to say the prayer. Saying the prayer is just a part of what Scouts is and these people honour that – it's just like you respect another person's culture.

I don't think it's the critical thing – Scouts has a lot of non-Christians as well.

When asked whether they felt these elements should be removed, parents **did not have strong affirmative opinions to remove the Christian elements** from Scouting.

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I think it doesn't need to change, but the perception of Scouting in the public eye at large needs to change. Once you're in there it's great, not religious

I don't think the prayer or God elements should be removed. I work in welfare and all the charities have a Christian belief and their vision and values are a good thing, people are happy about that. Nothing about Scouts is making people go to church or be religious, so I think it's fine.



I don't perceive Scouts to be overly religious...

If someone doesn't want to do the God thing then they shouldn't make a big fuss about it.

Others felt that Scouts could focus more on **how the Christian message and elements are communicated** rather than seeking to remove them.



If you look at the literature it says you need to observe the prayer, that's the first thing you read – I think maybe it seems full on, and maybe we're not interested. But that's not actually what happens at Scouts – I think the literature is written in a way that gives misconceptions about what is actually done at Scouts. You don't want to put people off having this religious element front and centre, they should put it to the side a bit.

I'm not saying they necessarily need to be removed, but take a back step and not make it as prominent in what you read. I mean keep it there, but don't put it in the literature. When I went for the first time I thought, 'Oh this is religion'. I've got nothing against religion, but I thought I don't want him to do [those religious things] but he didn't do them and it was fine.

I don't have a problem with the prayer, but maybe it can be changed for people from other religions and be modified a little bit. But it's good in that the prayer they say they wish peace and no wars and those messages are good.



Don't they say "Our God"? You can just about apply it to any God.

Connection with the Queen

When asked of the relevance of Scouting's connection with the Queen, respondents similarly felt that the **historical connection provided a strong foundation** for the Scouting movement.



If that's how it all started –with the Queen – then that's how it should continue.

I think it's a stability thing in some ways – a lot of the strength of organisations like Scouts becomes its history. What is the history that the foundation is built on? It's the queen. You've got Bear Grylls now as the chief of head Scouts, it's about picking icons and bringing those icons through and it's about the perceptions that those icons give. The queen is a position that is stable – Scouts is not overly monarchistic.

The traditional association with the queen doesn't bother me. I can sense a few cringes when the religious element comes in though, but I tend to just bite my teeth.

DECISION DRIVERS & INITIAL UNDERSTANDING

Exposure to Scouting Movement

The majority of families interviewed stated they had a **previous connection with Scouts** which motivated them to get their children involved in the Scouting movement.



When I was a child my brothers were always involved in Scouts and I always thought that I would get my children involved. I wanted my boys to have structure and confidence and experiences with Scouts.

My brother was in Scouts, I was in Guides, and my dad was a Scout leader.



I myself did Cubs, Scouts and Venturers, and became a Queen Scout. I was very familiar with the whole process and wanted my son to be involved.

My nana was a Scout leader and she was always talking about how much fun she had in Scouts, and then my girlfriend was taking her kids so I started sending mine.



I was involved in Guides. I have friends who are leaders, so I've got friends that have been associated for a long time. A lot of my friends have kids who are now involved, so we've been kind of associated with it for over 25 years.

As such, for many parents their child's involvement with Scouts **emerged as a result of their own participation** in Scouting.



My children got involved through my own experience with Scouting.

I grew up in a small village in the UK and we always just knew that Cubs and Scouts were about. As I got older I wanted to find something positive for the kids to do after hours – my daughter was not playing any sport and I wanted to find something to encourage her to interact with other people.



A friend of mine asked if I wanted to join her in sending our kids to Scouts, and as I've been through Scouts myself, I remembered the positive experience I had so we've picked it back up.

For parents without a prior connection to Scouting, a strong exposure factor was that their **children had friends** who were involved with the Scouting movement.



A friend of my son's was doing Scouts. My son is extremely into the outdoors and I have no idea about these things, so I sent him to Scouts.

The kids saw new friends and school mates going there, and that's how they got involved.



A kid at school's mum was well involved, that's how I got the introduction. My daughter also got involved with friends in school. Generally it seems to be an

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introduction through friends – some of my daughter’s friends heard about it mostly through friends.

One parent was exposed to **participate through the movie, *Up***, which gave her taste of what the Scouting program could offer.



*We originally got involved because of the movie called *Up* – my son loved it so much that he just wanted to do what was in the movie. We did an internet search and sent an email – that’s how we got involved. In thinking about why we wanted to do it, it was helping others in the community just like in the movie.*

Another parent got involved through a promotion that had been sent through their primary school’s newsletter, and another mentioned that the desire for Scouting had been there for some time but that there was no spaces available in her local troop until more recently.

Motivation to Join and Pull Factors

The Scouting **program and components** themselves were a strong pull factor for parents which motivated them to involve their children in the program. They recognised the significant potential of Scouting to **provide outdoor exposure, life skills, and physical activity to their children**, especially in situations where they felt such exposure was lacking.

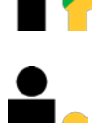


The boy stuff in general, the outdoors and things like camping safety.

Getting them away from the computers and iPods and electronics, keeping them outdoors and motivated.



I’m not from Australia so I don’t know much about the outdoor things here and the camping culture – I wanted them to be taught the basics on how to behave in the bush since we live next to the national park. I want them to know how to be safe in the bush, protecting nature and the environment.



It’s a safe way of getting them out because we are all helicopter parents.



We joined because our older son has to be kept active and we found he was bored, and then his younger brother followed after him.

They saw the great potential for Scouting to provide an environment through which their children could develop lasting **friendships with like-minded peers** outside of the school context.



Friendships were a big thing.

I was a single parent when my son started Joeys and sent him to have a bit of male input and develop friendships.

Comradeship, a team to work with not a competitive sporting environment

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The recognised the **social and developmental potential** of Scouting for their children, believing Scouting would be a positive environment for their children.



My kids were a bit quiet, and I wanted to put them into something that would help them open up.

I think in our group there were some kids who had behavioural problems, and parents brought them along to give them an outlet in a place where they could be themselves.



For us, it was a social outlet for my son, who's not very good in social situations. So it was a different way of being social.

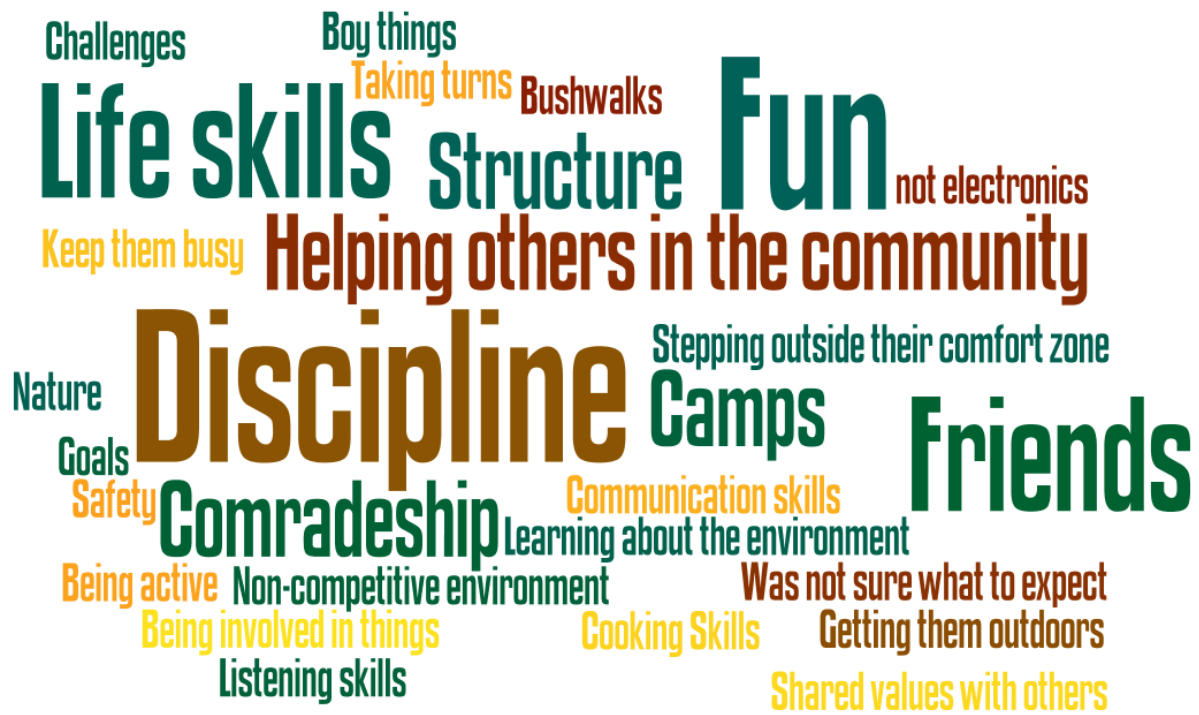
They were drawn to the potential of Scouting to **expose their children to their local communities** in a more hands-on, practical way.



I wanted them to know the history of the community – it was getting to know where they are living and having a face to face experience with the local community, the local fire brigades, the policemen in the area.

Initial Expectations

When parents were asked what they initially expected of Scouts, the following words and themes emerged.



Experience of Expectations and Surprises

Many parents **felt that their expectations of Scouting were met** once their child had commenced Scouting. Parents mentioned ways in which Scouting surprised them, both in positive ways and in ways that did not meet their initial expectations.

Some were surprised by the **size and variability** of the Scouting movement and program.



Yes I was surprised because I didn't know there were different groups – I saw there was Joeys, then Cubs, and Scouts.

I was surprised by how many activities there are, how good the leaders are and how interested they are in the kids.



We didn't really have any concept of the size of the Scouting movement and how many people get involved. My daughter went to go to a camp but I didn't visit the website so I had no idea about it, and then suddenly the day before I wake up and someone tells me there are 3000 kids there! I thought it was just our group. We

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turned up for the buses and there were 20 buses, not just the one I was expecting. That was an experience that grew her, belonging to something much bigger.

Other parents were surprised about how **well-managed** the children were at Scouts.



I was surprised by how self-managed they are, they really look after themselves and are very organised. Scouts gives them an environment to manage the activities they do each week and to be flexible with what they plan from week to week.

While some parents were satisfied with the communication they received on their children's programs, with some parents receiving numerous emails, others felt that they were surprised by the **lack of information and instructions** that were offered.



For me the surprise has been the lack of information. When my daughter was in Guides I always knew what was happening, whereas I feel a bit lost with Scouts, like there's something coming up this week but I don't know about it.

I've been surprised by the lack of directive with the forms – not knowing that a form has to be in at a certain time. The instructions were lacking.

Sometimes with the communication they just rely on the kids to relay the information but then they don't tell you until 5 minutes before that they need something.

Some felt that the **program differed** in particular elements, such as **camp**s, to what they had expected.



I didn't know they had a lot of camps and things – I love that because the kids get a break from me (mother).

We never went to camp when I was a kid, but there was always one big one maybe a weekend. But she's joined in February and she's been on 3 camps including a hike, and she even missed one. There's a lot more outdoor stuff than we realised.

Others, mainly from the Former Scouts Parents group, felt that the **program itself was not what they had expected.**



My expectations changed because they didn't do what I expected them to do – in Joeys when they started they didn't do any community work, excursions, or visit anyone in the community but tended to stay inside for the whole session on the Monday night. I originally joined for that purpose, but even as they got older they didn't do those things – doing something for others.

Some other surprises experienced by parents centred on the **expectations they had to have a certain type of leader** for their child.

Purpose of Scouting and Reason for Existence

Parents expressed that the Scouting exists predominantly to **instil values** within young people, being a platform through which youth can grow and flourish. These values include instilling an **appreciation for the outdoors, helping children learn how to work together and collaborate, and instilling common sense**. They appreciated Scouts for looking after their kids for the time that they were at Scouts.



Youth guidance and mentoring – that’s why Scouts exists. You want your Scout to think on their feet and do something with their lives, and that’s what they learn at Scouts.

It’s about achievement – kids achieving and setting their own goals.

Teamwork – it’s learning how to work in a team.

Scouts exist to help young people learn to have respect for the environment.



Common sense. Life skills.

Set up to keep kids out of trouble.

It’s another whole dimension that you can’t get out of school and traditional sports – it provides something completely different.



Independence and skills. Back to those old fashioned values.

Everybody’s equal, everyone is able to have a go and share and care about other people.

They recognise that Scouting provides a **safe environment** for their children to explore life in ways they otherwise wouldn’t be able to, in an achievement focused yet non-competitive environment away from the performance pressures of school.



It is important for kids to be out in a safe environment.

It helps them learn how to be safe when they are outdoors, like making a safe fire.



Scouts creates a point of difference. Kids in schools aren’t allowed to run on hard surfaces, and even if they pick up a match everyone is worried they’re going to set something alight. Scout halls are in suburban areas and the public know that Scouts are going to light fires – it gives kids an outlet to do things that they generally would get in trouble for, and it shows the responsibility of what they are given – that experience and sense of adventure. The things that kids get told are wrong, Scouts turns into an acceptable part of life.



Yesterday my son said, “Can we go buy a rope?” which would never happen without Scouts.

My daughter was out gardening last weekend, and I said, “What are you doing?” She learnt how to garden at Scouts camp.

YPR TARGET MARKET RESEARCH

They recognised the **international reputation and network** of the Scouting movement and its unique ability to unite young people all across the globe.



Scouts has a worldwide reputation, and every country adapts its program to its country.



It's one of those organisations I see that if our young people ever want to travel and experience the world there's always someone there where they can go and knock on the door and say, "I'm a Scout." It's that common ground – a bit like sport in some ways.

If you think about the Scouting networking potential, it's enormous. It has structure, locations, the ethos, and people across the globe who are connected through it.

The **history and heritage** of Scouts was very important to participants in looking at why Scouts exists today.



When I actually read the history of how Scouts began, I was very attracted to Baden-Powell and his story and motivated by the needs of the community and how Scouts can draw kids in to meet local needs.



Historically, Scouts existed to develop young men for roles in the battlefield. Once it moved beyond that, it gave them something to do when at a time when there weren't that many things to do.

BRAND & COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

How Scouts is Perceived in the Community

Parents felt that the perception of Scouts in the community and in schools could be improved. They generally felt that the community perceived Scouting to be **outdated, old-fashioned, or unattractive** to young people.



I think at the age of 13 it's perceived old fashioned.



The kids at school think Scouts is old fashioned – but one of my daughter's friends likes it when she hears about it because Scouts get to do all this stuff that the other kids don't get to do.

I think you'd keep more if some of the perceptions towards Scouting changed.



It is a bit daggy and nerdy. But I don't care, my son's out having fun – he's been canoeing all weekend, and what did his mates get up to? Nothing!

Maybe it's a bit regimented, like the military, and that I think maybe puts a few people off. Not from the discipline side of it, but Scouts evolved from the military and the Boer War, and there's still that sense out there that it's regimented, even though that's not what it really is.

Most of my friends seem to think it's old fashioned, but when they see what the kids are getting up to, they're kind of interested. They have this perception that all they'll do is sit in a hall and play with sticks.

I've got to admit when my wife put my son in Scouts I thought, "Oh no, he's going to be daggy," but no, it's been fantastic.

The people that grew up with it are all sending their kids, but those who didn't don't even give it a look.

In schools, they felt that Scouting was **not a trendy activity to be involved in**, and that this perception could be improved:



I think it's really important that they do advertising in schools because people do have that negative perspective like 'Ugh, Scouts'. It's not really seen as an acceptable activity unless you're passionate about it. I think educating kids in schools on what sort of activities go on would be of interest.

I think promoting the Scouts values and the benefits of it to children would be helpful.



I think the whole Bear Grylls thing is brilliant because kids think he's cool – that's all kids want these days is to be cool.

I think you'd keep more if some of the perceptions towards Scouting changed.

Several other factors were mentioned regarding community perception to Scouting, particularly an association with child abuse. Others felt this issue had not come up in their time with Scouting and were surprised themselves when others mentioned it.



Some bring up the child abuse stuff – I was at dinner with the canteen ladies and I mentioned the boys and Scouts and they said ‘I can’t believe you let your kids do that’.

I am surprised about the perception of parents – if we’re going to mention this topic, then we should stop sending our kids to Catholic schools, too.

Most of my friends’ kids do it, lots of people do Scouting. I have had people ask about whether it’s safe. But I know most of the leaders so it’s fine.

Brand image and the logo

When asked whether they felt the Scouts logo needed to be revitalised or changed, many parents disagreed, stating that it was a **well-regarded symbol**.



It doesn’t need to change – I think leave it as it is.

The fleur-de-lis is a French symbol used by the Welsh, I think it’s very culturally diverse. One is a symbol for yourself, one for God and one for another.

No, I don’t think it’s outdated.



Some parents also mentioned the uniform when it came to brand image. Parents felt that the **uniforms project a positive image to the community** and were a valuable part of the Scouting expression.



They look good in their uniform.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Desires of children

When asked what the unique desires were of their own children when it came to leisure time and activities outside of school hours, the following were answers that emerged.



Several parents mentioned their **children's initial hesitancy in going to Scouting quickly disappeared.**



My son just goes to have fun. At the first Scouts meeting they were handed a piece of pen and a paper, and as he hates to write he looked at me as if to say, "What have you gotten me into, mum, I'm not writing." Then they said to rip the paper up and he looked at me like, "Oh my god, mum, this is the best!" The look on his face was, "Ok mum, you can go now." He loves it at Scouts.



My daughter would be anxious at first, but then she would go and have a brilliant time.

Parents recognised the **influence of technology** on their children and felt that some of these desires had changed over time, but many of them had stayed the same:



They still go outside but it's a bit different, they don't do it as much.

Even though my kids aren't in Scouts anymore they still pitch the tent outside of holidays.

Skills gained through Scouting

Parents felt that their children had **gained significant life skills** through Scouting and that the environment prompted them towards being more independent and taking more initiative of their own development.



If you asked them they wouldn't realise it, but they like to go somewhere and be with their own peer group where they have a level of control. At school the teachers have all the control, but at Scouts they can have fun, can be masters of their own destiny and be their own leaders.

It's teaching them independence so they can do things like tie a knot on the fishing rod.

My son cooks breakfast for himself now. He went to the Jamboree and came back much more independent, now we're even sending him to the world Jamboree in Japan!



The kids grow in their independence – they have to shower themselves and dress themselves, pack their own bag in the morning and do things like pull down the tents.

There is an expectation of them that they step up and get involved, whereas maybe at school it is not the same and they get told what to do.

Parents who had been in Scouting themselves explained that **there were significant skills they learned while at Scouts**, many of which were transferrable later in life:



What Scouts learn helps them in life – my brother became a carpenter and used the knots he learned in Scouting in his working life, and my husband learned to make fires and that has helped him.



I learnt skills through Scouts that I still use today. Tying up the trailer, but also learning to have a go, work out how to do things, it was always a challenge to make you think and be creative.

Developmental milestones achieved

Parents felt that Scouts had **benefitted their children developmentally in a number of areas**, assisting with confidence, independence and social skills.



It's brought my son out of his shell, he was very timid and is starting to have a bit of confidence.

My son is an only child so for him, spending time with kids his age who were not from school was a good thing to help his confidence and have new friendships, to get an understanding that life is not just about him.

For my son it was drama – before Scouts my son would never come forward, but he just came into his own and start singing, and he absolutely loves drama now.



My son is very quiet and shy and has anxiety, but at Scouts he's just a different kid.

Scouts has brought him out of his shell and now he is positive and loves being a leader. The school was doing nothing for him and he was just becoming more introverted, but Scouts has brought him out, it's unbelievable.

My son is still very young but I can see he is far more independent when he's at a Scouts function than when he is in my household, he's the baby of the family when he's at home and aware he's quite young. At Scouts he steps up and volunteers for things I didn't think he was ready for – but he just steps up and does it.



Scouts has helped my daughter with her anxiety, now even at home she doesn't panic as much because of what she does at Scouts.

There was a particular trouble maker in our troop. His parents thought he would be a lot of trouble, but then he had a stern talking to at Scouts and wanted to keep going. Scouts has worked for him and he now feels comfortable in the group.

Even though my son hates [being in front of people], when he goes to give a speech or something he develops confidence. Even though they don't like it, it's developing their skills, and if they feel it's a safe environment this is a good thing.

A very small minority of parents felt that Scouts had not significantly assisted their child's development.



I'm not sure where it helped my son's development – all I remember is him learning how to tie a knot. I don't think he did as much at Cubs as they could have, the only things they really did was go on camps.

Badges and Awards

Parents were asked to evaluate the badges and award system of Scouting, and whether these awards helped to encourage participation and engagement in their children.

Parents at large felt that the **badges and award system were beneficial** in engaging their children.



There's a lot of badges and the kids can pick and choose based on their interest.

The Cubs love the stuff they do with all the games – I used to think, “That’s a cheap old badge,” but I know I wasn’t that interested, I just wanted to be there and have fun, but I was still a Patrol leader so I must’ve learned something and got something.

I think it’s just nice that they get a reward, a step forward. My daughter likes to wear her uniform with pride on Anzac Day and she has badges there and all the friends see the badges and she shows them off.



The awards scheme is very valuable. My son ended up getting the top award through help from the leaders – and now he’s gone badge hungry!

You’ve got to work at them and the leaders don’t just throw them at kids, which I think is good. It gives them that sense of reward and achievement.

It is amazing what they learn – my son now has a scrapbook for each badge, he’s made it his little project. He’s really proud of himself and has got a lot.

Parents sought to encourage the badge system but expressed a desire for Scouting to **present a non-competitive environment for their children and not one centred around achievement of the badges**, since they felt school was putting enough pressure on their children to perform.



I don’t think it’s about having to go in and get a badge – a badge should be about something they want to achieve. I see Scouts as being an outlet where they can go and enjoy themselves and not have all the pressures of School, but have a network of people to support them if they want to get badges. I don’t want them to have the pressure of getting badges, I think it should be on offer but there should be just as much reward for kids that don’t get them.

A learning environment should be organic and have a process behind what the kids are learning. Without it being regimented in the badges, my son or daughter wouldn’t be clear of why we do things like clear the ground when we go to make a fire.

There’s times when the kids are actually working on things, handcraft or cooking, and they are earning the badges without even realising.

They take pride in their uniform with the badges, but this shouldn’t serve to exclude those kids who don’t have as many.



I think the fun keeps them motivated [rather than the badges]. He loves the camps and everything. He is having fun and I don’t treat Scouts as seriously as school.

YPR TARGET MARKET RESEARCH

Some parents were **surprised at the number of badges other parents reported their children getting**. It appeared there were significant differences in the ways children received badges from troop to troop.



My son got a badge for trumpet, sailing, photography. He even got a swimming badge when we went to the local swimming pool.

Mine got nothing.

If the leader just cruises along, they don't get as many badges.

Some parents also expressed a **desire for the children to attain more badges** and a desire to help them attain those badges. Some parents felt they didn't have the skills to support their children in Scouting, although these parents were not in the majority.



It really affects my son that he's not getting badges, and he says to me, "Why am I not getting badges, mum?"

I wish they did more of the badge stuff at Scouts, because I have no idea of what they do at Scouts. I don't have time either; the kids want to do the extra badges but I can't help them.

Maybe there needs to be some support for the parents, like the DIY classes for parents at Bunnings, even once a month or once a quarter, where parents can learn how to do things and develop a support network, getting people to share their own professional knowledge with each other.

When parents were asked **to what extent the badge award system helped their children stay motivated** in Scouting, the responses were varied by age – Older Scouts Parents felt these weren't as important to their children, but Younger Scouts Parents felt the badges were a considerable pull factor.



Yes and no. I think it depends on the child. My son doesn't care so much about the badges, he's more happy learning all that boy stuff whereas my daughter likes the badges.

Once they get to Year 10 and the work gets a bit more serious, and that's where we struggle with the badges.



One of the main reasons they go is for the badges – if they were taken away you would take away the sense of achievement and goals.

If they just made it a destination to have fun and do stuff, it wouldn't be the same for the kids. If they removed the badges they'd have to replace them with something.

Scouting Sections

Feedback to the Program of specific sections

Parents had feedback specific to the Scouting sections.

Joeys

Parents felt that Joeys should be **fun** and, where possible and appropriate, include the **outdoor elements** pertinent in the Cubs program.



Joeys is all about fun – if you make it fun they will learn and enjoy it.



My son just got back from Joeys and couldn't go to bed because he was so excited talking about it. He was really engaged and they had an environmental lesson where they were making a water filter – he really took it all on!

Cubs

Cubs was perceived to be the section in which many **outdoor activities take place and an age group where kids are fully engaged with the program.**



The good thing about Cubs is that there's plenty of badges and everyone can go for different badges. What the leaders do is plan that night around that badge. But once they move into Scouts the badges are a bit more time consuming and harder to achieve.



Cubs was very structured going through the badges and Scouts they just do whatever, it's organised chaos.

Scouts

Former Scouts Parents felt that it was **time for the program to be adapted**, particularly for the Scouts section.



Scouts needs to be more interesting for the kids for them to carry on. It needs to be a bit different and a little bit more grown-up. At the moment Scouts are doing the same things as those are doing in Cubs. Cubs should have something to look forward to when they move to Scouts.

It is a huge amount of work to keep it cool and engaging, but if you are going to engage a kid on something that they find of interest, that's the only way to keep the kids.

Current parents, however, felt there was a **significant positive difference with Scouts**.



The difference between Cubs and Scouts is absolutely enormous – Cubs is just a bunch of kids running rampant, but I walk into the Scouts hall and it's like they grow up about 2 years just walking through the doors. Cubs I almost couldn't bear to be in the room.

In Cubs we were always encouraged to stay and help but in Scouts, their whole philosophy is that they're helping the kids to be more responsible and look after themselves, they therefore self-manage. That's the difference I found. It sounds like every troop is different and it all comes from the leaders.

Progression of Scouting sections

Parents were asked whether there should be adjustment of the current age groups for the sections of Scouting, particularly for Joeys (currently 6-7), Cubs (8-10 years of age), and Scouts (10.5-14).

Parents in the Older Scouts Parents group were uncertain as to whether the current ages should be adjusted for, but some felt that the Joeys were perhaps too young to start many of the outdoor activities characteristic of the Scouting movement.



My younger ones, really look up to the 15/16 year-olds in Scouts because they're kind of mentoring them. The older kids are really organised and take them out on excursions, which they love.



The age gap between 6 and 8 is massive, it's big between 8 and 10, but it's not as big between 10.5 and 15. With a bit of thought, most 10.5 year-olds want to do what 15 year-olds are doing.

Perhaps they should they go back to just being two groups – when I was in Scouting there was Cubs and Scouts, no one knew what a Joey was.

I find a lot of the younger kids, the Joeys that come in, they are too young whereas the Cubs are a bit older.

If they got rid of Joeys and just had the two groups, the ages might be 7-10 and then 10-15.

Others, however, felt that Joeys should start earlier:



It needs to start at an earlier age – 5 – so you get more kids in. Once the kids are in school they already have a lot of other activities that they are involved in.

In helping the younger Scouts members adjust to being with the older cohort of Scouts and minimise any potential bullying, a number of interventions were suggested.



I don't know enough but one of the things that worked really well is a buddy system where you have an older person assigned to a younger person to bring them through Scouts.



I suppose it depends on the leaders – maybe they have to motivate the kids and give them more drive and direction to stop the bullying.

These parents felt that it was not necessarily a matter of adjusting the years, but providing the **flexibility for children to progress to new sections** depending on their readiness to progress.



With Cubs my son got really bored and the stuff they were doing in Scouts was more interesting to him.

My son would've been in Scouting longer if he could've moved up from Cubs earlier, but instead he decided to take 2 years off because he wasn't challenged enough.

Maybe there should be an overlap. Then you get someone who's more advanced and they can go on to the next section. You have to plan two years up because some kids are smashing everyone in their own age group.

I like that we have a 6 week trial period in each group, therefore if they get sick of it they can move up an age group.



Maybe it's more important to know the level of independence and expectation from the child at each level rather than the actual program.

Aligning Scouting sections with school years

When asked whether Scouting sections should align more closely with the school years, the **Older Scouts Parent group was unsure.**



I don't think it should align with the school years – it's about capability and recognising that capability. You lose a child because they can't cope or they're not challenged enough, and I think you have to prepare for both of these things as an organisation.

No kid wants to be held back, but the way it is now you can bring a child forward and if their friends are in another section you can bring them forward, too.

It's not necessarily about matching to the school years.

Going up from Cubs to Scouts and primary to secondary school all at the same time might be a bit much – it's good for them to be able to go to Scouts first and be prepared. They go from being the boss in Year 6 and all of a sudden they're they little ones. Being in Scouts does prepare them better for high school.

The Younger Scouts Parent group, however, brought this up before being asked of the possibility, as a **viable option for Scouting in the future.**



I think it should depend on the grades at school they're at instead of what age they are. We have a bunch of kids who are in 2nd class who would love to be in Cubs but have just missed out.



My kid is in Year 6 and he's in Scouts and I think he's just too young, I think it should go from Year 7. What I'm finding is he's one of the younger ones with all these older kids.

My thinking would be for Cubs to be up until Year 5, and I love that idea of grades instead of age, but starting Scouts at Year 6 to get them ready for high school.

It's great that my son is in Cubs now instead of Joeys. I think having a younger group and something that starts in 2nd grade and goes through until 5th grade might be nice.

Lack of awareness of Scouts sections by some parents

Some parents expressed that they had **not received enough information about the Scouting sections** prior to sending their children to Scouting, and that more information on what each of the sections had to offer would be beneficial to them.



I think it will be better if parents were given more information about the program. When we joined Scouts I had no idea what they would be doing in the group, but I was just told to join Scouts based on my son's age – they just chose it for me. It would have been better if they gave me a program for Joeys and Cubs and let me know what they were doing in each of those age groups so that our decision could be better informed.

Others felt that the yellow Scouting book provided them with all the information they needed to make an adequate choice.



You get a yellow book and everything that the kids do is marked off in that book – it's worth reading.

We get a term's program at the start of every term, and it shows you in the book what are they're going to do each week – and then we sign off to get that award.

These comments show there was some discrepancy in the program and communication experiences of different Scouting troops, much of which seemed dependant on a troop's leaders.

Most Enjoyable and Beneficial Elements

What parents enjoyed most

There were a number of elements that parents enjoyed about having their children in Scouting. **Seeing their children be happy and enjoy themselves** was the most rewarding benefit to most parents.



Just seeing them happy, seeing them enjoying themselves.

Seeing him do something out of the ordinary that would make him happy.

The fact that they were getting fun and enjoyment out of it was great satisfaction.



Satisfaction out of it. You see the kids and what they're learning and they learn so much and become independent.

Just how friendly and helpful everyone is, how much fun they have.



They do things that I would not be able to do with them.

They also enjoyed seeing their children **grow and flourish** through Scouting in the skills that they learned and the broadening of their life experiences.



I think for me it would be learning life skills.

Appreciating what they've got at home when they come home – it's so nice to have them appreciate a soft bed after being away on camp.



He gets dig holes and campfires and that kind of stuff, I'm not sure about that, I'm happy he's doing it. Like the other day they took apart a first aid kit, and I would never think to do that.

It's amazing – he was chopping up all the salads for cooking last night!

Parents enjoyed being a part of the Scouting program where they were able to and if they had the time.



At mother's day, they get the mums to get in and father's day they get the dads to come in. They get you to do activities.



I like the involvement with the parents – parents would go and get involved they would do makeup on the mums for mother's day. One of the things they also do is cook for us at father's day.

What parents feel is most beneficial for kids

The areas of Scouting that parents felt were most beneficial to their kids were the **outdoor elements that provided them the opportunity to engage with nature** – through excursions or camps.



Bushwalks, they were doing different bushwalks, and all had a story to go along with it – the kids had so much fun with the lanterns at night and seeing the animals.

Campfires – talking stories and sitting around the campfire.

Camps! He could not stop smiling from ear to ear when he came back from camps – he did some scary things and we were so proud of him. He loved being independent and being away from mum and dad.

They learn to respect and protect the environment.

Engagement and what the kids enjoyed the most

Current Scouts seemed **highly engaged** in the program when it was taking place.



They are fully engaged – they're not sitting around, they're engaged.

They say, 'It can't be 8 o'clock already!' Our group's only 1 hour, and it's too short.

Parents felt that the kids enjoyed all of the **outdoor and hands-on elements of Scouting the most** – the camping, campfires, games, cooking, and the bushwalking.



Things like setting fire with matches, cooking on top with cans, that kind of thing.

Activities in the community were also enjoyable to Scouting members, for those who had the opportunity to engage in this way.



My daughter went to the nursing home, and they're all dementia patients, but she really enjoyed it and said, "It's nice to sing to people who are sick". She really enjoyed it.

Parents **did not feel there were considerable elements that their children did not enjoy** – most of their children reported wanting to stay longer at the Scouts hall. One parent mentioned that her child did not enjoy the ceremonies, but that this was the only element they didn't enjoy.



They enjoy all of it I think – he's never come home and said, 'I'm bored'.

My son wishes that it went longer, it's too short.

They really, really love going, they don't want to miss out.

My son could probably skip the leaving ceremonies at the end.

Fees

Most parents **did not consider the fees to be a substantial obstacle** to their participation with Scouting.



In regards to fees, it wasn't a lot, so it was a good balance with the other activities we did.



I think it's quite reasonable. We took a gold coin back in my day, and if you work out what that would be today, it's about the same.

The fees are reasonable – what's a babysitter worth per hour? It's about \$10 a week we worked out.

Others, however, **dependant on the nature of their children's activities**, felt that the children were doing outdoor activities with a significant price tag attached.

They did not feel, however, that a slight increase in fees would make a difference to their current involvement.



I find the fees quite high.

It's more expensive than Guides, which was \$75 for the whole year.

I think if you know beforehand what it will cost it's quite reasonable. But you've got to pay for everything else as well, like camps.



My group at the moment are just doing activities outside – abseiling, scuba diving, rock climbing. They don't do anything at the hall which is really costly. The kids have decided that this is what they want to do.

The camps are heaps cheaper than putting them into other activities in holidays.

Parents also felt that some of the funds could be **better utilised to minimise parental involvement** in things like transportation to camps.



Why don't they just hire a bus? At the camp this week we had to pick them up and drop them off everywhere. They could hire a bus – say 50 parents pooled \$5 and they'd be there. It would be so much better than parents dropping kids off everywhere.

Leader Evaluation

Appreciation of leaders

There was a **deep appreciation expressed for those leaders** who took the opportunities to engage the children and encourage them personally.



Scouts exists because of the dedication of the leaders – and no matter what you do, there are fortunately always a few people who take on the responsibility of making these things happen. I know the leader of my two girls, he puts in hours and hours, 12 hour days. As someone moves on another picks up the baton, without those people it wouldn't happen.

Parents appreciated opportunities where leaders showed they truly knew what the kids needed and were able to **look out for them individually**.



There was a program where they had a fire day, cooking marshmallows and making fire. My son got home and took his brother to the yard, and for a couple of weeks he was starting fires and roasting marshmallows in the yard. We saw the smoke one day and realised he'd been doing it for weeks! Then one day they were awarding prizes at Scouting and he said, "Look what I've got, dad!" It was a little fire extinguisher.

The kids appreciate people who stop and listen to them, who care about what they do and how they do it.

Satisfaction dependant on leader

A number of parents mentioned that their experience of the program was **directly affected by the type of leader that they had** and that **leader's ability to engage their children**. The enjoyment and satisfaction a child received from Scouting seemed proportional to a leader's capacity to engage that child. Former Scout Parents expressed this as a strong reason as to why their children were no longer in Scouting.



It depends totally on the leader. We had a brilliant leader at the beginning and then they swapped from a male to female leader but it was very important for my boys to have a male leader to look up to, which didn't happen.

The more interested the leaders are, the more interest the kid will take.

We had a problem in our group where my husband was the Cub leader and he kept it quite exciting, but when they moved on to Scouts they had a lot of people dropping out because the leaders in Scouts were boring and did the same thing over and over again and weren't open to new ideas.



Our Cubs unit is bursting at the seams and it's because there's a sufficient number of leaders running a really tight program. You need to have a flow of leaders and parents who are helping.

Training of leaders required

Parents expressed that they would encourage Scouts to **provide further training opportunities** for leaders in a number of different areas.



You would hope that the training that the organisation provides to leaders would provide some of those values in life – it's not about topping each week with a better experience but it's stripping back the activities to simpler forms of entertainment. Out of the structure of the activity come the life lessons – it's not about lighting a fire, it's about the broader life lessons of starting a fire.



Leaders need more help. There needs to be more than one leader to run a program.

They probably do need more support at the bottom, the leaders – more support from the organisation itself.



I think it needs to be easier for leaders. It needs to be smoothed out a bit.

Everything's hard and a little bit yesterday, so they need to be tech savvy even if they don't have to follow the trend.

Increasing leader incentives to encourage engagement

A number of parents, especially Former Scouts Parents, felt that the structure of the program should be extended to pay some volunteers in order to provide better organisation and communication to families. They also felt that the leaders oftentimes needed more support.



It's very difficult because the leaders are volunteers don't get paid. I think that's one of the main downfalls of Scouts – everything is done voluntary, and at the moment, society doesn't have time for society.

If there's a fee paid to Scouts Australia, why isn't there a teacher employed to man the group?

I said the same thing in the evaluation – they really should pay someone because it gives them the incentive to do things well.

Improvements to the Scouting Program

Parents mentioned several improvements that could be made to the Scouting program, including improving organisation and communication and a number of new initiatives.

Organisation and timing of the program

Parents felt that **changing the timing of Scouts** would be beneficial both for them and for drawing other families into Scouting.



We changed to another Scouts because it's Friday nights not Wednesdays. Friday nights is such a better night than Wednesdays.

I want a different night and want them to experience more, but I don't want to move them to another troop.



It's pretty hard when you have to pick them up as late as 9:30 at night. Many people pulled out because it was so late.

Some parents felt that **their particular troop and program was not well organised** and that there was a significant amount of time wasted when their children were in Scouting, which would draw out the program past its finish time. Parents emphasised that they appreciated a well-run program that was planned ahead of time.



Sometimes there is so much time waster which is valuable time, but it's wasted.

I appreciated Cubs because we knew what they were doing for each of the 4 sessions in the month – it was well planned out.

Parents expressed that a way through which this could take place was **streamlining the program** across different Scouting troops and re-using what other troops had already implemented previously.



Why can't you just have a basic program? We use the same program year after year, and I don't see why everyone can't use this program.

If the program is already being used and out there, they should share it.

I ran Regatta for several years and we had to start from scratch, but since then that program has been used.

Some felt, however, that doing this would potentially bore the children if it was not done tactfully.



If you are in the Scouts group the same for 3 years, you will find the repetition of the Program a bit boring.

Improving communication

A number of parents felt that communication from their Scouting troop could be improved. Some felt that the utilisation of **electronic forms of communication** and **consolidation of information and permission forms** would be of great benefit.



There are so many notes that are brought home with events that are coming up. The first time I asked them, "Can you just email it to me?" but they couldn't. They need to get with the times and get on internet and email.

Every time they go off to the Scout hall we have to fill in a form – It would be helpful if they just printed one with all the details of the term on it. Just make it one form at the beginning of the year which covers all the activities outside and for this form to be valid for the whole year.

The forms were an absolute pain.

Others felt that they **didn't understand the Scouting language and terms** used in the communication, or that there was **insufficient information** provided to them about the Scouting movement as a whole.



I felt a bit lost in Scouts. Our Scout leader is great and sends emails all the time, but I don't understand them. I feel like I'm that mother that has to reply and say, 'Did you mean such and such?' I don't understand the lingo of Scouts and all that. It was only recently that I realised there was Cubs and Scouts. More info at the beginning would help and a program coming out at the beginning of term would be great.

Some also felt they did not receive enough information from Scouting about the fundraising and the **outcomes of the funds that had been raised**.



What I found was that a lot of parents who fundraise raise the money, but the group doesn't tell the parents where the funding is going to.

Some suggested a **streamlined communication approach** be introduced across Scouting, to minimise the work required by individual troops and to provide consistency within the movement.



The Scouts association could help with modularising and helping individual groups with their communication mechanism – a cookie cutter type approach. That way you'd get more consistency across the different groups and a similar feel. and you'll get more consistency across the different groups, and you'll get a similar feel across it all.

An example of where parents seemed to be informed differently on Scouting policies and procedures was a conversation that emerged between Scouting parents who were confused about the appropriate attire to wear to an Anzac march.



One thing I have noticed is that our kids all have the shirts and scarfs. In our unit, your unit decides what to wear on the bottom. No one's ever told me what to wear on the bottom. We went to do the Anzac march, we had red pants, blue pants, black pants,

green pants. It's not on the website. Each unit in Cubs decides what to do on the bottom.

In our troop we're allowed to wear navy, but if you're not in the building you have to wear bone.

Because there was only one pair of pants available, we assumed those were it. On Anzac day, I looked to see what they were supposed to be wearing on the website, but I couldn't find it.

This is an example of where increasing communication consistency could help to eliminate any possible confusion among Scouting parents.

Creating new programs and initiatives

As parents expressed being increasingly time-poor, they felt that a Scouts holiday program would be of great benefit to their families and alleviate the challenge of keeping kids engaged at home during school holidays.



In the holidays, it's a shame they couldn't get a day or two like camps. If you could send your kids to a Scout camp for 2 days.

RETENTION

Current Scouting parents were extremely positive towards Scouting and strongly hopeful of maintaining their child's connection to Scouting. This was evident to an even greater degree of enthusiasm among the Younger Scout Parent group.



Yes, I want them to continue their involvement.



Yes, I definitely will encourage that they keep going, even if that encouragement is, "You're going!"

Factors Impeding on Member Participation

Factors impacting Scouting member engagement

Current Scouting parents felt that children were initially engaged with the program through parental encouragement and friends, and potentially would leave if their **friends were no longer in Scouts.**



Friends – it's about the associations they have made. If their friends are leaving then they will leave.



I think it depends on parents being involved and getting them interested at first, but once they get a taste of it having some other friends in it is important.

Others felt that the **leaders** were significantly important for retention.



My eldest son pulled out of Scouts because he didn't like the leaders. He only lasted a few weeks with the new leader and pulled out – he was 11 and had been in Cubs for 3 years.

My son would only pull out if he wasn't liking the leaders or had a clash with some of the other kids.

They also felt a significant factor impeding on child's participation was the **increased workload that young people have** as they take on more responsibility at school and with work commitments.



They would leave for study reasons, a higher workload, or doing things like dancing. Kids have so many things to do now – they have to choose and they can't do it all. When I was a kid you either went to Scouts or Sea Scouts or Boys Brigade – there was nothing else to do! There were no youth clubs. Today there are so many things for them to choose.

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School has a big impact – a lot of my child's friends don't do as much of the activities of Scouts anymore because of school.



My daughter pulled out of Guides because she got a job and she was in Year 11, so she couldn't maintain studying, working and Guides. I said something has to go and it can't be school so it was just a time thing that she couldn't go.

Parents recognised that one of the most significant challenges faced by any organisation **trying to retain an active membership base of 12, 13, and 14-year-olds** who were often drawn away from the activities they had been involved with at a younger age.



It's hard to be seen as cool for doing Scouts at that older age.

They just get to an age where they think it's not cool anymore and aren't as engaged – it's a peer pressure thing.



I think what kids do after school at that age group is a question that everyone is asking. If we can find that solution, geez we'll make a fortune getting those kids involved.

The question, "How do you keep a child from 13 to 19?" is something Clark Shoes have been asking for a long time. The AFL/NRL has pumped billions of dollars locally. Soccer is even struggling to keep kids at that age – the falloff is just massive.

By the time you are a patrol leader you're either going to be a Scout that is going to be a Venture Scout or not – you're either a Scout through and through or not.



In sport – they say if you have a winning team you will attract players. This is not true for 13 year olds, they just fall off the planet. It's one of the hardest things to engage them at that age. You have a group going abseiling and doing things like having indoor water fights – these are all things that a 13 year old or 14 year old should be drawn to. For some reason they just fall away.

Others felt that if Scouts **could continue to engage young people well**, then the above factors and 'excuses' would have less of an impact on retention.



If you can engage them and they get to an age where they get to make a choice, it won't matter what the workload is or the excuse is, but they will dedicate their time to Scouts. It's about the engagement through the volunteers and the pride of their uniforms.

You have to keep the talent, and sometimes the 13 year-old who is not throwing themselves fully into it has to be picked out and promoted to the group and challenged individually.



Leadership and training is a big one – if you can get them to understand that they can have an impact and still be involved and contribute, that's a way to keep them engaged.

Reasons for leaving by former Scout parents

Former Scouts Parents mentioned several key factors that **impacted their desire to continue with Scouting**. The most important factor was **a change in their child's desire to be involved**.



While they were enjoying it you just kept on going. Once it stopped being fun, they didn't want to go anymore.

Former Scout Parents explained that their child's desire to stop being involved were varied and multifaceted, including a **change in leaders** or having unengaged leaders, a **change in the program and what was done**, a **change in friends** who were involved, not having the time to continue or Scouting's timing being inconvenient for them.

A **change in the program** and expectations was one of the most significant factors:



He did not find Scouts as beneficial as Cubs, it was more theory work than the practical.

They were not always totally organised, which was a bit of a downer for the kids, and they didn't do as much in Scouts as they had done in Cubs – you don't want to compare but you begin to see the differences as you move through. It's those little things that make a difference.

A **lack of challenge and not having leaders to engage** the Scouting members to be challenged was a second theme that emerged.



Some leaders have been in the position for such a new time that they need something new and fresh.

It's like going from primary school to high school. Your child is now 10.5-11, but the kids would have a couple of weeks of it and find it too boring and leave.

A **change in friendships** and friends moving on was another significant factor:



Some of my son's friends stayed in Cubs while he moved up, and he lost that friendship because it was a different night, which is part of the reason why he lost interest.

All his friends left the following year, but he remained until just this year, when he gave up.

My son's close friend from Scouts dropped out and he had nothing tying him back to Scouts.

Others felt that the **timing** of Scouts no longer suited them or that Scouting would not finish at the time they were expecting and **frequently ran late**, or that there were other organisational issues that emerged.



I told him he could no longer go because he was coming home way too late. I love Scouts. If our session wasn't finished at 9-9.30 we would still be going. That was the only reason we left. It was just too hard to keep going – starting at 7.30 for a 10 year-old is way too late. They wouldn't finish on time and often go until 9.30pm.



Time was an issue for us as well, and you'd sort of not want to pack stuff in, but if it finishes at 8.30pm it should start tidying up at 8.15pm.

For us it was also a discipline issue – the leader was not able to control the children, and in the hall they would be running rampant. They lost so much time in the hour in discipline, so I think they should get some training. If they got some training or teacher management skills on how to control the groups that would have helped them.

For Former Scout Parents, the **transition between Cubs and Scouts** seemed to be the critical time to focus on increasing retention rates.



Also the changing from primary school to high school – the education needs – they need to do more assignments and more homework.

Other Former Scouts parents mentioned that **bullying** had been significantly present in their Scouting troop and that this was a strong reason from moving on from Scouts. They felt that teaching children to be resilient amidst the bullying was a key life skill that Scouting could instil into children.



The reason one of his best friends left was the bullying. Obviously there will always be bullying, but if they can teach the kids to resist it that will help them in life.

They need to improve the bullying and giving the leaders help on how to resolve bullying within the groups. There is just so much that goes on and there needs to be some sort of procedure put in place to stop bullying from happening. An 11 year old is going into Scouts and a 15 year old – it is a big age difference and it is very intimidating for younger kids, who can then be prone to bullying.

Children do unkind things to one another and it's important to train children to reply to the bullying of others – we can't make bullying go away but at least we could train them with how to react to the bullying.

Decision maker in leaving Scouting

Parents who left reported that the decision to do so was mainly driven by their children's desires – the **Scouting members themselves had the final say**.



My decision was driven by my son. I didn't push him to quit.

I encouraged my son, but it was his decision to leave. You can't force them to do something they don't want to do.

Factors Impeding on Parent Participation

Respondents expressed that most parents of today **chose to send their children to a program rather than have a desire to get involved themselves.**



Parents today are too busy making a career and the bucks to pay the mortgage, at the end of the day they send their kids to be educated and will pay to educate.

Some parents have multiple kids involved with multiple weekend activities.

Parents expressed that being involved with Scouting needed to be an option in which **parents are freely able to choose their level of engagement.** They felt that putting a child into Scouting should not necessitate parental involvement.



A lot of parents put their children in Scouts because they want their kids to be happy in an organisation and parents don't necessarily want to be involved. We put our kids in swimming, but that doesn't mean we have to swim next to them.

I don't criticise parents who don't want to get involved, I think it's a preference. A lot of parents who lived in the area preferred to go home and come back.



I wonder how many parents hold off having their kids involved because they are concerned they think they have to be involved and won't have enough time but think there is that commitment.

Current Scouting parents felt that having the **flexibility to choose their own involvement** was strongly beneficial to them.



We all help a little and we don't have to do much – there are a lot that don't help at all.

It's great that it's not a burden on your own life.

You can be completely involved or not involved at all and nobody judges you. Don't get me wrong, I will get involved in father's day but we just don't have the time to get involved regularly. But it's nice that nobody judges you for not being involved.

Former Scouts Parents especially felt that they had been **under-supported while volunteering with Scouts** and that having appropriate parent support for the fundraisers and events they were involved in was a significant challenge and eventual burden for them.



The amount of times we asked for parent involvement and we just didn't get it – there seemed to be a lack of commitment from parents to Scouts.

My group used to say, "We are down leaders, please help," but no one would stick their hand up and help.

I was in the fundraising committee and the sausage sizzle organiser. It was dreadful at the end because we just got pushed and pushed [to do more]. I was with another lady and we just had enough after a while.

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They asked for so much fundraising and so much help. I just thought they should increase our fees and stop the fundraising. Some people want their weekends and don't just want to do Scouts.

One parent expressed that when she did get involved, **her input and suggestions were not welcome**, which discouraged them from maintaining her involvement.



They were begging for leaders so I got involved but I was told, "That's not how we do it here." I kept trying and kept getting knocked back. Even though I was very happy reading the materials and getting involved, no matter how much I tried, I was always put back. If they want parents to get involved there should be an openness to new ideas, otherwise parents and children will lose interest.

REMAINING RELEVANT IN CHANGING TIMES

The Scouting program was seen to **hold strong relevance** in a time in which children are increasingly tied to technology. Both current and former Scout parents emphasised the applicability of Scouting into the future.



I think it will stay relevant over time, because there will be a return to the things of old. People will see there's too much technology, and desire what used to be.



If you look at the high schools, they do the Duke of Ed – which is similar to Scouting and continued already through the school system. It is an appreciated program and well recognised.

They recognised, however, that some of the communication from Scouting could be **reinvented**.



Update and change Scouts for today's necessities – what was important for society 50 years ago is not relevant today.

Technological Adoption and Integration

Parents had differing views of Scouting's best adoption of technology into the future. All three groups expressed that Scouts Australia should **seek to better integrate technology in its communication with Scouts and parents** as well as in its teaching materials.



Scouts definitely needs to incorporate technology more.



The books that they go for the badges – they were written so long ago that they need to be update to this world's technology.



The Scouts website is not kid friendly or easy for them to use.



The Jamboree and the Scouts website last year was horrendous, but it was better this year.

Some felt it would be positive for Scouting members to be able to **better integrate technology in the program** through the in their presentation of materials.



Some of the Cubs and Scouts need to present certain material. It would be great if they could use technology to do it.

In regards to the program itself, however, parents expressed a number of concerns for the **over-integration of technology**.



I would hate to send my kid to Scouts and they are sitting on electronics.

No, I don't think they should use technology more – they get heaps of that elsewhere. The reason I put them in Scouts is so they get away from it.



Scouts should be confident enough in what it offers not to run headlong into the digital world – the world will soon work out that what Scouts brings is unique.

There's a fine line between using technology to make Scouting more efficient, but I don't want that as an end goal at all, because they've got technology at school and they're getting sucked into it.

Fix the websites, make it more kid friendly so they do get more active into Scouts and stuff like that, but it's is a fine line. If they start going into iPads and stuff like that, it's no different from what we're trying to get them out of.

Use it to the degree that you need, but don't fall over that cliff.

Others expressed that they felt that Scouts **already integrated technology** in some ways.



It all depends how the technology is used. I think it's good if they teach them things like understanding physics and how electricity works and all that. That's technology, too.



I think they're doing a good thing already because there is a technology badge and even a Minecraft badge which all the kids are into.

Parents made a number of suggestions as to how Scouts could integrate technology into its programs. Not all parents, however, felt that turning badges into electronic forms was the way of the future.



Let's get a Scout app.

Maybe you can engage 13 and 14 year olds with something bigger, social media, or an app to share what badges they got and get to know other Scouts kids. It would introduce an element of competition and people thrive on competition.



You could take the badges and move it onto an app on the iPad so they can simply look at what's there, click on badge and it would tell them what they have to do to get that badge. If they interacted with the kids through things like that, that would be helpful. We have a website that's good for programming, but if they put it to the kids' level that would help.

If you've achieved a badge it would be good to see what you haven't achieved yet and maybe read a bit about it – a yellow book online in an interactive way.

I know with the teenage Guides, the local units have a blog where the girls can put things on, and they can interact and learn different activities, but they keep it quite tightly regulated.

Digital Communications

When asked to what extent they should integrate digital forms of communication in Scouting including social media, parents held mixed views, with some seeking to involve their children less with social media but others seeing it as a positive way to bring children together around Scouting.



I don't want them in that [social media], I try to get them out of that. That's what they're going to Scouts for. I send him so he's not in the iPad.

For older kids, I don't think we need to worry about social media, because there are plenty of ways they can use to communicate with their friends from Scouts. I don't think it's necessary for Scouts to take that role.

Parents expressed that social media would need to be done in a professional manner if it was to be integrated at all.



If you go about it the wrong way you come across the wrong way like a government department. You either resource it and do it well or don't do it at all.

Competitor Analysis

When asked what the main competitors of Scouting are, the following activities emerged.

Karate
Rugby Soccer
Tutoring
Drama Dancing
Sport Judo

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Parents recognised that the competitors of Scouting are all organisations that provide activities for young people outside of school hours, with the most significant of these being **sports**.

Scouts was recognised by parents to be **less involving than sporting clubs**. They appreciated the flexibility Scouting provided and the less intense nature of the Scouting commitment when compared with sports.



When you go to a sporting club you make a commitment that you will go to training and weekend games or you'll let the team down. When you go to Scouts there is nothing like that.

This is positive with Scouts – if we've got a family event on, we can say we won't be at Scouts this week.

They expressed that **Scouts was a beneficial alternative to sport**, and that the physical activities involved in Scouting should be promoted to make parents aware the Scouting helps to physically engage children.



There's a lot of research on physical exercise and belting round a football field isn't necessarily going to make you that much fitter than just getting up and doing things. You can achieve health outcomes in a couple of minutes of getting up and doing stuff. There is that activity side of it in Scouts that's comparable to sport.

A lot of people do Scouts because they're not sporty so we've got something that caters to them.

It was expressed that most children choose between sport and Scouting, and that very few are able to do both, although some do, despite some clashes in scheduling.



My son does rugby league and dancing, and he's 10 mins late every week.

Well my son does both sport and Scouts. This week he couldn't go because the camp was on.

My friends have made the choice between weekend sport like soccer and football and Scouts. My sister's family is crazy about sports, whereas my son couldn't care less, so for us, it was a natural choice because that's where his strengths lie.

They also mentioned the idea of Scouting including a sporting element, and that sporting and Scouting were not dichotomous entities.



Do you think Scouts could start up a soccer program and have their own teams, do you think that could work? Maybe orienteering, cycling, or even a running day? For parents who want to send their kids to sport instead of Scouts, maybe they could bring sport to Scouts. You could then have both sport and Scouts in one – that way if you want to play footy you can do it at Scouts.

Tutoring groups and other educational programs were also seen to be direct competitors for Scouting.



Also all kinds of tutorials and tutoring. I heard that before selective exams and other school exams basically no one comes to Scouts because they have tutorials.

Marketing an Innovative Message

Parents had a number of suggestions as to how Scouting could market itself to Australian families. This involved **marketing an innovative message and marketing through innovative ways**.

Emphasising the values and outdoor elements of Scouting

Parents feel that **emphasising the values and active/outdoor elements** of Scouting would help inform the community of the benefit that the Scouting program holds for young people, especially as parents are looking for their children to be involved less in sedentary activities.



If the parents think it is worthwhile, no matter how busy their schedule is, they will find a way to fit it in. I think it's important that we build up a spirit for adventure and challenges in our kids and a love for nature. These are things parents can agree on. They will find room in their schedule as long as they think it's important – it's about the values that Scouts brings.



Children mature through the Scouts process and evolve through it in a really positive way. It's probably hard to convey that message without 'it's all for nerds' or for kids who can't socialise. I think there are a lot of parents who are now realising that their children need these different forms of stimulation.

Emphasising a message of safety and flexibility to parents

In an era of working with children checks and media scrutiny around child protection, parents today are **hyper vigilant about ensuring the safety of their children**. Parents emphasised that they were looking for Scouting to present itself as a safe program both in the content of its programs and in the quality of its leaders.



For parents, perception is reality. Mums want their kids to play soccer because they perceive it to be safe, even though it's not. We talk about adventure and trying things, but you have to make sure from a mum's perspective that it's safe – but from the kid's perspective it has to be seen as adventurous. These are two opposite sides of the spectrum.

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Part of the marketing should include outlining that even though the leaders are volunteers, they are trained adequately and have TAFE qualifications, etc. They need to tell parents that the kids are able to do all these adventurous and dangerous things because the leaders are trained and therefore it's safe.

Other parents felt it was essential to promote that involving a child in Scouting **did not necessitate parents getting involved.**



Parents might think there might be a lot of work, but it's not. I think we need to promote the flexibility of the program.

Emphasising a message of fun and adventure to children

As most parents expressed that their children were **drawn to the fun and adventurous elements of Scouting**, Scouts should continue to emphasise these aspects when increasing Scout awareness in schools and to young people.



They need to emphasise the adventure and fun. Some of my son's friends want to come to Scouts because they go on camps.

It's about the contradictory message – kids fundamentally want to do something that mum and dad really don't want them to be doing because it's so adventurous. It's working out how you sell that contradictory message

Emphasising the opportunities beyond Scouting

For a number of parents, the **opportunities for Scouts to continue their leadership training in more formalised ways as they get older is a significant draw-card to Scouting that could be emphasised more.** They expressed that having the Scouting program accredited through certification would provide proof of community participation and leadership skills for young people when seeking employment.



Wouldn't it be great if Scouts could bet a fantastic reputation that if a Scout was to finish Scouts or Venturers, get a certificate that was recognisable by employers to say that they've gained leadership skills and team skills.

I think it would help them getting a job – where often they are asked what sort of community work they have done.



You can get your pilot's license through Scouts. You can do courses. Just because you're a leader you get an adult certificate leadership course.

They gain work experience and they can get their APL now and then PPL through which she can get work experience and get a better job than starting her working life at McDonald's.

I'm trying to encourage Jessica to stay in there til the end just because it's great skills that they learn, which is going to help her work-wise later because they learn to lead and all these other skills that help them work-wise.

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There's a leader who takes the older guys on a boot camp weekend and works out of they've got leadership skills, and then they come back and mentor the younger ones. They all want to go on and get leadership.

Two situations emerged in which Scouting had **significantly assisted the Scouts in attaining employment or being considered for a selective school.**



When my daughter got her part-time job, her only experience was all the Guides stuff she had on her resume. The manager said, "The only reason I'm giving you this job is because you've been in Guides and you've got leadership skills." So for her, she looked back and thought 'if I hadn't done that...'



My son was applying for an out of area high school this year, and I'm sure that by putting on his involvement with Scouts and community work on the application that that helped in the application.

One parents expressed that a **partnership with larger organisations** could help older Scouting members gain workplace experience or establish networks.



Maybe just joining in with some organisation like Coles or Woolworths, and get them to take in Scouts leaders.

Emphasising a more culturally diverse message

Parents indicated that marketing to a **broader demographic and having culturally diverse messaging** would be of benefit for Scouting.



Scouts should be more accepting of being open to other nationalities – there was a kid from an Indian background who was made fun of for his name.

Scouts is becoming more multicultural – kids need to be taught that there are kids from different backgrounds, which needs to be incorporated.



I think this is the challenge for Scouts – most parents are very white and middle class and if you look at the demographics of Scouts it seems to be a fairly white middle class thing. It's changing the perceptions so that we can develop the potential that Scouts offers to a more diverse group of people.

It's really valuable that the kids go out there – if Scouts keeps engaging more variety and diversity it can only be a good thing.

Emphasising a 'girls are welcome' message

There was an **overall lack of awareness** among parents that the Scouting program caters to both girls and boys equally, a message that could continue to be emphasised to the broader Australian public.



I really hadn't clicked that girls could go to Scouts, because back in the day it was boys who did Scouts and girls who did Guides, and that still hasn't changed in the public eye.

Emphasising a fresh and reinvigorated message

Parents felt that the **message of Scouting could be recreated** to be fresh for parents who didn't have any previous connection to Scouts.



Once you do your market research to understand how many people were Scouts that have kids in Scouts and look at that correlation, you'll find a high percentage – even most of us here. It's about the people who don't have that history and don't know what we know.

It comes down to your target audience, you might choose to look at the kids who haven't even got to the age of Scouts, and maybe it's them that you need to be pitching to, it's not the ones you already have.

One parent expressed that perhaps the name “Scouts” itself needed to change in order to move away from some of the traditional perceptions held of the Scouting movement by the public. Others, however, were not sure on the name change but equally emphasised that changing perceptions was critical.



If you want to see Scouts moving forward in modern society, then don't call it “Scouts.” “Scouts” is the problem – it's what everyone is linking those perceptions to. Unless you can change the perception of “Scouts” being dorky and old, you need to change the name.

My oldest son is involved with Duke of Edinburgh, but “Duke of Edinburgh” isn't called even called the “Duke of Ed” anymore, it's called the D of E. If you look at public perception of Kentucky Fried Chicken, they called themselves KFC. We all know things need to change and Scouts might need to adapt in this way, too.

I don't agree with changing the name but I can see the logic and maybe 10 years down the track it's the thing that you need to do.

Emphasising a community-focused vision

In an era of increasing return to local communities and local participation, parents expressed they would like to see Scouting **continue its focus on helping the local community** and giving their children exposure to things locally.



I would like to see them more helping in the community, uniting people in their needs with one another, visiting nursing homes, visiting children's centres, visiting children's centres, showing children what society didn't necessarily have or don't always have the opportunity to see.



I know some people in Scouts in the US do some work experience and they place them in a nursing home where they volunteer for 6 months which gives them skills and understanding that other kids don't have.

Emphasising Joeys, Cubs and Scouts differently

Parents felt that different methods of marketing should be used for the different sections, and that each of the sections have their own unique target market.



I think it can't be a single marketing approach. If you talk about rebranding or rediscovering, you need to target groups. At Joeys you need to be in Sydney Child to target mother's groups, but when you get to Cubs, there's a whole change and you have to strip away the stigma of wearing a dorky Scout uniform – you know there are kids 9, 10, 11 year-olds who are very self-conscious of their appearance and the uniform is a barrier.

Marketing through Innovative Ways

Parents across the board had numerous ideas for Scouting could present itself in an attractive way to families in their local communities.

Engaging direct through the Scouting troops

They felt that Scouting troops themselves could **actively promote the program to local families.**



They had a bring-a-friend night, and I think they recruited 2 or 3 kids from that.

Maybe they could have open days like the schools do.

I think the organisation needs to drive it and provide resources for the local groups to get the word out. A lot of it is about how good the local leaders are. At the moment the local groups work fairly independently and don't really recruit or advertise strongly. If the organisation doesn't provide them with the resources to do so, then it's squarely up to the leader.

Engaging through commercial advertising

Others felt that commercial advertising such as television could be used to portray the message.



Just put out more ads on the TV, just prime time TV. Show all the fun they're having!

Engaging with schools

Some parents had heard about Scouting through school, but most mentioned that school did not help to promote Scouting. Scouting could increase its reach by working directly with schools.



A school teacher/principal mentioned Scouts, and the principal is very supportive.

Engaging with events

Others mentioned that gaining greater exposure at events could help engage young people in a more practical way.



We saw Scouts once at the Easter show and they had a big exhibition including rock climbing, painting, and volcanoes and stuff. It was great to have that display with kids walking past.

Easter shows, markets, even if they run around the schools. Get it out there, but show the fun side of it. The way you're going to show the fun is at events. Even at Bunnings – they have a big car park there, why not put a display on?

Engaging with prominent former Scouts members

Others felt that the way to get the word out was through sharing the positive experiences of previous Scouting members.



If they can find a bunch of prominent people who have come from Scouts and explain why they were involved, and do a media push on the things they gained and learned like people skills, the practical skills, the empathy for others, team building, etc. All these characteristics take time to come to bear, so if you can find prominent people that can articulate the things that people aspire to be like, it would be great. Scouts is then seen as a key to becoming to person you want to be.

This concludes the experience of Scouting parents. The second section of the report details the outcomes of the Scouting members research.

The Experience of Scouting Members

DECISION DRIVERS AND INITIAL UNDERSTANDING

For many of the Scouting members, their family's connection to Scouts in the past was part of the reason why they started at Scouts. Having a friend who went to Scouts and told them about their experience was an important deciding factor for the Scouting members. Some began at Scouts as their parents felt it would be a good place for them to make friends.

Current and former Scouting members had an initial understanding of what Scouts was which differed from the reality they experienced. Some expected it to be similar to school and others expected that they would always be camping when they went to Scouts. The vast majority were pleasantly surprised by the experience they had.

Describing Scouts

There was largely a positive focus in the way that current and past Scouting members described Scouts. Many suggested that it was about fun, outdoor activities and learning new skills.

Younger Scouting members



Older Scouting members



Former Scouting members



Expectation of Scouts and Experienced Reality

Expectation that it would be all outdoor activities

Many of the Scouting members had the expectation that Scouting would consist of mainly outdoor activities such as camping and hiking. For the majority of members this ended up being their experience however many were interested in doing more of these outdoor activities.



This is what I think about when I think of Cubs, I think of bushwalking. My least favourite thing is lighting a fire. And I am a bit allergic to smoke and so I can't join in.

I did a picture of a tent and me. When my friend first told me I thought it would be lots of camping. I would not prefer to do more camps because we are doing a lot.

When I went camping I was hunting down a cave the whole time, we saw a swarm of bats go across us. We had fun.

Camping is my favourite so I would like to do more of it.

I thought we were going to do lots of bushwalks near mountains, maybe go and find lots of leaves but instead I'll just learn about lots of stuff, animals and some other stuff I can't remember.



When I was beginning to think of doing Scouts I thought it was campfires and tying knots but we did lots of other stuff like go on camps and meet friends in other troupes. It was a bigger experience. A lot more behind it.

I thought it would be doing knots and not a lot of fun. My first camp coming up from Cubs was really scary and I didn't know what to expect but it was fun.

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I still go to Scouts and enjoy it. I ate milo once. I thought it would be lighting fires and going on camps and hikes and stuff. That's what we usually do.

Particularly former Scouting members had expected that the programs would consist of mainly outdoor activities and were not expecting so much writing to be involved in their week to week Scouting activities. Some of these members only enjoyed the practical aspects of the Scouting experience.



It wasn't too pleasant, lots of writing. We did hiking but not much. The camp and not much leading up to it. Just learnt how to start fires, I expected more camping and not much writing down, practical. When it was about writing down I enjoyed it less.

I just wish I could be with someone else like my friend didn't quit. I though Scouts would be more going outside and lighting fires with stones. It turned out to be just like drawing and writing. Mostly I enjoyed building – we built a fan out of batteries and wires.

It was boring and they could've made it less writing and stuff. I thought we'd go out into the bush and learn how to survive in the bush. We didn't.



Well this looks like dirt and mud because we went camping a fair bit and it rained lots. It was wet and cold so not enjoyable. We cooked food, learnt how to cook.

Well my friend was leaving and it was a bit boring because we didn't go out much and I got really interested in abseiling but we didn't do it that much. We only did it once in the whole time.

Surprised by how many friends they made

Some of the Scouting members were pleased and somewhat surprised by the relationships they had built with their fellow members and the time that they were given to socialise in the group. Leadership skills were an area that some of the Scouting members felt they had developed in.



I like Scouts because I can learn a lot. And I can be with my friends and I can learn to go camping with my whole family. First I did not think it was good but now I like it.



Leadership, how to play well and create new and great ideas.

I thought it would be fun and we wouldn't have campfires. We made lots of new friends in different troupes.

Before I went I thought it was all serious and all about knots. But it wasn't all about knots and it was sociable.

Scouting members were pleasantly surprised by their experience at their Scouts program and expected that it was going to be less practical than it ended up being.



The first one that I wanted to show you is this one and it says, "what are they doing?" Because I did not know what they were doing on parade. But this one next drawing says 'I love Cubs' because it is really fun.

Before I went to Scouts, basically I thought I was like going to listen to boring lessons. When I actually went there and saw was it was like I liked it. I have been on excursions.

I did not know what it was like to go in Scout, but then my friend went there. I wasn't vested. Me and my dad are vested. My dad is a leader.

Lots of camps, lots of playing games, lots of fun stuff. Joyful people, kids jumping, there is a campus



So I thought it would be fun and it is but there is someone in my group that whinges a lot which makes it a bit less fun.

When I first started I thought I'd be just hiking.

There were former Scouting members who had a negative experience with bullying at their troop and therefore did not enjoy their experience at the program as much as they were expecting to.



When I was at Scouts all of the kids sat at one table and I sat alone. Our leader said what are you doing you haven't written down anything. When I get home I'm tired. It's just a boring day. I thought it would be fun and I would find a lot of friends there. The only fun thing I remember was the sport and lighting fires with a battery.

I had a bully at Scouts and it made me want to leave. And someone was bullying my mum. I thought we were going to climb mountains and all that. We did it but not much. Not as much as I would've liked.

Current Attitudes towards Scouts

Happy, like I belong and relaxed

The majority of Scouting members indicated that they were extremely happy when they were at Scout programs as they got to see their friends and do fun activities. Many of these members also felt relaxed at Scouts and felt as though they belonged with their friends there.



I always feel happy and relax, mostly I feel relaxed.

I can't decide between happy, relaxed and where I belong I put in I am mostly feel happy, because I know the leaders very well and I know my peeps.

I feel happy because I am normally happy at Scouts.

Happy because my friends are there.

Some of my friends are there and my friend from Cubs is there.

I like it because of my friend, and sometimes we got to eat.



Like I belong – variety of people to talk to and they know the same stuff as you.

Happy – Cause I have all my friends there and they all make me laugh.

Happy – Because pretty much I love my friends a lot and I laugh out loud.

Happy – Too many friends to count to talk to. Too many.

Happy – Because most of my friends are there. And they laugh a lot and everyone starts laughing.



Happy – Because friends are there.

Happy – I enjoyed my time at Scouts. I'm not sad or anything.

Bored and Sad

The former Scouting members often felt bored, sad or a mixture of emotions when they attended Scout's programs. Some of the reasons for this was the paperwork that they were expected to complete, waiting around for activities to start and relational problems within the group.



Bored/sad – At the end of the night on the parade – we stood there for a really long time because they weren't organised. It was a mixture between bored and happy.

Sad – Well because I was left out.

Bored/sad/relaxed/happy – There was a time at Cuboree where we get to play a game in the night with torches and go out without teachers. At the end of Cuboree was boring because we had to stand there for a long time to get everyone from the place.

It was boring sometimes but I felt relaxed kinda. It wasn't like I was in school.

Bored – It was more paperwork than anything. Straight down pens down.

Bored/sad – Sometimes it was fun, sometimes it wasn't. My mum was getting bullied and I was getting bullied.

Nervous

One of the younger Scouting members felt nervous when they were at Scouts as the unpredictable nature of the group was a challenge for him.



Happy and nervous. Because Scouts is a bit unpredictable. Unless you ask your leader you don't know what is happening and I ask myself what is going to happen.

BRAND & COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

Scouting members loved their time at Scouts, however found that their friends did not perceive it to be as desirable as they did. Member's suggested that this was because they had not experienced it themselves.

Perceived 'coolness' of Scouts

Many of the Scouting members felt that their friends didn't understand what they do in Scouts and therefore it was not perceived as a 'cool' activity by their school friends.



They think it is boring, because he (my friend) does not know what it is.

There is a saying.... If you don't know about Scouts shouldn't judge it.

All my friends at school I told about Scouts, and they thought it was dumb.



They say it looks boring.

Most of my friends say I should get a life.

Most of my friends say my stories are boring but I find them actually really funny.

Some of my friends think it is cool.

Some of my friends are like 'awww' (negative sound).

Some of the Scouting member's main friendship group was at Scouts and they therefore considered it a 'cool' activity.



It's a matter of opinion.



Undeniably cool. Most of them go to Scouts.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Many aspects of the program were analysed with Scouting members identifying some of their favourite and least favourite activities. One of the most common comments when evaluating the programs was that the outdoor and active elements of Scouts were their favourite part of Scouts and the part that they could not enjoy elsewhere.

Similarities Between Scouts and School

Older Scouting members did not identify many similarities between school and Scouts as they felt more relaxed and less likely to get in trouble when they attend Scouts.



On school camps you sleep in cabins and Scout ones you sleep in tents.

No subjects.

I don't get in trouble as much at Scouts.

It's all optional – at school you have no choice.

Similar – learn stuff and there are friends. Bit more relaxed than a classroom.

You have more friends at Scouts and they don't bully you as much. At school you have heaps of subjects and if you don't do something you get in trouble.

Favourite Activity at Scouts

Outdoor activities

For the majority of Scouting members the outdoor activities were the highlight of their time in Scouting programs. For many of these members, the activities were what attracted them to Scout's programs to begin with and they expected that they would be able to partake in adventurous activities that they wouldn't have the opportunity to at school or in other areas of their life.



That you get to play a lot of games outside and inside.

First one is my badges. I've done a lot ... but I need to do 7 activities to get the award.

Playing spotlight. You need a very big area with lots of trees. We have to try to touch the torch without anybody spotting us.

I liked the campfire. We have humongous campfires. At the back of the hall there is still space. We cook marshmallows.

I like going on my first camp and can't wait to go there. I can't wait what to see what it will be like.



Hiking.

Patrol activities.

Making fires and cooking damper.

Probably going on camps and stuff like that.

Going on different kind of camps with other groups around the area.

I went on something called 'Scout hike.'



Camp that was it.

Cuboree.

Being with my friends

The friendships that Scouting members made at Scouts were instrumental to their enjoyment of the activities and programs. For many of the members the friendships that they made were more important than the activities themselves.



My favourite thing is to hang out with my friends and go camping.



Being with my friends and doing the knot tie.



Socialising with other people and making new friends.



Running around and playing tip with friends. Free time.

Active games

The active games played at Scouts were among former Scouting member's favourite activities. The former Scouting members group preferred the practical and active components of the Scouting experience.



Sport.

I really don't know. Dodgeball.

Abseiling.

Learning and craft

Particularly younger Scouting members found that learning new things and creating craft were among their favourite things about attending Scouts.



Learning about stuff and I like being with all my friends. I like learning about animals and other stuff.

I like crafting, I liked the first camp.

Least Favourite Activity at Scouts

Activities that do not fulfil my interests

While there were many activities that Scouting members enjoyed, the ones that were their least favourite were often due to the fact that they personally did not enjoy as much as others. For each member there was a different activity which did not interest them compared to others. For example dancing, walking and dodge ball were all mentioned.



When we have to dance. You have to paint and refill the holes.

My least favourite thing is playing dodge ball.

My least favourite thing is boomerang walk. You split up in groups and you have to listen ... it's just boring.

Having a fire. The smoke is not good for me.



Having to put up tents in the rain on camps and being cold.

Doing knots on camps – just takes a long time.

When you are camping and it starts raining and you get saturated and have to put up the tents – our leaders do it for us.

For some of the older members it was that they felt that they did not have the opportunity to earn a large range of badges or that one member did not enjoy his induction.



Not getting badges.

Getting chucked in the River Colo for my induction.

Time spent without activities

Many of the Scouting members, and particularly former Scouting members thoroughly enjoyed the times at Scouts that were action filled and exciting. Therefore, for some of this group their least favourite times at Scouts was when they were sitting around and not engaging practical activities.



I don't like the closing parade. It ends there and basically they dismiss you and you have to wait for one more week to come back again.



Not doing many activities. Most nights we just didn't really do anything. I would have liked more than anything the practical stuff for Scouting.

I didn't really like going outside to the playground just staying there... I would have liked more campfires outside with sausages and marshmallows.

The paperwork.

Just sitting there not doing much. Not enough activities.

Social issues within the group

Social issues within the troop were at times hard for Scouting members. Whether they felt a leader was being 'too bossy' or they weren't included by other members, these times were the least favourite of current and former Scouting members.



Splitting up from my friends.

I don't like to be apart from my friends, when we go into little groups I like it.



When the leaders get really bossy.

One time two people were swinging a really big rope and they were going too fast so I tripped over.



In the father's day thing we had to make flowerpots for them – I always just sat out. In the first stage a boy kept pushing me down to the ground and every time I tried to get up he pushed me down again, and the teacher was rude to me.

I was next in line to the leaders and I was about to become a Scout leader. They picked this one girl and she was younger than me so I never got to be a leader.

Enjoy the whole experience

One younger Scouting member was unable to decide on of their least favourite time at Scouts and shared that it was 'always fun.'



I like doing everything. It is always fun.

Learning how to Make Friends at Scouts

Many already had friends who attended Scouts

Some of the Scouting members already had friends who attended Scouts that they knew before they started, this gave them confidence to join Scouts as they knew they would know someone there.



My friends are already there.

Currently there has been a lot of friends of mine coming to Scouts.



Because there are heaps of friends there.



Well most of us knew each other. So we were already right by names.

Activities help you get to know people

The majority of Scouting members and many of the former Scouting members stated that partaking in Scout's activities such as camping and active games was a good way to get to know others.



Depends, it is sometimes hard and sometimes easy to make friends.

Yes, they try and help you.

At the start you invite people over and they decide if they want to stay or not. If they stay you have a lot of friends.

Yes because when you play the games you get to know them.

It kind of does, I've been making more friends at Scouts and after that I made more friends at Scout.



Definitely – get to work with them and actually talk with each other socialising a bit and finding out likes and dislikes. Working with them increases trust and you can meet their friends.

They're all older than me but it doesn't matter, we are friends anyway.



Well if I shared a tent with someone I would've probably made friends with them or it would've been awkward sharing a tent with someone I don't know. Otherwise what would you do? Ignore them?

However one older Scouting member found it was not always easy to make friends in activities.



Sometimes you can make friends in group activities but sometimes you can't.

It can be hard at Scouts if you don't make friends

Particularly the former Scouting members found that it was hard to enjoy Scouts if they did not have friends as it could lead to them being bullied or not being able to participate in activities.



I couldn't always fit in normally – I usually have one solid friend because I generally get pushed away so I felt sad sometimes.

We had one kid in our group always giving me a hard time but then he got expelled from his school and didn't come any more and that is good.



If you don't make a lot of friends – a lot – like an army – then you get bullied. I only had two friends and like five bullies.

Yeah it made it a little bit easier because we were all in the same situation. We knew we would have to make friends or it would be hard, because you're in a tent with the same people the whole time.

Yeah I guess because you needed to make friends or you wouldn't get to know people and it would make it harder to do activities.

You have to make friends so you don't get bored. I've got like 150 friends around the world.

Making Friends

Easier to make friends at school than at Scouts

The majority of participants, particularly former Scouting members found it easier to make friends at school rather than at Scouts mainly due to the time spent with them every day.



More time with school people so it's easier.

School – more people and more time to learn their names.

School (general).

Because you see them every day at school rather than once a week.

You're with them all the time and if you go on school camp you get to know them more.

Really every class in stage two I'm friends with because I see them a lot.

There's much more people at school than at Scouts.

Some of the older Scouting members found it an easier or similar experience to make friends at Scouts rather than at school. For these members it was that they were able to be friends with a wider range of people and had extended periods of time with them on camps.



Scouts – at school you choose some friends and stick with them whereas on Scouts people generally all choose to go so they want to meet people.

On camps you can socialise more than at school.

Both – if you go on camps then you have a lot of spare time where you can get to know a person and at school you have that time every day.

Both – both have group activities.

RETENTION

Changes in the social make-up of the troop was one of the key reasons why current Scouting members would, and former Scouting members had left. This could be friends leaving or a change in leader within the group.

Leaving Scouts

Friends leaving Scouts

Many of the older Scouting members would leave if their friends left, and for many of the former Scouting members that was the reason that they left. A large factor in the enjoyment for Scouting members was spending time with and making new friends, naturally if their friends left they would feel less connected to Scouts.



If my best friend left I would leave.



It depends on which friends.

If they left I would stay for a little longer until I turned 15 and left.

I would leave with my friends.

I'd be influenced by them because they are my whole age group – everyone else is younger.

My friends would influence me.

I would leave Scouts if my friends had left and I didn't want to be by myself

I would leave if all my friends left or we got a bad leader.

I'd leave if all my friends left.

Other current Scouting members are connected enough into Scouts that they would not leave even if their friends left. There was a resilient attitude with some that they would feel comfortable making new friends if their current friends left.



No I would not leave if my friends at Scouts left.



You can make new friends if your old friends leave.

It wouldn't really matter to me because I really like Scouts.

One older Scouting member did not feel as though they had friends at Scouts to influence them to leave.



I've got no friends to really influence me. That's the sad part of this conversation.

Would only leave if something drastic happened

Some of the older Scouting members jokingly pointed out that they would not leave Scouts unless something extremely bad happened to them.



If my first try of hand gliding was an epic fail.

If my life depended on it.

If I really hurt myself in the classroom and I don't want to do it again.



Someone would need to knock my tooth out for me to leave Scouts.

I would leave Scouts if someone punched me.

Change in leader

The importance of the leader to the Scouts program is demonstrated by the fact that some of the older Scouting members would leave if all their current leaders left.



I would leave if we got a new leader.

I would leave if all the good leaders left or if I turn 15.

If all the leaders left.



I left because the leaders weren't very good.

Change in Scouting program

If there was a drastic change in Scouting activities or in the social makeup of the group, current Scouting members would be more likely to leave the program. In particular this was no longer offering hikes and Jamboree.



Mean members.

If some of the mean kids at school would go and join and would do bad stuff to me.



If they stopped doing Scout hikes and Jamboree I would leave because I like the activities and meeting people from other patrols.

If they didn't have Jamboree.

Former Scouts leaving

Try a new activity outside of Scouts

Some of the former Scouting members left to try a new co-curricular activity such as army cadets or sailing. For one member this was due to them being left out at Scouts, for another it was that they wanted to try something new.



I wanted to try something new and just got bored. I went to Cubs first and then in Scouts activities they left me out. I do Army Cadets now, it's better.

I wanted to try new activities so went to sailing.

There was a range of other reasons why former Scouts left such as the late nights, the insects outside and bullying.



Because it goes too late. I can't get to sleep after. I have to take a sleeping tablet.

The mozzies. And there was a bright light that attracted them.

If I wasn't getting bullied, I liked some of the activities but mostly it was writing down things. And the girl who got picked as leader was the leader's daughter.

Friends leaving Scouts



I left Scouts because I was bullied and I was alone, and because my friend left.

I left because my friend was leaving and we didn't do many activities. It was a bit of both.

Parent or Scouting member decision to leave

Shared decision with Parents involvement to leave Scouts

The majority of former Scouting members explained that it was a joint decision between them and their parents to leave Scouts. A small portion of the parents also wanted their child to leave Scouts due to the late pick up times and the volunteering required by the parents.



A bit of both for us, because she (mum) didn't like having to do the volunteering. And the paperwork was mostly the reason. You wouldn't think that you would get out of school and have to do more writing.

I was scared that I would get bullied even more. And his (the bully's) mum didn't care.

It was mainly mine because my parents wanted me to do my decision.

It was partly mine partly my parent's, the parades ran late because they were unorganised. They had to pick up my sister from things after.

It was mine and my mums and I got addicted to my iPad halfway through going to Scouts. And I got addicted to my dog.

Some of the former Scouting members felt it was their own decision to leave Scouts and that their parents let them decide to leave.



It was my decision to leave Scouts. Just me. They said why not? Why not? I was getting bullied and my mum wanted to talk to his mum.

Mine. I didn't let my parents choose.

Parents would influence some of the current Scouting member's decision to leave while others felt they would make the decision themselves.



Would decide together.

They leave it up to us.

I would never let my parents make that decision.

REMAINING RELEVANT IN CHANGING TIMES

Skills learnt at Scouts

Outdoor recreation and survival skills

Current and former Scouting members listed a number of skills that they had learnt over their time in Scouts. The skills most valuable to members were outdoor recreation and survival skills such as lighting a fire, using a map and tying knots.



Tent setting up.

Survival skills.

Making fire and good camper.

How to use a compass and how to do knots.



How to use a map.

How to do knots like the reef knot.

They taught us how to do the knot that goes you pull yourself up like rock climbing.

Mapping, compass work, knots.

I learnt everything because I got the grey wolf at the end. You learn how to use a compass and light fires.

Life skills

Although many of the Scouting members did not see the broader picture of the skills they learnt at Scouts, some of the older Scouting members learnt skills that are applicable in other areas of their life, not only outdoor recreation.



First aid.

I learnt lots of different life skills.

Teamwork

Skills helping later in life

Practical skills learnt at Scouts are useful depending on the career path you take

The older and former Scouts felt that some of the skills they learnt at Scouts could be useful to them in the future depending on the career path that they take.



Knots can be helpful in many ways.



Depends what you do in the future.

Learning how to use a compass is pretty useful if you get lost.

We got to make our own compass with a lighter and melted it to how we wanted. We used poison to make it rotate. That was one good thing.

Well I guess knots if you joined the Navy. And how to light a fire – you couldn't learnt that at school.

I learnt how the compasses are made. Paperclip and metal. Maybe helpful, depends what I do in the future.

A small minority of older Scouting members did not see a future use for some of the skills that they had learnt at Scouts. One Scouting member saw the value in Scouts being an international organisation and the opportunities that this could bring.



I don't think square lashings will help in my future.

You're welcome at any Scout hall around the world.

Point of difference of Scouts

In comparison to school and other co-curricular activities, older and former Scouting members identified some topics and experience that they could only get at Scouts.



Only at Scouts – other groups don't get out that much. Scouts is doing stuff with the outside world.

There are more leaders to help you at Scouts.

Notably former and some older Scouting members felt that they were able to learn some of the same skills and earn some of the same experience they learnt at Scouts at school or other activities.



Other places too-at my school we do first aid.



Depends, sometimes you may learn about knots in science.

You can learn a lot of what you learn at Scouts at school or from family members.

In Science lessons sometimes you can see how the eye works...We wouldn't do that at Scouts.

Technology focus

Technology is rarely used at Scouts

Current Scouting members and former Scouting members did not use technology during their time at Scouts, or used it very minimally.



No we do not use technology at Scouts.

We do movie nights at the end of the year.

They occasionally use projectors.



Some leaders use their phones as a compass.

No you don't use technology at Scouts.



One time I called my mum, which is the only technology I have used there.

They didn't have the iPad there.

You aren't allowed to bring anything like an iPad.

You had to put it in your bag.

I put mine in my jumper for an emergency.

Scouts is a welcome break from technology

Principally the current Scouting members found that Scout was a good time for them to have a break from technology. Some reasons for this were that they felt that they had enough time playing with technology at home and that they could enjoy the outdoor activities more without the distraction of technology.



No, I prefer to be outside. It is nice to have a break from it.

I would not like to use technology, you need to wait until the next level. And the unlimited technology is just too much.

I won't like it, I have heaps of types of technology at home. You can survive without technology. If you are at Scout there is no time for it.

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In some areas yes, others no – we could use some technology with hiking (can use more technology there like compasses) – on actual camps no because you don't get the feeling of being in the wild otherwise.

I prefer technology more outside of Scouts.



I thought that it was more like being in the wildlife and going outside and camping without technology.

Other participants disagreed, particularly former Scouting members. Some of these participants liked learning online and would have preferred to use an electronic device to write rather than handwriting.



I would, because I want to know about lots of stuff. I like learning via technology.



I don't think it should be banned but in patrol activities in public places we should be able to.

It could have made it good.



They could have had an electronic roll call.

They could've used a computer instead of making us write.

To type down.

Instead of carrying a lot of sheets they could have given us an iPad, or we could've brought our own from home.

It would be much easier if we went online than switching off.

Scouts teaches you skills that technology can't

Of the current and former Scouting members who were not interested in using technology at Scouts, many of them felt that they could learn by experience rather than through technology.



You won't have chargers in the wild.

Yeah – better to learn by experience.

You wouldn't have the hands on experience.



I know how to test a battery by dropping it on the ground.

With technology you could be watching a video on how to light a fire easily but it could be a hoax or photo-shopped so it looks like they are doing something they are not.

However some disagreed stating that it depended on the activity whether technology or practical teaching was most effective.



Depends on the activity.



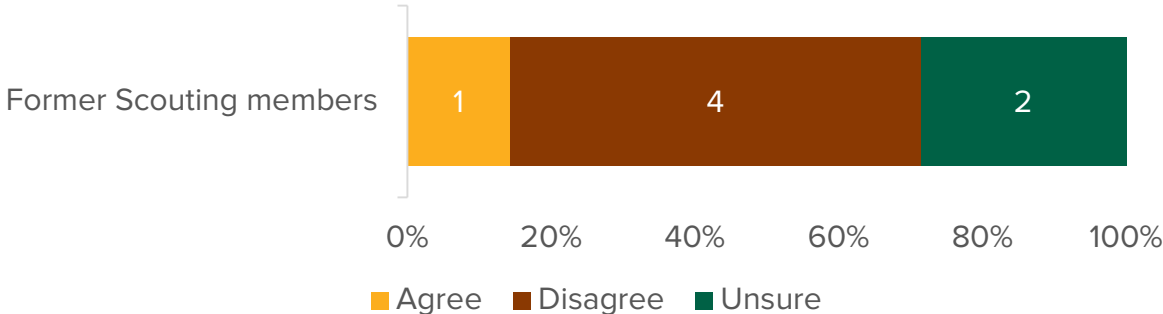
We could have searched on YouTube how to make a fire easily.

STATEMENTS

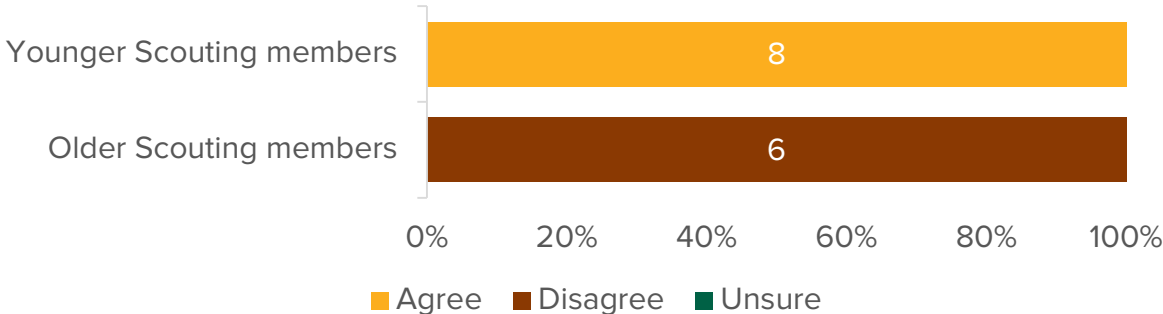
Scouting members were given the opportunity to vote on a series of statements and to indicate whether they agreed, disagreed or were unsure about the two options.

Enjoyment

"I really liked going to Scouts."

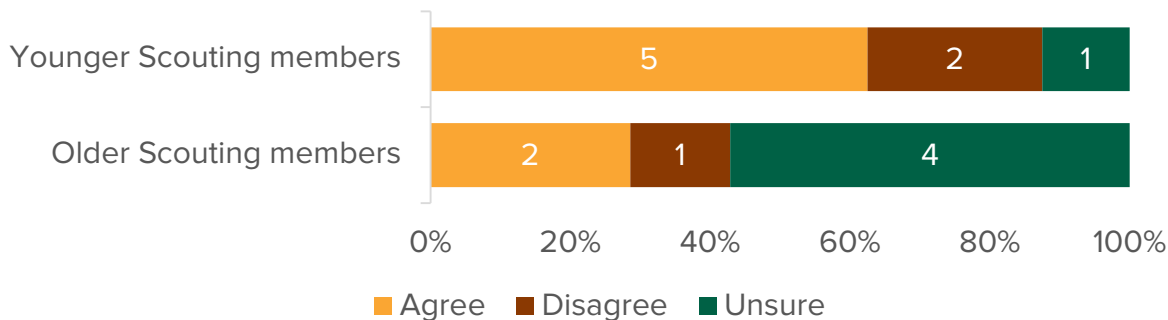


"I love going to Scouts."



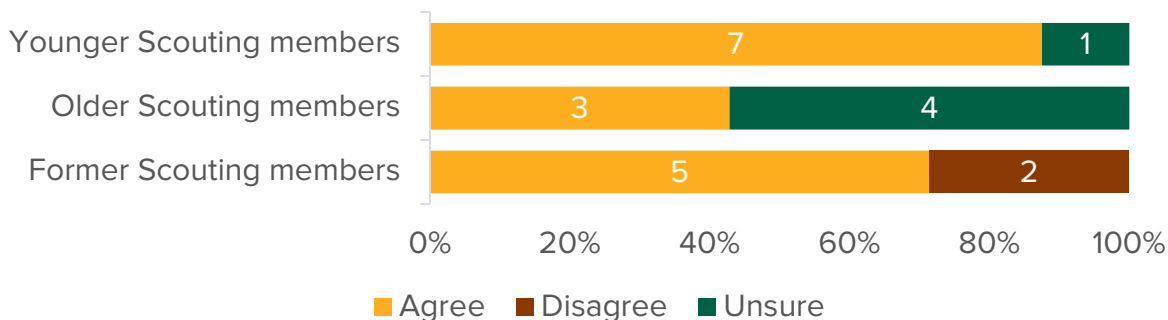
Friendship

"I have lots of friends in Scouts"



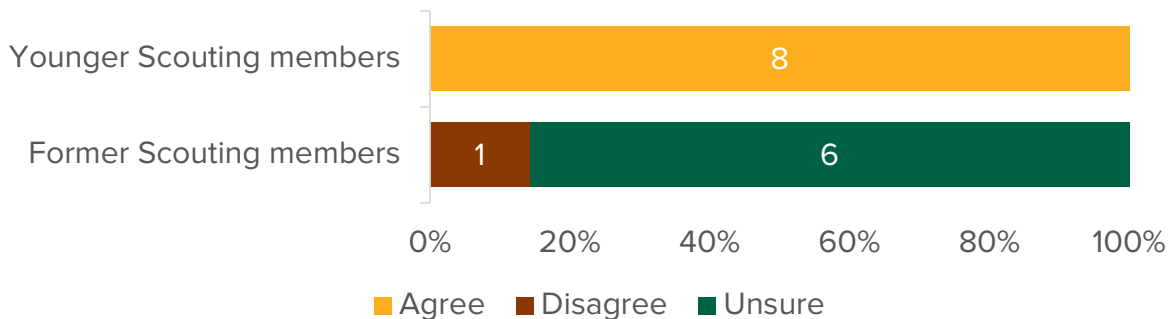
Leaders

"I really like my instructor."

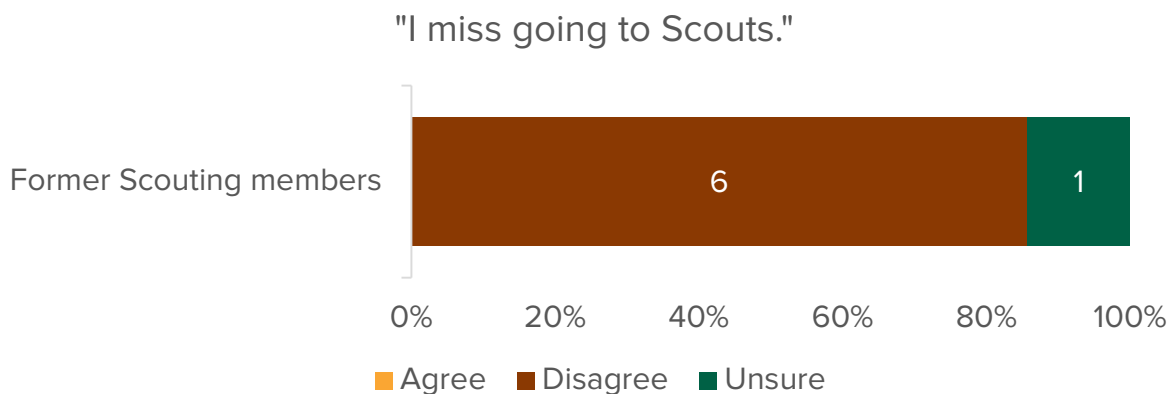


Learning

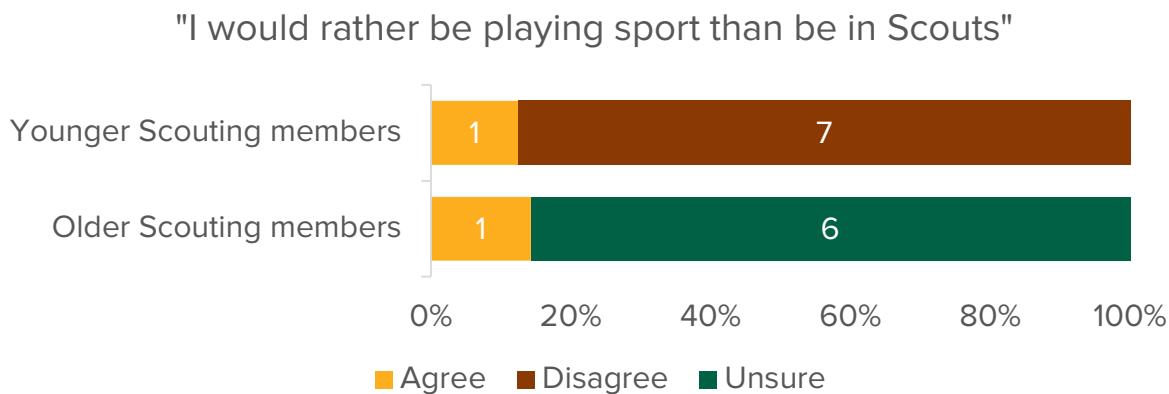
"I learn lots of new things at Scouts."



Missing Scouts



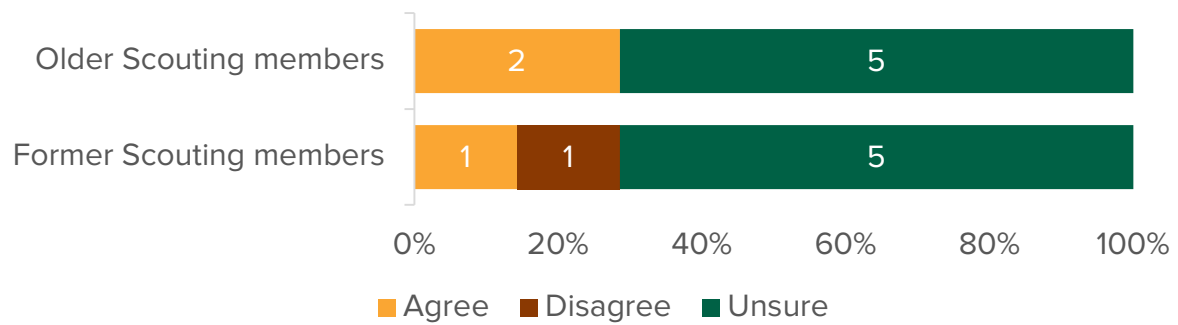
Sport or Scouts



I would choose sport because I have been in cross country and I am a very good runner.

Skills

"Skills from Scouts will help me later in life"



If I want to go camping I know how to put a tent up.

If I become a fisherman, I need to know how to tie up a boat.

If I go camping sometimes when I am on my own I don't really know what animals are outside and I need to know between a fox and a wolf.

IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements Scouts could make

Improvements in leaders

Older and former Scouting members suggested that improvements could be made in the leaders. For some this was leaders who understood them, had control over the other kids and allowed everyone a chance at being a leader.



Better leaders.

Younger leaders who understand more about kids these days and how we think.

More control over the kids – the leaders don't pay attention to much, they need to stop bad behaviour.

Nicer leaders, more control, no swearing.



There should be no leaders, wait no we need leaders.

They got all the big kids and the bullies to be the leaders. We would do relays to build our own canoe and when I asked what to do he said 'you should be on the loser's team.'

Make sure everyone gets a turn to be a leader. Once when I asked him what to do he said 'Just sit there. We don't want you here.'

Improvements to the facilities

Younger and older Scouting members alike had a number of improvements they would like made to the Scouting facilities. These included a bigger Scout hall, a larger outdoor area and cleaning of the facilities.



Planting more trees, and you can go for fake bushwalks.

Having a proper fireplace (once it started raining when we wanted to have a fire and it was all smoky).

The building is pretty small.

We have very limited space outside the Scout hall, I wish it would be a forest.



Better facilities to do activities in – Scout halls – we always had the fear of a funnel web or redback spider.

Maybe a Scout hall clean up.

Not so many rocks at camping where trying to put up tents.

Improvements to the program

Improvements to the Scouts program were suggested, particularly by former Scouting members. The main area that they emphasised they would like to see more of was practical activities and 'excursions.' Another improvement suggested was more interactions with other Scouting troops and competitions with them.



More outside games.



More learning and more learning about animals.

Less having to tie knots.

Maybe a camp that goes for a week (instead of weekend) I went on Cuboree which went for a week and that was good.

More interactions with different troops to do more activities together. More meet ups basically. It doesn't happen very much, mostly on camps.



Make it more competitive.

Mine is already more competitive – you can make more enemies if it is competitive.

Make it more Scouting.

Go out more.

Go on more excursions.

Maybe they should take you through the history of Scouting.

We can go to other Scout groups and do games and see who can make fire the fastest and meet them.

They should make you go into the bush with your Scout team and give you sticks and leaves and rocks to put around it and see who can be the most creative.

Competitive with different Scouts around NSW.

When we did sport they put all the best people in the same team. They made sure they always did things first before others.

Improvements in social problems within the troops

Former Scouting member had a range of suggestions regarding social problems within their troop. They suggested a buddy system be enforced where they are able to have someone who is looking after them for the first few weeks. The former Scouting members felt there was favouritism within Scouting families and would have liked that to stop.



An improvement they should make-they should probably give you someone like a buddy, they should probably put you in little groups for a few weeks so you can get to know them. I was sitting at a desk alone.

That's where my bully came in. He was like 'you went for the worst group-black' he pushed me and I had to go to sick bay and nobody took care of me. They just said 'sit on the bed and your mum will be here soon.'

They all favoured their sons.

Not to favour their own family.

Yeah like they took more interest in the badges for their own family. They made sure they (their family) all got the badges and didn't care about anyone else.