

# Scouts Australia Youth Program Review



25 June 2015

Fellow Scouting members and friends of Scouting,

The Youth Program Review (YPR) is conducting a wide variety of research to ensure we develop the best possible youth program for our future youth members. This research features a multi-faceted approach using our own teams, external demographers and researchers, exploration of previous research and working with other similar National Scout Organisations.

The following research was completed by a team of volunteers as part of Stage 3 of the YPR, exploring a whole range of information to build some foundations for our future “one program”. The questions for these topics were derived from feedback and related discussion and workshopping of initial YPR research.

“One Program” is the mantra under which this stage of the review has worked, recognising that although we use age sections, these must be strongly linked and united in working progressively towards a common goal, facilitating the development of individual young people.

Stage 3 was all about developing the big-picture concepts of a future youth program for Australian Scouting, concepts that will drive the ideas and detail that will emerge from Stage 4.

The discussion contained in this report has been supported for further development in Stage 4. No decision has been made to implement any proposals contained within.

Share your considered and constructive thoughts at [ypr.scouts.com.au](http://ypr.scouts.com.au); through discussion great ideas can evolve.

Yours in Scouting,

YPR team



## DISCUSSION PAPER

|                      |  |                      |             |
|----------------------|--|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Title</b>         | <i>Discussion on a Progressive Award Scheme</i>  | <b>YPR Paper No.</b> | 3-8-3       |
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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During Stage 3 of the Youth Program Review the team behind this report looked at the Award Scheme across all age sections of the program.

Research results, literature reviews (including reviews of other National Scout Organisations (NSOs)), and surveys of current youth member opinions were considered in this review by the working group. Common themes and inspiring comments reinforced the core elements of Scouting; personal challenge, adventure and social development remain ideals described by our youth members.

There is a clear need for the award scheme to be delivered more consistently across the country. A number of issues have been highlighted such as badges being given out unduly, youth not being recognised for their accomplishments in a timely manner and perceived injustices: an apparent result of differences in delivery across different geographic locations.

The award scheme needs to be simple, and far removed from a school environment. Too much written work and not enough outdoor opportunities are a deterrent to young people engaging with the award scheme. The award scheme needs to be flexible and allow Scouts to drive their own progress, and should be delivered such that Scouts can participate without drawing time away from study and school work.

Further investigation and development of an amended award scheme is recommended in order to increase youth engagement. During this process, it is important to consider the role of the award scheme as part of a greater Scouting program and ensure that it is serving its purpose.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the current Scouts Australia award scheme across all sections as a whole. While each section review has assessed its respective award scheme, this paper looks at the topic from a more holistic approach so that we are not missing the forest for the trees.

The Youth Program Policy (WOSM, 2014)<sup>1</sup> defines the Youth Program as “the totality of what young people do in scouting (the activities), how it is done (the Scout Method) and the reason why it is done (the purpose). It is realised through a partnership between youth members and adult leaders, taking into account the participants' interests, needs and abilities”<sup>2</sup>. The Youth Program of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century needs to offer a progressive process of self-education and personal development for children and young people in full consideration of this definition. This paper explores how the Award Scheme helps meet these needs and how it can continue to be relevant to youth members.

This report acts as a discussion paper for further investigation of the topic of a progressive award scheme beyond Stage 3 of the YPR.

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### TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT AND SCOUTING

- “Adults” (in Scouting) - All those whose main responsibility is to ensure that Scouting remains a learning environment, be it by playing educational roles or support ones.<sup>3</sup>
- “Branch” – The section of Scouts Australia within one state of Australia (e.g. SA Branch).
- “Group / Scout Group” - An administrative grouping of different sections in a small geographic area. In general, all sections in a Group meet at the same hall, all members wear the same Group scarf (except

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<sup>1</sup> [http://scout.org/sites/default/files/library\\_files/programmepolicy\\_e.pdf](http://scout.org/sites/default/files/library_files/programmepolicy_e.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://scout.org/youth\\_involvement](http://scout.org/youth_involvement)

<sup>3</sup> World Organisation of the Scout Movement, *Position Paper – Unlocking Our Potential*, World Scout Bureau, Geneva, June 2014, p1

in Queensland, where they wear a state scarf), and often members will progress from one of the Group's sections in to the subsequent sections at the same Group. Not all Groups across Australia have all sections, but in general most have more than one. Groups are usually named by their geographic area, e.g. "1st Windy Valley Scout Group", and have a Group Leader who coordinates the efforts of the section Leaders. This term should not be confused with a group (no capital), which has the same plain English meaning as always and can still be used as normal to denote collections of items or people.

- "Movement, the" - The Movement of the Scout Association
- "NSO" – National Scout Organisation
- "Scout section" - The youth section catering for 11-14 year-olds.
- "Scouting" - The activities provided by Scouts Australia.
- "Scouts Australia" - The organisation of the Scouts Association of Australia and its branches.
- "Section" - An age-range grouping of Scouting youth members. May refer to all youth members within that age range across Australia or another geographical division, or to one formation of that age range from an individual Group.
- "Small team system" - An element of the Scout Method: the non-formal self-education system. Young people are grouped in to small teams, generally of 4-7 youth members from the same section, and work together to complete activities or tasks. The teams may be a permanent part of a section's organisational structure (a 'home' small team) or may be formed for an individual activity or event. There is usually a formal leadership structure within the small team, with a designated youth member as leader and potentially another as an assistant. The small team system is also often known as the Patrol System.
- "WOSM" - The World Organisation of the Scout Movement.

### 3 METHODS

The team used a variety of research techniques to gather and collate information in order to contribute to answer the underlying question "Define the characteristics of a dynamic and adventurous advancement (award) scheme that meets the developmental needs of our members through one program". Throughout stage three of the Youth Program Review (YPR), the team conducted research primarily through literature analysis and survey data to address this question.

It should be noted that during the course of Stage 3, the original list of guiding questions was amended and trimmed to those below, with the view that a further review of this topic encompassing those questions removed, would continue beyond this stage of the review.<sup>4</sup>

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

This table is a breakdown of the guiding research questions and the research methods used with each.

| Question  | Research Methods <i>(described in detail below)</i> |
|---|---|
| What are the key skills and qualities that need to be developed in our youth members, across the age range?     | Literature Review                                   |
| What is required to ensure a developmental award scheme that is consistent and progressive across all sections? | Literature Review                                   |
| How do we ensure that an award scheme is adventurous, in line with the program?                                 | Literature Review                                   |

<sup>4</sup> [APPENDIX A](#)

|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Is a suitable model already available?   | Literature Review                   |
| Should we treat different types of skills differently in the award scheme? E.g. "Scouting Skills" vs. Leadership vs. PERMA (refer Seligman)                      | Group Discussion                    |
| Does industry certification fit in?  | Key Informants                      |
| How do we accommodate youth with special needs?  | Key Informants                      |
| Do we want a single award scheme to retain a distinctive character, or symbolic framework, for each section?   | Literature Review                   |
| What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current Venturer and Rover award schemes (the most recently revised)? Has there been an improvement in achievement? | Literature Review, Past Surveys     |
| How do we ensure the award scheme stays relevant?  | Group Discussion                    |
| How can we ensure youth can enter the award scheme at any level?   | Group Discussion, Literature Review |

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## ANALYSIS OF OTHER DOCUMENTS & RESEARCH

The World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) is the recognised global authority on Scouting, and therefore one of the first sources referred to when conducting research. An analysis was conducted of the WOSM Constitution<sup>5</sup> and WOSM's Renewed Approach to Programme (RAP)<sup>6</sup>. Scouts Australia Policy and Rules 2014<sup>7</sup> was used as a key reference, as well as the work and publications of other National Scouting Organisations (NSOs) such as Scouts Canada and Scouting Ireland.

Scouts Australia had commissioned work from two research companies, BDRC Jones Donald and McCrindle, to assist in the review. These reports were analysed for relevant information, and compared with data from other NSOs.

Early in the YPR, the National Youth Council (NYC) aimed to answer the following question to assist with the development of the Youth Program Review plan:

*"What are the burning issues that the members of Scouts Australia believe must be covered in the Youth Program Review?"<sup>8</sup>*

From this central question the NYC designed five key questions that were posed to Scouting members resulting in 650 responses ranging from Joey Scouts to Leaders. The results are detailed in the report collated by S. Tyas. These questions asked the respondents to identify:

- Strengths and weaknesses of the Scouting program
- What issues should be covered in the YPR
- What should and should not be changed by the review

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## SURVEYING

### AUSTRALIAN VENTURE 2015

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A series of mini-surveys for the Youth Program Review was undertaken during the Venture whereby Venturers were encouraged to complete a quick survey whilst waiting in meal queues or similar. Each mini-survey comprised a different set of questions, with many (but not all) being grouped according to a particular YPR research topic.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://scout.org/sites/default/files/library\\_files/WOSM\\_Constitution\\_EN.pdf](http://scout.org/sites/default/files/library_files/WOSM_Constitution_EN.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [http://scout.org/sites/default/files/library\\_files/RAP\\_Toolbox\\_EN.pdf](http://scout.org/sites/default/files/library_files/RAP_Toolbox_EN.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.scouts.com.au/resources-and-information-for-members/online-library/policy-rules>

<sup>8</sup> Tyas, S., 'What are the burning issues that the members of Scouts Australia believe must be covered in the Youth Program Review?', Scouts Australia National Youth Program Review, no.1, 2014, p1

## 4 RESULTS

### BDRC JONES DONALD<sup>9</sup>

Market research company *BDRC Jones Donald* conducted research into retention of members in the 10-15 year age range. Six focus groups were held with former Scouts and their parents. All groups were held in Victoria in July 2014. They found that the 5 elements essential to acquiring and retaining members were; fun, friends, new skills, adventure, and outdoors.

Being outdoors and active was cited by young people as key to engagement. Many of them mentioned too many nights in the hall and too much knot tying as reasons for becoming bored with the program.

Experiences associated with badges were not necessarily reported as positive. Youth were disappointed by a number of issues relating to badges including leaders giving them out lightly and earning badges but never having them presented. Young people also mentioned that whilst they enjoyed earning badges, wearing them on the uniform was seen as uncool, and that typically badges were more appealing to 'geekier' Scouts.

Suggestions for changes to the badge system included earning awards as a Troop rather than as an individual, having optional badgework time outside of the Scout meeting and management of the badge system online.

BDRC Jones Donald suggest: "If badges are to be continued, Scouts might consider introducing a process to ensure recognition is given when deserved and consistent. There is also opportunity for Scouts to introduce new methods of recognising accomplishments, such as group awards for team work."

### MCCRINDLE

#### MCCRINDLE PHASE 1<sup>10</sup>

Phase 1 research completed by market research company *McCrindle* aimed to provide a general overview of the key challenges faced by Scouts Australia. Three focus groups were run in New South Wales in June 2014, with current and former Scouts and their parents.

#### BADGES AND THE AWARD SCHEME

This research suggested that in general parents found the award scheme beneficial to their children, but they wanted Scouting to remain non-competitive and not simply focussed on the earning of badges. Some parents expressed concern at discrepancies with the number of badges children were earning; suggesting that some children had lots of badges and some children had none.

The extent to which the award scheme motivated young people to be involved in Scouting varied with age, with younger youth more interested than older youth. Parents also suggested that often they feel unqualified to support their child through the award scheme and would rely on the leaders to do this.

There were also a number of mentions of utilising technology and apps to manage badge work. Allowing other Scouts to see what badges you have earned online, as well as teaching and marking of badges managed on phones and tablets.

#### MOST ENJOYABLE AND BENEFICIAL ELEMENTS

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

<sup>9</sup> <http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/bdrc-jones-donald-qual-report-scouts-05-08-2014-final.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/scoutsaustralia-ypr-mccrindle-2014-research-phase-1-1-5.pdf>

children enjoyed all of the outdoor and hands-on elements of scouting the most – the camping, campfires, games, cooking, and the bushwalking.

The skills most valuable to members were outdoor recreation and survival skills such as lighting a fire, using a map and tying knots. For some of the youth participants, principally Scouting members, the outdoors was seen as a welcome break from technology. Some reasons provided included the feeling that they had enough time playing with technology at home and that they could enjoy the outdoor activities more without the distraction of technology.

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#### MCCRINDLE PHASE II<sup>11</sup>

When non-Scouting parents were asked what they would most want a program to provide, 'outdoor adventures' superseded options for arts, music, sporting competitions, academic learning, or child/youth events.

*How important would the following factors be to your decision as a parent in involving your child(ren) in a children's or youth development program?*

Non-Scouting parents would be most interested in involving their children in a development program to see their kids grow (71% stated this was extremely or very important to them), keep their kids active (70%), and get involved at a cost that is not too difficult for them to manage (67%).

Like non-Scouting parents, Scouting parents also agreed that seeing the kids grow and keeping the kids active are the most important factors in involving their children in the Scouts program (84% and 82% deemed these as extremely or very important, respectively).

*If your child(ren) were looking to get involved with a children's or youth development program, how INTERESTED would they be in the following activities?*

Outdoor adventures attracted the highest interest from both non-Scouting and Scouting parents. The research indicates that Scouting parents believe their children would be twice as interested in weekend camps as non-Scouting parents. Scout parents also indicated more interest in large child/youth events than non-Scouting parents.

Scouting Parents were asked how interested each of their children would be in a range of extracurricular activities. Reported interest in outdoor activities does not show any strong trends across age groups, with at least 4 in 5 parents reporting extreme or very high levels of interest for their children for all ages. Interest in art or music instruction and performances peaked at age 8 (56%) and declined steadily by age 17 (41%). The lowest interest was shown by 18 year-olds. Reported interest in weekend camps does not show any strong trends across age groups, with at least 4 in 5 parents reporting extreme or very high levels of interest for their children for all ages.

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#### AUSTRALIAN VENTURE 2015

The Scouts Australia 16<sup>th</sup> Australian Venture was run at Woodhouse Activity Centre in South Australia between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2015. Several surveys were conducted at the Venture in regards to the award scheme and summaries are provided below.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/scouts-australia-ypr-mccrindle-phase-2-report-website.pdf>

### Are you actively participating in the Scouts Australia Award Scheme in your current Section?

| Answer Options         | Response Percent | Response Count |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Yes (please answer Q4) | 66.7%            | 76             |
| No (please answer Q5)  | 38.6%            | 44             |

### If yes, why?

| Answer Options                           | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Personal Choice                          | 69.9%            | 51             |
| Leaders Influence, Direction, Motivation | 19.2%            | 14             |
| Parental Influence                       | 11.0%            | 8              |
| Sense of Achievement                     | 42.5%            | 31             |
| Help with Schooling                      | 19.2%            | 14             |
| Professional Qualifications              | 24.7%            | 18             |

### If no, why not?

| Answer Options                 | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Too busy                       | 37.0%            | 17             |
| It's boring                    | 15.2%            | 7              |
| Too hard                       | 10.9%            | 5              |
| Too time-consuming             | 21.7%            | 10             |
| Doesn't meet my needs          | 6.5%             | 3              |
| My Unit/Crew etc doesn't do it | 19.6%            | 9              |
| Other (please specify)         | 32.6%            | 15             |

### What aspects do you think should be covered by an Award Scheme?

| Answer Options  | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Adventurous Activities                                    | 75.4%            | 86             |
| Environment   | 42.1%            | 48             |
| Leadership  | 66.7%            | 76             |
| Citizenship   | 50.9%            | 58             |
| Lifestyle   | 43.9%            | 50             |
| Community Involvement                                     | 44.7%            | 51             |
| VET Certification   | 36.8%            | 42             |
| Community Recognition of Achievement                      | 33.3%            | 38             |
| Professional Skills                                       | 53.5%            | 61             |
| Areas of Personal Growth (Social, Physical, Intellectual, | 54.4%            | 62             |
| Clear Progression between Sections                        | 37.7%            | 43             |

### Who does most of the "planning" in your program?

| Answer Options           | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Adults                   | 16.7%            | 12             |
| Youth                    | 45.8%            | 33             |
| Adults and Youth (50/50) | 37.5%            | 27             |

| Do you actively review your program? |                  |                |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options                       | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes                                  | 37.0%            | 27             |
| No                                   | 26.0%            | 19             |
| Occasionally                         | 37.0%            | 27             |

| What are the best parts of the current Award Scheme? |                  |                |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options                                       | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Self paced   | 44.2%            | 159            |
| Achievable   | 25.8%            | 93             |
| Sense of achievement                                 | 37.8%            | 136            |
| Individual choices/preferences                       | 36.1%            | 130            |
| New experiences                                      | 42.2%            | 152            |
| Challenging experiences                              | 34.7%            | 125            |
| Adventurous  | 31.9%            | 115            |
| Lots of variety                                      | 39.2%            | 141            |
| Other (please specify)                               | 9.4%             | 34             |
| <i>answered question</i>                             |                  | <b>360</b>     |

Other responses here include the Rover Link Badge, and Helping you get a Job

| What are the worst parts of the current Award Scheme? |                  |                |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options  | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Time consuming  | 57.1%            | 200            |
| Too complex   | 26.0%            | 91             |
| Too challenging                                       | 10.9%            | 38             |
| Too difficult to understand                           | 19.4%            | 68             |
| Too much paperwork                                    | 58.6%            | 205            |
| Unachievable  | 8.3%             | 29             |
| Individual choices/preferences                        | 7.1%             | 25             |
| Too adventurous                                       | 6.0%             | 21             |
| Not adventurous enough                                | 11.4%            | 40             |
| Other (please specify)                                | 12.0%            | 42             |
| <i>answered question</i>                              |                  | <b>350</b>     |
| <i>skipped question</i>                               |                  | <b>15</b>      |

Other Responses include, Unit Council Passing Stuff is Hard, Too Much Paperwork, and Remaining Motivated if it is Not Popular in the Unit, Managing Time, Non- Variable Expectations / Requirements for Youth with Disabilities, Extremely Time Consuming and Expensive, and finally Not Dyslexic Friendly.

| Does the Award Scheme enhance your experience in Scouting? |                  |                |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options   | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes  | 78.9%            | 276            |
| No   | 21.1%            | 74             |
| Any comments   |                  | 44             |
| <i>answered question</i>                                   |                  | <b>350</b>     |

Other Responses include, Scouting is the Award Scheme, Doing Badges = Learning and Experience, Some Sections do but not all, Probably but I am Not Doing It, Something to Aim for / Work towards, Helps with Programing, Depends on the Unit, Feels good to get an achievement and makes me what to try harder, I wouldn't do half the courses or activities if I didn't need the badge, Teaches New Skills, Depends on Why you Are in Scouts and Depends on Activities.

| <b>Does the current Award Scheme motivate you to remain in Scouting?</b> |                         |                       |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>  | <b>Response Percent</b> | <b>Response Count</b> |
| Yes  | 54.3%                   | 189                   |
| No   | 45.7%                   | 159                   |
| Any comments   |                         | 39                    |
| <b><i>answered question</i></b>  |                         | <b>348</b>            |

| <b>How flexible do you think the current Award Scheme is?</b> |                            |                          |                            |                      |                           |                       |                       |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>   | <b>Not flexible at all</b> | <b>Slightly flexible</b> | <b>Moderately flexible</b> | <b>Very flexible</b> | <b>Extremely flexible</b> | <b>Rating Average</b> | <b>Response Count</b> |
|   | 33                         | 88                       | 149                        | 59                   | 25                        | 1.87                  | 354                   |
| <b><i>answered question</i></b>                               |                            |                          |                            |                      |                           |                       | <b>354</b>            |

| <b>The Youth Program Review is considering a model whereby the Award Scheme is continuous across all sections, while still providing a top award at each section. Do</b> |                         |                       |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>  | <b>Response Percent</b> | <b>Response Count</b> |
| Yes  | 72.2%                   | 252                   |
| No   | 27.8%                   | 97                    |
| Any comments   |                         | 51                    |
| <b><i>answered question</i></b>  |                         | <b>349</b>            |

Other responses include; Each youth Section has Different Skills levels, best not to lose that too RPL, Rovers Needs more Service, and Joeys More Learning badges, It has been extremely effective in Ireland and provides a high level of achievement, Have to keep publicly well known, as long a achievements are recognised in each section and kids don't miss out on recognition if they miss a section, allows convenient transfer between sections, reduces the overlap, May motive scouts to stay in Scouting, and It would be difficult to change all award schemes.

Other comments that were expressed in the survey include;

- Flexible in that you can choose activities but not flexible in that they must certainly be done properly.
- Adds a lot of pressure on top of the pressures already placed on the people who are attempting to get the awards, like school etc
- I feel like it is a waste of time. I do feel like the proposed model would work better.
- We don't do awards
- The requirements seem quite high.
- There needs to be an easy to access guide about how it all works on a national level.
- I want to do my queens scout award
- I know nothing about the award scheme
- It is too hard for some people to achieve.
- Too many signatures are needed for badges.
- Make it more understandable and easier to find the information.
- Same standards for everyone and uniformity across States in approval

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## BURNING ISSUES REPORT<sup>12</sup>

The National Youth Council (NYC) conducted a survey and used the responses as the basis of this report.

5% of respondents highlighted the need for more badges and for current badges to be updated. It was also highlighted that there are inconsistency in the way that different groups sign off and present badges as well as the varying level of work required to earn a badge.<sup>13</sup>

The report identified a need for Cub Scouts to participate in more activities with other sections and also with other Packs. There was also some interest in one-off badges for the Cub section specifically, citing the attention span of Cubs as an issue for the award scheme. Respondents also felt that there was a time conflict between boomerang work and achievement badges, and some packs have an emphasis on one or the other

The report recommended that there be consistency in the award scheme across Australia, and the right adults be recruited and trained to implement the program. Leaders should be qualified in adventurous activities, and recognition of skills should be streamlined to make it easier. They also suggested building more leadership opportunities into the program for young people.

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## IRISH YOUTH PROGRAM REVIEW

Scouting Ireland in recent years conducted a review of its program in a similar fashion to the YPR here in Australia. From this review they developed a new award scheme which is more self-driven, as outlined below.

Special Interest badges replace the merit badges. They have 5 areas – Skills, Physical, Community, Environment, and Adventure. Each area involves the development of individual goals relating to personal development, determined by the youth member in collaboration with an adult leader. As such, these badges are based on “doing your best”, and maximising a personal standard. Every section has their own colour of these, and an individual can earn 3 badges in each area in each section.

Adventure Skills badges include a set of nine areas, each with nine stages and subsequently not aligned to sections. Camping, Backwoods, Pioneering, Hillwalking, Emergencies, Air Activities, Paddling, Rowing and Sailing are the skills areas chosen to provide a framework for an active and adventurous outdoor program. Competency in specific skills enables members to enjoy a variety of Scouting adventures and activities safely.

The Chief Scout Award is the peak award for each section. This award is tied to Duke of Edinburgh but is reported to be of a higher standard. It requires gaining a specified number of special interest badges and adventure skills, with some additional requirements. Notably, there is an element of flexibility in obtaining this award, with in some circumstances a youth member being permitted to complete it after having recently progressed to the next section.

Chief Scout Award can be worn in section above (in fact, you just keep wearing the highest one, if you get Beavers and don't get Cubs you can keep wearing Beavers in Scouts).

## 5 DISCUSSION & INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

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### ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND QUALITIES

There is clear evidence that both parents and youth want the Scouting program to deliver outdoor skills such as camping, fire lighting, and cooking. As such it seems the award scheme should focus on active practical skills development if it wants to engage young people. This team suggests adventure skills and expeditions be

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<sup>12</sup> <http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/report-ypro1-burning-issues-jan-2014.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p4

included in any future award scheme in line with the focus on “adventurous program” by YPR Stage 3 topic 3-6.

There was some evidence to suggest that older youth members want skills related to leadership, however leadership was not seen as essential by all parents, suggesting that this is something that should be pursued by some, but not all members.

Mission Australia tells us that the top 3 concerns of young people in Australia today are stress, study issues and body image. As such, a case seems to exist for Scouting to endeavour to build resilience and self-confidence amongst its youth members, as well as ensuring that Scouting activities are not contributing to the burden of study and homework by competing for time. Furthermore, future development of the award scheme should take into consideration the changing needs and concerns of the Australian youth population.

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## OUTDOOR AND ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES

One of the major trends across the research on this topic is that Scouting needs to deliver on its promise of outdoor and adventurous activities. Young people and their parents see outdoor learning and adventurous activities as what makes scouting unique. Not enough outdoor activity has been cited as a key reason for members to leave Scouting, and adventurous activities were the top answer when Venturer Scouts were asked to identify what the award scheme should include. Ensuring a sufficient number of outdoor activities are included in the award scheme will allow us to satisfy our key stakeholders and hopefully increase both involvement and retention.

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## PAPERWORK AND DOCUMENTATION

Both current and former youth members cited the amount of writing and paperwork as an issue. Venturer Scouts felt that the worst thing about the award scheme is the amount of paperwork involved. Similarly, many of the past members and some parents interviewed mentioned that they were surprised and disappointed by the amount of writing that was involved in weekly meetings. Learning by doing has been an important element of the Scout Method since 1907, and is key to providing an engaging award scheme.

“The secret of sound education is to get each pupil to learn for himself, instead of instructing him by driving knowledge into him on a stereotyped system.” – Robert Baden-Powell

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## UTILISATION OF TECHNOLOGY

Although generally it is agreed that the absence of technology is a benefit of Scouting, when it comes to management of the award scheme, technology has been a theme throughout the team’s research. Youth members have suggested a need for easily accessible information to assist them with the requirements of the award scheme, parents have suggested wanting a simple way to support their children with badge work, and both youth and parents have mentioned the benefits of an application for smart phones and tablets.

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## CONSISTENCY

Ensuring that the award scheme is delivered consistently across the country as well as in each individual group has been an issue identified by both current and former members. Issues which need to be addressed include leaders ordering badges then not presenting them when they have been earned, and Scout Leaders perceived to be favouring their own children in the group.

Another issue of consistency which stood out was that members perceived badges to sometimes be handed out ‘lightly’ or to not be earned properly. This perceived injustice is a cause of concern for some members, and suggests that clearer guidelines for leaders are required to ensure that everyone is treated fairly when it comes to the award scheme.

The Roving Towards 2020 review<sup>14</sup> addressed the issue of award standards by creating the Baden-Powell Scout Award (BPSA) support team, a possible solution which could be looked into for other sections.

## REVIEW PROCESS

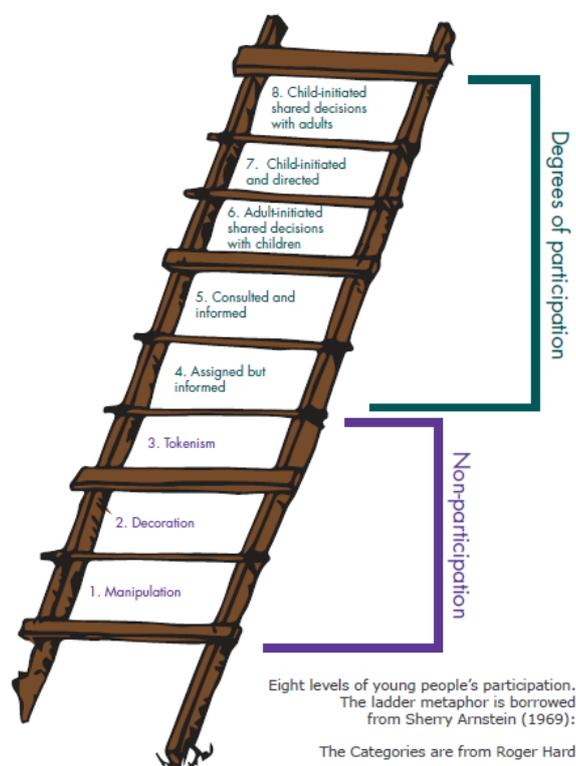
Both the NYC's Burning Issues paper and the McCrindle research identify a need to ensure that the program is constantly reviewed and updated to remain relevant to young people. Ensuring that the award scheme is developed and updated regularly will allow Scouting to stay contemporary.

Both Scouts Canada and Ireland have adopted a model known as "Plan, Do, Review" ([Appendix E](#)) to be used for all Scouting activities. Plan, Do, Review is designed to allow youth to be involved during the entire process, ensuring the program is able to be modified constantly to meet the changing needs of members. The model is simple and can be used to review all aspects of Scouting, including the award scheme.

## YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Baden-Powell observed, in the early stages of Scouting, that youth have a desire for self-direction. He noticed that leaders were getting carried away in the delivery of the Award Scheme.

As has already been referenced, this team spent time reviewing Canada and Ireland's own youth program reviews. Both of these reviews moved towards making their NSOs more youth led and their programs directed more by youth. It is felt that Scouts Australia should consider where they currently sit on Hart's Ladder of Participation<sup>15</sup> below in the context of the Award Scheme, and where its delivery may be best-placed.



*Hart's Ladder of Participation*

<sup>14</sup> <http://ypr.scouts.com.au/perch/resources/final-report-the-rover-review.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> World Organisation of the Scout Movement, World Scout Youth Involvement Policy, 40th World Scouting Conference Slovenia 2014, Document 9, August 2014, viewed on 1 February 2015, [http://scout.org/sites/default/files/Conf%20Doc%209%20WSYIP\\_1.pdf](http://scout.org/sites/default/files/Conf%20Doc%209%20WSYIP_1.pdf)

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## ONE AWARD SCHEME

Young people want a self-paced award scheme that involves new experiences and a sense of achievement. Over 50% of Venturers have highlighted that working to achieve the “Peak Award” is too time consuming and 26% suggest that it is too complex. Members will benefit from a simple award scheme that will provide them with new and relevant experiences that complement the program naturally. Flexibility in the scheme is important, as is ensuring that it can be adapted to suits the needs of everyone (such as those with disabilities and those from many different backgrounds).

Both Scouts Canada and Ireland have moved in the direction of offering “one program” including a continuous award scheme across all sections. This program offers great flexibility and is driven by the young person. It simplifies the award scheme for participants, allowing them to work at their own pace and on their own terms, supported in the process by adults. It also allows members entering the movement at any age to start at a level appropriate to them.

If Scouts Australia was to move towards one award scheme across all sections, it would need to be developed by youth and address the issues identified by this paper.

The NYC’s Burning Issues paper highlighted that in the Cub section specifically, the boomerangs and achievement badges do not seem compatible and as such packs seem to focus on earning either one or the other. Further investigation is required to determine the extent of this issue, though anecdotal evidence suggests that across other sections there are some badges which hold more weight than other.

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## ACHIEVEMENT RATES

The participation and completion rates of the award scheme are often equated with its success. One senior World Scout Committee volunteer suggests that the award scheme should be attainable by all, and achieved by as much as 75% of membership. The Venturer Scout Section Review similarly suggested that the Venturer Award could be achieved by all Venturers who actively participate in the program. This contrasts to an alternate view of the award scheme as recognition of Scouting youth who attain a specified standard.

Any future review should take into consideration the purpose of the award scheme within the program in order to determine what percentage of members should be completing the top award in each section. The reduction of interest in the award scheme as age increases should also be taken into consideration.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Further development of the award scheme is required in order to address the needs of youth members. Development of any future award scheme needs to utilise outdoor activities and minimise written work in order to maximise youth engagement.

There is a clear need to investigate further the inconsistencies and perceived injustices involved in the delivery of the award scheme and address these issues. It is necessary to involve young people in the development of the award scheme and ensure appropriate review processes are put into place to continually update the scheme.

Scouts Australia should determine what the aims of the award scheme are and what role it plays in the greater Scouting program. Once this has been determined, we can begin to more closely analyse our current award scheme, and explore further the merits of adapting existing models such as that of Ireland or Canada.

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## 8 APPENDICES

- A. YPR Plan Stage 3-8 – Revised Version, 22 OCT 2014
- B. Plan, Do , Review Model – YPR 2015

## APPENDIX A YPR PLAN STAGE 3-8 – REVISED VERSION, 22 OCT 2014

3-8 Define the characteristics of a dynamic and adventurous advancement (award) scheme that meets the developmental needs of our members through one program.

This topic is about the **big picture** of the award scheme across all sections. It does not include the minute detailed requirements of each element.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

- What are the key skills and qualities that need to be developed in our youth members, across the age range?
- What is required to ensure a developmental award scheme that is consistent and progressive across all sections?
- How do we ensure that an award scheme is adventurous, in line with the program?
- Is a suitable model already available?
- Should we treat different types of skills differently in the award scheme? eg. "Scouting Skills" vs Leadership vs PERMA (refer Seligman)
- ~~How~~ does industry certification fit in?
- How do we accommodate youth with special needs? ~~How do high achieving members fit in?~~
- Do we want a single award scheme to retain a distinctive character, or symbolic framework, for each section?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current Venturer and Rover award schemes (the most recently revised)? Has there been an improvement in achievement?
- How do we ensure the award scheme stays relevant?
- How can we ensure youth can enter the award scheme at any level?
- What makes an advancement scheme important enough that it is in our Method?
- ~~How should both the AoPG and our Method be embedded in the award scheme?~~
- ~~What are the key threads that weave their way through each section? What is common core, what is essential across the sections?~~
- ~~How do we recognise achievement in an end to end award scheme? What becomes of the top award in each section?~~
- ~~How do we measure suitability to earn an award? How do we minimize bureaucracy? Whose role is it to check achievement standards?~~
- ~~How can we allow members experience/progress at their own unique level/time/way?~~
- ~~What links can we make between our advancement scheme and the Australian Curriculum? What may be the pros and cons of such a link for Scouting and our members?~~
- ~~What percentage of members should achieve the top award in each section? How does this relate to WOSM's advancement scheme guidelines?~~
- ~~How can the award scheme be streamlined to enable it to be embedded into programming?~~
- ~~How do we provide clear guidelines for youth and Leaders in all aspects in the award scheme?~~
- ~~How can the award scheme be adapted for diverse communities?~~

**HOW:**

- Listing the key skills and competencies required by our purpose and community needs into a scope and sequence across all sections
- Summarising the award schemes being used in other NSOs, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of their schemes.
- Reviewing input to the YPR from members to date
- Seeking feedback from members on the strengths and weaknesses of our current award scheme
- Collaborate with the AoPG (3-3) and Scout Method (3-4) groups and incorporate work into final recommendations as necessary
- ~~Reviewing of what occurs in like organisations and schools, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award~~

**DELIVERBLES:**

- Prepare a ~~detailed~~ big-picture plan of a possible adventurous award scheme for all age ranges
  - ◊ Create a scope and sequence of a new award scheme through one program
  - ◊ ~~Recommend the different aspects of the award scheme along with names and procedures.~~

APPENDIX B PLAN-DO-REVIEW MODEL

