

Dear Members, Parents, and friends of Scouting,

The COVID-19 pandemic will go down in history as one of the most significant events of our lives and of the last century. Affecting lifestyles and lives of people all over the world, it will be one of those crisis events where you look back and reflect on how you reacted and dealt with it at the time.

Defining our legacy is something we all need to do right now – What did Scouts do?

So far, we have done the right thing. We have followed the rules. We have pivoted and re-created Scouting. When needed, we have remained socially distanced but still connected through our programs. Importantly, we have supported each other.

This pandemic has infiltrated all aspects of our community. At times, it has affected our work, our schooling, our families, and our friendships. Some of us have lost loved ones. In our global society, we now have family and friends around Australia and the world and just like you, I am desperate to get back to spending time with them.

There is a light at the end of this tunnel. Increasing availability of vaccinations to broader age groups is making it easier to see a brighter future, where we can all enjoy travel and open borders. This will also allow us to Scout together again and keep our young people safe at the same time.

When we joined Scouting, we all made a promise. Regardless of the version you recite there's a line there that I take very seriously. "To Help Other People". This is our duty.

We are leaders and role models in our communities. People look to us for direction. What we say and do has a direct influence on others and that is why I say if you are able to be vaccinated, please speak to your GP and get it done.

I, along with the rest of the Branch Leadership Team, have been vaccinated. We have done this to keep our promise to contribute to our community and our world.

Expert advice tells us that getting vaccinated will reduce the risk of passing on the virus to a person who might not survive it. That, to me, means that being vaccinated is the epitome of helping other people. That is us keeping our Scout Promise.

For us to run our programs, there may come a time when Government directions impose a range of requirements, including vaccinations. I want you all to be able to safely participate in our program face to face. Let's aim to be vaccinated before we're told we 'have to'.

We have enjoyed many freedoms compared to other parts of Australia and the world since the pandemic started due to our almost COVID-19 free state, but with the borders due to open in the coming months, this may change. If you haven't been vaccinated and can be vaccinated, now is the time to do it.

When we look back, will we be able to say we kept our promise? Did we lead? Did we influence? Did help other people? Did we make our young people our priority and keep them safe?

That's my challenge to everyone involved in Scouting.

I want to thank our members for doing their part to keep Scouts WA a child-safe organisation. Going forward, we will continue to do what's best for the safety of our members – both youth and adult.

Earlier this month, Scouts Australia updated their Vaccination Policy. Scouts WA supported this change. You can find a copy of the policy [here](#).

The policy details the need for individuals to follow the health guidance provided by governments, including any Public Health Orders, and to seek medical advice as to their own particular circumstance to make an informed decision in relation to vaccination.

It is not the policy of Scouts Australia to exclude unvaccinated members from membership, though there may come a time in Western Australia when Public Health Orders do not allow for participation in community activities unless you are vaccinated.

I'm interested in your thoughts too. Please feel free to respond to ourduty@scoutswa.com.au

Yours in Scouting,

Ayden Mackenzie
Chief Commissioner
Scouts WA