

HISTORY OF CHILD SAFE SCOUTING

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Owner Executive Manager

Relevant policy NA, but refer to Scouts Victoria's Supplementary Submission to the *Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations*, 2012

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Introduction

Scouts Victoria has had a long tradition of putting in place policies and procedures to ensure children taking part in our programmes are safe.

What we have done

Since as early as 1938 Scouts Victoria has operated in accordance with a document originally referred to as Policy Organization & Rules (PO&R) and later called Policy & Rules (P&R). Before 1958 this document was issued by the British Association of Scouting and after 1958 the document was issued by the Australian Scout Association. The 1938 version of PO&R contained the following statement of policy in rule 72:

"In view of the responsibility to parents and of the dangers which have been found to exist, L.A.s. and D.Cs. must take every precaution to ensure that no one whose moral character is open in any way to suspicion should be admitted into the Movement, and they must show no false mercy in any case where such a person has gained admission."

In the 1947 edition of PO&R the following sentence was added to rule 72:

"Where circumstances indicate that a criminal offence may have been committed, the D.C.[District Commissioner] must see that the police are informed"

Although there have been variations in the drafting of this policy over the decades the above has remained a central tenet of Scout policy for example the 1961 version of PO&R contained the following rules:

3/13 Applications for warrants as Group Scouters are made in the first place by the individual concerned. The application must be made on the form prescribed by BHQ and must be dealt with by the procedure set out in the following rules

3/14 Applications must give the names of at least two persons of repute who will know the applicant personally and can vouch for his character and general suitability.

3/15 Applications from Scouters of sponsored groups must be approved by the Sponsoring Authority as prescribed in Rule 7/13 (4)

3/16 The DA (District Association) must satisfy itself in every case the applicant is fitted by character and previous history to be entrusted with the care of boys and has in particular

- 1. The necessary qualifications required by the rule relating to rank in question*
- 2. A full appreciation of the religious and moral aim underlying the scheme of Scouting*
- 3. Personal standing and character such as will ensure a good moral influence and sufficient steadfastness of purpose to carry out the work with energy and perseverance*
- 4. A willingness to avail himself of any facilities offered for training appropriate to his rank*

3/17 In view of the responsibility to parents and of the dangers which have been found to exist, DC's and DA's must take every precaution to see that no one whose moral character is open in any way to suspicion should be admitted into the Movement and they must show no false mercy in any case where such a person has gained admission. Where circumstances indicate that a criminal offence may have been committed, the DC must notify BHQ who will see that the police are informed.



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3/18 When a person whose character and past history are not fully known makes an offer of service to or seeks to be associated in any way with , the Movement or member of it as such the following procedure shall be observed

- 1. The appropriate scouter or other member approached or aware of the approach shall report it immediately to the DC*
- 2. If the DC knows or is able to ascertain enough about the person making the approach, he shall give prompt direction and /or advice*
- 3. If the DC, does not know and quickly cannot ascertain enough he shall at once consult his AC if his District is part of an Area or Branch Headquarters if it is not*
- 4. If the AC knows or is able to ascertain enough about the person making the approach, he shall give prompt direction and/or advice; otherwise he shall promptly consult Branch Headquarters*
- 5. In the case of an emergency or urgency or if it is otherwise impractical to consult the DC and/or the AC, a Group Scouter or other member shall consult the AC or Branch Headquarters directly*
- 6. Branch Headquarters, when consulted shall furnish a confidential report to the AC, if the relevant District is part of an Area, or to the DC if it is not and if the circumstances warrant it, at its discretion direct to another Scouter or other individual."*

From about 1994 Scouts Victoria, although still subject to PO&R, developed and adopted its own specific Child Protection Policy.

In 1996 PO&R was rewritten as P&R and implementation of National Policy was devolved to State Branches, the 1994 Child Protection Policy seems to have been prepared in anticipation of this devolution.

The 1996 P&R also introduced the concept of an Adult Code of Conduct which all leaders were required to agree to. Although reporting of inappropriate behaviour was at

all relevant times a policy of Scouts Victoria and Scouts Australia the Code of Conduct had the following clause added to it in 2003:

"10 Adults in Scouting must report any conduct seen or heard that does not comply with the Code of Conduct."

In 2016, Scouts Australia adopted the National Child Protection Policy, which applies to all branches (states and territories) in Australia. This policy was developed with the organisation Child Wise, and took in learnings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse. Scouts Victoria has provided additional elements to this to meet and continuously improve our obligations under Victorian Government regulations, including the Child Safe Standards.

Further information

Much of this information has come directly from Scouts Victoria's supplementary submission to the Victorian Government's *Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations* (2012). This can be found at the following webpage: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc/article/1789>.

More information about how we ensure that all of our activities are Child Safe, including copies of our current National Child Protection policy, can be found on the Child Safe section of our webpage: www.scoutsvictoria.com.au/child-safe.

Conclusion

Scouts Victoria is continuing to improve its approach to Child Safety to ensure that all young people and adults that take part in our programmes feel safe and are safe at all times.