

SCOUTS PROMISE REVIEW REPORT



From: National Commissioner, SCOUTS New Zealand

To: All Members

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, SCOUTS New Zealand launched our new 10 year strategy called Better Prepared. Better Prepared is the culmination of two years of extensive membership and stakeholder consultations and strategic workshops led by our board and National Council and is intentionally aligned to the WOSM 2023 strategy and key policies.

A consistent piece of feedback received during the development of Better Prepared, especially from our youth and their parents, was the need to contemporise our Scout Promise to better reflect our communities and social norms. Acting on this feedback, the National Council of SCOUTS New Zealand launched a review of our Promise, including two extensive consultations of our membership and stakeholders and a Scouting and Youth Development literature review.

In September 2016 our National Council received the final recommendations of the 18 month Promise Review and adopted the recommendations. Final approval was then received from the World Organisation of the Scout Movement in April 2017.

PROPOSAL

	Current Promise	Proposed Promise
Scout Promise	On my honour I promise to do my best, To do my duty to my God, To the Queen and my country, To help other people And to live by the Scout Law.	On my honour, I promise to do my best, To develop my spiritual beliefs, To contribute to my community, country and world, To help other people, And to live by the Scout Law.
Cub Promise	I promise to do my best, To do my duty to my God, To the Queen and my country, To help other people And to live by the Scout Law.	<i>Discontinued. Cubs will make the Scout Promise</i>
Kea Promise	I will try to share my fun and help others.	I share, I care, I discover, I grow

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED SCOUT PROMISE

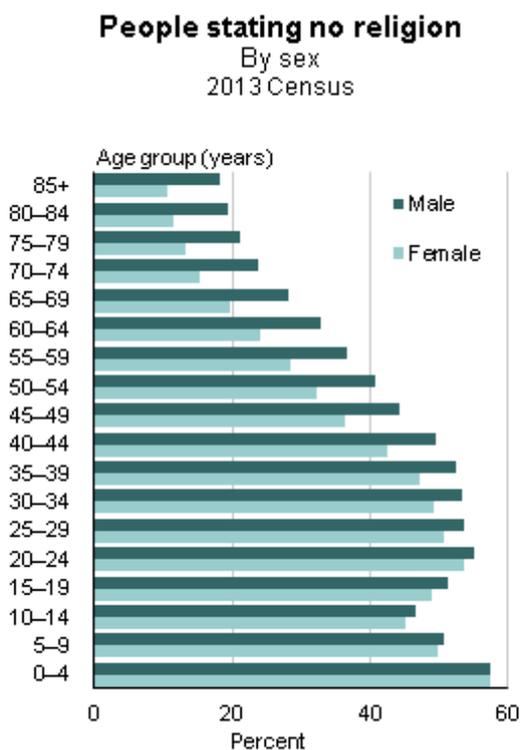
Commitment to Spiritual Development

Expression in proposed Promise:

“To develop my spiritual beliefs”

Explanation of proposed Promise:

SCOUTS New Zealand believes an understanding of one’s spirituality and the spirituality of others is an important element of holistic youth development. As an informal education organisation SCOUTS New Zealand has the potential to excel in this area but we believe our current Scout Promise hinders full spiritual development within our national social and religious context.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

In the 2013 New Zealand census, 42% of all New Zealanders and 47% of New Zealanders aged 19 or under identified as not belonging to a religion, a trend that has been on the increase in New Zealand for decades. Concurrently, the diversity of faiths represented in New Zealand society is increasing, with a growing number of New Zealanders now practicing a non-monotheistic religion.

Throughout our membership consultations on strategy, Scout Law, and Scout Promise over the last four years, our membership has consistently identified that the Scout Promise in New Zealand could be more inclusive with regards to its commitment to

spiritual development. At present, some members who do not belong to a religion or who belong to a non-monotheistic religion feel they have to compromise on their beliefs in order to make the Scout Promise. These members feel unable to have an open discussion about their beliefs within Scouts, undermining opportunities for genuine spiritual awareness and development. Some members stated that they feel dishonest or uncomfortable when making the Promise, but did so in order to access the great value that Scouting provides and do believe in the values Scouting represents.

Focus groups indicated that many parents (of both scouting youth and non-scouting youth) prefer non-religious activities for their children and expressed discomfort with the use of the word 'God' in the Scout Promise, even though most were supportive or not uncomfortable with the inclusion of spiritual development in the Scout Programme.

On a more practical level, many youth members responded that they do not understand how to carry out their *duty to their God* day to day and would prefer a more actionable commitment.

In recent years, the term "*my God*" in our promise has often been interpreted very broadly in SCOUTS New Zealand to encompass the spiritual beliefs of members who do not believe in a single or Christian 'God', as the term is traditionally defined. For this reason, some members argued that the word 'my' allows for a sufficiently wide enough interpretation to be inclusive. However, other members felt that using "*my God*" too broadly was dishonest and potentially dismissive of genuine spiritual beliefs. Moreover, many members felt that their spiritual beliefs could not honestly be described by "*my God*", suggesting that *duty to my God* is not sufficiently inclusive.

The Review Team choose the word 'develop' because it is the most appropriate verb in this instance because it is a relatively simple word which encourages commitment to ongoing growth and exploration, while also allowing for an individual's views on spirituality to change over time.

The Review Team discussed the suitability of the word 'spiritual' and whether it will be readily understood by youth of all ages. However, the team concluded that it is the most accurate word for describing our expectation of our member's commitment to spiritual development and that it is much easier to understand than our current definition of the term "*my God*".

Programme Implications:

While Spiritual Development and *Duty to God* are present in our training and programme tools, most leaders have difficulty meaningfully including spiritual development in their programmes because it makes them feel uncomfortable in our diverse society. Consequently, most leaders currently either avoid any element of spiritual development or address it in a token way which may in fact be harmful to genuine spiritual development.

The development of a new Scout Promise has coincided with the creation of our new Youth Development Policy for SCOUTS New Zealand which includes a renewed focus on spiritual development. This is in line with WOSM's guidelines for spiritual development which identifies the following four basic approaches to understanding spirituality: religion as spiritual, spirituality as the development of the individual in a religious context, spirituality as existential development, spirituality as the search for meaning of things and experiences within oneself. It is intended that the proposed Scout Promise and new Youth Development Policy will help youth, leaders and parents to gain a better understanding of what it means to "*develop my spiritual beliefs*".

Commitment to Others

Expression in proposed promise:

"To contribute to my community, country and world,
To help other people"

Explanation in proposed promise:

New Zealand Youth increasingly identify with multiple levels of community, from local to national and global. "*To the Queen and my country*" has typically been explained to youth members as representing the national community. While this is one element of commitment to others, it does not adequately convey a sense of belonging and contributing to a local or global community. Furthermore, many youth members identified that they did not understand how to carry out their "*duty ... to the Queen*", as the monarchy has become a more abstract institution in New Zealand society.

The term 'community' was selected because it conveys both a sense of the local and of the multiple communities which all people belong to. For example, school communities, scouting communities, ethnic communities and religious communities.

The term 'country' was selected to retain the national focus of our existing promise.

The term 'world' was selected to bring a new international emphasis to our Scout Promise that was previously lacking. It is intended that inclusion of 'world' will help youth members think about their wider place in the world and bring new focus in our Promise and programme on international peace, understanding and cooperation. It is also intended to reinforce the global nature of scouting.

Commitment to Self

Expression in proposed promise:

"On my honour, I promise to do my best"
"And to live by the Scout Law"

Explanation in proposed promise:

No change is proposed from our current Promise for two reasons:

1. We believe our current Scout Promise, coupled with our Scout Law, accurately and concisely conveys responsibility for the development of oneself.
2. These lines are very similar to those used in Baden Powell's original Scout Promise and emphasise a sense of continuity, heritage and global unity.

EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED KEA PROMISE

During the review of our Scout Promise, the Review Team noted that our current Kea Promise (*"I will try to share my fun and help others"*) only covers commitment to others, not Personal or Spiritual Development.

However, our current Kea Motto (*"I care, I share, I discover, I grow"*) covers more of the commitments required in a Promise by WOSM, namely; commitment to others (*"I share"* and *"I care"*), Personal Development (*"I discover"* and *"I grow"*), and Spiritual Development (*"I discover"*). The consensus of our Promise Review Team, Programme experts and Kea Leadership team was that adopting the motto as our new Kea Promise was both more aligned to the intention of a Promise and an age appropriate commitment for youth in the section.