



National Rover Council Review

Final Report:

Executive Summary

April 2021



Introduction

This executive summary presents the findings and recommendations from the 2019-2021 National Rover Council (NRC) external review commissioned by the NRC in early 2019. The review examines the NRC operations, its functions, and its structures to improve the NRC's effectiveness and deliver better outcomes for Rover Scouts in Australia. This document should be read in conjunction with the full final report.

Since 1979 the NRC has provided representation and support to Rover Scouts across Australia. The NRC has undertaken projects that have improved Rover Scouts' experience within Australia and other National Scout Organisations (NSOs). Whether leading the organisation of the 8th World Moot in Melbourne 1990-91 or ongoing reforms to the Rover Scout training or the achievement pathways, the NRC has sought to improve Rover Scouts' experience and provide a unique opportunity for Rover Scouts to influence the youth program directly.

For its members, the NRC provides opportunities for growth and personal development and supports the realisation of the vision of the World Organization of the Scout Movement for Scouting to be a youth led, adult supported organisation.

Our recommendations focus on improving the NRC's operations to ensure it meets Rover Scouts' needs effectively and efficiently. This is an opportunity for the NRC to strengthen its governance arrangements and improve its benefits to Rover Scouts.

Through reflection and continued development, the NRC could be well placed to act as a global leader in Rover Scout governance and provide leadership and inspiration to similar bodies within Scouts Australia and other NSOs.

Disclaimer

This executive summary has been prepared for consultation purposes only and does not reflect the views of the National Rover Council or Scouts Australia and does not indicate a commitment to a particular course of action.

This paper should be read in conjunction with the full final report, which is available from your Branch Rover Council (BRC) upon request.

Have your say

Feedback and comments on this executive summary and the full final report should be provided to your BRC by **12 June 2021**. Your BRC will then vote on each of the recommendations listed below.

Terminology

For clarity, the generic terms 'Branch Rover Council' (BRC) and 'Branch Rover Adviser' (BRA) are used, noting that the naming of these organisations and positions varies between Branches.

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Executive Summary

Our findings reveal broad support for the NRC and the opportunities it provides for Rover Scouts throughout Australia. As with all organisations, there is room for improvement. The recommendations put forward seek to strengthen the NRC's governance approaches and ensure it is best placed to fulfil its purpose and objectives.

We have worked with the NRC to amend its purpose statement based on extensive feedback. The NRC's new NRC purpose statement and functions were accepted by the NRC in March 2021 and are in the process of being approved by the Scouts Australia National Operations Committee (NOC). The most significant change is a greater focus on supporting the growth of Rover Scouts while also supporting ongoing improvements to the Rover Scout program's quality.

In light of these changes and widespread confusion among Rover Scouts about who is ultimately responsible and accountable for different matters impacting Rover Scouts (e.g. training, marketing, retention), the NRC should work with key stakeholders to provide greater clarity as to who is responsible and accountable for different elements of the Rover Scout program.

Structurally, the NRC consists of representatives from each of the eight BRCs, an elected Executive, and elected and appointed Project Officers. While the overall structure of the NRC is broadly fit for purpose, we have made three recommendations to amend the structure of the NRC to ensure it is effectively meeting the needs of Rover Scouts:

- The Training and Development Officer should be reclassified from an Executive member to a Project Officer to better match the scope of its duties as managing a portfolio rather than the operation of the NRC, and in reflection of changes to the Rover Scout training curriculum.
- A new role of Treasurer should be established as an Executive member to provide greater financial reporting and accountability, to support work being undertaken by the NRC to improve the handling of their finances, to reduce the workload of the Secretary (who currently handles this role), and to identify new sources of income for the NRC (e.g. Government funding).
- The NRC Delegate role should be abolished as it is not effectively fulfilling its two main roles of raising Rover Scout awareness of the NRC and undertaking NRC project work. We recommend this workload be transferred to other members of the NRC (see below).

We also recommend that the NRC develop a short, induction-style training process for new NRC members to ensure that they understand how the NRC operates to ensure that they can maximise their contribution and involvement.

There is a clear disconnect between the NRC and the Rover Scouts who it represents, with some BRCs suggesting they are better placed than the NRC to deliver its work. Across all our consultations, there was a near-universal agreement that Rover Scouts are unaware

of what the NRC does. This lack of awareness, coupled with their annual payment of the Rover Levy to fund the NRC's operations, has led many Rover Scouts to question the NRC's utility.

In light of this, we recommend that the NRC increase the frequency of its public reporting to ensure that Rover Scouts are aware of the NRC and its work, provide updates and outcomes of projects, and provide greater opportunities for Rover Scouts to provide their input into NRC deliberations. To overcome the information loss encountered when messages filter down to Rover Units via their BRC, and in some states their Regional Rover Council, we recommend that the NRC develop mechanisms to allow it to communicate directly with Rover Units.

We also recommend that the NRC conduct an annual survey to gather information on its performance and seek views and ideas to ensure the projects it undertakes align with the needs and wishes of Rover Scouts.

The NRC uses a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings throughout the year to discuss matters facing Rover Scouts, put forward proposals for improvement, and report on progress. While the meetings are an effective means of proposing and progressing the NRC's work, the NRC should maximise the value of its Conference by using it as a forum for strategic planning and reporting and move the discussion of operational matters to Remote Meetings.



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The costs associated with the annual NRC Conference were raised as a major point of concern among Rover Scouts. While we see the value in continuing the Conference in its face-to-face format, we recommend that the NRC choose the location and date of the Conference based on value-for-money considerations rather than the existing rotation system. If these recommendations are adopted, the NRC should organise and host the Conference rather than a BRC, to lessen the burden on BRCs and position the Conference as an independent and unified gathering.

The NRC has established effective and transparent voting systems to support decision making and elections. The NRC's approach to voting does, however, include several unique features which we do not believe support transparent and effective governance. We recommend that the NRC amend its approach to voting by:

- Granting each BRC delegation (one for each of the eight BRCs) a single vote rather than the current two-vote system, as delegations rarely split their vote and delegations should provide a unified vote while representing the Rover Scouts who elected them, and
- Organise the NRC Executive and NRC Team members into a delegation and grant them a single vote to give the elected members of the NRC agency and a say in matters which directly affect them.

We found that the NRC has in place fit for purpose by-laws and key governance documents to support its work. We have made recommendations to further improve and strengthen these documents by addressing identified gaps in the by-laws and policies and ensuring a

consistent approach to creating and reviewing future NRC policies.

The NRC has established robust document management systems to support their decision making and projects. Their online OneDrive system supports the NRC's work and provides easy access to important documentation and a suitable platform for information sharing. To maximise the benefit of their document management system, we recommend that the NRC ensure that all documents and files created as part of an NRC project are centrally stored on the NRC document management system to provide greater transparency and accountability.

While the NRC serves as a forum to share information and ideas, it is also an ideal platform to undertake projects which benefit and support Rover Scouts across Australia. While the NRC has a long history of project management, we recommend reviewing and improving its approach to project reporting to ensure projects are delivering on their goals in a timely manner.

NRC Delegates are not viewed as an effective means for undertaking projects. We instead recommend the NRC appoint Project Officers to undertake this work to ensure the right mix of skills and allow the NRC to more closely manage the quality and timeliness of projects.

While the NRC has commissioned several reviews over the years, it has largely not acted on the recommendations arising from these. To achieve the best value from this review, we recommend that the NRC develop an implementation plan to ensure that accepted recommendations are acted on in a timely and transparent manner.

The Review Team believe that the value of the NRC for Rover Scouts in Australia will increase significantly if the proposed recommendations are accepted through:

- greater clarity of the purpose and functions of the NRC compared to other Rover Scout and Scouts Australia governance bodies, leading to more effective cooperation and collaboration
- continued support for and improvement of the Rover Scout youth program
- a greater focus on supporting membership growth
- more robust structure, stronger by-laws and more effective meetings
- improved training of NRC members to support them in contributing to the NRC

- reducing the NRC's operating costs and allowing this money to be invested back into Roving
- improved communication and consultation with Rover Scouts and other key stakeholders
- better management of projects undertaken by the NRC.

The NRC has significantly improved its internal operations since 2019, during what has proved to be a challenging period for all areas of Scouting in Australia. The recommendations arising from this review seek to further build on this excellent work and ensure that the NRC operates effectively and efficiently and provides benefit to Rover Scouts across Australia through continuous improvement of the Rover Scout program and supporting ongoing member growth



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Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The NRC should undertake work, in collaboration and consultation with other organisations involved in Rover Scout governance, to clearly define and clarify accountability and responsibility for the different elements of the Rover Scout youth program.

Recommendation 2: The Training & Development Officer role should be reclassified as a Project Officer and have a greater focus on delivering non-Adult Training & Development training opportunities. The role should continue to advocate on behalf of Rover Scouts with regard to the AT&D curriculum.

Recommendation 3: A new Treasurer role is introduced to the Executive to handle the NRC's finances and seek new sources of income and is trialled for two years to assess the effectiveness of the role.

Recommendation 4: The NRC should abolish the Delegate role. The NRC and BRCs' Chairs will become responsible for Rover Scouts engagement and awareness, and appointed and elected Project Officers will be responsible for undertaking NRC projects.

Recommendation 5: The NRC establishes a short training and induction process for all NRC members to ensure they understand how the NRC operates and how they can most effectively contribute to meetings and discussions.

Recommendation 6: The NRC should increase the frequency of regular public reporting on project progress and outcomes, decisions made, and opportunities to contribute to the NRC.

Recommendation 7: The NRC should establish a mechanism for it to communicate directly with Rover Units.

Recommendation 8: The NRC should conduct an annual survey of Rover Scouts and key stakeholders to measure the NRC's effectiveness and seek Rover Scouts' views on matters affecting them to help determine the future direction of the NRC.

Recommendation 9: NRC Conferences should focus on strategic planning and reporting, while Remote Meetings focus on proposals and projects to support the implementation of the strategic plan.

Recommendation 10: The NRC Conference's location should be selected based on maximising value for money rather than the current rotational basis.

Recommendation 11: The NRC Executive or a Project Officer should organise the NRC Conference rather than the BRCs.

Recommendation 12: The NRC Conference's date should be moved to low travel season to provide greater value-for-money and support greater engagement with Rover Scouts ahead of the Conference.

Recommendation 13: NRC voting procedures should be amended to give each Delegation a single vote.

Recommendation 14: The NRC should extend voting rights to the elected members of the NRC. The NRC Executive and the NRC Team should form a Delegation alongside the eight BRC Delegations and be granted a single delegation vote. The NRC Adviser, as an adult member of the NRC, should not be involved in voting by the NRC delegation.

Recommendation 15: The NRC should update its by-laws to include sections on committees, parliamentary authority and disciplinary procedures and add further clarity to how voting is conducted.

Recommendation 16: The NRC should establish policies addressing conflicts of interest, procurement, and document management.

Recommendation 17: The NRC strengthen its approach to document management to ensure that all documentation related to decision making or created as a result of a project is centrally recorded.

Recommendation 18: All proposals brought to the NRC should clearly address how they contribute to the NRC strategic plan, demonstrate that the NRC has or can acquire the required skills and experience to complete the project, and provide measures of success.

Recommendation 19: The NRC should establish regular reporting for all ongoing projects at each Remote Meeting and Conference.

Recommendation 20: The NRC should develop an implementation plan for the recommendations arising from this review which are agreed to.

Background and Methodology

It was agreed during the 2019 NRC Conference that an external review of the NRC would be commissioned. The review's objective was to examine the NRC's functions and structures to improve the NRC's effectiveness and deliver better outcomes for Rover Scouts. In establishing the external review, the NRC identified several systemic issues it was facing, including:

- information loss between stakeholders
- a perceived low return-on-investment from Rover Scouts, who each pay a small annual fee to fund the NRC
- a disconnect between the aims and outcomes of the NRC
- inefficiencies in NRC processes
- difficulties in internal and external communication
- decreasing levels of engagement with the NRC.

The Review Team was formed in early May 2019 and brought together a team with both Scouting experience and experience providing advice or consultancy services around change management and organisational structures. Review Team members were not currently involved in the Rover Scout section as youth or adult members to maintain their independence.

Further information about the review is available at <https://rovers.scouts.com.au/nrc-external-review/>.

To form a view against the review objective, the Review Team adopted a mixed-methods approach to gather evidence and input throughout the review, encouraging the broadest range of Rover Scouts and other stakeholders to contribute. The Review Team:

- reviewed NRC documentation
- attended NRC Remote Meetings and tabled a series of 'early win' proposals which the NRC could implement quickly and easily to improve its governance arrangements
- attended the 2020 and 2021 NRC Conferences and held five workshops/plenary sessions exploring how the NRC operates
- attended BRC meetings between November 2019 and March 2021 to gather feedback and ideas
- conducted a survey of current and former Rover Scouts between February and June 2020 using the SurveyMonkey platform
- contacted Rover Scouts within other NSOs to understand how Rover Scout governance is structured and operates internationally
- released a discussion paper in September 2020 seeking submissions on the purpose and structure of the NRC.

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