

GIRL GUIDES
AUSTRALIA

PROMISE AND LAW REVIEW



Listening to the membership and members of the community to find the values that are important and relevant to girls and women in the second centenary of Guiding in Australia.

Foreword

With the Centenary of Guiding in 2010, the Board of Girl Guides Australia decided to review the wording of the Promise and Law during 2011 to ensure the way the values are expressed in the Promise and Law are relevant and meaningful to girls and women in 21st century Australia.

The fundamental principles were laid down by Lord Baden-Powell in the original Promise and Law. These are the values we stand for. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) asks each Member Organisation to interpret them in accordance with their own culture and to express them in their Promise and Law. WAGGGS also asks Member Organisations to review the way they present the Promise and Law, the relative importance given to each value and to be up to date and aware of the changing needs of girls and young women in their country.

The review provides an insight into the way members interpret the fundamental principles of the Promise and Law and the ways they would like the fundamental principles expressed in 2012. The review also provides a framework to assist Girl Guides Australia to ensure the wording of the Promise and Law enables girls and young women to grow into confident, self-respecting, responsible community members.

Introduction

In 2011, Girl Guides Australia conducted a comprehensive review of the wording of the Promise and Law. The last review took place in 1993 and resulted in no changes. The Australian Guide Promise and Law has not changed significantly in over 40 years, yet the Australian community has changed enormously over this time.

The review took place over a 12 month time frame. It commenced with an education process to explain the meaning of the Essences of the Promise and Law, which were laid down by WAGGGS at the World Conference in 1972. Attention was also drawn to the changes in composition of the Australian community and reasons for reviewing the wording of the Promise and Law. This was followed by a series of surveys for Youth and Adult members. These provided insight into the way the Australian Guiding community understands the Promise and Law. The survey results demonstrated a desire for change, some areas of concern, and the values members consider important. The respondents who took part in the review reflect a wide spectrum of ages, geographical locations, cultural backgrounds, roles within Guiding or relationships to Guiding and lengths of membership. The diversity provides a rich understanding of both the similarities and variances in the values important to respondents.

The findings from this review will assist Girl Guides Australia to further develop programs to ensure Guiding remains relevant to the girls and young women of Australia.

Survey Methodology

- There was an online survey for Adults on the Girl Guides Australia website, which used Survey Monkey technology. The survey opened in early September and closed mid-December 2011. The survey was promoted by all State Girl Guide Organisations in multiple weekly e-news publications, State magazines, websites and by word of mouth. The survey could be downloaded for interested parties who didn't have access to the internet. A small number of members took advantage of this opportunity to have their say. All survey participants were invited to add further comment at the conclusion of the survey: 380 chose to contribute.
- A resource kit of was distributed in the third week of September to every Guide Unit to allow Youth participation. The kit included a suggested program of activities consistent with the girls' developmental stages. These were designed to facilitate discussion on the wording of the four components that make up the Promise and Law. Once the activities took place, each Patrol* was asked to fill out a simple survey Postcard and return it to Girl Guides Australia where the data was collated. Unfortunately the kits arrived several weeks later in Queensland compared to the other States. The resource kit was also available to be downloaded from the Girl Guides Australia website. All State Girl Guide Organisations were asked to promote the importance of participation.
- Leaders who used activities from the resource kit were invited to return an evaluation sheet on completion of the program. These provided further insight into the effectiveness of the kit and project.
- There was an online survey for Youth on the Girl Guides Australia website, which used Survey Monkey technology. The survey was available from early November until 22 December 2011. Girl Guides Australia asked State Girl Guide Organisations to promote the survey as an alternate for youth members who did not participate in the postcard survey. Due to the late arrival of the resource kit in Queensland, the youth online survey was more heavily promoted and undertaken.

Participation in the Adult online survey was close to 1200 from all States, across a broad range of ages and Guiding experience. 85 Leaders filled out evaluation forms about the Youth postcard survey. Close to 3300 Youth members responded by sending back a postcard or taking part in the online survey.

* A Patrol consists of 4-8 members

Executive Summary

Participation

All Adult and Youth members of State Girl Guide Organisations as well as the wider Guiding community were encouraged to participate in the review of the Australian Guide Promise and Law. The review was promoted through various media in the State Organisations throughout 2011. In total there were 4500 participants aged from 5 years to over 60 years. The survey was mentioned in a number of ABC radio interviews in Sydney, Brisbane and Sunshine Coast. The public was invited to participate.

The respondents from all States and age groups have shown that a change in the wording of the Australian Guide Promise is desired. The respondents were particularly concerned with the use of the word 'God' to express the first Essence in the Promise, the relevance of the inclusion of the Queen in the second Essence and the appropriateness of the word 'obedient' in the law.

From the Adult survey, only 16.5% of Adults would like the wording 'to do my duty to God' to be maintained to express the first Essence of the Promise as laid out by WAGGGS. There was even less support in the Youth Survey. Adult respondents indicated they preferred the wording 'to respect our land, Australia' over the present wording. Many respondents were not happy with the continued inclusion of the Queen, despite the change to 'optional' in 2010. A large number of the respondents were unaware that the inclusion of the Queen had become optional in 2010.

From the comments received, it was evident that there is a diverse level of knowledge surrounding the history and traditions of World Guiding and the philosophy of Lord Baden-Powell. It is clearly an area where further learning and development is required in all age groups. From analysing the comments a larger percentage (48.7%) made positive comments calling for change while 33.6% were negative comments. Some comments were disturbing and showed a lack of understanding of the inclusive nature of the Girl Guide movement. The remaining 17.7% were neutral and interesting.

58.3% of the youth respondents stated the wording needed to be updated, while 30.5% were happy with the present wording. From the Leader evaluation forms and the comments from the Adult survey, many Leaders felt that the younger girls did not understand the meaning of the current Promise and Law. Many felt that the younger girls learnt it by heart with little understanding of the concepts. 72.9% of Youth Members felt the current Promise and law was relevant to them, but many stated they would still like the words updated. It is concerning that 27.1% felt the Promise and Law was not relevant to them in the current form.

Where to go from here

The respondents have given Girl Guides Australia a clear indication of the concerns they have with the current wording of the Australian Promise and Law. Survey participants of all ages have reviewed not only the way the Essences of the Promise are expressed but also the behaviours required to put the Promise into action (the Law). The respondents clearly dislike the word 'obedient'. In the Adult online survey comments and in the Leader evaluation forms, there were a reasonable number of members who are also concerned by the complexity of the Promise and Law for the younger girls. The results of the review will assist Girl Guides Australia with policy formulation, development of program and training resources, and the adoption of different wording for the Promise and Law.

Profile of Respondents

20% of the Adult membership chose to respond to the on-line survey and 15% of the youth membership responded to either the Postcard or the on-line survey. The respondents represented all States and age profiles. The age of the participants in the Postcard was not directly asked. However the Leader's of Guides who participated in Postcard activity, indicated the age of the girls and the number of girls in the Unit on the Leader Evaluation sheets. This gives a clear indication of the age range of girls participating. The numbers reflect the census figures which indicate 80% of the youth membership is 12 years or under.

The response rate is in line with the Girl Guides Australia Census figures with a few exceptions. The response was lower than expected from Western Australia and Tasmania. The results of the survey are not thought to be adversely effected by the lower participation rate in the two States. The response received from Western Australia and Tasmania was in line with the national result. Over 17 % of respondents of the Postcard survey failed to indicate the State they were from. This made it difficult to gain a clear picture of the response rates from the States. However Guides in Queensland received the Kit several weeks after the Districts in the other States which is indicated in the response rate. A greater number of youth members from Queensland participated in the on-line survey.

State	% Adult OnLine	% Youth Online	% Postcards	% Leader evaluation	% Census
NSW & ACT	30.7	25.0	33.8	38.8	32.5
VIC	29	13.7	20.6	28.2	24.8
QLD	25.8	47.6	14.7	14.1	21.8
SA	6.6	0	8.1	9.4	6.9
WA	5.3	12.9	4.1	4.7	9.1
TAS	1.7	0	1.5	4.7	4.1
NT	0.6	0.8	0.5	0	0.9
OTHER MO or No STATE	0.3	0	17.1	0	0

Table1. The response rate in the different surveys from each State Girl Guide Organisation

Age	% Participation
18 - 30	18.7%
31 - 45	29.7%
46 - 60	28.4%
Over 60	23.2%

Table 2. The age profile of the respondents to the Adult on-line survey

Gender	% Participation
Male	1.5%
Female	98.5%

Table 3. The gender profile of the respondents to the online survey

Role	% Participation
Leader of Adults	21.3%
Leader of Youth	54.7%
Trefoil Guild member	13.0%
Parents	16.3%
Staff member of Girl Guide Organisation	1.3%
Volunteer non-member	1.3%
Adult member no leadership position	7.2%
Olave Member	8.6%
Community Non-Guide member	1.8%
National, State or Region appointment	7.2%

Table 4. Role of the respondents

Length of membership	% of Respondents
Nil, not a member	9.5%
Up to 5 years	16.7%
6 - 10 years	10.1%
11 – 15 years	12.2%
16 – 20 years	11.3%
21 – 30 years	17.8%
Over 30 years	22.4%

Table 5 Length of membership of Adult respondents

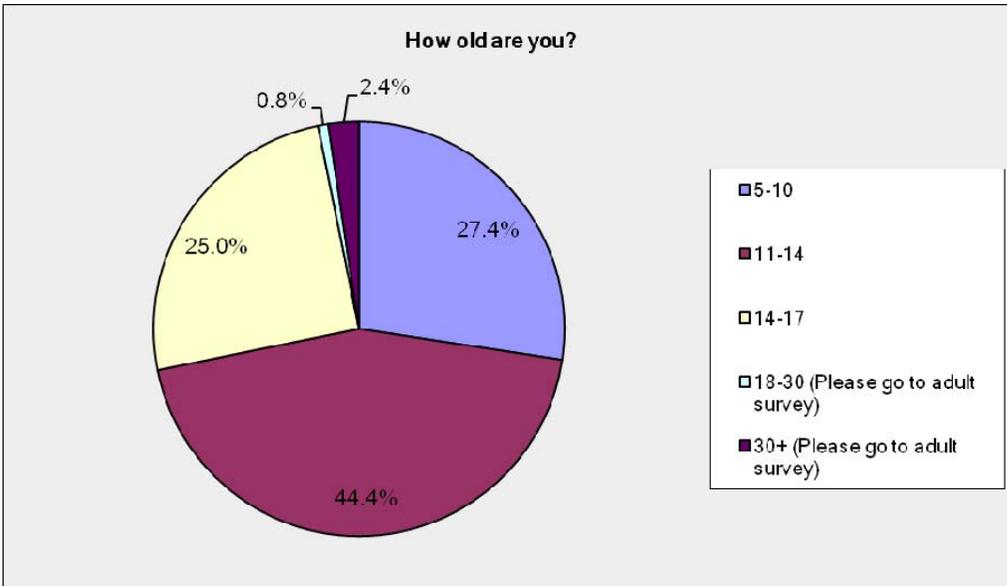


Table 6. Profile of youth online survey

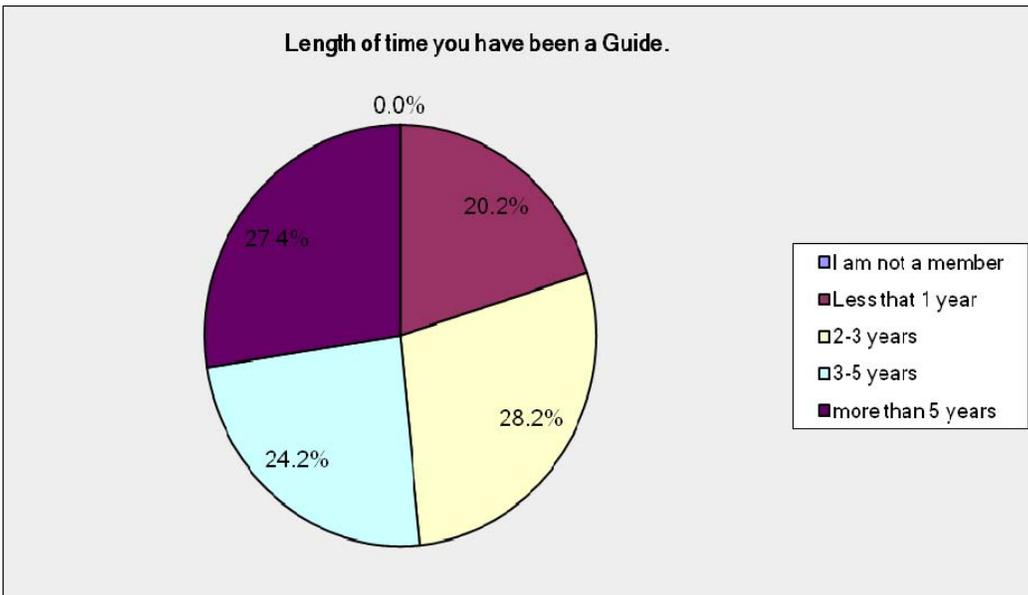


Table 7. Length of membership of youth members

Review Findings

Youth Postcard Survey:

Is the Promise and law relevant to you?	
Yes	72.9%
No	17.3%
Yes, with changes	9.8%
Does the present wording need to be updated?	
Yes	58.3%
No	30.5%
Maybe	1.0%
Not Answered	10.2%

Table 7. According to the Leader evaluations attached to the Postcards, 52% of Leaders were concerned with the present wording, mainly regarding God, the Queen and obedience.

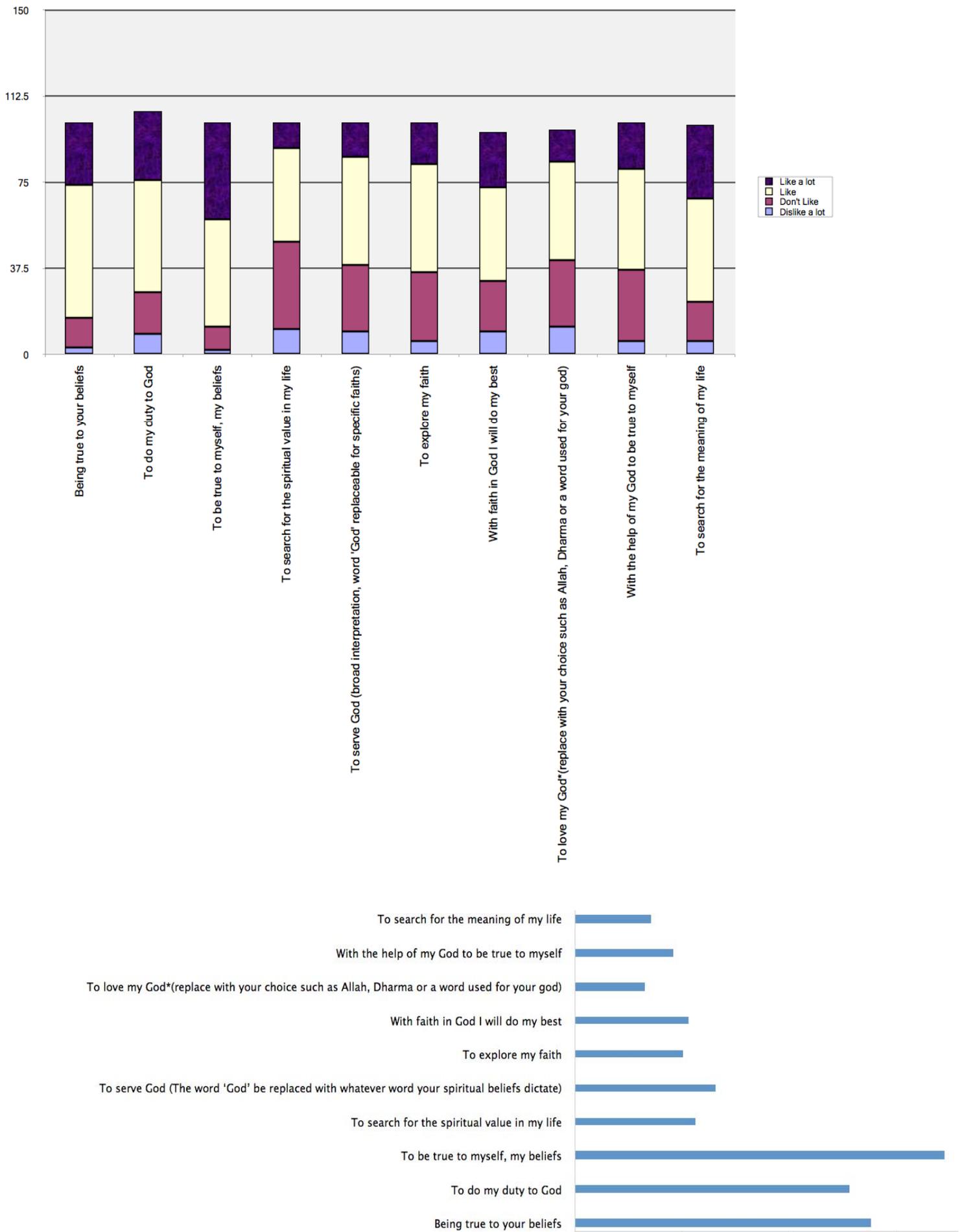
Essence 1. Exploring Spirituality

The adult and youth online surveys asked respondents to rate each of 10 phrases that expressed the first Essence of the Promise. The results for the Adult and Youth surveys were consistent in their first and second preferences. The Postcard survey was open ended with the respondents putting into words their Patrol's preference. The themes were consistent with online surveys. The words that were the most popular with the Youth members were true, beliefs, God and myself. The word 'duty' was not at the same level. There were many comments from the Youth members that they didn't feel the use of the word 'God' was inclusive in multicultural Australia.

Wording	Youth Online Support (%)	Adult Support (%)
To be true to myself, my beliefs	22.5	22.2
Being true to your beliefs	16.7	17.8
To search for the meaning of my life	15.2	4.6
To do my duty to God	13.4	16.5

Table 8. Grey numbers indicate where one result was preferred strongly by one group but not the other. Weighted scores for Essence of Spirituality (Adults)

Essence of Spirituality

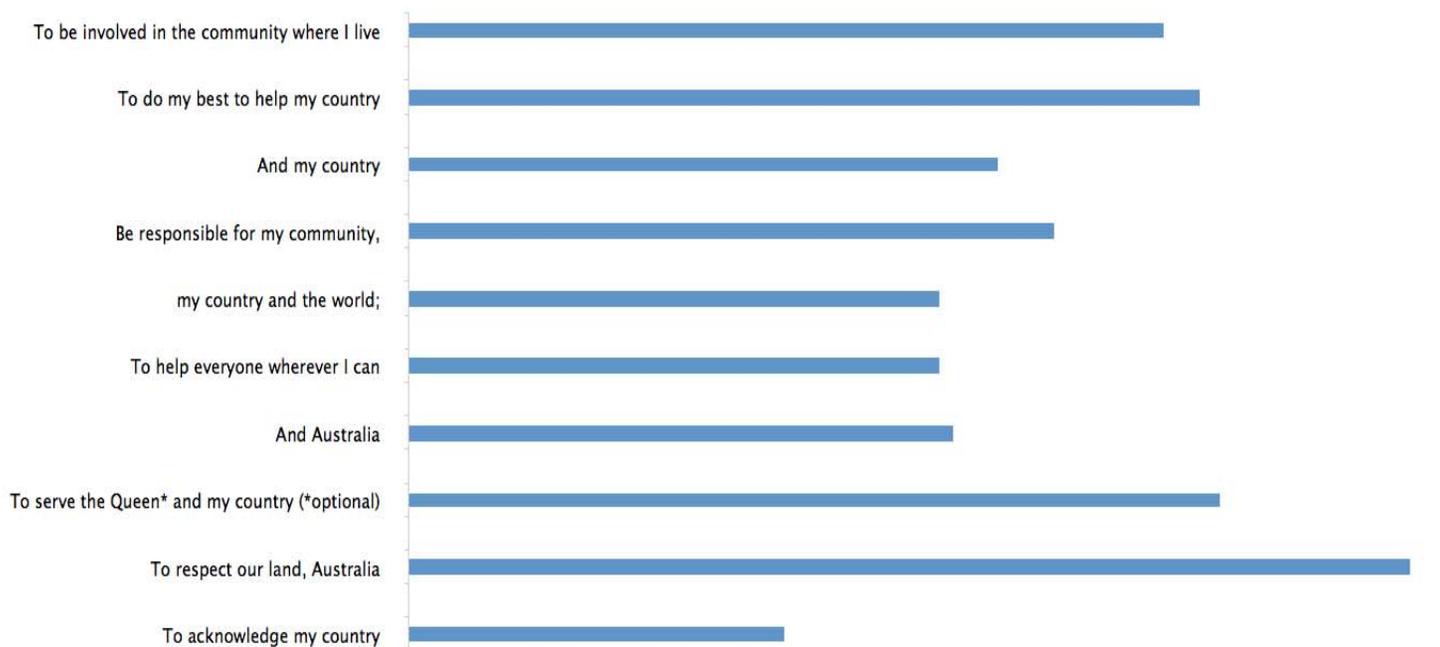


There is consistent preference for 'True to beliefs' in some form across all age groups and all States. The group over 60 years of age had the greatest preference for 'Duty to God', and the least support for 'True to my beliefs'. Support for 'True to my beliefs' was particularly strong with the 30-60 year olds and the Youth members. The Adult members in Queensland had a slightly higher preference for 'Duty for God' than other States, but still overall preferred 'True to my beliefs'. There were many comments asking for change particularly concerning the use of the word 'God'.

Essence 2. Responsibility to Country

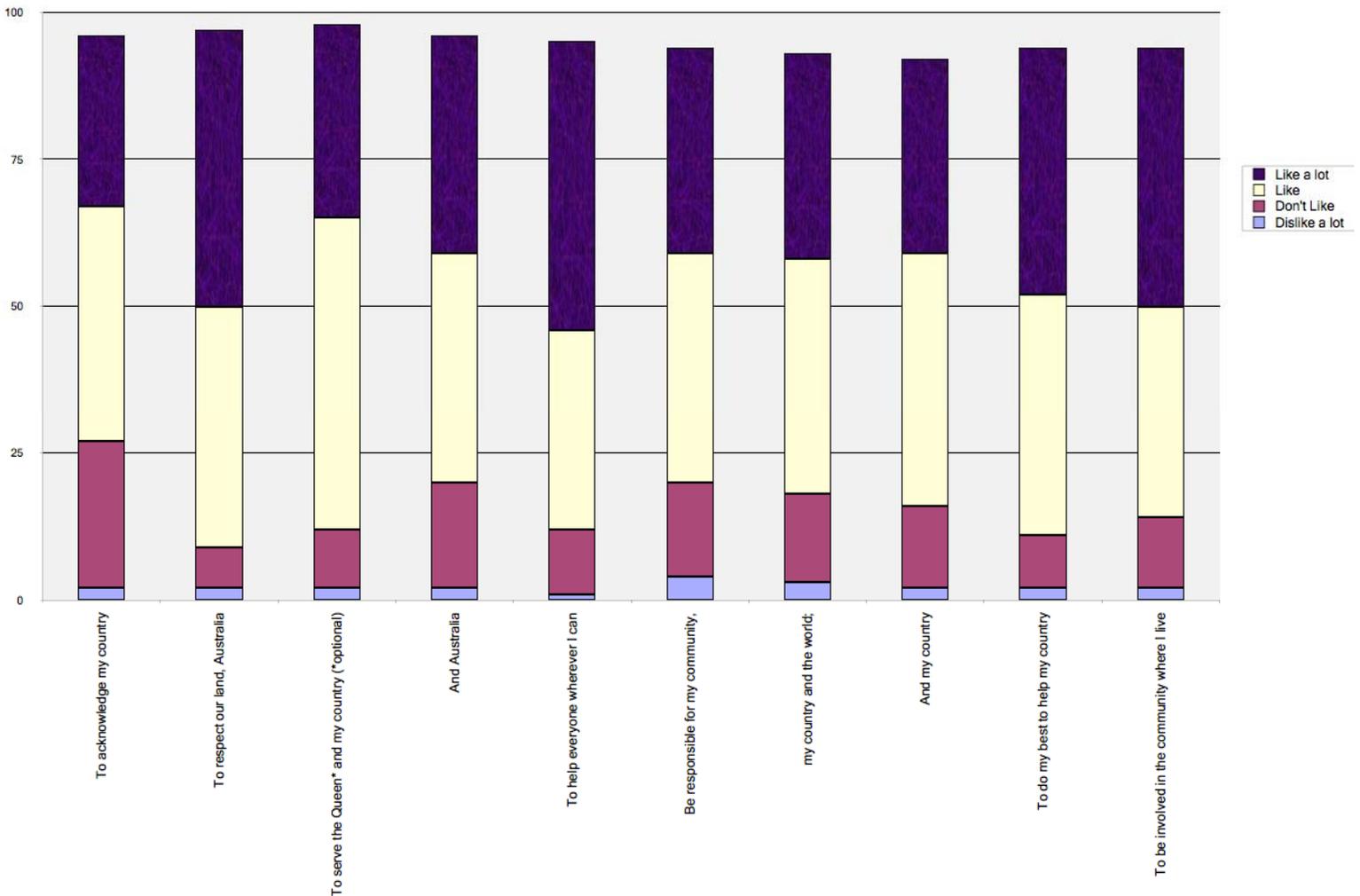
Wording	Youth Online Support (%)	Adult Support (%)
To respect our land, Australia	12.5	14.7
To help everyone wherever I can	12.3	7.8
To serve the Queen* and my country [*optional]	10.0	11.9
To do my best to help my country	11.2	11.6

Table 9. Grey numbers indicate where one result was preferred strongly by one group but not the other. Weighted scores for Essence of Country (Adults)



This graph shows the positive and negative reactions of Youth to each wording. Please note the significance of the bottom layer, showing “Dislike” responses as well as the top layer showing positive responses. The responses from the Postcards were very close with no clear indication of the girls’ preference. The Leaders commented that the younger Guides had little concept of this section of the Promise. The over 60 year’s age group preferred ‘to serve the Queen and my country’, while the 30-60 years strongly supported to respect our country, Australia. Many in this age group disliked ‘to serve the Queen and my country’.

Essence of Duty to Country



Essence 3. Helping others

All age groups clearly preferred to help other people from the choices available. There were a number of other suggestions to consider.

Essence 4. The Method

The respondents were consistent in their support for ‘to keep the Guide Law’. In each group the same three options were the most popular, although the postcard respondents ranked ‘to respect the Guide Law’ as their second preference ahead of ‘to live by the Guide Law’.

Wording	Youth on line support (%)	Adult on line support (%)
To keep the Guide law	17.3	20.6
To live by the Guide law	12.7	17.4
To respect the Guide law	12.6	14.4

Table 10. the weighted scores for Essence 4. the Method

The Law – how to put the Promise into action

The online survey respondents were given an extensive list of options to rate each from ‘strongly like’ to ‘strongly dislike’. From the weighted results themes were consistent across all groups. There was a consistent dislike for the word ‘obedient’ across all groups. From the results the Promise and Law review committee grouped the themes to come up with eight characteristics important to all groups to be worked into the Law. The characteristics are

RESPECT, HONESTY, FRIENDLINESS, WORLD AND ENVIRONMENT, RESPONSIBILITY,
EMPOWERMENT, CHARACTER

References and Further reading

Books

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (1997) A Challenging Movement, World Bureau, London
Coleman, M & Darling, H (1989) From a Flicker to a Flame: the Story of the Girl Guides in Australia Girl Guides of Australia Inc, Sydney

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts Publications

WAGGGS Educational Programme Guidelines (1998)
WAGGGS Exploring Spirituality (2005)
WAGGGS Our Rights, Our Responsibilities (2002-2005)
WAGGGS website

The working party also considered a variety of historical material relating to the founders and the birth of the Girl Guide Movement.

Acknowledgement

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