

First in First Aid



Australian Youth Council

Youth

# THE ACCOLADE REPORT

# [2008]

In 2007, the Australian Youth Council initiated discussions relating to the engagement and recognition of young leaders within St John Ambulance Australia.

The 2008 Australian Youth Council Key Themes and Messages specified production of a report into the engagement and recognition of young leaders.

The Accolade Report is a summary of the key findings and recommendations resulting from the Australian Youth Council's research and consultations.

*Engagement & Recognition  
of Young Leaders in St John*

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the Australian Youth Council initiated discussions relating to the engagement and recognition of young leaders within St John Ambulance Australia.

The 2008 Australian Youth Council Key Themes and Messages specified production of a report into the engagement and recognition of young leaders.

The initial concept has grown from its infancy into *The Accolade Report*. This is a summary of the key findings and recommendations resulting from various research and consultations around Australia during the 2007-2008 period.

The report aims to summarise the current status of youth leadership in St John Ambulance Australia, juxtaposed with current best practice and models from other organisations. The report makes further suggestions for the organisation's future directions in this arena.

The various sections of the report, although independently written are intrinsically related in terms of leadership development and recognition. All sections of the report should be reflected upon during consideration of the recommendations.

## BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The majority of contemporary leadership theorists currently agree that leadership is not an innate trait and that young people can learn and develop leadership attitudes and skills (Fertman & van Linden, 1999). To a greater extent this model is echoed in St John Ambulance Australia's own ethos, with not just management training being offered but an increased focus on *Leadership Development*, as outlined later in this report.

Zeldin and Camino (1999) outline five areas of competency that distinguish leaders and shape youth leadership development efforts:

1. Communication – persuasive argumentation, public speaking/writing and engaging the participation of others;
2. Teamwork – respecting others, performing roles of both leader and follower, building on strengths, and commitment to free group input and expression;
3. Personal Identity – understanding the relationship between oneself and the community, pride in being a member of a larger group, awareness of areas for self-improvement, taking responsibility for one's actions and the resulting consequences;
4. Professionalism – demonstrating tactfulness, understanding protocols, appropriate dress and action given appraisal of context, delivering quality work, positively presenting oneself to others; and
5. Project Management – setting goals/developing action steps, meeting facilitation, reflection, distinguishing between one's interests and community needs (Boyd, 2001).

It is argued by Fertman & van Linden (1999) that becoming "...a leader is a developmental process". This process may not be inherently the same for young people as it is for older adults.

It is critical that young people develop their leadership skills in "real situations" which strike a cord with them, situations which the young person personally considers important, consequently this allows them to become actively engaged "in the decision-making processes" affecting their lives (Boyd, B. L. 2001; Des Marais, Yang, & Farzanehkia, 2000; Fertman & van Linden, 1999) and potentially the lives of others.

In other words, young people need opportunities to both learn about and practice leadership in meaningful and authentic ways.

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### WHY PROVIDE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES?

Many leadership academics and youth development professionals agree that leadership development is an important, but often overlooked facet of youth development (MacNeil, 2000).

It is commonly argued that the development of leadership skills contributes greatly to the positive development of young people and their communities. Such skills, which include aspects such as goal-setting, problem solving and sound decision-making, are not just essential for leaders, they assist individuals in navigating contemporary society (MacNeil, 2000).

In addition, assisting young people develop leadership skills makes them better able to solve community problems and enhances their community participation (O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003). It has been noted that young leaders are also more likely to demonstrate higher career aspirations, increased self-esteem and improved high school completion rates (Bloomberg, Ganey, Alba, Quintero, & Alcantara, 2003).

By supporting and engaging young leaders, older individuals, organisations and communities experience direct benefits through stronger connections to other young people in the community (Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Lorens, 2001). In turn, this leads to greater community and societal resilience.

Young leaders generally maintain a greater understanding of the problems faced by other youth, and can provide fresh perspectives for how to address these problems (Des Marais, Yang, & Farzanehkia, 2000; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Lorens, 2001; McGillicuddy, 1991).

Furthermore, young people help to re-energise adults and counteract negative stereotypes of youth when they are successfully engaged in leadership within their communities (Zeldin, & Camino, 1999; Fiscus, 2003).

It is in this academic context that this report is framed.

## CADET & CADET LEADER OF THE YEAR CONSULTATION

### BACKGROUND

In October 2007 the Australian Youth Council met at the annual Youth Stakeholders Weekend to discuss issues concerning young people in our organisation.

One idea brought to the Australian Youth Council's attention was that of Cadet/Cadet Leader of the Year (COTY) recognition [known as the Peter Falkland Award in some jurisdictions].

Currently the recognition of awardees in jurisdictions differs in a number of areas including:

- Mere existence of the award or one of its type;
- Methodology and criteria for selection;
- Roles of recipients;
- Recognition of recipients (including identification);
- Ongoing recognition of past recipients.

The Australian Youth Council tabled a proposal to the National Cadet Officer's Group (NCOG), at the same Stakeholders Weekend, which suggested that ongoing recognition of COTYs should be investigated. This proposal was at that time considered by NCOG and then declined.

### METHODOLOGY

Convinced that this was one overt example of manifestation of a potential lack of recognition of young leaders in our organisation, the Australian Youth Council has continued its research and conducted an online survey aiming to consult at least 10% of the Cadet/Cadet Leader population.

By the expiry of the consultation period (February 2008), 157 individuals were polled.

The online poll asked respondents key statistical information and also the following key question: "Should previous Cadet/Cadet Leaders of the Year have ongoing recognition on the St John uniform? (e.g a badge or small lapel)", respondents were given three options to reply with:

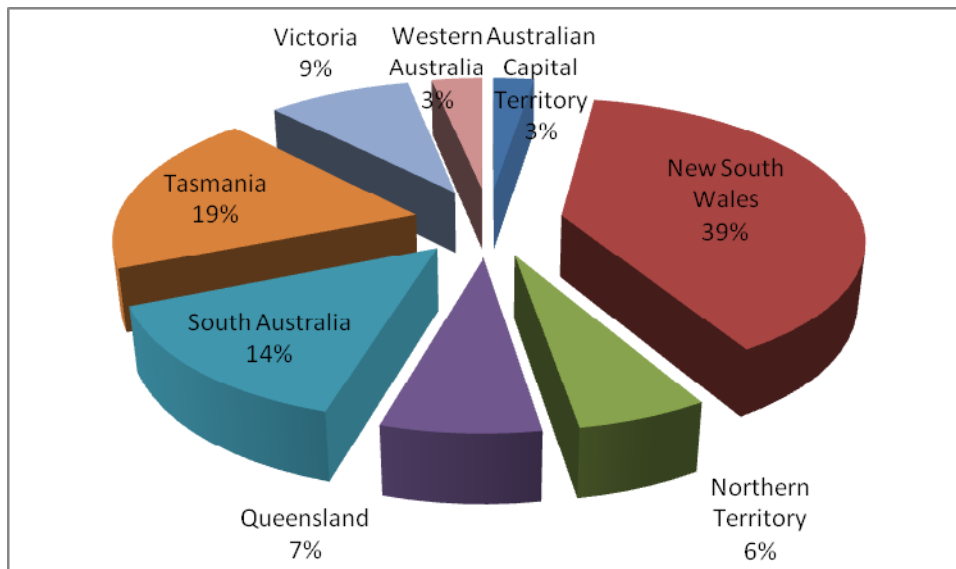
1. YES, for the duration of their membership.
2. YES, BUT only whilst they are a Cadet/Cadet Leader.
3. NO, they should only have recognition whilst they are in the year of their award.

The respondents also had an opportunity to elaborate on their response with more detail and in doing so being able to discuss further the ramifications of recognition issues.

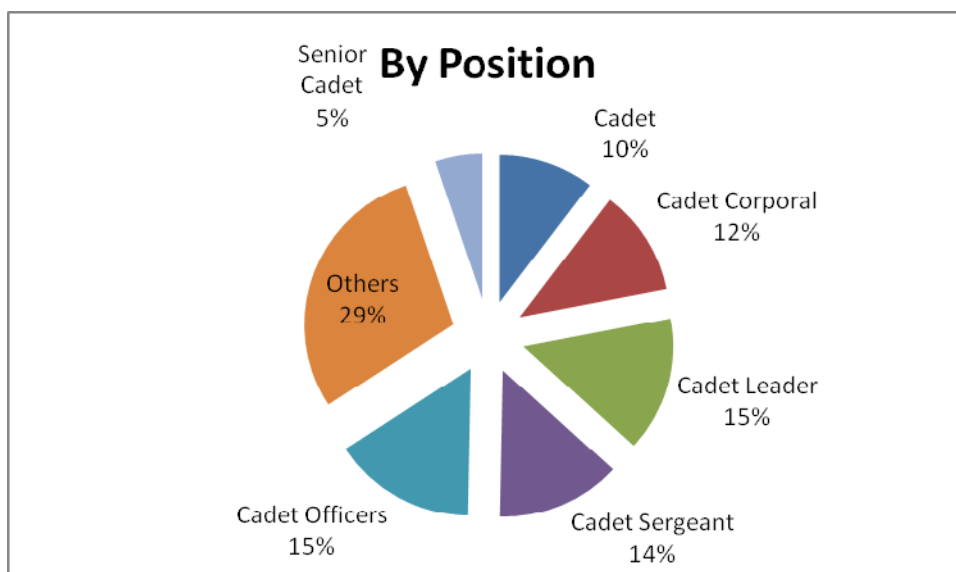
RESULTS

The demographic of respondents was as follows:

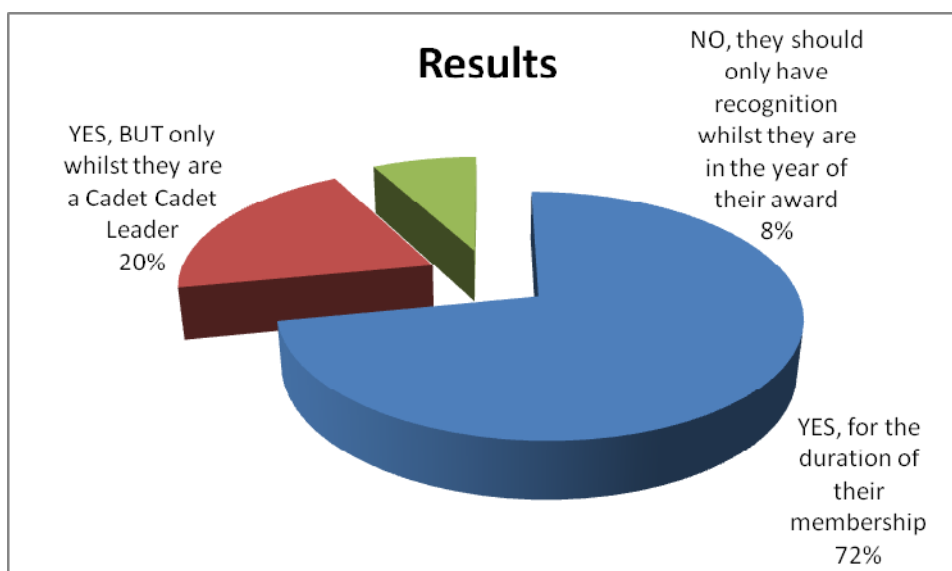
By jurisdiction



By position in the organisation:



The quantitative results of the poll are as follows:



It is clear that the vast majority of those polled **believe in ongoing recognition for COTYs.**

The most interesting outcomes of the survey however lie not necessarily in the purely quantitative, rather in the qualitative. The comments component of the poll attracted significant feedback valuable to the broader topic of recognition in St John Ambulance Australia. Key comments included:

“I think recognition is a major part of St John, especially for awards during your Cadet/Leader years. It would be nice to see this recognised as a service award that can be carried over into your Adult years also, similar to the Grand Priors Award.” (23, NT)

“Appropriate recognition is always an issue in St John and this is a great way to recognise our members, using an existing structure.” (17, ACT)

“Being recognised as cadet/cadet leader of the year is a very big honour. It takes a lot of hard work and persistence. I believe it is a higher award than the Grand prior. You only get very few chances to win the cadet/cadet leader award but many more for” (15, TAS)

“We need to be looking at recognition as a whole, not just in terms of badges and uniforms NSW members should know who the award recipients are and what they have done/why they received the award.” (19, NSW)

“By not giving them recognition for the career within the organisation, it may give individuals something more to strive for, rather than just knowing they were the best for such a year.” (22, NSW)

“It shows that they put in lots of hard work and earned something for themselves. They should not have to lose that just because their year is up.” (17, TAS)

## EXTANT INTERNAL AWARDS AND ELIGIBILITY

It is critical to consider the currently available internal awards for young people which are offered at individual state/territory levels and on a national basis. Young people in St John are identified as 12-25 years. This summary includes awards, scholarships and leadership opportunities.

### NATIONAL AWARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

#### CADET OF THE YEAR (ALSO KNOWN AS COTY OR PETER FALKLAND AWARD)

COTY is open to cadets, selection criteria is largely inconsistent across the organisation.

#### NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP FUND

A National fund open to any volunteer or staff member of St John Ambulance Australia 12-25 years wishing to undertake external leadership training and seeking financial assistance to attend.

#### ST JOHN SOUTHERN CROSS AWARD

The St John Southern Cross Award is a self driven, self paced (with assistance from mentors) program for any St John member 16-25 years who seeks further personal development. There are four components to the award: community, challenge, relationships and service.

## GRAND PRIOR'S AWARD

The Grand Prior's Award is for cadets and involves gaining 12 proficiency badges over three years (topics include a number of different subjects such as Knowledge of the Order, which is compulsory, Sports, Computer Studies, Personal Safety, ANZAC Heritage to name a few). Upon finishing the requirements the Cadet then achieves the Grand Prior's Award which generally is presented at a state level, usually at an annual awards ceremony.

## CHANCELLOR'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS (18-25 AND 26-50, COMBINED)

The Chancellor's Youth Leadership Development Program is open to anyone within St John Ambulance Australia 18-50 years who wishes to improve their leadership skills within St John. Generally the program is of nine months duration, running from October to June. The program consists of up to three workshops. It includes delivering presentations, course readings, teleconferences, mentoring and networking at a state and national level.

## STATE AND TERRITORY AWARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Individual jurisdictions offer internal awards as follows:

### NEW SOUTH WALES

- Lady Gallagher Scholarship. This scholarship is for a young person entering into tertiary studies in a health related discipline;
- Edeline Jenkyn Award open to cadets up to and including 17 years (2 awards for cadets, 1 male and 1 female);
- Regional Cadet/Cadet Leader of the Year (determined by Regional Superintendents);
- A one year secondment to State Cadet Group is available to a member under 25 years (determined by the State Cadet Officer).

### TASMANIA

- Beryl Coker Endowment Fund. This fund allows young people to gain funding for personal development opportunities;
- Three University Scholarships offered annually;
- Pattullo Young Endeavour Scheme. Open to a young person 16-23 years, given a sponsored place on the young endeavour journey.

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- Walter Winterton Award, for an outstanding young volunteer.

### NORTHERN TERRITORY

- Alan Bromwich Scholarship. This Scholarship was established to encourage current and past members of the St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Cadets to undertake a minimum of three years full-time study within a medical, nursing or allied health discipline and to retain their links with and contribution to St John;

- Leadership Development Program – Would Ya Challenge (approved funding for the challenge);
- Leeuwin Ocean Adventure.

## EXTERNAL ORGANISATION INITIATIVES

### Girl Guides

Girl Guides has age groups similar to St John – Gumnuts 5-6 years, Brownie Guides 7-11 years, Girl Guides 11-14 years, Rangers 14-18 years and Rovers 18-25 years.

Girl Guides award their members for leadership and maintain a significant emphasis on leadership in many of their awards. Guides also provides leadership training opportunities and leadership skills.

- The Junior BP Award. The guide member must complete leadership training in order to obtain the award. This award is similar to St John Commissioner's Award. In order to achieve the Junior BP the guide must meet challenges and evaluate their leadership skills at the end of each challenge/activity. They must also complete six badges which are an interest badge, a group badge, a competency badge and then three optional badges of the guide's choice. Then they complete a further six activities to achieve the award.
- The BP Award, for those 13-17 years, includes leadership training, team building, challenge exercises and appears to be a combination of the St John Grand Prior Badge and Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) training weekends. The award includes a leadership evaluation at the end of each of the challenges and badges, plus leadership development that needs to be documented and discussed with the leader of a guiding unit. There are 10 badges that need to be completed which include two interest badges, two group badges, two competency badges and four badges of choice. Individuals then need to complete a further nine activities, which includes theory and practical before achieving the BP Award.
- The Queen's Guide Award for those girls 14-18 years, which combines leadership, team building, organisation, facilitation of a residential camp and appropriate training to be the camp leader, plus other leadership/training opportunities.

The above three awards are presented by certificates and also include a label pin and cloth badge to be placed on the sash that girls wear with awards, badges earned and rankings.

The Bronze and Silver Endeavour Challenge awards allows Guides to be challenged in six areas – Promise and Law, Guiding Traditions, Service, Outdoors, World Guiding and Leadership. These awards form part of the above awards, however provide interim recognition.

In the past Girl Guides offered rank like St John NCO ranking after completion of a number of challenges, leadership skills, running your own group of members and training for various areas. This ranking has been amended to reflect different achievement areas after completing leadership and other training. The 'ranks' are the Brownie Footpath (which is equivalent to

Cadet Corporal), Brownie Road (equivalent to Cadet Sergeant) and Brownie Highway (equivalent to Cadet Leader).

### **Australian Red Cross**

The Australian Red Cross leadership and awards focus on numerous leadership and team building activities, all which contribute to recognition. The Australian Red Cross is similar to St John in structure, and recognises young people in terms of the number of hours contributed.

### **Scouts Australia**

The Scouting movement of Australia is open to both male and females from 10 through to 26 years.

Scouts offer awards and activities that carry through the different age groups, with awards that link to each age group. This provides an opportunity for development towards the next age group of the Scouting movement. These awards include leadership aspects. It is similar to St John with equivalents to the Commissioner's Badge, Grand Prior's, Sovereign's and the new Southern Cross Award. One award, the Scouts Heritage Badge, like the Grand Prior's Badge can be worn into adult membership.

Another award that scouts can obtain is the Scout Leadership Course badge – this is centred entirely on leadership, with the scout member undertaking a leadership activity to show their demonstration, understanding and completion of a leadership activity. "The Scout Leadership Course aims to provide suitable leadership skills for Scouts with a practical 'hands on' approach run in line with the Patrol System." "Leadership activity - this requires a Scout to show significant personal development while demonstrating an active leadership role e.g. organising and planning an activity or event that covers a minimum of one full day or overnight."

The highest award in Scouting is the Baden Powell Award which focuses on personal development and a range of areas, skills and challenges to be undertaken by a Rover between 17-26 years. The Baden Powell Award can be undertaken once a Scout becomes a Rover. This is similar to the St John Southern Cross Award and Duke of Edinburgh Award. The Baden Powell is awarded at Government House by the Governor and Chief Scout.

### **Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme**

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is open to individuals 14-25 years. There are four different areas that must be completed and three different levels, completing one level before moving onto the next. The three levels are bronze, silver and gold. The award must be completed by a candidate's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and they must be 14 years to commence the Bronze Level, 15 for Silver and 16 for Gold.

The four areas of the award are Service, Physical Recreation, Expedition and Skills. At the Gold Level there is also an additional residential activity. For each area a candidate must keep a record of every activity that they have completed and also have a supervisor to sign them off.

## POSITIVE FINDINGS

Throughout the research and consultation process it was evident that St John has already achieved much in terms of providing leadership development, it is appropriate to have particularly applauded aspects documented in this report, including:

- Promotion opportunities for young people in Cadet Divisions (NCOs);
- *Some* inter-organisational training such as with Scouts;
- Development of transferrable leadership skills in curriculums;
- Provision of opportunities to practice leadership skills;
- Networking opportunities with decision makers;
- Financial support to attend training;
- Provision of positive role-models for developing leaders;
- A new found focus on leadership, as opposed to management development;
- A diversity of leadership roles available.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### What can the organisation do to help young people develop leadership skills?

In developing leadership skills young people face unique obstacles, some are posed by older individuals who (1) think leadership is something that one "grows into" or earns, (2) don't believe young people are capable of being leaders today, (3) are unwilling to share their power, responsibility, and decision-making, and (4) just assign young people to tasks rather than allow them to determine what happens in program planning, design, implementation, and evaluation (Des Marais, Yang, & Farzanehkia, 2000). To overcome these obstacles and help young people effectively develop leadership skills, adult allies can:

- Promote youth/adult partnerships;
- Give young people real power to make decisions and responsibility for the consequences of their decisions;
- Ensure that young people are provided with the training and support needed to take on new levels of responsibility and decision-making;
- Provide a broad range of contexts which allow young people to learn and develop leadership in the real world with diverse and unfamiliar groups (Gardner, 1990; Des Marais, Yang, & Farzanehkia, 2000);

- Recognise and respect the knowledge, experience, and skills that young people have now while still challenging them to enhance these skills and try new things (Des Marais, Yang, & Farzanehkia, 2000).

Older leaders play a critical role in helping young people develop as leaders. Working with adults young people can learn about the many different leaders and leadership styles, and the ways that leadership and beliefs about leadership are shaped by culture, values, and life experiences. Adults can support them to find or create the style that's right for themselves (Gardner, 1990).

Finally, adults can help dismantle the barriers that might prevent a young person from authentic engagement in leadership roles, and help create opportunities to learn and practice leadership in ways that make a real difference to them, their organisations, and their communities.

This report has also uncovered some technical aspects which the organisation should consider in its future planning:

1. Introducing longer-term recognition for Cadet Leaders of the year.
2. Introducing leadership as a core component of development for all young people in the organisation, not as an optional extra, and identify clear career paths for young leaders.
3. Encouraging an equal opportunity policy which removes any opportunity for ageism.
4. Introducing a nationally consistent Cadet/Cadet Leader of the Year Award and potentially a national Cadet/Cadet Leader of the Year.
5. Investigate inter-organisation networking in terms of leadership training and exchange.
6. Investigate consultation with external organisations' leadership/advisory groups regarding leadership development.
7. Implement opportunities at local (divisional) levels which encourage young people to participate in leadership roles in both Cadet and Adult units.
8. Ensure that leadership development or training opportunities are not limited to those who have extant or have been flagged for extant positions, rather leaving time for interest and opportunity to develop.
9. Provide clear mentoring programs and partnerships for young leaders.
10. Promote the National Youth Leadership Fund at the jurisdictional level.
11. Investigate possibility of further recognition of young people within the Order.
12. Develop apprentice/graduate programs for staff which provide exposure to various areas of the organisation, allowing for future progression into general management.

## CONCLUSION

The **St John Australian Youth Council Accolade Report for 2008** concludes, through investigation, research and supporting literature review that young people need to be supported and provided with opportunities to have responsibility, explore challenges, contribute to decision making and problem solving processes.

St John currently provides many opportunities for young leaders to be developed and be showcased to peers and older leaders for contributions at local and state levels. Awards can demonstrate efforts and contributions they have made to the organisation.

There are however, a number of avenues in which St John could strengthen its leadership development available to young people, ranging from training and mentoring to physical opportunities being identified. Such opportunities have significant academic and anecdotal backing, as evidenced in this report.

**Youth Development is a core business of St John Ambulance Australia and the focus of the Australian Youth Council. Developing young leaders is critical to achieving this business outcome.**

## THANKS

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- Australian Youth Council members
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