

## **RETHINKING SQUIRE TRAINING**

*From Australian Scout Magazine, Nov 2010.*

Squire Training is about training Squires, right?

Nuh!

In the past year or so, the figures show that Rover Crews have done a fantastic job at retaining Venturers into Rovers. This is because more Rovers have made great efforts to have personal contact and conversations with older Venturers. Well done!

But... we seem to be getting worse at retaining our young Rovers. One of the common concerns is that bad Squire training can turn people off Rovers altogether.

Consider this: Squire training is not about training Squires, it's about training your organisation. It's about making sure your Crew has the skills to operate. There are eight years to develop and train your members – Squire training is only six months of that eight years.

So what does this mean in practice?

It means that Squire training needs to be only those skills that make new members functional in your Crew. **Relevance**. If your Crew enjoys motorsport, and hasn't been rock-climbing in years, why are you still teaching Squires to tie a figure-of-eight knot when they don't know how to change a tyre?

### **5 signs you need to rethink your Squire Training**

#### **1. Your Crew needs to run 'Squire Training Nights'.**

If Squire training consists of the skills necessary to function as a Rover, why do you need to run extra activities to cover this? Is your program that dull? Being a Squire is getting trained on-the-job. Learning campcraft skills is fun when they're learnt on a Crew camp and extremely tedious when you're putting up a tent in the park or lighting a fire out the back of the hall. Ever considered incorporating ethical training into your weekly activities? Cub leaders have to do it, why not Rovers?

#### **2. It takes the average conscientious Squire longer than 6 months to finish Squire Training**

If your Squire's keen and the Sponsor's supportive, your Squire training program should be dead simple to complete in six months. These days there are bigger time demands on young people, so six months is an ideal that few Crews live up to. But Scouting moves with the times. Is there some fat that can be trimmed from your training program? Is that last barrier to becoming a full Rover really that important to the proper functioning of your Crew?

#### **3. Your Crew's best activities are run by Squires**

Being a Squire is the first real taste of being a Rover. Make sure that Squires have something to aspire to and look forward to. If your Crew program is carried by Squires, where's the

incentive to make the effort to become a full Rover? Either the Squire training is aimed too high, or it's time your full Rovers developed some ambition!

#### **4. You have Squires on your Crew Executive**

If you trust your Squires to run your Crew, then surely you trust them to be full members? Sometimes it's a necessity to have Squires on the executive in small Crews. If it's not a necessity, it's time to rethink your Squire training program, or pull out the stops to finish those last components of the training.

#### **5. Completing Squire Training is an exercise in bureaucracy**

This is a common pitfall for Crews that grow fast, i.e. big Crews that act like small Crews. Doing a Squire project should not need a joint sitting of Parliament to approve commencement. Most tasks should require a conversation with the Sponsor and possibly the Crew Leader or Rover Advisor. No Squire should have to wait for a Business Meeting (or the Papal seal) to start anything.

Some real scrutiny is required for the Baden Powell Award – not for Squire training.

#### **“But, it's tradition!”**

Traditions are a fantastic part of Rover Crews. Every Crew has a unique history. This doesn't mean we can't think critically about our Squire training traditions. Why not keep your traditions, but make them relevant and achievable:

- Ambitious Squire projects can be completed by a team of Squires, or significantly reduced in scope.
- Rather than organising a major activity, Squires can participate or organise one component: write a menu, check the tentage, organise transport. There are eight years to learn the finer points of event management.

If Crews can't keep their Squire training relevant, then they need to get used to traditions like shrinking membership, becoming a clique, and getting stuck in a rut!

#### **Do:**

- make sure that if your Squire has to attend a meeting, they have a Sponsor or older Rover to explain what's going on.
- require your Squires to attend (or complete online) an Intro to Rovers course. In a couple of hours, Squires can learn material that would take months to pick up otherwise. (Your Crew does pay for all training, right?)
- think of the tasks that are important to your Crew that go under the radar. For example, teach Squires to secure and use a trailer safely – truckies' hitch or ratchet straps: doesn't matter. Square lashing – less important. Teach Squires to make a Facebook event invitation for a Rover party with appropriate privacy settings.
- give Squires meaningful nicknames on their Squire investiture, or have in-jokes between Sponsors and Squires, or encourage Sponsors and Squires to talk or meet up outside of Rover nights. Make it a special time.

## **Don't:**

- ask your Squires to do more of the work than full members. There are better ways to emphasise service, and if done insensitively it's basically bullying, which has no place. Get your Squires through their training through support and positive reinforcement. If that doesn't work, the sponsor along with the Crew Leader and Rover Advisor needs to ask the Squire if they still wish to be a member of the Crew.

Check out your Squire Training Resources for more ideas. [The Crew and it's Program](#)

Above all, ask the question, 'is this component of the Squire Training going to help the Crew?' Why not have a discussion during some down-time at the den or around the campfire?

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*\*Since writing this article, Morris held the position of Chairman, Victorian Branch Rover Council (2011-12)*