ORIENTEERING ACT (OACT) PARTICIPATION REPORT TO ORIENTEERING AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE – Dec 2017.

This paper presents information on OACT participation and membership numbers. The paper also discusses the challenges with attracting volunteers to conduct events.

OACT would like these issues discussed during the OA Conference or at least have the information and experiences from the other States shared between States.

Summary: Questions and proposals raised in this paper are:

1. It should be possible, using the Eventor API to write software to show participation patterns. What software has been already written by other states to show this?
2. OACT is requesting that OA and the States work together to improve Eventor for renewing and new memberships.
3. For all States, what are their membership fees and enter-on-the-day event entry fees for members and non-members? What model works best to entice people to become members?
4. OACT recognises that a move to paid roles for course planning, organizer and controller is a step from which it will be difficult to return to a fully volunteer sport and that increased entry fees would be required to cover the cost. What other models are in place in other States?

OACT Participation at Public Events

	Classic		Local Bush		total		Street		Total	
	# events	Partici-pation	# events	Partici-pation	# events	Partici-pation	# events	Partici-pation	# events	Partici-pation
2005	22	2236	58	5630	80	7866			80	7866
2006	17	1943	53	5738	70	7681			70	7681
2007	16	1321	66	6790	82	8111			82	8111
2008	15	1906	63	6403	78	8309			78	8309
2009	18	2613	57	6076	75	8689			75	8689
2010	15	2211	60	6837	75	9048			75	9048
2011	15	2044	59	6119	74	8163	14	1663	88	9826
2012	12	1188	60	6176	72	7364	22	1691	94	9055
2013	11	1645	59	6792	70	8437	35	2109	105	10546
2014	11	1377	56	5554	67	6931	27	1626	94	8557
2015	10	1281	60	7141	70	8422	44	2624	114	11046
2016	6	736	54	6462	60	7198	39	2616	99	9814
2017	11	1691	56	6438	67	8129	40	2665	107	10794*

* Estimate for 2017 assuming 1,600 participations in Twilight and 1,000 participations in spring street-o for Sep -Dec 2017.

The above table shows participation (i.e. number of starts) and number of events held since 2005. Please also see graphs at end of paper.

In addition in the past 2 years OACT has been conducting School Orienteering **SC-ORE** for primary school children. This is program of 4 events held before school in a relay format. Two programs per year have been held in the past 2 years with participations increasing from 208 over the 4 events to the most recent 560 over the 4 events. Also OACT has been doing much work in Sporting Schools and in other school programs.

The Classic events are the traditional (mostly) Sunday orienteering events and includes championship, badge, ACT League and NOL events when held. This does not include national events such as Easter and Australian Championships when hosted by OACT.

The Classic column shows a gradual decline in the number of events held and consequently total participations across the year. However, the number of participants per event has slightly increased over a ten year period, indicating that participants are still interested in attending these events. The challenge is attracting course setters, organisers and controllers. This decline in the number of events held each year becomes more apparent if you add in the national events. Whereas in the past, OACT was able to host Easter plus the following weekend, I believe OACT would struggle to do this now, and we did not try this at Easter 2016.

'Local Bush' events includes our Saturday winter and Wednesday Twilight summer evening programs, the Wednesday winter lunch program, MTBO and some 'other' events. The number of events has held reasonably steady. The Saturday and Twilight programs (full sport-ident, 4 courses up to 5km) has shown a gradual increase in average participation per event, such that in the 2016-17 summer the 16 Twilight events had an average participation of 167 and the 2017 Saturday program had an average participation of 213 for the 15 events.

The demand for the Saturday and Twilight programs is there, the challenge is supply, i.e. the ability of our clubs to find sufficient volunteers to conduct these events. Over the years, the number of Saturday events has dropped from about 16 to 17 down to 15, with 14 planned for 2018. The number of twilight events has dropped from 18 to 19 in the past to 15 for the upcoming summer.

The **Wednesday lunch program** extends from May to September and attracts on average about 28. It is self-time, manual punching and mark your own maps from the master map. Each event can be organized and course- planned by one person. There is a general understanding that each of the regulars has a turn in organizing an event. With this low tech format, we could handle double that number of participants. The irony is that if the number of participants became sufficiently large that we had to use pre-marked maps, sport-ident, more courses etc, then the Wednesday lunch program would probably fail because we would not find the volunteers to do this

My observation is that many orienteers are happy to volunteer, provided they do not need to organize and coordinate other people nor use high-tech equipment and the larger events require these.

OACT started **street orienteering** in 2011 on Monday evenings. A $10K ACT Government Health Promotion grant funded the initial equipment and maps and free participation for the first series. We chose the Melbourne model using black and white maps, manual punching and mass starting in order to minimize the volunteer input to one person. Basically all the growth that OACT has had since 2005 in terms of participation is because of street orienteering. During daylight saving hours, street-o attracts up to 100 participants, and in Canberra's winter it can be as low as 30. Also during summer, street-o is held in parallel to the summer Twilight program on Wednesday evenings.

OACT has received some ASC participation funding to produce further street-o maps. The rationale for this was that persons are more likely to offer to organize street-o if they can do it in their local suburb. Hence more street-o maps to cover a larger part of Canberra's suburbs.

The street-O program relies upon a coordinator to organize the roster for the individual to organize each individual event, and do other coordinating roles. In organizing the roster, non- (day) members are also encouraged to volunteer to organize events and many day members do this. I believe this is the only example in Australia where non-members organize orienteering events.

 When that coordinator retires, will we be able to find another coordinator or coordinating committee, or does our street-o program stop? Will people simply say "we used to do it but we do not do it anymore"?

This, to me, is a major threat to orienteering – in OACT (and I suspect the other state associations) we rely upon a small number of individuals and if those persons were to disappear, we would be in huge bother.

Day Members Participation

Day (or Casual) members are those who do not belong to an orienteering club. In 2016, 1,068 day members took part in 3,215 participations at OACT events. Some 452 of day members took part in 2 or more events, meaning that the majority of day members took part in only one event in 2016. Some 71 day members took part in 10 or more events.

Over 30% of all OACT 2016 participations (total 9814) in 2016 were by Day Members. This varies depending on the type of orienteering. Over 50% of street orienteering participations were by day members. About 25% of participations at the Saturday and Twilight events were by day members. Less than 10% at classic league events, and near zero at championship events.

Some 50% of all day member participations were done in small groups (teams) and mostly at the easier (blue and green) navigation standards.

How does this compare with Interstate?

Looking at interstate results, it appears that OACT attracts a much higher number of day members, and also OACT attracts higher numbers of persons doing orienteering in groups or teams. I speculate that the reason for this is that it is easy to attend an orienteering event in Canberra, held mostly in suburban locations, no more than a 20 minute drive from home.

Also, in the OACT results we place team members on separate lines. This means extra work when preparing results, but team members can be individually identified in participation analyses including day member analysis. I note that in other states' results, team members are placed on the same line in the results, suggesting that they cannot be electronically identified or analyzed.

Why are Day Member numbers Important?

When OACT applies for government grants, the ACT Government wants to know is how many Canberrans do orienteering. Just reporting club members (usually in the high 400's) is not impressive. Being able to report club members and day members (about 1,500) looks far more impressive.

How does OACT determine Day Member numbers?

I understand that some states keep a register of day members (in Eventor?) and which is manually compiled from event registration cards. For OACT with 3,200 day member participations this is clearly impractical – you do not know who is already in that register but even if you did, there is still 1000.

OACT determines day members from the results. This means collecting all the csv files from OE2010 and other spreadsheets where OE is not used, for all selected events, and doing various excel operations, to come up with a list showing for selected events all those participants who participated and the number of times they participated in those events. This includes both club members and day members. This is quite a lengthy operation and we only do it at the end of the year so as to include in the Annual Report.

It should be possible, using the Eventor API to write a program that will show for selected events whose results are in Eventor, the list of all those (including their club if they have one) who participated in those selected events and the number of times. A further derivation is that the software produces an excel or csv table showing the selected events and the participants (indicted by class or course) so that further analysis can be done (example shown below). I am hoping that one our OACT members or someone elsewhere from across the States can produce this software.

	Event 1	Event 2	Event 3	Event 4	Total events attended
Participant 1	O1 MM	O1 MM		O1 MM	3
Participant 2		O2 WJ	O2 WJ dnf	O2 team	3
Participant 3	GR team		GR team		2
Participant 4		O1 WM mp			1
Participant 5		O2 MM	O2 mm		2
Total					
etc					

From what I can determine, at the present time, Australian orienteering has no idea who is participating, apart from looking at individual event results, does not know how often people are participating, nor how many Australians are participating in orienteering. OA President Blair has alluded to this in his introductory papers.

Regarding the Eventor API, I am aware that other state associations have written programs to analyse results. What programs already exist?

Presenting Results Information

For many years, except for street orienteering, OACT has been presenting its results at local eod (enter-on-the-day) events in 7 classes per course. That is, for each course: Men Junior, Men Open, Men Master, Women Junior, Women Open, Women Master, and Teams. This adds more interest, and is important for new persons who do not know others to see how they go. Also I think it is important to identify the juniors in this manner especially as orienteering puts a lot of effort into junior and school orienteering. OACT believes presenting the results in classes rather than courses enhances the orienteering experience.

When I look at other states' results, many event results seem to be listed only in Courses; everyone in together. OE2010 makes it easy to do this, as distinct to OACT's approach using classes where all entries have to be manually entered into OE2010 which means more work at events.

Membership

Year	Memberships	Members
2005	235	496
2006	238	500
2007	248	503
2008	221	435
2009	224	468
2010	247	513
2011	246	524
2012	234	520
2013	222	490
2014	195	411
2015	212	442
2016	208	474
2017	210	482

The table (left) shows total numbers for the 5 OACT clubs, ie not counting associates when they existed etc. OACT does not have the option that you can belong to a club but not OACT and vice versa.

The OA state levy is based on the number of memberships. Eventor does not tell you this information. I assume that the state associations determine membership numbers by exporting the member data, sorting and counting number of unique addresses, or some process to that effect.

Can Eventor Count?

	Members (as counted by Geoff)	Figure reported in Eventor (Organization and Member overview)
AO-A	50	*50*
BS-A	166	*179*
PO-A	139	*154*
RR-A	107	*115*
WE-A	20	*24*
Total	482	

Here I exported the member list for each club and counted members and compared this to the club total that Eventor tells you. I am correct and Eventor is wrong.

How hard is it to become a Member?

OACT is encouraging renewing and new members to become members on-line.

OACT still receives complaints about the user unfriendliness of Eventor and there is a possibility that potentially interested orienteers decide not to take up a membership

To determine if it was too hard, and wearing a 'new person's hat', I recently attempted to go through the process of signing up for membership pretending I was a new person, using the Test Eventor. However I got error messages. So I used the real Eventor (which now contains 3 more fake registrations) to go through the exercise of signing up as a new family. Whilst I could do this, I can understand that a new person unfamiliar with Eventor could have difficulty.

Is the Test Eventor still operative? Can we still use it to do tests, as I describe above?

OACT is requesting that OA and the States work together to seek changes to Eventor for renewing and new memberships, also including additional membership data entry fields, such as Emergency Contacts. Other data would be useful for membership and event management

Who renews?

As with many organizations, the long standing rusted-on members are most likely to renew. Those most likely not to renew are new members.

Participation analyses I have done over the years indicates that some 50% to 70% of new members do not renew in the following year. Their participation patterns are typically:

a. They attend one or two events when they are keen and they become members. They then stop coming for some short term reason and never get back into it, even though they may have the best of intentions.
b. They (or just the children) participate as a family group in the very easy (blue) or easy (green) courses. They may attend a number of times at the Saturday or twilight programs, but when the program finishes, we do not see them again. By the time membership renewals comes, they have long forgotten orienteering and are doing other things.
c. If a parent (usually the dad) starts participating as an individual in the harder courses, (and not, for example, as part of the family group as above), then we are starting to get the family hooked onto orienteering, and the probability they will renew increases. Indeed, if this step is not reached, then there is a near 100% probability they will not renew.

If the new member is a young single person, (20s – early 30's) there is a high probability they will not renew.

Why would I want to be a member?

As an individual what is the attraction for me to become a member? Adult membership for OACT is $90 per year. For this I save $5 on the day event entry. The Australian Orienteer magazine is going online and is now available to non-members. If I am doing 15 events a year it is cheaper to be a non-member. Maybe a better approach is to reduce membership fees and charge more for event entries.

Question for the other States: What are their membership fees and enter-on-the-day event entry fees for members and non-members? What model works best to entice people to become members?

Volunteering to conduct events, and hence increase participation

We discuss volunteering under Participation, because without our volunteers we have no events and hence no participation.

The Strategic Planning Background Paper refers to the technology that has hugely reduced the volunteer workload at (particularly) high level orienteering events – removing the need for card checkers and time calculators as example. This reduction probably was not so pronounced at lower level events which relied more on honesty i.e. cards not checked and self-timing. I would suggest the volunteer resource freed up by technology has been used to enable orienteering to stage more events.

Meanwhile society is changing. People are not volunteering. People are increasingly time poor – increasing numbers of dual income families, longer work hours for many.

I suggest that the biggest weakness of orienteering is its huge reliance on volunteers to conduct events. This is more so than any other sport, including events-based sports such as triathlon and parkrun. I believe we are already struggling with this. OACT clubs are struggling now to find volunteers who are often the same people and it is getting close to when events will be cancelled because of lack of volunteers.

Elsewhere, Triathlon outsources events to other parties: Sri Shinmoy and Elite Energy. Within orienteering we note that 'Bold Horizons' are the organisers for ONSW Saturday program and presumably have some arrangement with ONSW. Is this a way to the future?

In anecdotes, I have heard words such as: "We should (volunteer), but we cannot therefore we had better leave". "We better not attend too many orienteering events or we will feel obligated to volunteer and we do not have the time".

How do state associations and clubs recognize and reward their volunteers who organize events? Here I am talking about recognition beyond that as provided by awards such as the Silva and David Hogg awards and similar types of awards at state level.

The OA strategic plan includes:

Mission includes: 'Enhance the profile of orienteering and retention of members through . . . event management technologies'.

Vision includes: 'easy to use electronic timing systems for low cost community and schools orienteering events - significant participation in orienteering from smartphone and other technology models'

The whole purpose of this continuing technology advancement should be to make it easier for our volunteers to conduct events. This must be a priority. If it also improves the experience for competitors, then that is a side bonus.

If technology improvement makes it more complicated for our volunteers or increases the amount of volunteer work, then we should not adopt that technology.

The strategic plan states:

"1C. Increase participation in orienteering by school students

iii. Innovation in new orienteering products for juniors: Space Racing, Spooks In The Park, Adventure Races, smart phone technologies, maze orienteering, online orienteering games, permanent courses etc"

The reference to smart phones is not just a school student or junior thing. This is the future.

I understand the reference to smart phone technologies refers to what I call virtual GPS controls. There are no physical control flags and competitors use their smart phone or some device yet to be developed which alerts and records when the competitor is at a control area.

If we can get rid of the volunteer effort in putting out control flags and SI units and then collecting them after the event, I think that is a major plus in ensuring the long term future of orienteering.

Graphs below:

These represent the tables shown at start of this Paper – OACT Participations.

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Classic

- Events
- Avg/Event
- Linear (Avg/Event)

Avg/Event values: 102, 114, 83, 127, 145, 147, 136, 99, 150, 125, 128, 123, 154

Events values: 22, 17, 16, 15, 18, 15, 15, 12, 11, 11, 10, 6, 11

Years: 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017

Local Bush

- Events
- Avg/Event
- Linear (Avg/Event)

Avg/Event values: 97, 108, 103, 102, 107, 114, 104, 103, 115, 99, 119, 120, 115

Events values: 58, 53, 66, 63, 57, 60, 59, 60, 59, 56, 60, 54, 56

Years: 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017

Total classic and local bush

Events: 80, 70, 82, 78, 75, 75, 74, 72, 70, 67, 70, 60, 67

Avg/Event: 98, 110, 99, 107, 116, 121, 110, 102, 121, 103, 120, 120, 121

Years: 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017

Legend: Events, Avg/Event, Linear (Avg/Event)

Street O

Events: 14, 22, 35, 27, 44, 39, 40

Avg/Event: 119, 77, 60, 60, 60, 67, 67

Years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017

Legend: Events, Avg/Event