

AURU
Australian Ultra Running
5 year plan 2007 – 2011

Introduction

The 5 year review for the period 2002 – 2006 shows that

- (a) the numbers participating in ultras (excl Six Foot & Great Ocean Road) is bouyant at 900, up from 600 in 2002
- (b) the numbers participating in conventional marathons is bouyant at 7100, up from 5500 in 2002
- (c) the numbers participating in the two 100 km Oxfam trailwalkers is very strong at 3800 up from 400 in 2002.

This being the case, it is obvious that the sport needs proper marketing, the interest is there and the people to target are those who participate in the marathons and larger team events.

Marketing

It is proposed that a detailed annual race calendar be prepared, in four-color triple A4 and disseminated at the capital city marathons, Six Foot Track, Great Ocean Road marathon, Australian Ironman, trailwalkers etc.

This document would showcase the various races on offer for the year. An entry would be offered to Race Directors of those races currently appearing in the AURA race calendar.

It is proposed that a nominal fee of \$100 would be charged for the entry. In due course, we would favour an arrangement where AURA members would receive a discount on their race entry fees.

Advertising would be offered to interested parties such as the suppliers of shoes, running apparel, energy supplements etc.

It is envisaged that the print run be of 25,000 copies. The cost of this would be recovered from charges for the calendar entry plus advertising revenue.

Branding

As part of our broader marketing strategy, AURA must take steps to effectively develop its brand. Branding goes well beyond advertising or logo design. It is the process of promoting our visual, emotional and cultural image to our members, the broader community and the media. It involves the way we talk and think about our association and it is integral to our growth.

In 2007, we must take steps to ensure the AURA identity develops a strong sense of loyalty amongst members and starts to make a name for itself in the general public. Our aim is for the AURA name to be synonymous with ultra running. It is important that AURA needs to continue to be viewed as the prime entity for the continuing

development of long distance running in Australia. It is a member of the International Association of Ultrarunners and needs to do justice to that relationship.

AURA's first step will be to finalise its logos and to ensure we use them in a consistent manner on all publications, apparel, websites, advertising and other documents disseminated by AURA.

All aspects of our business should reflect and support our intended brand. Our key objective or, if you like, our product, is to create and deliver a pleasing and memorable ultra race experience. Our most valuable asset is our people. Race directors, committee and State representatives need to be focused on delivering on our product.

We must show passion, inspiration and professionalism in all aspects of our endeavours.

Public relations

One aspect of marketing that hasn't successfully been tapped by AURA is media PR. In 2007 we will be producing media releases on a regular basis to a broad range of media outlets. Of course, the emphasis will always be running publications but we will also target mainstream media including commercial radio, TV, magazines and online resources. There is no reason however, why we cannot achieve some editorial in magazines such as Outdoor, Men's Health and even Women's Weekly. We will assist race directors achieve media support for key events and promote the AURA brand through media at any opportunity. To be successful at this, we must be careful to not saturate the industry with media releases, rather produce timely and professional releases.

It is our aim to ensure key AURA events are adequately covered by professional photographers and incentives are provided for TV and documentary coverage.

Race sanctioning

It is proposed that races promoted by AURA would need to comply with an AURA sanctioning process. Briefly, this would be similar to the requirements of Running Australia, requiring proper course measurement (Jones counter for measured road courses, GPS for non-measured road races and all trail races), necessary approvals from interested authorities, public liability insurance, toilet facilities, rubbish disposal, safety, marketing plan and prompt results publishing. Races sanctioned by AURA would be entitled and expected to carry an appropriate AURA logo, similar to the IAU labeling process. It is expected that this would take 12 months to fully implement.

Apparel

It is important that the AURA apparel be redesigned to make it more attractive to the eye and more comfortable to wear in all conditions. The apparel would be passed on at a reasonably low price and members would be encouraged to wear it at all races sanctioned by AURA.

Ultramag

Ultramag is substantially better than it was when produced in mono. However, it can be improved further with proper planning. In particular, the format needs to be revised

to make it more attractive to prospective advertisers. With improved quality a far larger quantity can be produced thus facilitating an offering through newsagents etc.

Website

We need our own website. Kevin Tiller of CoolRunning has done a great job in attending to our basic requirements but in coming years we need something which is a little more specific to our own requirements. To this end, we have secured the domain name www.aura.asn.au The website would include the race calendar of the AURA sanctioned races. Each race entry in the calendar page would have a link to the website of that particular race. Should the race not have its own website, AURA would provide one for it. This would be basic but it is envisaged that it would include as a minimum, details of the race, the race entry form and the results of prior years.

There is no doubt that the internet and electronic communications will play an increasingly important role in our continuing development and we look forward to working closely with Kevin to achieve this initiative.

Email newsletters

It is proposed to send out email newsletters on a monthly basis. These would report results of races for the previous month, preview upcoming races and provide an update of the AURA points competition and to advertise uniforms etc. There would be a cost involved in providing this service, but it could be defrayed by advertising revenue.

Email newsletters are considered to be an extremely useful tool in generating interest and act as a refresher in the dissemination of information.

Assistance to Race Directors

It is proposed that existing and prospective RD's be offered assistance as follows

- (a) advice as to how to conduct a race, the need for pictures and prompt reporting of results
- (b) gaining necessary approvals from Municipal authorities, State Government Departments, Police etc
- (c) provision of Public Liability insurance, which would be passed on at cost
- (d) plans for first aid and safety
- (e) development of race entry forms. These would be required to carry the AURA logo

Need for more races in NSW

It is obvious that more races are needed in NSW. I would suggest that we need as a matter of priority a 24 hour race (preferably track, but could be on a road loop if properly measured) and a road or trail race of approx 65 – 75km. Shorter than 50km and it's barely an ultra. Longer than 75km and its starting to get too hard as a first step up from marathons. I would be only too happy to personally lend some assistance to

get these races established, but they must carry approvals from the relevant authorities.

AURA points competition

This has become quite popular with reasonable prizes now on offer and after some limited publicity. It is proposed that the value of prizes be increased for 2007 from \$2,000 to \$4,000 by the addition of a trip to contest the Comrades marathon in South Africa for the winner, with prizes down to 10th place.

Only the races appearing in the AURA calendar would be eligible and. As before, only athletes who are members of AURA would be entitled to points.

Signature event

AURA is part of a group which is formulating plans for the holding of a stage race from Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane in 2009. This would include 15 athletes, half from Australia, half from overseas. All runners would be required to qualify. It is envisaged that substantial sponsorship monies be raised and that highlights of the event be televised each evening on television, much the same as the Tour de France and the Dakar rally. It is envisaged that this event would attract significant public interest to our sport, just as the Westfield Sydney-Melbourne race conducted from 1983 to 1991.

It is planned to involve communities and schools in particular. With modern technology, we should be able to capture the public's interest, make it interesting for the athletes and profitable for the sponsors.

The need for qualifying races should, in itself, provide a heightened interest in the Colac 6 day race.

Naturally the staging of the event is dependent on gaining the support and necessary approvals from the various State Governments.

Colac Six day race

This iconic race has been in danger of becoming extinct. My view is that all possible needs to be done to ensure that it survives. I favour a concept where the runners would need to qualify, various top overseas runners would be invited, reasonable prizemoney be on offer and that it be paid for by sponsors who would receive advertising benefits, principally via television coverage. The fact that this race will likely become the principal qualifying event for the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane race should assist it to regain its popularity.

Conclusion

There is tremendous potential to take the sport to new levels over the next few years. I am certain that, with the necessary hard work and application, this can be achieved.

Ian Cornelius
President
AURA
3 February 2007