

AUSTRALIAN ULTRA RUNNERS ASSOCIATION INC

BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

- The Westfield Sydney - Melbourne races held from 1983 to 1991 created considerable interest in Australia in the sport of ultra marathon running. This interest was from participants, would-be participants and an adoring public.
- The resultant publicity proved a boon for the Westfield group.
- Those races saw many fine performances by Cliff Young, George Perdon, Yiannis Kouros, Bryan Smith, David Standeven, Richard Tout, Sandra Barwick, Eleanor Robinson and others.....all world class athletes, some before but most as a result of the Sydney to Melbourne race.
- The qualifying standard to gain race entry was typically 200km in a 24 hour race within 12 months preceding the race. This led to the creation of and interest in 24 hour track races.
- AURA was formed in 1985 about the same time as the International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU), AUA (USA) and ACU (Canada). In fact, Geoff Hook, the principal founder of AURA was also one of four who promulgated the formation of the IAU. Geoff Hook held the office of President of AURA for the first 15 years of its existence until year 2000 and is a Life Member of AURA.
- Apart from a two year gap where Paul Ashton and Gary Parsons were President each for a one year term, the Presidential role has been fulfilled by Ian Cornelius for the past 9 years.
- All or almost all of the IAU member countries have a national athletic federation (NAF). Many countries also have a national ultra association (NUA). AURA is a NUA.
- Of the 50 or so member countries of the IAU only 9 remain which are NUA's. The remainder are the NAF's of each respective country. The remaining NUA's, in addition to Australia, include Ireland, Canada, Italy and France,
- Over the years, the IAU has grown closer and closer to the IAAF to the point where the premier 100km and 24 hour races in the world, formerly known as World Challenge or World Cup are now referred to as world 100km championship and world 24 hour championship. A world trail championship (normally 55 to 70km) has also recently been added.
- These championships are held under the auspices of the IAAF and the rules of the IAAF, including anti-doping regulations, are observed for such Major IAU Competitions (MIAUC's).
- AURA has assumed responsibility for the past 25 years for the governance of ultrarunning in Australia.
- The IAU, in conjunction with the IAAF, are now desirous to shift that responsibility to Athletics Australia; not because of any shortcoming of failing on the part of AURA but more for sake of bringing Australia into line with the structure of other countries.
- AURA has been able to stimulate interest in the sport to the point where the number of participations has grown tenfold in the past 9 years and the quality of performances has improved exponentially.
- If Commonwealth championships were held for 100km, 24 hours and 6 day races, in the near future, Australia would likely win 3 gold (women) and 2 gold (men) based on 2010-2011 rankings and current form.
- Should Athletics Australia assume responsibility for the governance of the sport in Australia, AURA is concerned to ensure that the strong base that it has built will be preserved.

Ian Cornelius,
President, AURA
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