

## Proposal for Orienteering Victoria Membership Fees – response by Dandenong Ranges Orienteering Club

Dandenong Ranges Orienteering Club Committee, October 5 2013

Dandenong Ranges Orienteering Club (DR) supports the concept of participants joining a club and Orienteering Victoria (OV) simultaneously, as we believe this will strengthen both OV and clubs in terms of government funding and volunteering, and provide an attractive range of benefits to members. However, in DR's view, the current proposal presents a number of issues.

The first issue is that the proposal as presented appears to proscribe club membership fees at a standard rate for all clubs. This has come about by the suggested mechanism of participants joining OV, with club membership added on, and OV passing on a fixed payment to clubs.

DR strongly suggests that the mechanism should be reversed; ie participants select a club to join, then OV membership is automatically added. Club membership fees, which must be determined independently by each club (and which may currently range from \$5-20 per household), are transferred as appropriate. In other words, clubs would effectively pay a fixed per-member affiliation fee to OV, and retain the balance as a club membership fee. This is how many other sporting and other associations (eg Rotary) operate.

Besides the issue of club membership fees, there are several advantages to using clubs as the primary joining mechanism:

- Clubs have a strong physical presence at events through uniforms, flags etc, which OV does not have
- Clubs have a communication chain with their members through email bulletins etc
- Designated Eventor club administrators are able to assist club members who have difficulty with, or no access to, Eventor; and can provide a point of contact for new participants who need help with the process

DR also suggests that the second discount condition proposed, ie that “newcomers are instructed that they need to join ...”, needs to be reworded. Membership is not being mandated, so the wording “instructed that they need to join” is not enforceable. It is also highly impractical to monitor participation in three events, especially if spread across different series or disciplines. Participation eligibility is not a membership benefit, so the only point at which membership compliance can be monitored is at the point of benefit claim; ie awarding series prizes, accepting Championship entries etc.

DR suggests that wording similar to “All newcomers are strongly encouraged to simultaneously join a club and Orienteering Victoria, and are provided with a list of benefits, and clear instructions on how to join via Eventor” be used instead. Written material explaining the benefits and providing clear instructions must be widely available at all events for organisers to provide to all newcomers. Information about clubs must also be provided so that newcomers can make an informed decision about which club to join, rather than an arbitrary “ballot paper” or “tick a box” approach (which could lead to AR/AW receiving many more new members than TK or YV!)

DR is particularly concerned with the final two sentences under “Review Period”. If OV wishes to retain them in the proposal, then the criteria for imposing them, and the means by which they would be observed, need to be clearly explained. Again, without mandating compulsory membership,

these conditions are unenforceable, and poorly worded. Perhaps a better approach might be to reward clubs who actively encourage their members to join OV, as this is far easier to demonstrate.

Additionally, most clubs, including DR, have some long standing/foundation/life members who for reasons such as ill health, injury, distance or time constraints, are no longer active participants in OV events, but who wish to support the club they may have been a member of for over 30 years. There is no benefit to joining OV for these club members, but clubs should not be punished for retaining them. DR suggests that clubs be able to have a separate membership level for non-participating members, which does not require OV membership, without OV taking action in terms of increased affiliation fees.

The final sentence is, as previously stated, highly impractical as currently worded. It also imposes a further financial impost on clubs, rather than disciplines, via higher levies, which is inappropriate if its intent is to encourage each discipline to support the membership proposal.

Regards

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Dandenong Ranges Orienteering Club