

The current fixturing of Bush events in Victoria

Currently the calendar aims to provide	When	Avoiding clashes with
One state series bush event per month	Early March- Carnival	Rogaines
One state series mtbo event per month	Autumn and spring	Cyclogaines
1+ state event every long w'end if possible	Labor / QB w'ends	
MelBush events at regular intervals	Post- Easter	
Bendigo events every Saturday	March-October	Proximate National events
A maxi date good for MelBushers, rogainers	Late Aug-October	Rogaines, Carnival
Foot championships – middle & long	pre-Aus carnival	NSW, Tas, SA, ACT champs
Vic Relays		Eur summer, Carnival
A night event	November (warm)	Rogaining
A Sprint into Spring series & sprint champs	Culminating end Nov	Relays; Night O

Issues and concerns about the current fixture structure

There are five main issues that have been raised in relation to the design of the 2017 fixture (at the Strategy Day and in many less formal discussions). Each of these is presented below with a summary of the issues raised and an attempt to clarify the situation with data or other analysis.

Issue	
- Expressed concerns	- Analysis
Too few technical bush events closer to Melbourne	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experienced orienteers as participants felt under-supplied March-June this year (though Tas, NZ meant 2017 = very unusual) - Some felt under-consulted about the conversion of state level bush events into sprint or park events closer to Melbourne - Although MelBush meets the needs of novices, it lacks the technical challenge and diversity of terrain desired by experienced orienteers in Melbourne - For some, a state series event once a month doesn't provide enough technical bush orienteering closer to Melbourne. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since 1996 the number of Victorian bush events has increased from 54 to 57 per year. - The increase has been in Bendigo and MelBush events - The number of State Series style bush events has fallen by 40% - The number of Club events in technical bush areas has fallen by 90% - This is a shift to the organisation of local orienteering. The proportion of Victorian bush events within a local series (Bendigo and Mel-BushO) has risen from 50% to 80%. - Half the MelBush people only do Melbush, and don't venture further out. The comparable figure in Bendigo is around 65% who only compete in the local Bendigo series. - If we accept that MelBushO does not provide technical orienteering, then almost 80% of Victoria's technical bush orienteering is in the Bendigo local fixture. - This was an inevitable result of the interaction of an increasing preference for local organisation (as exemplified in the 2017 relay and SS at Yarra Valley) and the paucity of technical orienteering terrain near Melbourne.

The diversity of terrains and maps has been declining

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orienteers like new challenges but the diversity of maps has been shrinking. - The supply of new terrain is not apparent in SS events. - A perception that many older maps are not being maintained or not being used. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The movement to local orienteering is reflected in the emergence of new maps. In Melbourne the growth in mapped terrain is in the urban sprint form. New terrain has also been appearing regularly in Bendigo. Six new bush terrains around Bendigo have been introduced in the past three years. Half of these did not debut at State Series events. - Most of the new Victorian terrain has been mapped on a voluntary basis, which accelerates the trend towards local maps. - The decline in the number of SS and particularly club events means a sense of declining terrain diversity at forest events is inevitable for those who choose only to attend SS bush events. - Most of the good terrain in the Daylesford-Castlemaine area was mapped last century. New terrain will be found further afield (NE, Stawell, Wedderburn), but with the preference for local orienteering and the trend to voluntary mapping, the investment in mapping this terrain is not warranted. |
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The current State Series lacks a sense of occasion

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State series event attendance appears to be stagnating and its demographic is ageing. - Some people want age classes back to improve competition. - Some believe that pre-entry has reduced attendance, though its clear that the fall in attendance happened long before the introduction of Eventor and pre-entry. - Higher entry fees for SS events are seen by some as a disincentive to attendance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 1996 SS events attracted between 200 and 250 orienteers. Today the figure is between 140 and 170. - The decline in the number of events (particularly “club events”) on technical forest maps has reduced the opportunity for Melbourne orienteers to develop their bush course setting skills. |
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Issues with volunteer organiser enthusiasm

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some organisers see the SS format as too much work. - There appears to be limited success in attracting new people to the task of organising. - Technology has reduced the workload of event organising but has increased the required level of skill. A new organiser needs to learn to use OE, Condes and Eventor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since 1996 there is increased competition for the efforts of volunteer organisers. Since 1996 we have introduced MTBO, MelBushO and Sprint into Spring, as well as a significant expansion in the Bendigo fixture. New organisers seem to be more attracted to the organisation of local events. - Most SS bush events are organised by a very limited pool of 8-10 organisers who front up most year. |
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a suspicion that the introduction of the current technologies intimidates some who might otherwise consider learning to organise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The pool has changed very little since 1996 and is clearly ageing. - The fixture preferences of this small pool of organisers probably indirectly shapes the structure of the bush fixture. If they don't offer, it won't happen. An expanded fixture will need to attract more and newer organisers. Maybe we should not be asking "What events do you want" but rather "What events are you willing to organise" or "What are you willing to pay so someone else will organise". - The Sprint into Spring series has outsourced results management. Bendigo Orienteers are considering creating a remunerated position to support the Bendigo fixture. These sorts of moves clearly imply higher entry fees.
<p>Demographic changes in participation</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally understood that the sport is experiencing structural ageing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An interesting comparison- 340 entrants in the 1996 Vic Champs. 170 in the 2016 Vic Champs. Both were stand-alone events. This gives a sense of the potential decline in the volunteer pool. - The most obvious impact of demographic change on the bush fixture has been the withdrawal of three clubs from providing SS events. In 1996 TKV, AWV and CHV each provided a SS event. None did so in 2017. This was half of the decline in the annual number of SS events since 1996.

Trade offs

It is inconceivable that we can find solutions to each of these five challenges. In fact, solutions to some will be in conflict with some of the other objectives. An obvious example is the trade-off between professionalising event services and the concern over high entry fees. The key trade-off is between the desire for more technical events and the limited pool of willing organisers. The solution is to construct a format that increases the opportunities for Melbourne orienteers to experience technical orienteering closer to Melbourne and which also is attractive to current and new organisers. But what might this look like? As you read the accompanying document on existing and potential new formats, you need to assess the new formats according to how each addresses this key trade-off. Which type of event do you wish to compete in? Which type of event would you be willing to take on as an organiser?

A longer term question is whether the current club structure is the best means of delivering a bush orienteering fixture.

Existing and potential forest orienteering formats for events and series

Existing formats

Championship events

Number: 3 in a normal year
Courses: long=12, middle=8, sprint = 4+, relay=4 (+1 mixed)
Format: Long, Middle, Sprint, Relay
Classes: Age classes
Attendance: 160-210
Entry: Pre-entry
Target: Forest orienteering for all skill levels.
Critiques: Average number of participants per class has been a regular discussion. Partial shift to 10 year age classes a few years ago. Not sure this issue has been resolved.

Unanswered questions:

in the future can we manage both Vic and National Champs in the one year?

State Series

Number: 7-9 (variable, based upon willingness of clubs)
Course: 9
Format: For many years a mix of middle and long, but an evolutionary inclusion of one or two sprint events has popped up in the last two years.
Classes: No age classes.
Attendance: 130-175
Entry: Pre or EOD
Target: Forest orienteering for all skill levels.
Critiques: Two points of discussion regularly come up. Some lament the decline in both the number and sense of occasion associated with the events. The second issue is a feeling that the work in organizing the events is too great with a declining volunteer base and the distance of the events from Melbourne. Reconciling these two concerns is obviously a challenge.

Unanswered questions:

Has the development of the MelBush series reduced the number of inexperienced orienteers attending State Series events? Should this series be forest based or include sprint?

Bendigo Bush

Number: 35-40 per year (over 75% of the Victorian technical bush fixture)
Course: 5 (with some variation)
Format: Line courses (approx. 7k,5k,3k hard, 3k mod and 2k easy)
Classes: No age classes.
Attendance: 50-80
Entry: EOD
Target: Forest orienteering for all skill levels.
Critiques: Distance from Melbourne for those living in the metropolis. A sense that the series has grown to an extent that it stretches the club, particularly with some significant long-term contributors stepping back. There is not much energy or enthusiasm for volunteering beyond the local series.

Unanswered questions:

Should we reduce the volunteer burden by reducing the length of the season, simplifying some of the events (fewer courses) or going back to less technical event management.

MelBushO

Number: 8-10
Course: 4
Format: Line events on maps closer to Melbourne.
Classes: No age classes.
Attendance: 130-190
Entry: EOD
Target: Forest orienteering for developing orienteers
Critiques: Seen as a success in making forest orienteering accessible for Melbourne. Does not cater to the technically oriented orienteer.
Unanswered questions:
Need to monitor that future fixture changes do not impact on this series.

Other formats

A mix of formats have appeared as one off events over the years (eg Maxi-3hr, Blodslitet, Night Score). Some have survived and others have disappeared.

Alternative formats

Vic Bush Classic

Making the State Series fixturing more predictable, age classes, and organised outside club structures.

When: Fixed Sunday of each month
Number: 8
Course: 9?
Format: Line.
Classes: Age classes ?
Organisation: By a group that combines interested members of all clubs
Entry: Pre-entry and EOD
Target: All levels of Bush orienteering
Questions: Is there sufficient volunteer enthusiasm?

Vic Bush Autumn/Winter

Same as above, but every fortnight in Autumn and Winter.

Premier Series

Using three Championships and three Premier events to make a six event Orienteer of the Year competition.

Number: 3- Long, Middle and Sprint + 3 Championships (long, middle sprint)
Course: 9? Or match those of the championships events (so 12, 8 and 4+) ?
Format: Line
Classes: Age Classes
Organisation: One event per club per year
Entry: Pre-entry
Target: Dedicated orienteers
Critiques: Events will have a higher volunteer load than existing SS, but there will be fewer as compensation.
Questions: Leaves more flexibility to fill the rest of the fixture. See below

O-Experience Series

A collection of events with unique formats (eg Blodslitet, Maxi-3, Night Score, Bendigo Night Championships)

Number: Depends on offers.
Format: No fixed format or course structure
Classes: Flexible
Entry: Up to organiser
Target: Experiential orienteers
Questions: How much variety can we find?

Boutique Series

The success of Jim Russell's Bendigo To-Day points to another approach to the provision of more technical orienteering. This event is characterized by:

- Quality terrain and course setting;
- Event designed to be managed by one person.
- Small number of courses- ie does not cater to the inexperienced orienteer.
- Pre-entry only. Maybe a cap on numbers.

A number of experienced course setters have privately indicated an interest in providing an event based on this administrative structure.

Questions: How many enthusiastic individuals are there out there? Will this reduce willingness to organise more demanding events.

Ballarat Local Series

Is it possible to organise a smaller version of the Bendigo Series in Ballarat? This might have an event every month on a Sunday.

The resulting fixture **could** consist of three hubs of local style events- MelBush-O, Bendigo and Ballarat-Daylesford local series, with all three groups coming together for Premier series events throughout the year.

MapRun Series

Create courses on the MapRun app. Leave courses open for a fortnight. Provide maps for download and self-printing.

The use of the MapRun app needs to be tested in Bush environments.