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3rd April 2012

Attention: Tim Hughes
Principal Research Officer

Economics and Industry Standing Committee
Level 1, 11 Harvest Terrace
West Perth, WA 6005

Submission – Inquiry into 2011 Kimberley Ultramarathon

Dear Tim,

Please accept my submission for the “Inquiry into the 2011 Ultramarathon”. As President of the Victorian Rogaining Association (VRA) I believe that my submission is relevant to point f) of the inquiry’s terms of reference:

f) whether there are measures that should be taken by government to ensure the risks including bush fires in remote areas in the context of extreme sporting events are adequately identified and addressed.

for the following reasons:

1. The VRA is an organisation that holds 7/8 endurance events per year in bushland settings of between 6 hour – 24 hour duration
2. Kate Sanderson is an active member of the VRA, participating and volunteering in events over the past 4 years
3. The VRA has extensive experience in holding events in bush settings that are prone to bushfire events

Personally, I am a regular ultramarathon runner and know and have participated with Kate Sanderson in ultra marathon events most recently in the “The North Face 100” ultramarathon in NSW, Australia in May 2011. I am a regular volunteer at various ultramarathons within Victoria including Bogong to Hotham, Great Ocean Walk 100km, Marysville Ultramarathon. I am a personal friend of both Kate Sanderson and Mr Andrew Baker who was at the Kimberley Ultramarathon at the time of the incident.

The VRA conducts a risk audit every 2 years within the organisation to review current and foreseeable risks associated with the sport of Rogaining. Rogaining is a sport involving teams of 2 –5 members who utilise their navigation and endurance skills in a competition within a bushland setting. The sport was invented within Australia and is now an international sport. Typical winning teams of a 24 hour rogaine cover in excess of 100km depending on terrain and bushland. There are numerous ultramarathoners, adventure racers, extreme sport enthusiasts and Bush Search and Rescue (BSAR) members within the Rogaining community.

I have no association with Run the Planet, nor have I taken part in any of their events.

The VRA conducts most of it’s events on land owned by the State of Victoria and managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Parks Victoria (ParksVic), local council areas and private land owners. In most cases there are no

requirements to provide anything other than Public Liability Insurance certificates of currency to obtain a permit to conduct an event. The permits require us to cancel events on Total Fire Ban days, Code Red, Extreme, Severe and Very High Fire Danger days. The VRA has cancelled events in the past at short notice in such cases most recently in Lal Lal Victoria in 2009.

In some instances rogaines cover land area that has a land permit holder operating on DSE land, such as a pine plantation. In these cases, an additional permit is required from the land permit holder that stipulates submission of Risk Plans and Search and Rescue procedures prior to the permit being issued.

As part of the VRA risk mitigation approach, the following actions are undertaken:

1. A risk audit is conducted every 2 years on our operations, Risk Register and associated documentation
2. A map (1:25k to 1:33k scale) is provided to every competitor at each event
3. A dedicated safety vehicle drives a safety route that is marked on the map provided to every competitor
4. A Search and Rescue procedure is in place, a copy is kept at the event start/finish area, and managed by a VRA committee member who attends the event to coordinate any search/rescue events or unforeseen events
5. An Event Cancellation procedure which addresses event cancellations prior to or during an event, is in place and a copy is kept at the event start/finish area
6. A mandatory gear list, including team first aid kit, whistle, compass – is checked by the event Admin team prior to teams receiving maps
7. The Admin team records the mobile phone contact details of every competitor
8. Pre-event briefings are always conducted prior to the start of a Rogaine. This includes a section on safety, the safety vehicle, and the signal for a mid-race event recall
9. Events that have limited 3G mobile phone coverage require us to hire a satellite phone. The emergency contact numbers are printed onto the map. The phone is manned by the Administration Manager or Committee member at the Start/Finish area at all times
10. The VRA contacts local authorities to advise them of our event (Police, State Emergency Services)
11. Administration is required to carefully track all teams that enter and exit the course to ensure that all competitors are accounted for
12. A First Aid officer is present at every event at the Start/Finish area, and for large events we use a third party company to provide this service

To my knowledge there are no minimum safety standards defined by either government or sporting associations to hold an event such as a Rogaine or Ultramarathon in a bushland setting.

The VRA believes that the above approach defines a framework to minimise risk within endurance events held in a bushland setting, and as such is relevant to your inquiry's terms of reference.

Regards



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