

traq

TRAIL RUNNING
ASSOCIATION OF
QUEENSLAND

Strategic Plan 2018 -2022

Trail Running Association of Queensland

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The TRAQ Strategic Plan 2018-2022 has been developed by the 2017 Membership Committee. TRAQ wishes to thank the following people for their contributions and effort:

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Vice President: Hubertien Wichers

Secretary: Joris Wu (van der Geer)

Committee Members: Greg Coulter, Julie Ellett, Paul Vennells, Warwick Nichols and Peter Walker

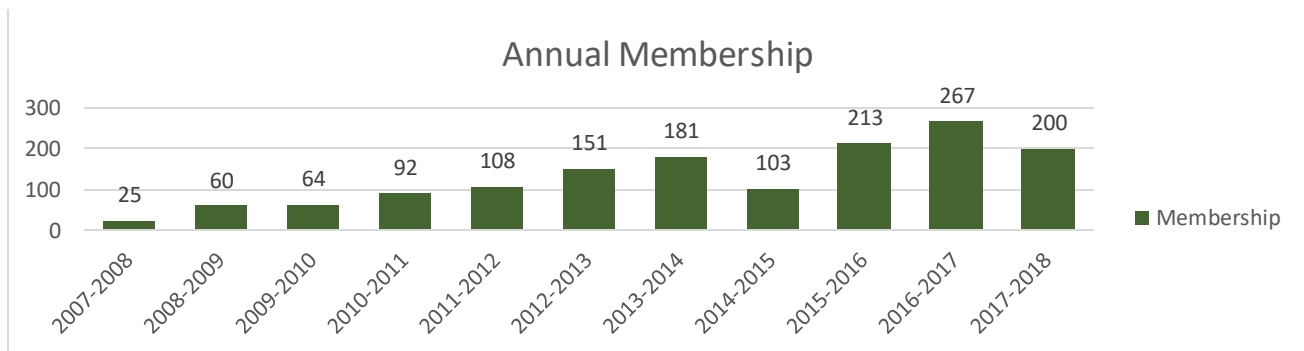
TRAQ Members: Tim Coles and Ben Duffus

Overview

Running on trails is continuing to grow in popularity across Queensland, Australia and internationally. The increasing number of trail running groups, clubs, businesses and events are evidence that people find it great to leave their busy working, study and home lives behind, get out of the city, off the bitumen and into nature. Trail running and natural experiences are a way of reconnecting with the world and the rising popularity of environmental and adventure sports is testament to people’s desire to strengthen their connection with the natural environment.

History

The Trail Running Association of Queensland (TRAQ) was formed in 2007 to address an increasing interest in Queensland trail running. TRAQ’s purpose is to organize running event on trails and provide people with quality trail experiences. TRAQ is a not for profit, incorporated association governed by a volunteer management committee elected annually at an Annual General Meeting. TRAQ is a membership-based organisation. TRAQ charges a nominal amount for membership (\$17.50/annum in 2017/18) with \$10.00 of the membership fee allocated to Queensland Athletics for member insurance. Membership grew between 2007/08 and 2013/14, declining in 2014/15 before steadying at between 200 to 250 financial members from 2015/16 (refer table below).



Mission

TRAQ’s mission is to assist people to engage with the natural environment around them, experience safe and challenging events, and to connect the growing community of trail runners and users in Queensland.

Vision

TRAQ’s vision is to be an organisation that is respected for supporting trail runners, groups, clubs, events and competitors engaging and associated with trail running across Queensland. TRAQ is viewed as the peak body for Queensland trail running and facilitates the sport’s safe, inclusive and sustainable growth across the State.

Six Key Purposes

TRAQ organises events by runners for runners and since being established has been driven by six key purposes, which include:

1. To promote trail running, support trail runners and trail events.
2. To promote active use of Queensland's trails and natural environment.
3. To coordinate a statewide trail running series and calendar which complements existing races and provides events throughout the year.
4. To pursue improved arrangements for approving access to quality trails for events.
5. To arrange overall trail running sponsorship and support sponsorship for individual events.
6. To create and maintain a website which supports the association's objectives above.

Key Opportunities and Challenges

TRAQ recognises that the sport of trail running is growing and that this growth will present several opportunities and challenges now and into the future. Below is a list of the key challenges and opportunities identified at the time this strategy was developed.

Opportunities

- The sport of trail and adventure running is generally gaining in national and international recognition with the volume of people competing in trail running events is expanding year on year.
- More people are using trails for leisure and competitive pursuits and the formation of new clubs and groups is facilitating entry for newcomers to the sport.
- Opportunities for higher levels of competition in trail running are beginning to take a more formal shape in Australia.
- TRAQ have a wide engagement with leisure, fitness and runners participating in events organised by various organisations. Utilising TRAQ and the wider trail running community's resources to meet changing stakeholder demand is a significant opportunity.

Challenges

- The increase in participants and competitors is providing for a proportional increase in the impact upon trails and the natural environment.
- Governing bodies and authorities are increasing the scrutiny of events and trail use more generally.
- Information and education regarding safe trail use and environmental care are struggling to keep up with the sports' growth.
- Coordination of trail running in Queensland is becoming increasingly difficult as the sport grows and facilitating relationships amongst stakeholders is increasingly challenging.

TRAQ's Strategic Plan has been developed to address these opportunities and challenges over the coming five years.

The Strategy

In 2017, the TRAQ Committee set about developing a 5-year Strategic Plan to provide direction for the Association during this period of growth in our sport. This process involved engagement with the trail running community, TRAQ membership, peak bodies and government. A five-year Strategy is a common tool used by organisations to assist in planning. Having a strategy in place will assist the TRAQ Committee and stakeholders to:

- develop fundamental objectives and targets for the organisation that guide our elected Committee’s decision making,
- coordinate all actions to achieve our longer-term goals within a specified timeframe,
- prioritise the allocation of financial and human resources,
- determine if TRAQ is achieving its key objectives, living its vision and realising its mission.

The Strategy statements represent where we would like TRAQ to be in five years’ time and brief notes on implementation and action. There are seven long-term, strategic areas that underpin this strategy:

1. **Providing value to the membership** – providing our membership with value through investment back into strengthening the sport of trail running.
2. **Supporting advocacy and facilitation** – engaging with stakeholders as a ‘peak body’ on behalf of the trail running community of Queensland.
3. **Ensuring safety and wellbeing** – supporting improved safety within the sport of trail running and the wellbeing of participants.
4. **Exemplifying events excellence** – providing safe and enjoyable trail running events to the wider trail running community.
5. **Providing trail running opportunities** – providing opportunities for access to trail running by all community members and opportunities for trail runners to achieve their potential in the sport.
6. **Operating with governance and accountability** – operating a well-managed, transparent and accountable organisation for the benefit of our members and the wider trail running community.
7. **Strengthening organisational and financial sustainability** – ensuring that members and stakeholders funds are invested and expended in such a way as to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Association for the benefit of the membership.

Each of the strategic areas are unpacked in the sections to follow. At the end of this section a Scorecard of key success measures and a Register of resources that will support the plan are provided in support of these strategic areas.

1. Providing Value to the membership

Members are highly valued and receive specific benefits not available to non-members. In the past, these 'benefits' have included: discount event entry, early bird discounts and entry to events, scores on event and competition ladders, commemorative t-shirts and caps. TRAQ will work to increase membership through increasing benefits to members and expanding opportunities for trail runners to become members of TRAQ.

What are our objectives & targets?

- Keep membership and event entry costs low whilst still providing well-organised, challenging and safe events.
- Continue to offer members discounted entry fees to TRAQ events and expand opportunities for entry discounts to other events.
- Expand membership opportunities to include group membership with, for example, a TRAQ Member Club.
- Provide options to engage with members beyond events through, for example, working bees for trail care/creation/restoration and supporting group runs.

Actions we will implement to achieve our objectives & targets

- Work with event service suppliers and stakeholders to ensure event participation expenses are minimised and costs remain low in comparison to commercial events.
- Work with trail running groups and clubs to expand opportunities for participants to become members of TRAQ.
- Encourage member feedback and suggestions including providing a private and confidential means of communication for any member who has a complaint.
- Encourage and promote other running groups to hold training runs around the race route in the weeks leading up to an event.
- Refresh and renew the TRAQ Brand including introducing TRAQ trail colours and a competition and members stripe.
- Better publicise that there is a Trail Runner of the Year Award and ensure that the point system is fair and equitable to all runners.
- Engage with environmental and bush care groups to investigate opportunities for TRAQ members and the trail running community to become involved in trail care.

2. Supporting advocacy and facilitation

Advocacy and facilitation of trail running in general is a core focus area of TRAQ and the Association intends on behaving more as a peak body in Queensland going forward. TRAQ wants to be viewed as an organisation that advocates for and facilitates the development of trail running across Queensland and contributes to development nationally.

What are our objectives & targets?

- TRAQ advocates for the access to and use of national parks, forestry areas and other outdoor areas suitable for trail running.
- TRAQ communicates with key players (e.g. members, affiliates, supporters, the public, government, partners, collaborators, researchers, educators, sponsors) through a variety of effective means to strengthen the relationship with authorities. This is the single most significant difference we have with other bodies (i.e. being a Non-Profit).
- TRAQ will proactively contribute to the creation of future government policies for national parks and protected areas, guided by clearly articulated values, criteria and principles. Connectivity, infrastructure and education have been identified as key issues for trail and parks users and TRAQ will advocate for these key issues.
- TRAQ's membership and supporter base is open to all nationalities and includes people of all ages. TRAQ will continue to build a positive culture for trail runners regarding trail safety and trail running, for all trail users, be it individual runners/walkers, groups and clubs or event organisers.
- TRAQ will continue to update communications and communication mediums to match (appropriate) societal trends.

Actions we will implement to achieve our objectives & targets

- Engage around key issues with peak bodies for sport and the outdoors across Queensland and Australia.
- Contribute to planning for trail development and care in Queensland including:
 - Developing an Environment & Sustainability Plan, including an environmental impact evaluation and minimisation strategy,
 - Plan to include, for example, a policy to ensure runners take their rubbish with them and that TRAQ ensures that all signs and rubbish is removed after an event. Generally, there is a policy to encourage car-pooling to events, bus transport may be provided as an option. Toilets and toilet paper are provided if required.
- Liaise with National Parks to create more single trails solely for the use of runners and walkers. For example:
 - have Council representatives and TRAQ visit key trails to understand the true value of single tracks and trails from a trail runner's perspective.
 - Invite authorities (e.g. park rangers) to events to ensure we meet expectations and engage them in the event culture.

3. Encouraging safety and wellbeing

The growth in trail running, and therefore, trail use by a wide range of people of varying experience levels has increased the opportunities for adverse impacts upon participants and the public. TRAQ, as the peak body for trail running in Queensland, is determined to ensure that all trail runners are provided the opportunity to participate in a safe and equitable environment.

What are our objectives & targets?

- Continue to implement, maintain and exemplify high safety standards improving upon current delivery with an aim to reduce hazards and the risk of injury to participants, volunteers, service providers and TRAQ members.
- Ensure that a communications plan is developed and/or updated for each event.
- Ensure an inclusive and supportive culture including ensuring that our Association and Conduct is free from discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. All members of the trail running community have a right to feel welcome, respected and safe.

Actions we will implement to achieve our objectives & targets

- Take all reasonable care for the health and safety of ourselves, our participants, volunteers, service providers and TRAQ colleagues including:
 - Ensuring we comply with all relevant legislative requirements including standards and codes of practice,
 - Promoting systems that will minimise harm through the identification of hazards, effective and timely investigation of incidents and the appropriate control of risks,
 - Seeking continuous improvement in our safety systems through consultation, technology, work practices and health and safety performance,
 - Having a risk identification process in place for all TRAQ events or activities.
- Develop event communications plans that cover a promotion strategy leading up to the event, including launch, reconnaissance, updates, using communication avenues such as social media and email.
- Handle event queries on time through responsible communications committee member or by the Event Organiser.
- Pre-event communication is sent out in the week leading up to the race and posted on the website and advertised on social media.
- A race briefing for all runners to attend is provided ahead of each race start, covering course description, hazards, emergency procedures, catering and prize giving.
- Event information provided and includes items such as registration processes, event description, support and checkpoints and maps.
- Ensure equipment is regularly updated to current race standards.
- Work with running groups and clubs, event organisers and other trail users to promote trail safety and reduce the potential for injury whilst on the trails.

4. Exemplifying events excellence

TRAQ provides a well-organised series of low-key events for runners by runners over a variety of terrain, distance and toughness. In other words, TRAQ aims to organize races the way that runners would like to have them organised. TRAQ currently (2018) has 7 events per annum scheduled into our race calendar.

- Mount Glorious
- Pinnacles
- Brisbane Trail Marathon
- Walkabout Creek
- Camp Mountain Challenge
- Lake Manchester
- Washpool

These current events are well run, safe and financially sustainable events and any events added to the calendar in the future will need to meet the high-standards of event delivery currently in place.

What are our objectives & targets?

- Streamline event development and standardise delivery procedures.
- Strengthen volunteer numbers and coordination to streamline the events process including continuing to actively support volunteers at TRAQ events to ensure a high-level of service and consistency.
- Ensure that the community is informed of our activities and engaged to minimise event and activity impacts.
- Maintain and improve the delivery of current TRAQ events and investigate future event opportunities.

Actions we will implement to achieve our objectives & targets

- Event Management and Race Director training program prepared and delivered on an annual basis. The training and supporting resources will include:
 - risk management planning, volunteer planning, marketing and communication planning, environmental planning, permits and fees and budget/financial plans.
 - all operational requirements, including permits, safety plans, engagement of services, such as photography, coffee, catering, first aid.
 - Event safety and communications management.
- Develop and implement a master volunteer register across all events.
- A community engagement and impact strategy needs to be developed and updated each year, to ensure that the community is not negatively impacted, and if possible, is engaged with the event. Confirmation with SEQ Water, National Parks and other land owners is needed to avoid clashes with other (local) events.
- Update event plans each year, based on the feedback from the previous year and the knowledge about the upcoming changes in the event.
- Investigate the opportunity to include other events in the TRAQ Annual Event Program including, for example, a night trail race.

5. Providing trail running opportunities

TRAQ advocates the development of a choice of trail running events across Queensland, and if necessary across Australia, to foster quality competition, being accessible from beginner to experienced/elite trail runners to support athlete career development. These events may be hosted by TRAQ or another event organiser. The advocated events may include a Queensland or Australian Trail/Mountain Running Championships (i.e. Series).

At a Queensland level TRAQ affiliates with Queensland Athletics. At the Australian level it affiliates with Athletics Australia and associates with the Australian Mountain Running Association and the Australian Ultra Running Association. If an Australian Trail Running Association existed, TRAQ would most likely associate with that body. At an international level TRAQ affiliates with the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) and the International Trail Running Association (ITRA).

What are our objectives & targets?

- Better promotion of TRAQ events through its affiliation to Queensland and Australia Athletics.
- Introduce a defined pathway for youth through to adults into trail running and organized racing.
- Introduce assistance and/or sponsorship for elite and/or emerging talent.

Actions we will implement to achieve our objectives & targets

- Increasing permit numbers to include youth at appropriate events.
 - Account for restrictions of numbers that may be impacted by an increase in youth participants (e.g. parking, transport, etc.)
- Promote the Walkabout Creek event and the Lake Manchester 6km and 10km distances as 'Come'n'Try' introductions to trail running.
- Develop a process and guidelines for athlete assistance and sponsorship. For example, in providing financial assistance to an athlete we need consider not just the athlete's ability, but also their personality and commitment to TRAQ.
- In providing financial assistance to clubs or groups TRAQ will develop a process and guidelines to ensure we are endorsing and supporting appropriate behaviours and activities.

6. Operating with governance and accountability

What are our objectives & targets?

- TRAQ meets member and stakeholder expectations through accountability, transparency and disclosure.
- TRAQ has clearly defined internal control policies outlining individual roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.
- TRAQ has clearly defined relationship and linkage processes between Council, Executive, Staff and Volunteers.
- The Association's functions are undertaken by staff and volunteers; and, staff and volunteers are well managed.

Actions we will implement to achieve our objectives & targets

- Systems and Processes including, for example, an up to date TRAQ asset register, volunteer register, and register of 'free' event entries for volunteers & past-winners.
- Development and adherence to a TRAQ Annual Budget and accounting system that is open for review by members and authorities upon request.
- Safety Policy to be developed and formalised including:
 - Producing a standard safety template for a legal representative review within six months of 2018 AGM,
 - Legal representative to amend and sanction the template developed,
 - TRAQ to implement Safety Policy prior to 2019 race season,
- TRAQ Events Environmental Management (TEEM) Policy
 - Produce a draft standard TEEM Policy within six months of 2018 AGM,
 - Submit to BCC, Seqwater, State Government for comment and/or approval
 - TRAQ to implement TEEM Policy prior to 2019 race season
- Sharepoint Migration to Google Drive
 - ICT contractor to be briefed and quote to be provided to TRAQ for AGM's Strategic Plan Implementation Expenses table (completed Feb 2018).
 - Cost approved by members engage ICT Contractor to undertake migration within one month of engagement (completed Feb 2018).
- Implement a receipt/invoice management system to ensure that all event and Committee expenses are accurately accounted for and able to be presented for audit on an annual basis.
 - Expensify (www.expensify.com) system implemented and being trialed (Feb 2018).

7. Strengthening organisational and financial sustainability

As a not-for-profit organisation the Committee must ensure that TRAQ is financially sound to enable it to continue providing high quality, low key events for its members. The advantage TRAQ has over commercial operators in the market is that TRAQ is a not-for-profit (NFP) and can use funds to support their activities rather than the activities supporting funds generation (i.e. profit). However, TRAQ may choose to generate excess funds for a purpose in the interest of the members, of what is normally expected as a return for a race.

What are our objectives & targets?

- TRAQ is a financially sustainable and self-funded organisation.
- Financial sustainability is achieved in many ways including through membership, events and grant funding.
- TRAQ maximises scarce resources in priority areas and demonstrates sound organisation and budgetary management through planning and tracking of income and expense.

Actions we will implement to achieve our objectives & targets

- Investigate and allocate resources to reviewing grants for equipment purchases and general organisational support in further detail.
- Continue to deliver excellence in events and the balance between minimising event costs and maximising event impact, including an event surplus where possible.
- Maintain an annual budget and record of income and expense to ensure transparency and strong management of members and stakeholders funds.
- Work with the TRAQ Auditor to ensure financial systems are robust, but with consideration that TRAQ is a small organisation.

Scorecard

A scorecard will be developed to measure and manage the delivery of our strategic plan. TRAQ have identified success measures that will be included within this scorecard and be used to monitor whether the Association is achieving its mission. These measures include:

Success Measures

- Annual membership numbers and retention rates.
- Race/event participation numbers.
- Volunteer numbers and volunteer retention.
- Safety incidences (e.g. frequency rates) at races and events.
- Financially sound management of an annual budget and event budgets including measurement of profit, loss and break even on an annual basis.
- Feedback from trail runners, members and event participants including facebook posts, personal comments, letters, etc.
- Realisation of trail creation within National/State Parks and Reserves measured by kms of trail created.
- Trail care provided measured in hours/volunteers.
- Relationship with authorities.
- Maintenance and updating of equipment.
- Calendar or list showing relevant interactions, e.g. attended meetings, dialogues.

Resources

TRAQ requires certain resources to enable it to implement actions and meet objectives & targets outlined in this Strategy. Resources include both financial and human inputs. A list of key resources identified by the Committee as enablers of this strategy include:

Resources Requirements

- An upgrade of the TRAQ trailer for safety and roadworthy requirements (Completed March 2018 through a new trailer build and sale of the old trailer).
- Volunteer management program (incentives for clubs who provide multiple volunteers at checkpoints/events).
- Event Management and training package development assistance (e.g. external consultant)
- Event specific banners or race arch with events listed.
- Contact list of relevant organisations, authorities and stakeholders.
- Calendar of relevant events/meetings.
- Repository aka 'kit' for the community to contain educational material on technique, training, culture, gear, as well as maps showing both trail networks and accessibility / amenity info.
- Purchase of tablets (e.g. Samsung Galaxy, Apple iPad) to streamline race timing.
- Race clock to enhance the race/event experience.
- Printer to allow TRAQ to prepare own event bibs.
- Updating TRAQ shirts and brand considerations including logo and colour scheme.
- Club shirts/singlets for people either representing TRAQ or assisting TRAQ
- Car/trailer decals and/or stickers to clearly identify TRAQ vehicles on course.
- Safety light for support vehicles at events.
- Purchase of a defibrillator to be used in longer events at the more isolated checkpoints.
- Banners to form a finish chute that promotes the other TRAQ events.

All resources listed will budgeted for and income expended after Committee approval, as noted in the relevant Committee Meeting Minutes, recorded in the annual budget and reported on through the expense system (software).

Our Impact

The lifeblood of TRAQ is its members, volunteers and the wider trail running community of Queensland. In 2017 TRAQ's financial membership did not grow, which has been a trend over the past 3 years; however, this one metric is not a true indication of the growth of the trail running community more generally. Quite the opposite. In fact, although TRAQ membership did not grow anecdotal evidence demonstrated a growth in membership/participants, both formal and informal, of trail running groups and clubs across Queensland, which was further reinforced by an increase in the number of participants engaging in one or more of TRAQ's seven events held throughout the year. It is TRAQ's opinion that trail running and engagement with the natural environment is a growing trend and TRAQ does not foresee a decline in event participants or club/group membership over the next five years.

TRAQ's ability to support trail running in Queensland and give back to the community is supported by both the financial return provided by our core event program and the engagement with our members and the wider trail running community. In 2017 we staged seven events. An overview of these events can be found below:

- 1) Mount Glorious Trail Race. Julie Ellett, Race Director. **145 event participants.**
- 2) Pinnacles Classic. Hubertien Wichers, Race Director. **138 event participants.**
- 3) Brisbane Trail Marathon. Paul Vennells, Race Director. **154 event participants.**
- 4) Walkabout Creek Trail Race. Joris Wu and Warwick Nichols, Race Directors. **164 event participants.**
- 5) Queensland Mountain Running Championships/Camp Mountain Challenge. Hubertien Wichers, Race Director.
78 event participants.
- 6) Lake Manchester Trail Race. Andrew Rowland, Race Director. **270 (inc. 36 for 6 km junior) event participants.**
- 7) Washpool Trail Race. Steel Beveridge, Race Director. **116 event participants.**

In 2017, **1065 members of the trail running community participated in our events.** If we continue to pursue our mission and the realisation of our vision in line with our Strategic Plan we, the current Committee (2017), believe that our support of trail running in Queensland and Australia will continue to strengthen, and the broader impact of our Association will increase.