

ACTRA PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2020

After our twilight event was cancelled due to smoke pollution, the Paddy was transformed into a Metrogaine following the bushfires and many other events for 2020 were cancelled because of the pandemic, we were finally able to run a night/day/cycle event at Kowen and the ACT Champs at Yanununbeyan.

As Association President during a miserable year it would be tempting to leave my annual report at just that one sentence, but to do so would be to ignore the significant ongoing efforts of many ACTRA volunteers and competitors on various fronts. Cancelling a thing may sound like an easy stroke of the pen, but behind the scenes a lot of course planning and event management arrangements first have to be done, then undone – courses planned and taped, payments collected and refunded, contracts arranged then rearranged, and of course hopes built up then dashed.

A year ago we had Fergus McLeod and Brad Vallette to thank for pivoting at the last minute to turn the burnt-out Namadgi Paddy Pallin event into a south Canberra metrogaine, little realising that later circumstances were going to preclude holding the actual metro. Likewise our planned 'Back to the Bay' event – to encourage participants to support the fire-ravaged south coast community – was scuppered by road closures on the Clyde and sudden drastic limits on non-essential travel and mass gatherings. My thanks to Julie Quinn and David Baldwin for establishing the connections in the Durras region, and persisting with the concept to enable that planned event to be rescheduled as the 2021 Paddy.

Into the rogaining void rode Jon Glanville with a smartphone-based MapRun solution. The opportunity for hundreds of members to emerge from lockdown – in small suitably distanced groups of course – and complete Jon's novel 'virtual rogain' in the Belconnen region centred on Mt Rogers, proved immensely popular and very enjoyable. It was great to know that so many people were just itching to go out rogaining again, and to see many bringing friends and family, and even the dog – some on numerous occasions – to experience this latest innovation in our sport. Indeed the concept was so well received that the next iteration, set as a Winter 4-hour replacement event by Keira and Tom Banks around the streets and rivers of the Jerrabomberra/Queanbeyan area, was even more popular. And the best thing of all? As there is no physical race infrastructure out there, the courses remain available for anyone to enjoy at any time – if you haven't tried it already, download the MapRun app today and have yourself a merry little rogain!

Once the gathering restrictions started to ease – within the ACT anyway – we were able to implement a Return to Play Plan to commence 'real' rogaining again in mid-August, albeit it still in somewhat modified form. There was PPE and hand sanitiser galore at Kowen Forest for the triple-header night/day/cycle event, where this time it was ACTRA committee member Nick Lhuede who ventured outside the box to devise a clever contactless punching system for the courses of first-time setters Jono Fearn and Ciaran Lane. Notwithstanding the absence of catering, results printing and awards on the day/s, there was still plenty of mud splatter to go around and fortunately no work for our trusty first aider.

A twist in the tale of an already forgettable year took place in Scandinavia. Jean Douglass and Ron Simpson had taken the precaution of completing much of the course-setting for the 8/24-hour ACT Champs at Yanununbeyan before heading off for 12 weeks overseas in February. They tell us they were then 'trapped' for 8 months in the magnificent hiking/paddling/sight-

seeing terrain of far-flung Norway, arriving back just in time to 'enjoy' a fortnight's mandatory quarantine instead of hosting the Champs in early November. The lengths a person will go to, to avoid running a rogaine!

But wait, there's more...more rain, that is! Having kindly volunteered to take over management of the Champs, it fell to Julie and David to make a very rare and hard decision to postpone the event for just one week following a deluge across the event map. We should have called it a LaNiñagaine! Unfortunately a last minute change like that is inconvenient for some, but those who were eventually able to get out there were treated to a very successful event.

We weren't the only ones cancelling events in 2020, and unfortunately we may not be out of the woods yet. With any luck the postponed AusChamps will be able to go ahead in South Australia in 2021, hopefully combined with the Inter-Varsity competition, but we may be restricted to California dreamin' again this year as it is hard to see the USA being a viable destination for the World Championships any time soon.

Regrettable as it is that we were not able to enjoy more rogaining in 2020, it is far better to have survived the year in good health. With good luck – and good management by your ACTRA committee of course – there will be better days and more rogaining ahead in the very near future. And even if you've got a bit rusty over the last 12 months, remember you can always get back into the groove by volunteering to assist with planning at any of our events. Check out the new ACTRA website for details at act.rogaine.asn.au

Stephen Goggs
February 2021