

**ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY
STANDING COMMITTEE**

INQUIRY INTO 2011 KIMBERLEY ULTRAMARATHON EVENT

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2012**

SESSION FIVE

Members

Dr M.D. Nahan (Chairman)
Mr W.J. Johnston (Deputy Chairman)
Mr M.P. Murray
Ms A.R. Mitchell
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mrs M.H. Roberts (Co-opted Member)

Hearing commenced at 3.33 pm

BOYCE, MR ROBERT

President, Australian Ultra Runners Association, examined:

BENSON, MISS BERNADETTE

Vice President, Australian Ultra Runners Association, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: Before we commence, I ask you in the public gallery to refrain from using audio devices as this may interfere with Hansard, and everyone should switch off their phones.

Thanks to both of you for appearing before the committee to assist in its current inquiry. We are very thankful for you being here. This committee hearing is a proceeding of the Parliament and warrants the same respect that proceedings in the house itself demand. Even though you are not required to give evidence on oath, any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as contempt of Parliament. Before we commence, there are a number of procedural questions I need you to answer. Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you receive and read an information for witnesses briefing sheet regarding giving evidence before parliamentary committees?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have any questions relating to your appearance before the committee today.

The Witnesses: No.

[3.35 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Before we ask any questions, do you wish to make a brief opening statement addressing the terms of reference, or do you want to go to questions?

Mr Boyce: I would like to start off—I am sure you were probably about to ask this question—with just a brief outline of what AURA is. AURA is a voluntary organisation that helps promote ultra-running within Australia. We keep records, select Australian teams and assist with races. AURA itself actually does not have any races that it conducts. I was here earlier and you had Andrew. It is people like Andrew who we assist. Basically, that is what our —

The CHAIRMAN: Are you a membership of groups, race organisers or individual racers?

Mr Boyce: Individual, and race directors as well. Usually they are both the same.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you provide guidance, let us say pro formas, on how you should run a race, what you should do, and provide guidance for insurance? What kind of functions do you provide to race organisers?

Mr Boyce: We provide verbal information mostly through emails. Again, assistance would be the best word. We have tried to unite the sport with most ultra runs in Australia so we can lift the level of health and safety, of course and make sure that we are doing the right thing by all runners. There have been races that have been around for 25 years, 30 years, that we have only just recently brought into the fold.

All new races—Bernadette will be able to give you an example of some in just recent times where we were not that aware of the conditions where they were, the people that are conducting them. As the new races are coming on, we are putting a lot more scrutiny—this was before this incident, of course—to make sure that the standards are of the highest level.

The CHAIRMAN: Could you tell me what an ultra-marathon is?

Mr Boyce: Anything over 43 kilometres.

Miss Benson: It is 42.2.

The CHAIRMAN: That is right. You do count the last few metres! It is just more than a marathon. It is not necessarily off road or anything like that.

Mr Boyce: We conduct probably three main types of categories—trail, road and track.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you provide accreditation for groups or are you considering doing that?

Mr Boyce: No, we do not have accreditation and —

Miss Benson: Do you want me to speak to the IAU accreditation? AURA does not provide—we sanction particular races that we have involvement with. We do not have any particular kind of accreditation where there is, say, gold, silver, bronze or something to that kind of effect. The thing that I think of then is the International Association of Ultra Runners, which does provide labelling for particular events, but that labelling is just really associated with the measurement of courses and the provision of aid stations or whatever for international competition.

The CHAIRMAN: You do sanction some events?

Miss Benson: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What does that mean—sanction?

Miss Benson: Any events that are listed on our website are events that we have sanctioned. Sanctioning of events means several things. We have had some involvement with the race director so that we have an understanding that the event is being conducted to what we understand is a reasonable standard, so, in terms of safety and everything that is in place, aid stations or what have you, for a particular race. Sanctioning also means that for our 400 or so members across the country they are eligible for a points competition, for running all the distance that they run and whether they win or things like that, that goes into sanctioning as well. The results go on the site. There is a lot that AURA does that is really around—it is very much a member-driven, member-based kind of organisation.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Do you charge for that? Is there a cost associated with that?

Miss Benson: This year, the fee is—there is \$100 fee for every race. That is for race listing. So, that is getting on the website, kind of just a maintenance fee for that kind of thing, mentions in our electronic news and our quarterly ultra-running magazine that we put out and then the only other fee that we charge is for insurance. If the races do not carry their own insurance policy and they would like to use AURA's insurance policy, then we charge for that.

The CHAIRMAN: AURA is a non-profit voluntary organisation?

Miss Benson: It is a non-profit registered organisation—association.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you looked at the Ultramarathon up at the Kimberley? Have you looked at issues related to it at all?

The Witnesses: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Were you informed of it beforehand?

The Witnesses: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you know anything about RacingThePlanet? Were they a member of yours?

The Witnesses: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Andrew mentioned that you have provided him advice and been a conduit for insurance for some of his races. Did you discuss the insurance issue? Do you provide guidance on insurance, what they generally cover, what type of insurance you need? Are there some pitfalls in obtaining insurance that you are aware of?

Mr Boyce: Recently, last year, I became the president of AURA and did a review of the insurance. In consultation with Bernadette and the committee at the time we decided that we wanted better insurance so we consulted people like Andrew and many people with their concerns. We sought two or three brokers and some experts, we believe, and canvassed what we would need for races. In obtaining that insurance, we gave fairly detailed information on every race that we were proposing to insure because we generally know who wants them each year—the type of race it was, the conditions, the time of night, the amount of runners—and we got advice back and have taken up that insurance. So, we consulted before we had the insurance. It comes at a cost, but we believe that we have a very good policy in place for people like Andrew who can conduct his races for our members.

The CHAIRMAN: What does it cover?

Miss Benson: It is a specific sports underwriter-type policy. So, it is a \$20 million public liability policy. It does not cover for participants' own ambulance cover. That is not part of this current kind of policy, but it is a liability coverage.

The CHAIRMAN: Does it indemnify or cover the race organiser from legal action from participants?

Miss Benson: Yes; race organisers and any volunteers as well.

The CHAIRMAN: It is Australian-based, is it not?

Miss Benson: Yes.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Just about the sanctioning of events, there are a few elements of the event in the Kimberley that I think are of concern. One is that there was at least one section of the race where the rescue of an injured competitor was not just difficult, but almost impossible to do in an appropriate way in quick time. Where these injuries took place between checkpoint 2 and checkpoint 3 is not accessible by four-wheel drive. In this instance we were dealing with people who were burnt, but it could have just as easily have been someone perhaps with a back injury or maybe a heart attack or stroke or something—some really significant debilitating injury. As part of your risk management plan in setting up the race, you have to have an evacuation plan for a medical emergency from, presumably, all sections of the race. We heard from Andy Hewat that where he holds his race there is availability of air ambulance, helicopters with winches and whatever. What we know of this course, particularly between areas 2 and 3, is that you cannot get a four-wheel drive in there; there is no local air ambulance with winch capacity. The nearest one is possibly Darwin, which is a long way away. So I am just wondering, in sanctioning a race, would you look at something like that, and would you sanction a race where there was no way of evacuating people promptly and safely from a section of it?

[3.45 pm]

Miss Benson: I do not think a person could possibly mediate for every possible risk in a race kind of situation. So I guess that is really what a risk management plan is; it is trying to look at mediating risks. I think ultra-running mentality, personality, varies. Some ultra-runners will only run road races or they only run track races. That is where they are comfortable. They want to go around a 400-metre track for 24 hours, and that is it. They do not want to step on a trail. Some cannot conceive of the idea of 24 hours spent going around and around on a track, and they want the most remote—you know, "Tell me the most remote possible place I can go run, where I have to run for

six hours carrying everything that I need on my back”, and that is what is going to be attractive to them. So completely sanitising everything out of it would take away from the experience for some people. That is not to say that then you are taking away every possible—I mean trying to prevent every possible risk from happening as well. People are making their choices; regardless of what sport it is that people are involved in, they are making their choices about engaging in a sport. So, no, we would not not sanction a race because it is taking place in the mountains where accessibility is limited in some places. If people are running through a very tight valley at some place and a helicopter could not get in there, or it was too windy that day, one could not necessarily know that in advance.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Also, can I just ask: in sanctioning a race, would you expect to see a map of the route?

Miss Benson: We do ask for maps of the routes from all of our new races that are coming in now. If existing races change, then we do ask to see that information as well. Now race directors always provide that to us. So we do get a map with all the new events. I am the one who is talking to potential new race directors as they are coming forward and asking them for their consideration. What background do they have in race directing? Have they ever done it before? If not, who else have they enlisted who has been involved in events? Who is co-directing with them? Give us maps. How many aid stations are you having? What are your mandatory gear requirements that you are telling runners that they have to carry? Where is your waiver? It is things like that.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Could you just explain the waivers situation in the sport?

Miss Benson: The which?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: The waivers that you just mentioned.

Miss Benson: Waivers?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Yes.

Miss Benson: That is really something that is primarily left to race directors because it is their event, but we do have conversations with them. We look at their waivers and talk to them about what—if we think that there are bits and pieces that could be added to strengthen their waivers. It is not just about a waiver, though, really; it is about what you are communicating to the runners before they embark on an event. So, in a race briefing beforehand, it is letting them know about the potential risks. So, I mean, risks are always written in any waiver, whether you are getting on a boat to cross—with the jetty here. There would be all kinds of waivers in that. But it is also communicating in advance of an event. Typically, that is in a race briefing each morning if it is multi days, or that morning of the event, saying, “Here are the conditions. Here is a reminder that you’ve got your mandatory hydration”, or whatever it is that people might need to —

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: So, basically, each race director completely gets absolved from any responsibility once the competitor signs this waiver.

Mr Boyce: I think we all know here that a waiver does not absolve you from your responsibilities if you are not meeting health and safety requirements. I think the waivers are there to make sure people understand the risks; and being tested in any court, well, that is another story. I think that the race directors do know that when someone signs it, that does not mean they are scot-free. They are well aware of that.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the role of the race director or organiser? What are the responsibilities?

Mr Boyce: They vary and are quite vast, but to run a successful race, a safe race. We want it run at a high standard, so we want no cheats. We want the course measured. We want, of course, our members to have an enjoyable time and a safe time. So there are a lot of roles, but primarily it is to get the runners from A to B as safely as possible and enjoy themselves the most.

The CHAIRMAN: So the organiser will be the person who has to identify the risks and communicate them, and try to put in place safety devices to minimise the risks, but also extraction and other issues, and make sure, if it is all about safety, that they can stop the race if need be; right?

Mr Boyce: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: In terms of communication, do you have standards about communication? You are speaking of races over at least 100 kays—it is the long distance —

Miss Benson: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: — and many times in very inhospitable areas or where the communication might not be adequate. Do you have policies and advice about communication?

Mr Boyce: Yes, definitely. They vary. It depends on race to race, of course. When I am running around Coburg, I find a better track; I do not need much. But various races where mobile phones work—and that is usually tested well and truly before a race starts—it will be mandatory to carry a mobile phone.

The CHAIRMAN: For the runners?

Mr Boyce: For the runners. Where races are remotely—it depends on the risk. Coast to Kosci, which is one of our races, they will have satellite phones. Not all will have them, but a big percentage will have satellite phones. Each race will do the risk assessment on the communication level, but all aid stations will have communication to be able to get to all other aid stations. So if we have got aid station 1, they will be able to contact 2, 3, 4 and 5 at events.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you sanction a race that had satellite phones but not working or could not be used, or could not communicate with their helicopters, or could not communicate from one checkpoint to the next?

Miss Benson: I am not sure. Sorry; that sounds like a loaded question. But with a satellite phone, you should be able to communicate.

The CHAIRMAN: Let us say they could not—for instance, they were brought from overseas and did not link up. There might be satellite line-up issues.

Miss Benson: So, from the get-go, if you knew that the communication was not going to be sufficient?

The CHAIRMAN: Was, at best, erratic.

Mr Boyce: Again, we would need to know more information.

Miss Benson: Yes, if that is not what was communicated to the racers, so it is really all about what is communicated to the racers in advance—what kind of race they have signed up for. As a racer reading their race briefing documents, whatever has been provided to them, that they understand that they have to carry a mobile phone or whatever is going to be in place, or that this is an extremely remote race, blah blah. But, yes, it would really depend. If what they are saying that they want to go forward with is not what they had originally told competitors—“This is what you’re signing up for”—then that would not be in keeping with what we would recommend, for sure.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: The race director—does he have the ability to disqualify, ask people to stop? When you see someone obviously, say, dehydrated, not quite with it and they keep plugging away—we have seen many of them on the telly; there are a couple of famous Olympic ones—does the race director have the ability to say, “You’re out”?

Mr Boyce: Absolutely; and it is fairly standard practice. Again, you cannot physically stop someone, but in races—Andrew mentioned Western States too, but with Western States, at each aid station, they will weigh you, and if you are below a certain weight, or have gained a certain weight, because that can happen with too many salt tablets et cetera, they will pull you out.

Miss Benson: There may be time cut-offs put in place as well, but the race directors have the ultimate say as to whether somebody can continue an event.

Mr Boyce: I am a race director; Bernadette is a race director. We have done it many times.

The CHAIRMAN: And you reserve the right to stop a race if you make decisions about imminent risks or otherwise.

Mr Boyce: Yes.

Miss Benson: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have a pro forma risk assessment plan? Let us say I am a new race director or I want to organise a race. Do I come to you and say, “How do I go about this issue?”

Miss Benson: We do not use a template risk management form, no. As I said, every race is individual in the sense of whether it is road, track or trail, and the kind of event that they are creating, particularly with trail events—the atmosphere and the kind of event that they are trying to create, whether it is highly supported or highly self-supported, will attract different runners to that; different runners want different events. Any interested parties—so, a department of conservation, lands, environment, where any events may be running through—those interested parties, or any councils or anything, may have specific requirements, and it is up to the race director to meet those requirements. So if they are passing through a particular city, and this city says, “We need a traffic management plan”, or, “We need a risk management plan” or whatever, it is up to that race director to provide that to the standard that that council or that department requires.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you advise your race directors to link with all the local bodies who may have input? They could be the —

Miss Benson: They must—any local body; you mean like —

The CHAIRMAN: The local shire, the local city.

Miss Benson: If they are passing through any—yes—shires, councils, any department of conservation lands, any national parks, anything where they are passing, they have to gain those approvals.

Mr Boyce: We would advise them, “You’ve come over and you want to start. There’s a process.” We give you all this information. Once you say, “Well, I’m thinking of this”, we would go through —

The CHAIRMAN: You would go through and say—let us say it was in the Kimberley—“You have to talk with the local shire, the ambulance people, FESA”, in our case.

Miss Benson: Yes. “And then come back to us once you’ve done all that, and then we’ll see where you’re at; and, if you’re still thinking you want to run the event, we’ll talk about the time of year you want to run it.”

The CHAIRMAN: Did RacingThePlanet get in touch with you about the 2010 or 2011 race?

Mr Boyce: No.

Miss Benson: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think that was odd?

Mr Boyce: There have been a few adventure races that have popped up and we never hear anything about it.

The CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Mr Boyce: It is not uncommon, no.

The CHAIRMAN: RacingThePlanet is very experienced. It has run races all around the world in pretty isolated places like the Gobi Desert and Antarctica. They ran the 2010 240-kay relay, I think

it was, or something like that. But do you think it is important for a body overseas that might not—when you run in the Gobi Desert you are on your own. There is nothing there, except mobile phones. But here we have a lot of services we provide. So, if you are coming from overseas, you might not know who to contact, and who is who in the zoo. Do you think it is important for them to liaise with groups like yourselves who have local knowledge and interest in the generic type of race?

Mr Boyce: Absolutely, yes. Local knowledge—if I ran a race in the Gobi Desert, I would be looking for local experts to consult with because I have never been there.

The CHAIRMAN: I would not run a race in the Gobi Desert!

[4.00 pm]

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Do you have a policy on the use of MP3s, iPods or things like that in races? I respect the fact that if you were running on a 400-metre track for 24 hours you may not need a policy for that, but in more difficult circumstances would you have a policy or recommendation on that?

Mr Boyce: We follow the IAU policy, which we recommend. Basically, if it is a non-road traffic event, you can use an iPad—what is it?

The CHAIRMAN: An MP3.

Mr Boyce: An MP3. I am showing my age! If it is a road event, where there is traffic, they are strictly —

Miss Benson: Individual events and individual race directors, even with a trail event, may choose—for example, we have another AURA-sanctioned event that is coming up very soon. That is a trail event but in the first leg of that event they do not allow the use of MP3-type musical devices because of runner congestion and they just want people to be able to hear if somebody wants to pass them on a single track. They can make those calls if they want to.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Do you have any competing organisations? Are you the only one or are there two or three others that count themselves as being knowledgeable in this area?

Mr Boyce: I think we are the only body.

Miss Benson: There is Athletics Australia, which manages events under the marathon distance.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: When an event is being publicised that it will be 100 kays or something like that, if you do not sanction that event, what do you put on your website, or where did you go to from there to advise people—maybe they are not quite the right words—but to highlight to people that this could be shoddy or dangerous? Do you put anything up or do you just ignore it altogether?

Miss Benson: I cannot say that I have had that uncomfortable, unfortunate kind of situation arise myself. One would always have to be very careful about defamation when putting something online because in the meantime, although we may say we do not feel comfortable sanctioning it because let us say this race director has no prior experience as a race director and is refusing to bring anyone else on board to help them out and we feel we are not comfortable with the situation because it is not around a track that is sequestered and more safe but it is way out in the bush, they may walk away, but in the meantime they may start putting things in place. They may have developed a bad taste in their mouth from their experience with us and then go and get advice, so for us to put something online to say people had better avoid such and such an event because of whatever reason, that certainly could be quite inappropriate.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Okay, then just a bit simpler than that, “not sanctioned by”; have you ever done that—this event is not sanctioned by us?

Mr Boyce: No. The situation does not usually arise, the reason being that we usually do not know if a race pops up and they are quite small; we do not know about them. I will be honest; I do not go

and look at every media release in Western Australia about what races are coming up. A lot of races, especially some of these international races, are proposed to start and never do. Where we have been very lucky is that we have a problem of recent times that we are having more people wanting us to sanction races and our calendar is getting quite full. People really do want to have us involved and consult with us and be a part of the association. We have not really had that arise. We would make the decision, obviously, if something—if a race started up, I would go out of my way to try to get involved to make sure that it is run as part of our association. We do not want another body to start up.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you know of any ultra-marathon events that have been cancelled or held up due to adverse risks?

Mr Boyce: Lots. I have had a race event myself—Mansfield to Mt Buller—which I run each year. A few years ago there were bushfires up in Mt Buller. They had finished but the race was about a week after. I consulted with the local authorities and I cancelled the race.

The CHAIRMAN: Could you give the particulars about that circumstance and your decision? On the day, had the fires been around and had they been there for a while?

Mr Boyce: The fires had been up in the area for quite a while—I think it was a couple of weeks. They had put them out and I consulted with the Mt Buller authority up there. They had the experts there on the field and they advised me strongly that it was not safe.

The CHAIRMAN: Were the fires very close to where you were going to run?

Mr Boyce: The fires had actually gone out. There were only smouldering at that stage—a week later—but the risk was still —

The CHAIRMAN: There was a risk that it might start up again or flare into where you were going?

Mr Boyce: Yes. That is one I was involved in myself.

The CHAIRMAN: Who made the decision?

Mr Boyce: I did.

The CHAIRMAN: You were the course director?

Mr Boyce: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: And you made the decision after talking to the experts in Victoria?

Mr Boyce: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: What year was that?

Mr Boyce: I think 2008. I will correct that if it is wrong.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you have decision rules from yourself about if this flares up, here is the decision rule I am going to have?

Mr Boyce: Again, in Victoria, my occupation is very much to do with bushfire mitigation through tree clearing through utilities. I understand the risk of bushfires in Australia as well as anybody. Recently I was involved with the fires in King Lake. If anybody ever mentions a fire in Victoria, you stand up and listen very quickly.

Miss Benson: We also had an event recently that was cancelled because of flooding.

The CHAIRMAN: Where was that?

Miss Benson: In the Blue Mountains.

The CHAIRMAN: You were in the valleys, no doubt.

Mr Boyce: It was the Six Foot Track at Katoomba. That was cancelled —

Miss Benson: Two days before the event.

Mr Boyce: It is a very iconic race with about 800 or 900 people.

Miss Benson: It was heartbreaking for everybody concerned, but it was the best advice the race director received.

The CHAIRMAN: What do you consider are the inherent risks of ultra-marathons? As a race coordinator and director, what do you worry about? What are the priorities in Australia? You mentioned dehydration.

Miss Benson: That is one of the top. Dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke, much more than something like hypothermia.

The CHAIRMAN: What about fire? Is that a standard risk? You have already mentioned Victoria.

Mr Boyce: Is up there, too. It is high. Individually, you look at each runner. You have to make sure that you either carry enough water or have enough drink stops. For any strenuous exercise you have to put all measures in place to make sure that the runner will have the opportunity to rehydrate. Beyond that, when it comes to fires and floods, consult widely and understand the risks in each area.

The CHAIRMAN: In terms of organising the race that you stopped, you went to the experts. How did you communicate to the people on the ground when you stopped that race?

Mr Boyce: The race had not started. I sent an email that said, “Sorry; next year.”

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: In that situation, if they have paid their money up-front, does that mean they get free entry in the following year?

Mr Boyce: It varies. In my race I was quite happy to transfer it to the next year. As with most race directors, it is a community service. We do not do it for money. If anything, we lose money on most races.

The CHAIRMAN: RacingThePlanet is a money-making exercise. Is there enough profit in getting involved in organising these worldwide events to make money out of it?

Mr Boyce: I believe they have been around for a while, so maybe there is. Not many race directors in Australia would survive on making money. The recent Six Foot Track is run by the Sydney Striders and it is for the Blue Mountain fire brigades. There was, after cost, a small amount of money given back in that case. The runners understand —

Miss Benson: There are a lot of fixed costs. It depends on the size of the event. There are a huge number of fixed costs. If you have already bought T-shirts that are emblazoned with “2012” event and you have paid for the insurance, the insurance company is not inclined to give you your money back even if the event does not go ahead. There may be some things you can carry forward like 100 tonnes of water or something.

The CHAIRMAN: Are these large marathons—Boston and New York—profit-making events?

Mr Boyce: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: But they have thousands of competitors, obviously.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: How much would a competitor pay to enter one of your races?

Mr Boyce: They vary, but, again, \$80 to \$150. We have a bit of a rule of thumb—a dollar a kilometre. They are not thousands of dollars. Bernadette, would you know what the dearest race is?

Miss Benson: I think the dearest is \$180. You can probably still find one that is maybe \$30. That is a very low-key kind of cosy event.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have policies of vetting runners—deciding who can run and who cannot and the conditions that should be met before they can be allowed to be a competitor?

Mr Boyce: Each race will vary. Again, if you are on a track that is 200 metres from first aid, it is not a big issue, but there are qualifiers, yes. The harder the race, the more stringent the vetting would be.

Miss Benson: Race directors do not want to have to pull people off a course for dehydration. You would like things to go as smoothly as possible. You will often put in requirements for something like the Coast to Kosciuszko event that was mentioned before where there are requirements that in the last two years you had to have run 100 kilometres or 180 kilometres, and things like that.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think that if they were going to run the event up in Kununurra—it is in tough country with a tough climate and terrain—should they have had criteria about who should be able to run, besides people just paying the fee?

Mr Boyce: They did not have one?

The CHAIRMAN: I am asking you.

Mr Boyce: They should have had one. I do not know if they had one or not.

Miss Benson: Unless they had aid stations every five kilometres where all you are expecting is for people to go five kilometres at a time; the chances are quite good that they can do that.

The CHAIRMAN: I think they were every 20 kays.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Every 13.

The CHAIRMAN: Pre-race competitors and volunteer briefings; what should these entail?

Mr Boyce: Again, it depends on the risk of each race, but mandatory checks, all the hazards out there, where you get lost and what to look for. Again, for each race, the more complex it is, the more you would detail.

Miss Benson: Some races will require that you carry course maps, some have flagging and you would need to know which colour flagging to be looking for and how often you would be expecting to see flags. Mandatory gear checks often happen during big races and you will be spot-checked. You will be running along and coming through an aid station and they will ask to see your headlamp or something like that to make sure you have it.

The CHAIRMAN: Would the maps be topographical or just plain route maps?

Miss Benson: It could be either. It depends on the event and what might be the most useful.

Mr Boyce: Another thing for the more difficult races is race etiquette. One of the golden rules, which we all put in the longer the race is, is that if you do come across someone who is distressed, you stop and stay with them until another person comes. It is just race etiquette. That is pointed out quite strongly in the more difficult races.

[4.15 pm]

Miss Benson: Typically, it would be a disqualification if you passed by somebody. The time that you spent stopping to aid somebody would be taken off your own finish time later. That can promote that.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I wish to step back a little again. Have you ever been asked to go out and assess a course physically yourself or do you just do the paperwork? Have you ever been flown somewhere to look at a course to see whether the markers are too far part, whether there is a shortage of water stations or those sorts of things? Have you been asked to do that?

Mr Boyce: No.

Miss Benson: There was one potential race where an organisation contacted me last year about putting on an event in the Sydney area. They did not realise I was in WA. They wanted me to come out and look at their parks area and look at what I thought might promote the best course for them

to run. When that was not feasible, I was able to put them in touch with one of our AURA state reps, who is a race director of an event herself. She went out and helped them. As Robert was saying, when people want to sanction an event, we do not try to put them off; we try to do what we can to help them create an event that will work.

The CHAIRMAN: Have the problems of the Kimberley Ultramarathon reverberated around the ultra-marathon community around the world?

Mr Boyce: Yes, very much.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the view?

Mr Boyce: People are very sad that two people got injured to that level. It affected our association and a lot of our members. I know Kate; she has run a few of my races. I have run with her. It has made people open their eyes.

Miss Benson: It is quite a close-knit community, the ultra runners.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not a large community.

Miss Benson: We are always looking for new people.

Mr Boyce: After the race we had the commonwealth event in Wales and everybody knew there.

The CHAIRMAN: One of the issues the committee has to look at when groups come to run an ultra-marathon is who is at stake if the state wants to look at sponsoring somebody—who do you go to for expertise? You cannot be expert in everything, from motorcycle racing to car rallies and whatnot. Would your organisation be a touchstone for that?

Mr Boyce: You probably had the expert, Andy, on before.

The CHAIRMAN: Is he a member of your organisation?

Mr Boyce: Yes. We would be able to direct people in most—I would not say all—situations to get the right outcome that would conduct a safe race.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Are any races run across the north of Australia? Are there any in Queensland or the Territory?

Miss Benson: We have several in Far North Queensland.

The CHAIRMAN: They are all through Asia now too.

Miss Benson: Not AURA events.

The CHAIRMAN: My sister was involved in one in Borneo.

Miss Benson: There are ultra running events worldwide. We do not have any events in the Northern Territory. We have only one or two members up there. The climate does not lend itself well to ultra running. It is extreme.

The CHAIRMAN: There the biggest risk was flukes in the body from streams—a big risk.

Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Please make these corrections and return the transcript within 10 working days of the date of the covering letter. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it is deemed to be correct. New material cannot be introduced via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on a particular point, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Thank you again.

Hearing concluded at 4.19 pm
