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Submission to Queensland Walking Strategy 2019-2029

QORF is the peak body representing the interests of the outdoor recreation sector in Queensland, which incorporates nature-based recreation, outdoor education activities, adventure tourism, adventure therapy, and adventure racing.

QORF (Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation Incorporated) is a member-based, not-for-profit association charged with representing a coalition of outdoor recreation groups to advocate on behalf of the outdoor community.

QORF is pleased to have been able to publicise the opportunities for people across the outdoor sector to contribute to the community consultation process involved in the Queensland Walking Strategy 2019-2029. We trust that many interested Queenslanders will have completed surveys and made submissions to this process to ensure that their voices are heard.

We note that “the Queensland Government is investing \$2.5 million over the next 3 years to deliver a range of initiatives and actions identified as part of the Queensland Walking Strategy to improve the environment we walk in and the facilities we walk on”.

In recent months, QORF has been strongly involved in the development of another Queensland Government strategy, the Queensland Sport and Recreation Strategy 2019-2029, which we understand is scheduled to be released in the first half of 2019. It is important that the Queensland Walking Strategy and the Queensland Sport and Recreation Strategy are in step with one another (pun intended). The Sport and Recreation Strategy will assist to shape the physical activity of all Queenslanders, while the Walking Strategy will deal with the physical activity that is undertaken most commonly by Queenslanders.

QORF made a public submission in response to the Queensland Sport and Recreation Strategy 2019-2029 Discussion Paper – that submission is available on

our [website](#). Many of the points made in our submission to the Queensland Sport and Recreation Strategy will apply to the Queensland Walking Strategy. We will restate some of those points in this submission, but request that the entire submission to the Queensland Sport and Recreation Strategy be considered in the development of the Walking Strategy.

- Title of the strategy

The title of the outcome of this process should be carefully considered. We note that the consultation website states that:

“When we talk about walking, we also include jogging, running, and moving with the aid of a mobility device (such as a wheelchair or a walking frame) – meaning we want to understand the whole picture.”

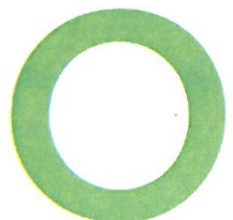
The intent may be to address the spectrum of pedestrian-based activities in this strategy, but it must be acknowledged that “walking” has a commonly understood meaning, which would usually exclude running and jogging. There is a real risk that stakeholders who are directly concerned with jogging and running may not realise that the Queensland Walking Strategy is relevant to them.

It is submitted that the title of this strategy should be revised to address this issue – it may be better to specifically include running and jogging in the title of the strategy alongside walking.

There are many levers that can be pulled by government to encourage more participation in outdoor activities, including walking, running and jogging. These range from:

- improved urban design (making neighbourhoods, suburbs and business districts more inviting and more accessible for walking/running/jogging),
- subsidised training courses, such as funding community groups and other organisations to improve the capacity of leaders and guides,
- more research into barriers and activators to walking, running and jogging,
- enhancing places and spaces where walking/running/jogging can occur,
- legislative/regulatory and policy changes that encourage people to prioritise walking, running and jogging as part of their healthy lifestyles, and
- making participation in walking, running and jogging more affordable for people with the least capacity to pay.

It is pleasing to see that the health benefits from increased walking, running and jogging are referred to on the Queensland Walking Strategy webpage. There are physical, mental and social health benefits associated with these physical activities, particularly in natural environments.



Walking/running/jogging in the natural environment

Although it would normally be considered outside of the responsibility of the Department of Transport and Roads, it is important that the Queensland Walking Strategy considers the need for planning in the natural environment for outdoor recreational walking, running and jogging. If this strategy is truly intended to be Queensland-wide, then it must include Queensland's protected area estate and other natural areas. This includes local neighbourhood greenspaces, as well as regional landscapes, National Parks and conservation areas.

Nature-based walking trails should be planned based on providing a range of options for users – short, medium and long trails, including loop trails that bring people back to the starting point without necessarily retracing their steps. Trails must be as accessible as possible to all people and be easily accessed. Consideration should be given to night-time access to trails to allow people to carry out their activities at times that suit the wide range of lifestyles across Queensland.

Consideration should be given to mitigation of conflicts between various trail users – for example, between mountain bike riders and walkers/joggers/runners. Trails can be designed to reduce conflicts or separate trails can be provided for different users. If one user group is given priority over another, then large sections of the community can be prevented from conducting their activity of choice. Rather than taking up a new activity, many people may become less active if their activity of choice is made more difficult to access.

Clubs and other organisations that conduct bushwalking/trail running and other activities should continue to be provided support and promotion by all levels of government. Similarly, increased government support could be provided for organised walking/jogging/running activities for the general public in bushland and other natural areas.

It is important that resources are allocated to rail trails across Queensland. Communities benefit directly from unused rail corridors being made available for walking/running/jogging and other activities. Existing rail trails should be enhanced, promoted and expanded, and government support should be provided to the establishment of new rail trails.

Information about places to walk/run/jog should be available to the community from one trusted source, which could be an app or a website. Currently, across Queensland, different land managers provide different levels of information about the walking trails on their land, without any reference to connecting trails on another land manager's land, making it difficult to develop an overall map of the opportunities available. The Koala Bushland Coordinated Conservation Area maps are a good example where this has been done across tenure, governments and land ownership.



Walking/running/jogging in the urban and built environment

Foreshore and river/creek-side path systems should be prioritised in development approvals and urban environmental planning. For example, the Kedron Brook trail on the north side of Brisbane is one example of a drainage reserve which has become a valued community asset because it was opened up to outdoor activities. Drainage reserves which may have been historically off-limits to outdoor activities can include walking/jogging/running trails, if the right measures are taken to ensure public safety.

All aspects of neighbourhood walking infrastructure should be considered within the planning phase of new developments.

Signage, parking and amenities in local government urban bushland reserves should be improved. These are the areas closest to where people live and are in abundance in many local government areas but receive little or no attention for public access. These appear to be the left-over bits of land – often zoned for conservation or environmental purposes – after a development has finished. These remnant pieces of land usually fall outside Local Government Infrastructure Plans and developer contributions for enhancement. As a result, they are given little or no priority yet they provide walking in nature opportunities close to where people live.

It is suggested that a study should be conducted into local government urban bushland reserves that could be made more accessible for walking, jogging and running and other outdoor recreation activities.

Suitable widths and designs for multi-use path systems should be more clearly specified and enforced, particularly in medium to high density settings with high levels of walking/jogging/running (whether for recreational purposes or for active transport) alongside other users such as cyclists.

All neighbourhood destinations (public and commercial) should be linked by accessible footpaths. Existing footpath systems should have improved linkages and closed loops, while ensuring that all new neighbourhood path systems are designed to provide loops and linkages to destinations. The number of dead-end footpath systems should be reduced.

It is suggested that the standard of supply for concrete street footpaths should be increased, and the design of footpaths be improved to accommodate more people and more activity, while reducing maintenance requirements.

To increase everyday walking, all footpaths, on both sides of every street, should be safe and accessible, whether they are formalised in concrete or not. Rural residential areas must provide safe and accessible neighbourhood walking, either on the streets/roads or on footpaths.



To reduce the use of private vehicles to travel to and from home to public transport hubs, appropriate walking infrastructure must be provided to link into the public transport network.

More nature should be introduced into neighbourhoods through planting appropriate trees to provide shade, improve comfort and enhance the visual amenity of the walking environment.

Walking/jogging/running in the community

Community initiatives, such as parkrun, which encourage more people to walk/run/jog, should be actively encouraged and supported by the Queensland Government. Support for these initiatives could take the form of direct funding, reducing red tape by streamlining permission processes, addressing concerns regarding insurance needs for organisers, or subsidizing training opportunities for volunteers, such as first aid or event management qualifications.

It is suggested that high priority communities should be identified based on the health and well-being data, and a range of programs should be directly supported in these communities, with the aim of getting more people outdoors walking/running/jogging for physical, mental and social health benefits.

It is suggested that the Queensland Government could host the “30 by 30” Nature Challenge to encourage more people to go outside for at least 30 mins and benefit from nature every day for 30 days. The simplest option to experience nature for most people is to go for a walk.

Research should be done into the differences (*health, social wellbeing, safety, social cohesion, active transport use*) in the walking habits between communities that have supportive walkable environments and those that don't.

Many outdoor education programmes across Queensland incorporate walking activities, particularly bushwalking. Completing a journey-based adventure can result in a true sense of achievement for the participants, especially where the journey is entirely or substantially people-powered. Outdoor education opportunities should be considered when determining the potential users of trails, and facilities provided where appropriate to cater for this sub-set of users.

Walking journeys are routinely undertaken by members of youth organisations like Scouts Queensland and Girl Guides Queensland. It is important that locations are available for group activities, without red-tape precluding these groups from accessing the facilities.

Walking/jogging/running underpin a significant number of tourism activities across Queensland, from mass participation events such as the annual Gold Coast



Marathon festival and the Oxfam Trail Walk, to wonderful trails such as those located in Carnarvon National Park, through to accessible streets like The Esplanade in Cairns and the Strand in Townsville. The potential effect of improved pedestrian access on tourism must be considered in terms of the economic benefits of walking/running/jogging, and the need to provide facilities for these activities.

QORF looks forward to further involvement in this important project. If there are any queries about any aspects of this submission, please contact Dom Courtney, Executive Officer, by telephone on 07 3369 9455 or by email eo@qorf.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dom Courtney
QORF Executive Officer

