27 May 2016

Tim Oberg
General Manager / Founder
parkrun Australia
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Dear Tim

Parks and Leisure Australia (PLA) is writing to parkrun Australia to congratulate your organisation on the significant success that you are experiencing with your parkrun events.

Parks and Leisure Australia (PLA) is the lead agency in Australia for Sport, Recreation, Leisure, Parks and Play. PLA is comprised of world leading experts in their field from all three levels of government as well as the wide ranging private sector.

PLA advocates to government for parks and open space and their value to communities. PLA helps plan and protect open spaces and parks. We also advocate for these spaces when conflicts arise over their use.

PLA and its members are very aware of the work being done by parkrun both in providing a "best practice" physical activity program for individual communities but also in bringing awareness of Australia's diverse parks to their communities.

We note that parkrun's are conducted at 141 different courses around Australia each and every Saturday morning and that more than 18,000 participants engage with your program each week. That's like combining the Sydney and Melbourne marathon’s and organising them each and every week. We also note that your courses and participant numbers are increasing on a weekly basis.

All three levels of government recognise the importance of physical activity to Australian’s. Local governments in particular are constantly implementing new programs to "get their communities active". parkrun is showing what a really effective physical activity program looks like.
Many of our PLA members participate in parkrun and so we are very aware of the process and structure that makes your program successful. Not just elite runners take part in parkrun but also mums and dads, their kids and sometimes their dogs. It doesn’t matter if you run a 16 minute 5km or walk it in 40 minutes, all participants are just as engaged. We also note the great "stories" that come from parkrun. People facing challenges in their lives, being given a new "focus" through their parkrun experience.

The other value that parkrun brings to the Australian community is in the enhanced awareness of Australia's fabulous parks. From the St Peters parkrun at Sydney Park, Albert Park in Melbourne, the Gold Coast coastline at Kirra, the rugged coast at Shellharbour, the beautiful heritage listed Queens park in Toowoomba, Hobart, Kirwana coastal walk, Newfarm in Brisbane, the Hunter river foreshore development in Newcastle to the Sandon Point at spectacular Bulli. One of the values of parkrun is the iconic locations in which they are conducted. parkrun has done much for bringing ordinary Australian's back in to their parks, or introducing Australian's to parks that they had never visited before.

Research shows that when people become aware of parks, and engage with them, they become advocates for those parks. Your participants who engage with their local parks have now become "protectors" of those parks.

parkrun has also demonstrated the value of partnerships, in particular the partnership between parkrun and local government. All 141 of your parkrun courses are in separate local government authorities, on parks that are most often owned and managed by these individual local governments. The way that parkrun has engaged with, and worked with their local government authorities has been a standout of your organisation, and has been noticed by PLA.

Finally, well done. Your Saturday morning community runs have proven to be a standout success in physical activity programs and in bringing Australia’s iconic parks and open spaces to the forefront of their communities’ awareness.

We look forward to watching your continued success and look forward to working with you in delivering great outcomes for Australian's in our parks and open spaces.

Mark Band
Chief Executive Officer