



**15 SEPTEMBER 2024**



## **BOB CLARKE, AM. LEGACY LIVES ON: Honoring the Founder of City-Bay**

Make sure to take a look at the feature article in last weekend's Sunday Mail highlighting Bob Clarke, the visionary founding father of City-Bay.

# 50th City-Bay the legacy of visionary founder

## HOW ICONIC RUN WAS NEARLY A FALSE START

Paul Ashenden

It's an SA institution that attracts tens of thousands of runners every September.

But, when Bob Clarke came up with the concept of a City-Bay fun run in 1973, jogging was such an obscure pastime he wouldn't train until after dark for fear of being seen by his neighbours.

For among the genteel folk of Adelaide at the time, running was seen as an activity for either criminals or the criminally insane, and there was no way Mr Clarke's family wanted anyone to discover his new passion.

"When Dad first started training to do a marathon, my mother used to say to him, 'Oh Bob, you can't be seen by the neighbours going out running – they'll think you've lost the plot,'" Mr Clarke's son Peter recalls.

"I was just not something that you did back in the mid-60s. But things started to change in the 70s, and almost a craze started to develop."

It's a craze that the event Bob Clarke instigated has helped fuel and organisers of this year's Lumary City-Bay – the 50th running of the race – have set their sights on attracting 50,000 participants.

That number is a far cry from the 1600 or so who gathered in front of Adelaide Town Hall for the inaugural event in November, 1973, just 11 weeks after Mr Clarke came up with the concept.

Bob Clarke was 41 when he took up running in 1966, with the aim of preventing the middle-age spread that afflicts so many. He ran his first marathon later that year, joined Adelaide Harriers and, in June, 1973, floated with the idea of a mass-participation fun run from Adelaide to Glenelg.

He took the idea to SA Amateur Athletics Association but they couldn't help because such an event would breach strict amateur codes, so he created his own committee – and one of the favourite annual events on the SA calendar came to life.

"He loved running, but his motivation was multi-faceted," Bob Clarke's son Peter said.

"He wanted to get more people involved in doing fitness activities and he wanted to bring it in as a family event, where family, friends, work colleagues – everybody could participate."

For Peter Clarke, now 71, his siblings Geoff, 75, and Brian, 66, the Lumary City-Bay Fun Run is an annual and some-



Bob Clarke, AM, with his City-Bay #1 race number, which was retired when he bowed out after many years and, right, Bob Clarke's son Peter. Pictures: Tait Schmaal, Dean Martin

times emotional reminder of the legacy their father left the state.

This year, the 50th running of the event, will be even more special than usual. About 25 family members will don commemorative shirts and participate in the event's 6km walk.

Bob Clarke died in 2016 at 91. He was 73 when he ran his last City-Bay, which he completed in 59 minutes – a remarkable time for his age.

He also ran in the first two events despite carrying the responsibility of being race director. Peter Clarke remembers his father taking to the microphone to address the runners from the Adelaide Town Hall balcony before rushing down to spare and joining the throng.



The 1974 City-Bay was an extra special one for the Clarke family, when Bob and his three sons all competed. Bob, of course, was the first of the quartet to arrive at Glenelg.

By 1975, the combination of entrant and race director became too much, and Bob Clarke concentrated on organising the event for the next decade before returning as a competitor for his last run in 1998.

The idea for the City-Bay came when Mr Clarke saw the success of Sydney's City 2 Surf, which started in 1971.

"I thought, well, if they can do it, we could do with one here," he later said.

"I thought we could get more people involved in athletics, we might be able to raise a dollar or two, so I spread the word that we should have a fun run."

Mr Clarke hooked up with John Fischer, general manager of News Corp's afternoon newspaper The News, who jumped at the chance to get behind the event.

News Corp, through The

News and later The Advertiser and the Sunday Mail has supported the City-Bay ever since.

Mr Clarke's tenacity in creating such a big event in the space of 11 weeks is a source of wonder for current organisers, who start their planning process 12 months out.

The scope of Mr Clarke's achievement is detailed in a new documentary by Adelaide filmmaker Johnny Taranto, which will air on Channel 9 on Sunday.

Radio personality Ryan Fitzgerald hosts the show, called City-Bay: 50 Years and Running, which also features Olympian Jess Stenson, three-time winner Grenville Wood and archival footage and pictures dating back to the first event.

Mr Taranto said the City-Bay was another example of Adelaide punching above its weight.

"On a per capita basis, the City-Bay is arguably the most popular fun-run in the world," he said.

"To think that this is all attributable to the vision, motivation and unshakeable determination of one man in 1973 makes this story even more remarkable."

Chairman Daniel Chaffey Hartwig said the Lumary City-



Bay board commissioned the documentary to mark the 50th running of the event.

"When we had a look back through all the Sunday Mail and news archives, and the Channel 9 footage, I think everyone was a bit overwhelmed with what was found," he said. "Just trying to get it all into one place has been an incredible unearthing of treasure. The final product shows the immediate enthusiasm that Adelaide had for the event, right from 1973."

"And it captures the fun of it more than anything, and shows once and for all that it's not an elite running race but a community – it's a real community-owned event."

Mr Chaffey Hartwig, who ran his first City-Bay in 1990, said the run was one of the most inclusive events in SA.

"I think it just goes to show the power of one person's idea," he said. "It has touched probably about a million participants by now, not to mention all the charities and everything else that benefits from the run these days."

"I don't think Bob would have any idea how big the legacy would end up being."

Tens of thousands of runners and walkers are expected to turn out for the 50th running of the beloved event, supported by the Sunday Mail.

Participants can opt for the classic 12km, as well as 3km, 6km and half marathon distances and raise funds for charity. All will earn a souvenir medal. Register now at [my.city-bay.org.au](http://my.city-bay.org.au)

City-Bay: 50 Years and Running will screen at 4.30pm on Sunday, July 21 on Channel 9.

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

If you caught the premiere of the documentary 'City-Bay: 50 Years and Running' last Sunday, you already understand its greatness! However, if you missed it or simply wish to relive the experience, you can watch it

again by following this link: [Watch City-Bay: 50 Years and Running 2024, Catch Up TV \(9now.com.au\)](https://www.9now.com.au/watch/city-bay-50-years-and-running-2024).



CATCH UP HERE

## OUR MERCHANDISE SHOP IS LIVE!

Our long-awaited merchandise shop is now live, and we can't wait to share it with you! We're thrilled to announce our partnership with ASICS to offer exclusive apparel merchandise commemorating our 50th year. Check out a sneak peek of some available items below, however there's so much more waiting for you on our website. Dive into the full selection at [Merchandise | Lumary City-Bay Fun Run](#) to explore the complete range. Whether you're looking for memorabilia to commemorate our 50th year celebration or outfits for your entire team on race day, we've got you covered!



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TANK**

**\$40.00**



**ASICS RUNNING  
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**\$30.00**



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JACKET**

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VISOR**

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**SHOP MERCHANDISE NOW!**

## **RECRUIT YOUR TEAM AND WIN**

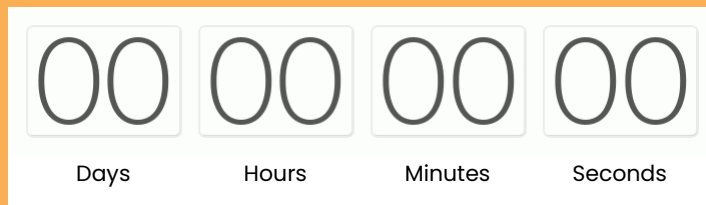
Team registrations will close on August 19th, giving you just under a month to assemble your team! Remember, you could win 12-months worth of free reformer pilates valued at \$1,800, courtesy of Studio Pilates North Adelaide and Glenelg. Simply recruit 10 or more team members for this year's Lumary City-Bay to qualify for this fantastic prize. Terms and conditions apply; find more details here: [Teams and Groups - Lumary City-Bay Fun Run](#)



REGISTER YOUR TEAM NOW!



THE COUNT DOWN IS ON:



TO GO, UNTIL RACE DAY! ☑☑♂

## Lumary City-Bay Fun Run

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City-Bay Fun Run Committee Inc. acknowledges and pays respect to all traditional custodians of the lands of which we Run, Walk, Work and Live throughout Australia.  
We pay respect to elders both past, present and emerging.

