

# **NZAC**

Membership Survey

September 2009

Compiled by Ollie Clifton, NZAC Executive Officer

# Executive Summary

The key findings of this survey are that:

- (a) There has been no significant change in the demographic profile of Club members. The relatively small percentage of Club members under 30 years old remains an issue. Club members also remain a relatively affluent section of society – it is therefore recommended that fundraising initiatives aimed specifically at Club members should continue.
- (b) Tramping and Outdoor Rockclimbing ranked as the most popular alpine-related activities, with General Mountaineering having increased in popularity in relative terms.
- (c) Members continue to undertake their alpine-related activities with family, or with friends, or a combination of both. Responses to all other options were negligible.
- (d) Awareness and usage of Base Lodges was very similar to 2005 and 2007.
- (e) “Time constraints” was the most common reason for not using Base Lodges. Comments were also made regarding lack of awareness, and “never having been” to certain areas. Hence it is recommended that our Base Lodges, and the climbing opportunities available in the adjacent areas, should be better promoted, especially to new members.
- (f) The comparison of “Importance vs Performance” of Club activities/services showed that Publications, Huts, Photocomp and Banff continue to perform very well. On the flip-side, Advanced Courses, Beginners Instruction and Recreation Advocacy have all underperformed. The following two recommendations are therefore made:  
That both Beginner Instruction and Advanced level courses need to be improved to meet member expectations.  
That better communication of the efforts made and outcomes achieved in the Club’s Recreation Advocacy be made with the wider Club membership.
- (g) The key Club services/functions of making hut bookings and payments would be well utilised if available on-line, and hence this work should be prioritised in the redevelopment of the Club website.
- (h) Both the Climber magazine and Alpine Journal could be improved by adding more alpine and intermediate level climbing content.
- (i) None of the options given for raising future Club revenue were popular, however there was an indication that the club should pursue more fundraising events.

## Methodology

Previous membership surveys have been completed in 2005 and 2007, hence where possible the data collected in 2009 has been done in such a way that it is comparable. 300 surveys were distributed to a representative sample of members throughout the country, by both post and email, with 134 surveys being returned. This is a higher response rate than 2007 (98 responses), but still a lower responses rate than 2005 (where all surveys were posted and 175 surveys returned). Use of an online survey tool (surveymonkey) and persistent reminders were the key differences in the improved responses rate in 2009.

All the raw data was entered into spreadsheets via the heroic voluntary efforts of Club member Leyla Novoa . This data was then analysed, and this report produced by Ollie Clifton, NZAC Executive Officer.

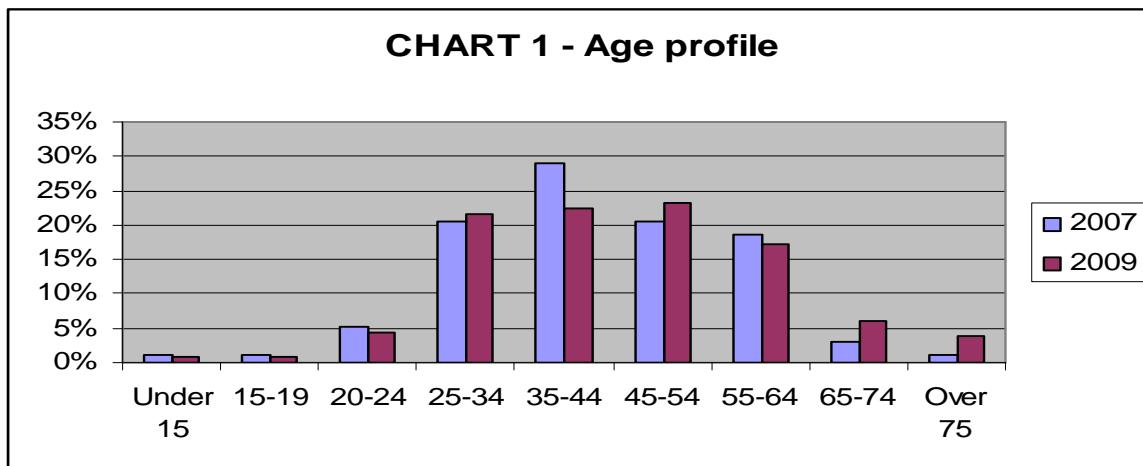
## Demographics

As in 2005 and 2007, this survey asked three questions relating to age, gender, and income. Comparative results for these three areas are detailed below.

### Age

The age profile of NZAC membership remains very much the same as it was in 2007 (see CHART 1 below). Hence the same conclusions drawn from the 2007 data apply in 2009, these being that:

1. Over 45% of the Club membership is aged 35 – 55 years old, with less than 10% being under 25.
2. This is in contrast to the age profile of the wider climbing community; the 2005 member survey noted that a major survey of 14,400 people by NFL research in 2001, found that approximately 55% of those who climbed regularly were under the age of 30.

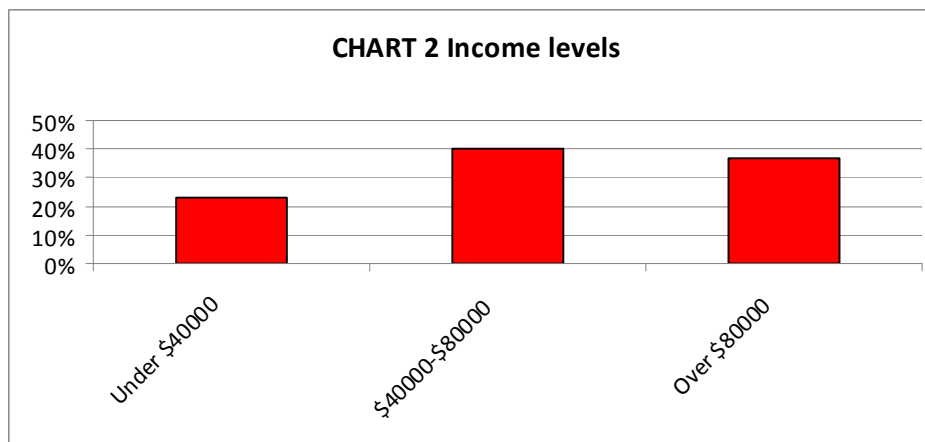


### Gender

The Club remains very male biased, with the ratio of men to women remaining at approximately 80:20. This gender ratio has not changed since 2005.

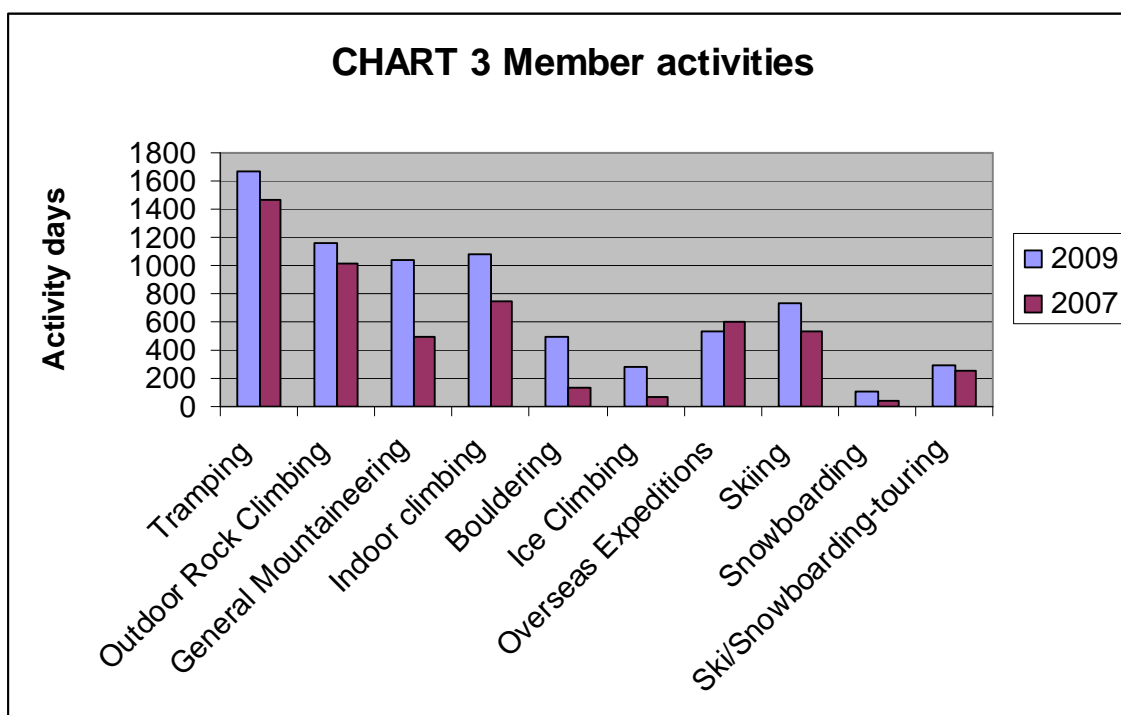
### Income

This question was asked slightly differently this year, with the intention being to establish what percentage of club members would be able to make a significant financial contribution to club fundraising activities. Graph 2 “Income Levels” shows that over 35% of members earn over \$80,000 per annum. This indicates that overall the Club membership remains reasonably affluent, and furthermore that fundraising initiatives aimed specifically at Club members are still a very worthwhile activity.



### Alpine-related Activities

Both the 2009 and 2007 surveys asked Club members their main interests, and the approximate number of days they had undertaken each activity (see CHART 3 below).

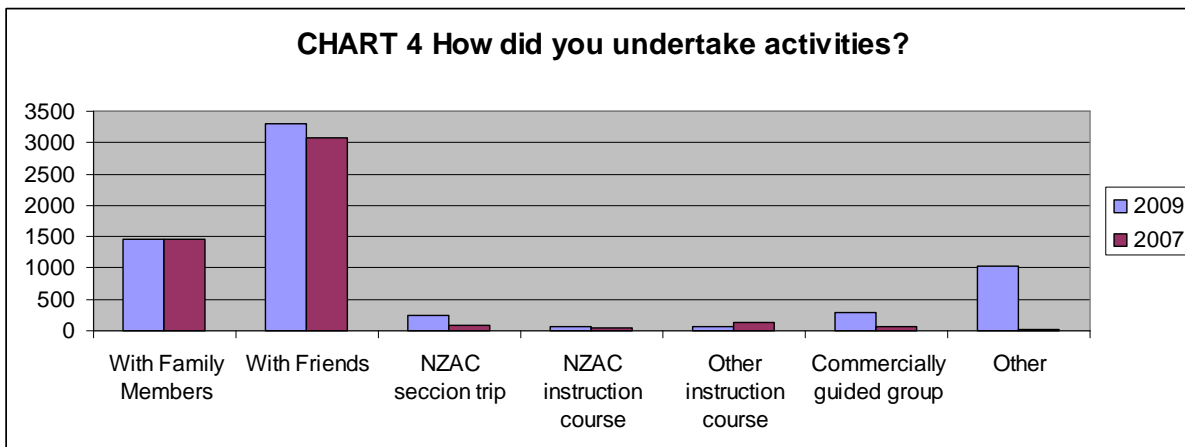


The data on activity highlights the relative accessibility of Tramping, Outdoor Rockclimbing, and Indoor Climbing. Comparatively speaking General Mountaineering has made a significant jump in 2009, recording almost twice as many activity days as 2007. This is very surprising given what we hear anecdotally, and see in other areas of hut activity (eg alpine hut usage and revenue). The increase in activity across most categories tends to suggest that we selected a more active sample of members in 2009 than 2007.

The activity categories themselves are not mutually exclusive – hence the data also illustrates the range of activity that members are involved in. The data collected in 2005 is not directly comparable.

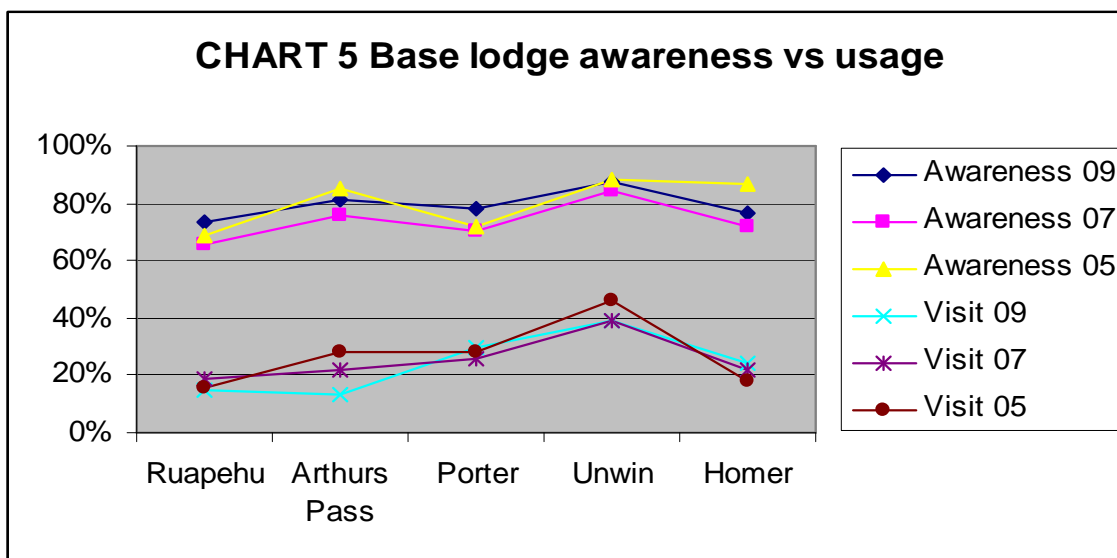
The second part of this question asked members how they did their activities – not surprisingly the “with family” and “with friends” categories rated the highest (see CHART 4 below). What was somewhat surprising was the “other” category, which had over 1000 days recorded – judging by the comments made in association with these entries, at least 75% of the “other” days represent solo trips. This may indicate that NZAC needs to take a more proactive role in helping climbers of

similar abilities/locations to find climbing partners. The number of days attributed to “NZAC section trips” has increased between 2007 and 2009, a very encouraging trend.



### Base Lodge Awareness

As in 2005 and 2007, members were asked two specific questions relating to their awareness, and usage of our five Base Lodges (Homer, Unwin, Porter, Arthur’s Pass, and Ruapehu). The data collected in 2009 was very similar to 2007 and 2005, with the same direct relationship between awareness and usage being evident, as per CHART 5 below:



In addition to this data, it was also asked that if people had not used NZAC Base Lodges, did they have any specific reasons. Comments from both 2007 and 2009 are summarised below:

2007 comments:

- Lodges are useful – I use them if in the area x 5
- New member, not aware x 6
- No longer climbing/activity restricted x 6
- Live overseas x 6
- Never been to those areas x 5
- Too far away/distance x 6
- Cheaper to camp x 3
- Time constraints x 9
- Prefer to use huts x 4
- Family commitments x 3

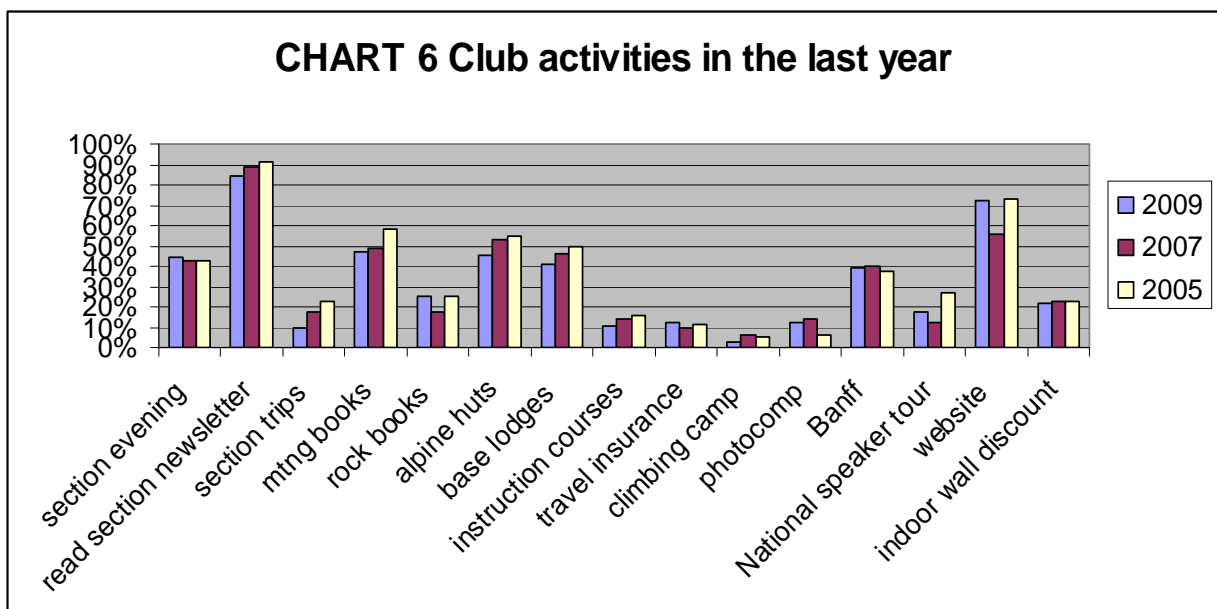
## 2009 comments:

Avoid crowds  
Wrong locations x 7  
New member x 7  
live overseas x 8  
Mainly weekend trips so usually stay in a hut or camping  
Lack of time  
Haven't been in these regions x 2  
Old body... x 2  
Family x 2  
Whakapapa usually booked out  
Tend to go for slightly more comfortable accommodation  
Revision of the base huts for children needed  
Prefer to camp if possible  
Whakapapa is too high  
At Mt Cook Village I prefer to use Wyn Irwin Hut  
Do other activities: kite-surfing, mtb  
prefer to get into the hills x 2  
Shied away from any mountaineering trips to the Alps

Although “time constraints” ranked highest in 2007, only one comment along these lines was made in 2009. Better promotion of our Base Lodges, and the climbing opportunities available in the adjacent areas could also be useful in addressing the comments around “New member, not aware” and “Never been to those areas”.

## Club Activities

This section of the survey asked respondents to indicate which Club activities/services they had participated in over the past year, and if they had wanted to be more active, what were the barriers. The results and comparisons to 2007 and 2005 data are shown below in CHART 6:



Of note here is the downward trend in many categories between 2005 and 2009, with the exception of the Website, and Banff Film Festival. Section Evening attendance, and Section Newsletters have held their own. This trend is of real concern and needs to be closely monitored.

In response to the question regarding barriers to participation, lack of time was by far and away the most common category selected, as in 2007. Encouragingly, “perceived quality” received the lowest number of responses. The “additional comments” received as part of this question were most strongly focussed around living overseas, distance to the local section, or family commitments.

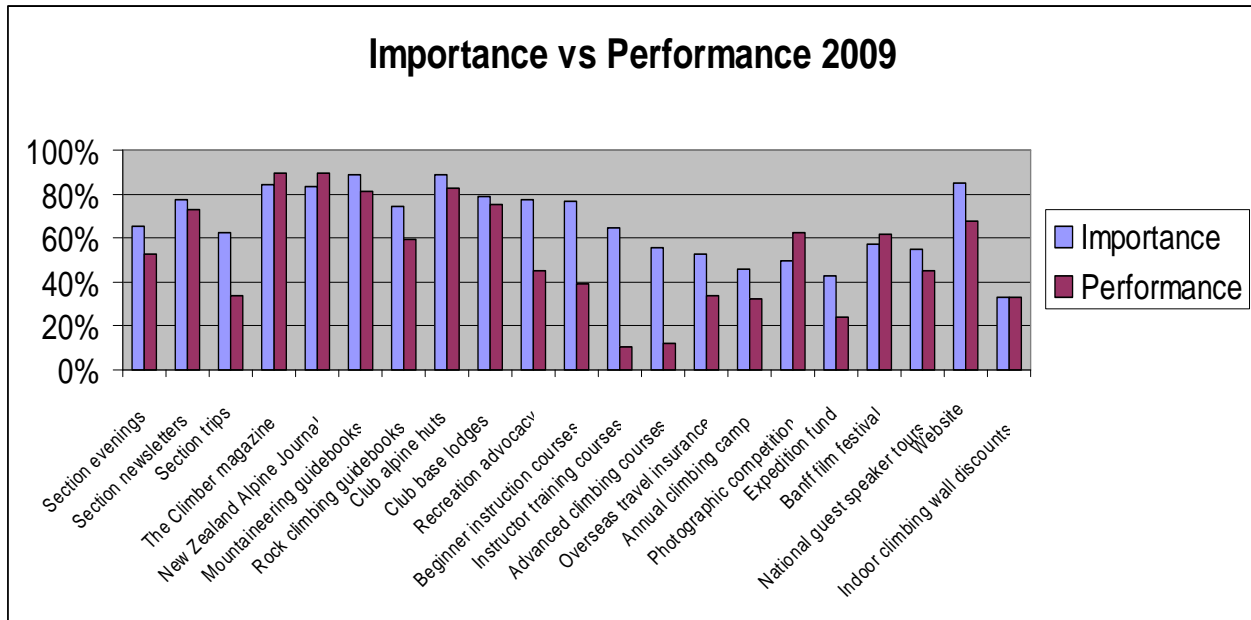
## Membership Satisfaction

As in the 2007 and 2005 surveys, members were asked to rank a list of 21 Club activities/services, in both their importance, and performance ie “how important is this activity/service” and “how has the Club performed in this activity/service”. From the 2007 survey, the following conclusions were made in relation to this question:

- Publications continue to perform exceptionally, with both the Climber and NZAJ ranking higher in performance than importance.
- The Photographic Competition and Banff Film festival also rank exceptionally, as they did in 2005.
- Mountaineering and Rockclimbing guidebooks have also performed well.
- Both Alpine Huts and Base Lodges have performed well, with similar rankings to 2005.
- Section Newsletters showed the biggest improvement, with performance now matching importance.
- Section Evenings gained in importance, but slipped in relative terms on performance!

Areas that need attention included Section Trips, Recreation Advocacy, Beginner Instruction and Advanced courses.

The results from 2009 are illustrated in CHART 7 below:



The best performers from 2009 were again the Climber, NZAJ, Photocomp and Banff. The biggest gaps were apparent in Advocacy and Instruction. Also worth noting was the increased importance of the website.

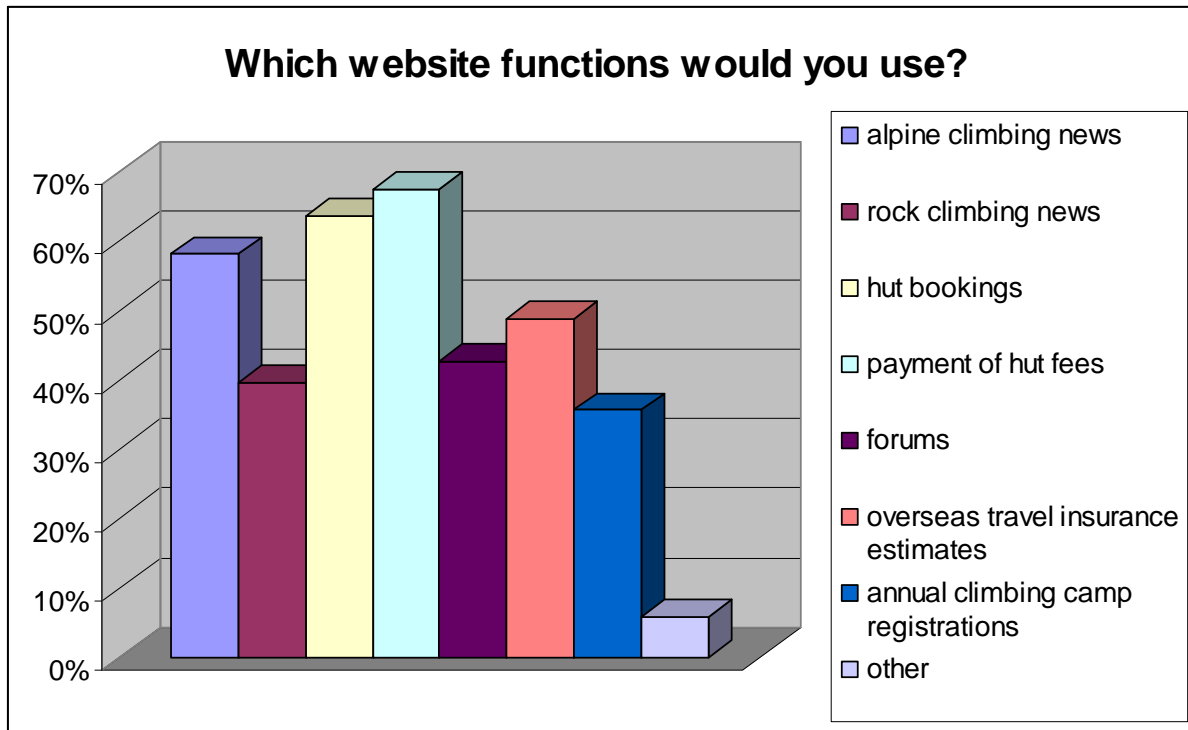
Also in relation to this question, members were asked for suggestions on other activities/services that the Club could be involved in. These suggestions are listed below:

- Connecting people through trips and activities is important
- Nice to have climbing trips but they are not essential
- I have not been a member long enough to use the services
- An Australian Section established to be able to access more benefits like travel insurance.
- Would be great to see a regular OS climbing camp (ie. Australian crags, Chamonix...)
- Increase ways in which we can get more people involved so increase memberships
- Guidebooks, huts, insurance and education keep people coming back
- Base lodges aren't too friendly

These suggestions were fairly wide-ranging, and nothing really conclusive can be drawn from them.

## Website

This question was new to the 2007 survey, given the redevelopment plans for the Club website, and increased use of web based services generally amongst members and wider society. Several of choices offered in 2007 have now been added to the website (purchasing guidebooks, subscription payments), hence the 2009 question offered different functions. Results are summarised below:



These results simply confirm our educated guesses, and highlight the need to progress the redevelopment of the Club website, especially the core functions of hut bookings and payment of hut fees.

## Climber magazine and Alpine Journal

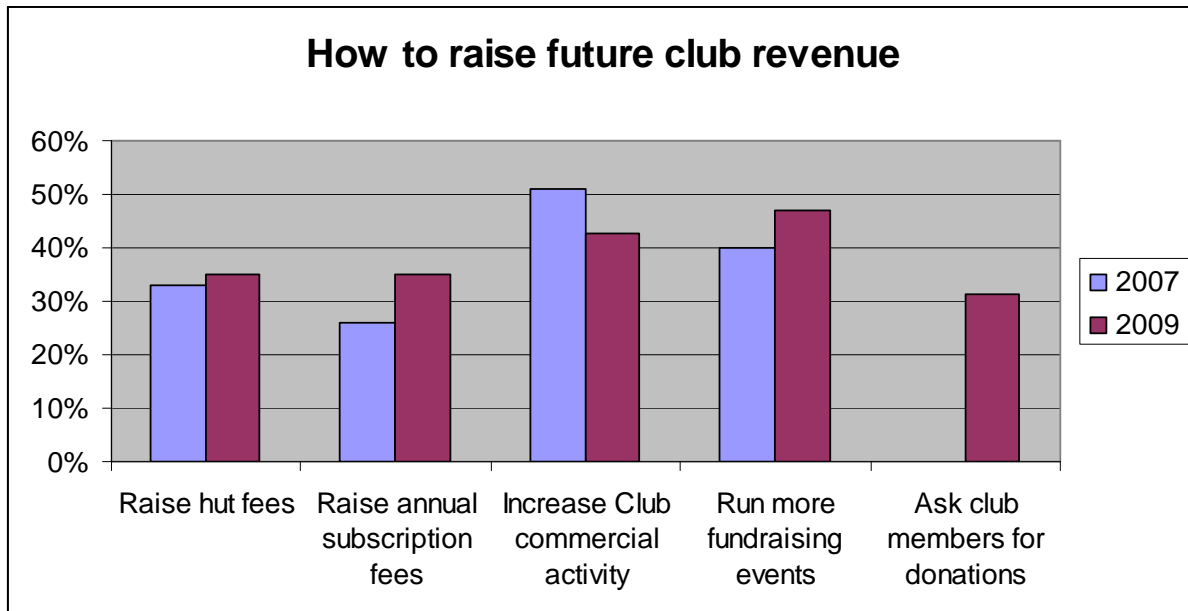
This year we asked what suggestions people had for content in these two publications. The responses are summarised below:

More alpine/transalpine/mountaineering trips and less rock climbing x 10  
Both are excellent at present x 7  
More intermediate level articles, less hard core x 4  
Climbing logbook x 2  
Topical issues and debate x 2  
Overseas climbing news round up in The Climber. Alpine Journal: keep on encouraging local stories.  
Not interested in interviews with stars. More informative content  
More in depth articles about specific mountains or climbing areas  
Regular articles on crags in NZ and Australia  
Accident reviews and what could have been done different  
New route information should be for people climbing all grades, not just hard grades.  
A bit of climbing history (NZ ) would be nice  
World's best routes and Australia's best routes (at all levels).  
Perhaps a handy hints section  
Creative writing

The main theme from this feedback is that most people regard the Climber and NZAJ very highly at the present, however improvements could be made by adding more alpine and intermediate level content.

## Future Club revenue

This question was introduced in the 2007 survey, asking members how the Club should raise additional revenue in the future. The results from 2007 and 2009 are illustrated in CHART 9 below:



A range of comments were received as part of this question, which are summarised below:

Huts ideas - pay for huts in advance, annual pass system, improve hut fee collection x 4

Increase commercial activities x 4

Sponsors x 8

Sell Club merchandise - t-shirts, merino tops, etc x 2

Ask all members to provide personal loans for specific projects at low or no interest repaid through hut fees. Set up a fund raising committee. Consider joint venture with other possible stake holders x 2

Expand membership x 4

Mid-week usage of base lodges x 3

Community grants, SPARC, Lotteries Board x 3

More volunteering work, working bees x 3

Raise hut fees for non-members x 3

The club should run a co op style specialist climbing store selling good alpine/climbing gear to members which would produce revenue and encourage people to become members.

Do less

Cut costs

Some of these ideas may be useful in developing fundraising strategies for the Club in the future.

## Recommendations

The key recommendations of the 2009 Member Survey are that:

1. Fundraising initiatives aimed specifically at Club members should continue.
2. Our Base Lodges, and the climbing opportunities available in the adjacent areas, should be better promoted, especially to new members.
3. Better communication of the efforts made and outcomes achieved in the Club's Recreation Advocacy be made with the wider Club membership.
4. Both Beginner Instruction and Advanced level courses need to be improved to meet member expectations.
5. The redevelopment of the Club website should continue to be a top priority.
6. Both the Climber magazine and Alpine Journal could be improved by adding more alpine and intermediate level climbing content.

Ollie Clifton

NZAC Executive Officer

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