



CAN membership system- background paper

This document provides background on the way CAN's membership is structured and administered.

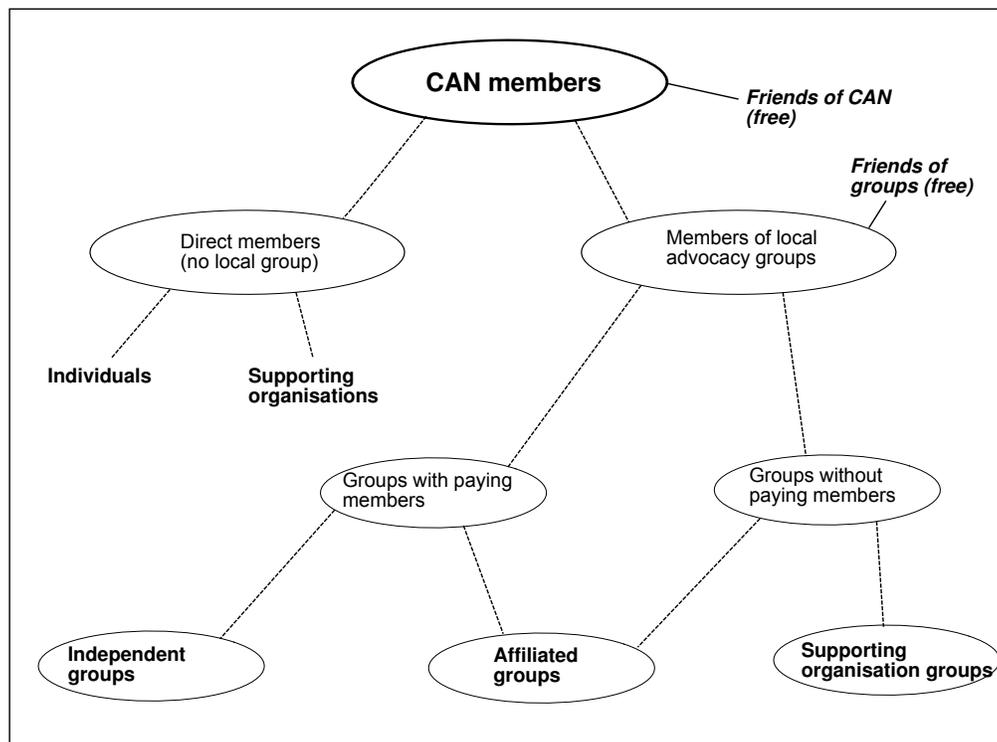
Membership structure

CAN provides membership for both individuals and for supporting organisations. Supporting organisations include bike shops, local/ regional councils, consultants, cycle touring businesses etc.

Most of CAN's individual members belong to local cycling advocacy groups which are affiliated to CAN. In general, the only individuals who are direct members of CAN are those in areas where there is no such local group. (There are occasional exceptions, e.g. a council staff member may wish to join CAN but not their local group, as that would create conflict of interest problems.)

Local advocacy groups

CAN's local advocacy groups vary considerably in size and in the ways they operate. Some have paying members, while others only have free membership. Some do their own membership administration, while others elect to have this done by CAN. The overall structure of the membership, including members of the local groups, is summarised in the diagram below.



As the diagram shows, there are effectively three types of local advocacy groups:

- **Independent Groups.** These groups have paying members but do all their own membership and other administration. For each of their members they pay a levy (\$10.00) to CAN each year. This is mainly to cover the cost of printing and mailing the Chainlinks magazine to them. There are currently three groups of this type: Cycle Action Auckland, Kapiti Cycling and Cycle Aware Wellington all incorporated. Independent groups are invoiced for levy payment each 1 July. For members joining and paying membership fees directly to CAN, the CAN Treasurer issues a credit for the total surplus above the levy, to the Independent Groups each 1. October.
- **Affiliated Groups.** The administration for these groups is done by CAN, allowing them to focus their resources on advocacy. In return for this they pay an increased levy (\$15.00) to CAN for each member. Surplus credits are paid as for Independent Groups. Some groups have free membership (email only) categories of their local group and in many cases (e.g. Spokes Canterbury) these form the large majority of their members. However these members are administered by the local group rather than CAN, and no levies are paid for them. They are effectively very similar to 'Friend' members (see below).
- **Supporting organisation groups.** Some groups are treated as supporting organisations of CAN and just pay a single annual fee. These groups may or may not have members at all- some are effectively operated by one person. Others have non-paying members, but for whatever reason (sometimes just historical) pay the supporting organisation fee instead of levies for their members who join CAN. Members of these types of groups who also choose to join CAN are treated as direct CAN members, i.e. their whole membership fee goes to CAN. Generally we prefer advocacy groups not to join as supporting organisations, partly because it means the group does not benefit from the fees their members pay. There are currently two groups of this type: Bike Taupo and Wanganui Bicycle Users Group.

The diagram also shows two other types of members: 'Friends of CAN' and 'Friends' of the local advocacy groups. Friends of CAN is a relatively recent membership type introduced in 2004. Friends of CAN do not pay a fee, and their membership basically entitles them to receive the e.CAN email bulletin. Friends of CAN is currently operated via a Yahoo! Group email list. Friends of local groups operate similarly but may also receive information from the local group about events etc.

Most local groups operate such Friends lists. (Spokes Canterbury operates three email lists, with different levels of involvement, all of which are free to join, and their 'Spokes Inform' group acts something like a 'friends' group.)

Membership classes

CAN has four classes of paid membership: waged, unwaged, family and supporting organisation. The annual membership fees for each type are shown in the table below. Self-administering local groups may choose to have different fee schedules, but most keep their fees the same as CAN's.

Type	Membership fee (p.a.)
Waged	\$30
Unwaged	\$15
Family	\$35
Supporting organisation	\$75

Supporting organisations are entitled to five copies of the Chainlinks magazine, which they can distribute internally. Individuals (and families) are entitled to one copy. All members are entitled to receive Chainlinks as hard copy, via email/ web download (PDF file), or both. Self-administering local advocacy groups distribute Chainlinks to their own members, so CAN sends them copies in bulk for distribution.

For CAN members and most local groups, memberships are renewed on 1 January of each year. Members who join late in the year (after 1 October) are credited with membership up until the end of the following year. Cycle Action Auckland operates a slightly different system where members renew on the anniversary of their joining.

Membership administration system

CAN carries out membership administration using an integrated database system. This system was introduced in 2006 and handles not only membership but also incoming correspondence. It can summarise details of incoming funds, so that bank deposit details can be prepared automatically, as can itemised lists of incoming funds for input into the financial accounting system operated by the CAN treasurer.

The database stores all member information (contact details etc) and keeps track of what date each member is currently paid up to. The system can also be used to view all correspondence received from each member, and all payments received from each member. It produces personalised welcome letters for new members and membership renewal reminders, and address labels for mailouts to members, as well as automatic emails to local groups to let them know when they have new members. It can also produce up-to-date membership lists for local groups administered by CAN.

At present the membership administration is shared between two people. The CAN secretary maintains the membership/ correspondence database. The main job of the membership secretary is to handle mailouts to members- mainly welcome packs sent to new members, the Chainlinks magazine (every two months) and subscription renewal notices. Welcome letters, renewal notices etc. are sent from the secretary to the membership secretary via email for printing and distribution.

Membership benefits

The main membership benefits for CAN members are:

- Chainlinks magazine- to keep informed about cycling advocacy news in NZ and overseas
- opportunity to contribute, either financially or with lobbying, at both national and local levels
- discounts on CAN merchandise (pack covers and t-shirts)
- opportunity to join discussion forums- general CAN Forum and special interest groups (SIGs)- currently legal and technical (engineering)
- some local advocacy groups offer other benefits, e.g. social events, bike rides, discounts at local bike shops

There are other benefits that are available to members, but are also in fact offered free to non-members as well:

- e.CAN email newsletter
- advice 'from the experts' - legal, technical, touring etc.

Strengths and weaknesses of membership system

Strengths of the current membership system include:

- flexibility- can accommodate different types of local cycling advocacy groups, from small, loose, relatively informal groups to large structured organisations
- low cost- administration is automated as far as possible, to reduce time costs

Weaknesses of the system include:

- communication between CAN and the local groups is not always very effective, partly because of a lack of personal contact
- members of some local groups feel little or no connection to CAN (i.e. the link isn't clear to them)
- the diversity of different types of groups can be confusing
- not many opportunities for local groups to learn from each other's experiences

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