

Competitors begin their 5km or 10km run or walk in race five of seven in the Frontrunner series, at Jacks Point on Saturday morning. Runners were advised they would quickly shed any thermal clothing. Men, women, children — both running and riding in pushchairs — and dogs turned out for the races. The final two races are scheduled for October 27 and November 24. The last race is a special half-marathon event.

PHOTO: CHRISTINA McDONALD

Trails trust lauds landowners

By TRACEY ROXBURGH

ALMOST 10 years to the day of the deed being signed for the Wakatipu Trails Trust, now Queenstown Trails Trust, the generosity of 24 Wakatipu landowners, instrumental in the formation of the soon-to-be-opened Queenstown Trail, was celebrated.

At a function on Friday, trust chairman Terry Stevens said the "hard part" was coming to an end and it was fitting the first part of "phase two" — the celebrations — honoured those who had made the trail network possible.

"Without the landowners, none of this would have

happened. It's particularly important to honour you tonight."

Deputy prime minister and Clutha-Southland MP Bill English recalled the moment Prime Minister John Key had a "rush of blood to the head" and raised the idea of the New Zealand Cycle Trail project. "[It was at an] employment summit... I'd spent a bit of time with the Prime Minister making sure he was sticking to the script... he went out and on the spot made up this idea.

"He did create this sense that actually it needed to happen, as he has explained to me many times, starting that day.

"My role was very simply to

spend about a month fighting the whole thing, because it was \$50 million when we were going down the toilet.

"He won and I lost."

Despite his initial trepidation, Mr English said he felt "a real personal satisfaction" seeing the Queenstown Trail nearing completion in his electorate and acknowledged the generosity of the landowners who, by granting easements over their land, had enabled an asset to be created for the community at large.

"There's a real tendency for some people to want to give away what other people have... often, people who want to

improve our environment... it's a majority saying 'we want a minority to give something up so the community can be better off.

"Often, those who are most vociferous in advocating it are those who aren't giving up anything.

"That's why it [the Queenstown Trail] is so special. "Thinking of the landowners... they are the people who have given something up."

Mr English said it was appropriate to acknowledge what he described as a "very rare occasion" — landowners giving up their clear ownership and allowing public on their land in the interests of helping

the trust realise its dream. "We owe a real debt of gratitude to the people who have made that possible.

"That real generosity of giving up something... puts a responsibility on the rest of the community to make sure that that generosity is respected — as people pass along those trails they respect the generosity of the landowners who enabled it to happen."

Trust chief executive Kaye Parker said because of the landowners the community had a Queenstown Trail "as none of us have ever experienced it before".

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