

Schoolboy cricket on the move

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Schoolboy cricket, after a two year lull, is experiencing a growth in popularity again.

Three years ago, the junior advisory board of the Canterbury Cricket Association, responsible for running schoolboy cricket, had a record entry of 97 teams. The next year the number dropped substantially to 85. It built up again to 93 teams last year, and this season has returned to the record level of three years ago. There are 97 teams entered in four grades.

Competition this season started a week earlier, on October 14, with 93 teams, but since then four additional sides have entered, said the chairman of the J.A.B. (Mr Derek Cockburn).

The growth has not been the result of any planned drive by the J.A.B. although it had asked clubs on the fringes of the city to move into the newer housing areas like Oaklands and Parklands to form teams.

Burnside-West University and Old Collegians are the largest providers of teams. This season Burnside has 18 teams, and a spokesman said it was about as many as it could handle. It could probably provide for another two teams. It has a total of 13 wickets at Burnside Park Oval and Ilam.

The club has done no campaigning for boys but believes its increase of two teams this year could be the result of two tennis clubs in the area having full memberships.

Old Collegians is the second largest club with 10 teams. Its numbers have grown steadily for three or four years but again

not through active campaigning.

Schools in the immediate area received circulars, said a club spokesman, but most of the campaigning was done by the boys themselves. They pass the message on to their friends.

The club has three pitches for schoolboys at Elmwood Park, its headquarters, but because of the growth of teams in the last few years has had to find additional pitches. This year it has three new pitches at Plynlimon Park and one at Heaton Intermediate School.

Two other clubs have doubled their number of schoolboy teams this year. Both Lancaster Park and East-Shirley has six teams — three more than last year. New Brighton and Hoon Hay Working Men's Club each have an extra team and a total of six.

There is a new entry from Chisnallwood Intermediate and Mr Cockburn said the whole of the city area had been covered, including Belfast, Hornby and Sumner. Outside the fringe areas teams become the concern of the North Canterbury sub-associations.