

MASTERS ATHLETICS – Beginnings in Australia and New Zealand

Veteran track & field athletics was introduced into Australia by a few veteran athletes, mainly from Western Australia, who heard that USA athletes were competing in 10-year veteran age groups. The first US Masters track and field competition was held in San Diego in 1968, and in 1973 the first Australian veteran track and field championships were held in Melbourne. A team from the USA also competed.

SA first

The first state to officially form a veteran track and field club was South Australia on April 14, 1971. The inaugural meeting of the New South Wales Veterans Athletics Club was held on April 20, 1971, while the Victorian Veterans Athletics Club was formed, initially for men only, in January 1972. The Queensland Veteran Club was formed in September 1973 also initially as a male-only club. Women were given full membership in 1983.

Masters

In 1974, a veterans club for men only was formed in Western Australia. Women were admitted in 1977. Also that year the Australian Association of Veteran Athletics Clubs was formed. The change of name – to Australian Masters Athletics Inc. – was made at the Annual General Meeting in Sydney in 2001.

Veteran clubs were formed in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory in 1979. The 1995 Australian Grand Prix was the first in which veteran athletes were invited to compete.

Across the Tasman

In New Zealand, organised cross country competition for men over 40 began in Canterbury in the early 1960s. In 1970 the first national veteran cross country championships were held; women's events began in 1975.

National veteran road championships followed in 1972, and by national vets' championships in road walking, marathon and half marathon events.

After a successful veteran pre-Commonwealth Games meeting in Christchurch in 1974, Canterbury vets set up the first full national track and field championship meeting in 1975, and these have been held annually ever since. South Island track and field championships have been held since 1981; North Island championships since 1986. Multi-event championships began in 1993.

NZ Masters

Administration of veteran athletics evolved slowly, with the New Zealand Association of Veteran Athletes formally adopting its first constitution in 1973. Centre Committees covering the 11 centres recognised by Athletics New Zealand were formed progressively. The organisation is now known as New Zealand Masters Athletics.