

2021 Australian Masters Athletics Track and Field Championships

ACT Masters Athletics Local Organising Committee

Convener: Bryan Thomas

Postal Address: ACTMA Inc, GPO Box 2356, Canberra ACT 2601

canberra2021@actmastersathletics.org.au



FINAL REPORT

LOC

2021 AMA CHAMPIONSHIPS CANBERRA

A SAD DECISION

A crisis meeting to decide to proceed or cancel the planned 2021 AMA Championships because of issues caused by the coronavirus pandemic was conducted by ZOOM Monday 4 January 2021. The meeting involved all members of the LOC2021 plus Phil Urqhart (AMA president) and Ken Smith (ACTMA president).

The recent outbreaks of the coronavirus and closing of state borders created doubt in our ability to organise a successful championships in March. There would be doubts in the minds of potential participants concerning travel and accommodation.

With heavy hearts and after much soul searching the LOC recommended to AMA that the event scheduled for March 2021 be cancelled due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting made three decisions – to cancel the 2021 Championships, not attempt to postpone the event to later in the year and not seek to host the 2022 Championships. It was with much regret the LOC felt it had to reach these conclusions.

Our inaugural meeting was in November 2019 and since then our team had achieved a great deal and it is with sadness we felt unable to continue. Obtaining corporate sponsorship was extremely difficult and proved to be impossible due to the dismal economic environment. However, we fortunately received some financial support from the ACT Government and it seemed we were moving in the right direction in negotiating their COVID safety protocols.

LOC2021 MEMBERS

ACTMA assembled an experienced and hard-working team capable of organising and conducting *an efficient, friendly and successful championships* to be held from Friday 5 to Monday 8 March 2021. Most of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) had considerable experience of national and international competitions while six members had also served on previous LOCs.

The 2013 AMA Championships in Canberra were a great success as were the four previous championships organised by the ACTVAC – in 1984, 1991, 1999 and 2006 so we were confident of doing so again for the 48th AMA Championships due to be held at the AIS Athletics Track and at Stromlo Forest Park.

Our LOC consisted of the following -

Bryan Thomas - convener. Bryan joined in 1980 and served on committee for seventeen years - fourteen as president and is a club Life Member. Bryan has participated in most AMA Championships since 1983 and at seven world championship. He was national president from 1990 to 1993 and as its historian wrote “*Age is no Barrier*” - *the History of Veterans/Masters’ Athletics in Australia* (published 2011).

Nadine Morrison – secretary. A member since 2007 Nadine is a regular in our monthly run/walk handicaps and until becoming a mother also at track and field. Nadine has been involved in other club events; for instance the Vets’ Half Marathon and Sprint Marathon Relay and was a member of the Membership Services Subcommittee from 2009 to 2011. She competed in the 2002 World Masters Games in Melbourne as a W30 distance runner.

Jo Klempe – treasurer. A member since 2007. Jo is a talented all-round athlete who has participated in national championships and enjoyed success at the 2016 WMA Championships in Perth. Jo was one of our most successful competitors at the 2019 AMA Championships in Melbourne where she won five individual gold medals.

Suzie Gaynor – publicity. It didn’t take Suzie long after joining in 2014 to get involved in administration and was elected secretary in 2018. She is a regular at track and field and both our monthly run/walk and throwing handicaps. Being interested in participating in a variety of events she was a very busy athlete at both the 2019 AMA and Oceania Championships.

Janice Banens – sponsorship. A member since 2000. Janice has participated with much success at fourteen WMA Championships. She has been our most outstanding female competitor for four seasons, has twice been AMA Thrower of the Year and in 2014 was Administrator of the Year. Janice was club vice president for three terms before being elected president for the next three years. She was a leader of our 2013 LOC.

Kathy Sims – merchandise. A member since 1999 Kathy has served six terms on committee. She was ACT Female Athlete of the Year in 2017 after previously being runner-up and for six years she was our nomination for the Middle Distance category within the AMA Awards. Two highlights of Kathy’s track career were being selected as a member of national teams that set World Records in both the W60 4x400m and 4x800m relay.

Neil Boden – competition. A member since 1991. In 1997 he led a committee that promoted our club at shopping centres and community events. He was LOC convener for the 1999 nationals and a member of the LOC for both 2006 and 2013 championships. Neil coordinated our track and field program for many years and in 2001 he and wife Kerry were Club-persons of the Year. He participated in the 2000 Oceania in Norfolk Island and the 2001 WAVA Championships in Brisbane. Neil has been president of ACT Athletics since 2013.

Jayne Hardy – competition equipment and AMA Board member. ACT Life Member. Jayne has won medals in all throwing disciplines at numerous Australian, Oceania and six WMA Championships. She was 2002 AMA Female Athlete of the Year and Thrower of the Year in 2012 and 2019. Jayne has been the club's most outstanding female competitor five times and club-person of the year for both our throwing handicap and track and field programs. She was elected to committee in 1998, again in 2001 and 2002 and from 2011 to the present. Jayne was a member of the LOC for the 2013 AMA Championships.

Bob Banens – entries and results. Bob is a national-class performer in all throws and has competed in many Australian and ten WMA Championships. Bob served four years on committee and was a member of the AMA Board from 2001 to 2007 and co-edited the *AMA Handbook*. In 2007 he was elected to the Oceania Board and took on the tasks of producing the *OMA Handbook* and re-writing the *WMA Constitution*. Bob produced both the *Program* and *Results Books* for the 2013 Championships. In 2018 he was awarded a Bronze Pin for service to AMA, OMA and WMA.

Sherryl Greathead – hospitality and catering. Sherryl joined in 1993 as a dedicated distance runner and able administrator. She served three years on committee during which time she was involved in the implementation of our first *Five Year Plan*. In 2014 Sherryl was Club-person of the Year for the monthly run/walk handicap program. Sherryl was a member of the LOC for the 2013 AMA Championships.

Robyn McClelland – administration and event support. Before becoming a member in 1998 Robyn had been a competitive squash and tennis player as well as having completed several triathlons. She has run seventeen ACT Vets' Half Marathons finishing amongst the age group winners on numerous occasions and in 2019 was W65 champion. Robyn was race director of the popular Canberra Women and Girls Fun Run from 2005 to 2010.

Adam Farlow – officials and volunteers. Adam joined in 2013. His outstanding performances as an M35 during 2018 included an ACT Record for 100m, an Australian Record 200m and being runner-up in the Masters Final at the Queanbeyan Gift. These performances qualified him to compete in the Commonwealth Games Trials and as a result Adam was our nomination for the Sprints category of the AMA Awards.

Mick Corlis – IT support. A member since 1995. Some of Mick's most memorable races have been in off-road 'ultras' such as the Six Foot Track, Fitzroy Falls, Bogong High Plains and the 60km Kepler Challenge in NZ. He has also performed well in many marathons, half marathons, cross-country races and fun runs. In 1997 his commitment to our monthly handicaps was recognised by being Club-person of the Year. Mick served three years on committee where his expertise in IT was utilized in his role as registrar.

(Each of the team leaders had a group of people willing to assist the operation of their portfolio – before and during the championships).

MEETINGS

Following the formation of the LOC fourteen meetings were held between November 2019 and February 2021. The first three were at the Belconnen Soccer Club in Hawker then because of the coronavirus restrictions ten were virtual meetings utilising ZOOM while the final meeting (wake?) was at the Ainslie Football Club. Most meetings benefitted from full attendance by team leaders while executive members of AMA and ACTMA were invited to attend and contribute to the latter meetings.

There were numerous other meetings between the formal LOC meetings by team leaders and interested personnel seeking government assistance, commercial sponsorship, promotion, obtaining quotes for merchandise and medals and viewing and booking venues etc.

- 1. November 2019 meeting at Belconnen Soccer Club.** Team leaders were identified and assigned an area of responsibility. Each would have maximum independence and were encouraged to recruit their own sub-teams. It was agreed our mission was “*to conduct an efficient, friendly and successful championships*” that was to be financially successful (that is be financially neutral or make a small profit).
- 2. February 2020 meeting at Belconnen Soccer Club.** An initial budget was presented based on a conservative estimate of 550 competitors charging \$60 entry plus \$20 per event. Total income was estimated to be \$143,000 and expenditure \$141,550. A graphic designer was engaged to produce logo concepts. Letters seeking sponsorship had been sent and a meeting with the ACT Government was arranged. Promotional material was being prepared for placement in competitor bags at the Brisbane Championships. We agreed on the competition program and entries were to open 1 November 2020 and close 14 February 2021. An engraver, photographer, first aid and physio providers were sought.
- 3. March 2020 meeting at Belconnen Soccer Club.** The budget was subject to change as treasurer was waiting on firmer figures from team leaders. No commercial or government sponsorship had been promised at this stage but nine club members have promised \$350 each for naming rights of specific events. The championship logo was decided by vote. Recruiting of sport officials and volunteers began. Geoff Sims volunteered to co-ordinate the cross-country and ACT Walkers Club to manage road walks at Stromlo Forest Park. Mick Morris from Athletics ACT agreed to assist with event programming. The potential number of medals needed was determined.
- 4. May 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM.** Team leaders prepared a *Special Report* of their activities to date and forwarded to LOC members prior to this meeting. A new budget based on 400 competitors x \$140 each meant a total income of \$56,000. It was anticipated we would receive a \$15,000 ACT Government grant and sponsorship would be reduced to \$4,000. Because of COVID-19 restrictions and lack of sponsorship we were reluctant to undertake much publicity in the near future. Our ACTMA committee generously offered a \$20,000 grant to the LOC.

- 5. June 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM.** Treasurer Jo planned to set up a *LOC2021 Canberra Operating Account* with CBA requiring two designated signatories. It was to be a separate account with no links to ACTMA. Artwork for medals, website and a postcard was to be completed the next day. Still no replies from letters to potential sponsors. Four LOC members are to meet the ACT Sports Minister next week. Agreed AMA would not like two Championships cancelled so LOC would contact AMA seeking an increased grant and/or wave the levy as a one off to help the 2021 championships not run at a loss. A Risk Management Plan (RMP) needed to be endorsed. It was decided we need to determine a date (November?) when payments have to be made before deciding to proceed or cancel.
- 6. July 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM.** Bob reported on the “*positive meeting*” between four LOC members with Minister Berry of the ACT Government. Jayne tabled the latest *AMA Championships Manual*. Discussion on the effects of the current coronavirus situation suggested that by mid-September COVID-19 will be the problem rather than finances; “people won’t book flights, ACT not wanting visitors and no vaccine until next year”. But we will press on but may still have to cancel the event! Competition director met with representatives from ACT Running and Race Walking Clubs regarding plans for events at Stromlo and creating a list of requirements for officials and volunteers. Bob discussed with Mick Morris a revised *Meet Manager Program* and the need to have event-specific COVID protocols for athletes and officials. A special waiver may be required - will seek legal advice.
- 7. August 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM.** LOC secretary was not available so Sherryl kindly volunteered to take the minutes. The ACTMA committee was not supportive of discounted entry for non-masters competitors (as suggested at last meeting) as it would undermine the value of membership to existing members. There was some good news re obtaining a sponsor to supply tops and hats for volunteers and officials. A \$2000 deposit was paid to AIS which will be refundable if we have to cancel. But we will be responsible for cleaning all equipment as COVID cleaning is the responsibility of the hirer. Lack of clarity over who is responsible for making a decision of possible cancellation led to agreeing to invite the presidents of both AMA and ACTMA to our next meeting. A temporary hold on circulation of the *EOI forms* until after next meeting. The *RMP* was revised due to the changing circumstances and an up-dated waiver. The *RMP* was forwarded to the AMA Board who were impressed and praised the work of Robyn. Our treasurer reported that the minimum number of entries in order to proceed and have a break-even budget was 400.
- 8. September 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM.** Shane Hutchison (ACTMA president) and Richard Blurton and Janet Naylon (AMA president and board member respectively) were welcomed to the meeting. A *Special Report* by team leaders of their recent activities and achievements had been distributed prior to every LOC meeting since utilising ZOOM. A strap banner was now on our ACTMA website and a message put in *Bulletin* to club members while information concerning our progress was sent to all State Masters Associations. Fifteen letters seeking possible sponsorship had not been successful. *Tradies Club* have a meeting at end of October but it doesn’t look favourable but we have made contact with *Ainslie FC* and it looks possible it may be a major

sponsor. The ACT Government withdrew hire charges for Stromlo Forest Park. The critical date for ordering merchandise is January so we must decide on going ahead or not before Christmas. ACT funding grants closed, we are in Tier 2 for \$15,000 to \$30,000. If successful any grant money spent and we were forced to cancel would not have to be repaid. Richard Blurton advised that AMA were keen to go ahead and would like the decision to be as late as possible and suggested some ways of reducing costs.

9. October 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM. ACTMA secretary reported on the recent AMA AGM where both Richard Blurton and Janet Naylor lost their positions and Phil Urqhart (Vic) was elected president. The new AMA Board expressed support for Canberra 2021 but no details of what sort of support. In our application for a government grant of \$30,000 an increased participation to 600 but a reduced average registration from \$140 to \$100 would mean a \$4,000 loss, but 500 entries would be a \$10,000 loss and 400 a \$20,000 loss. Should have an indication of grant success (or not) by mid-November. Still no success in seeking major sponsorship. Having difficulties negotiating with AIS – a major cost would be being charged for deep cleaning. If medals were ordered in December an overseas supplier could deliver by 2nd March. In an updated *RMP* - under current ACT protocols with less than 500 and being a multi-day event our championships were unlikely to get an exemption.

10. November 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM. New AMA president and treasurer Phil Urqhart (Vic) and John Clark (NSW) and new ACT president Ken Smith attended the meeting. LOC treasurer presented a revised budget based on 400 entries and hopefully receiving an ACT Government grant of \$15,000 (should know in a week). *Tradies Club* said ‘No’ to sponsorship but we had possible contacts within *Ainslie FC*. Not much success in other forms of financial or in-kind support because of the poor economic outlook due to the ongoing pandemic. The meeting had a discussion about “who will cover financial losses if we open entries in December then have to cancel in February?” It was agreed a decision had to be made at our next meeting. Phil and John (AMA executives) said there was a pent-up demand and if pandemic restrictions improve across the nation many competitors will come.

11. December 9 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM. This meeting was a ‘*crisis meeting*’ because we were to decide to proceed or cancel because of issues caused by the coronavirus pandemic. AMA executives Phil Urqhart (Vic) and John Clark (NSW) and ACT president Ken Smith attended – they were impressed with how the LOC had handled the difficulties. A budget was tabled with a net loss of \$1,850 based on 400 competitors and \$15,000 ACT Government grant but still without financial support from local businesses. However, hopeful of getting sponsorship from *Ainslie FC*. Under current legislation we were confident our latest *RMP* would be acceptable to conduct an event with up to 500 persons per session. Competition venues were booked and areas for meetings, packing, opening and social events would be secured in the near future. A straw poll at the beginning of the meeting indicated most team leaders favoured proceeding but four were uncertain. However, at the end of the meeting *all were in favour but one was apprehensive and outlined her concerns*.

12. December 22 2020 virtual meeting by ZOOM. Announcement about the Championships proceeding was put on Facebook and sent to all State Associations and

on club website. An *Event Safety Plan* was sent to ACT Health and the AIS with the following details about numbers – *While the number of participants is uncertain, across four days of the Championships, there could potentially be up to 600 competitors and 100 officials and volunteers and 100 accompanying persons. Not all would be in attendance for the whole championships. It is anticipated that, even in the first two busier days the total number at the am and pm sessions will not exceed 500. Maximum numbers at Stromlo Forest Park expected to be 150.* Robyn recommended restricting numbers to less than 500 at any one time as the exemption process is extensive and not guaranteed – this may require excluding accompanying persons and tweaking the program. Four LOC delegates had a positive meeting with *Ainslie FC* re sponsorship. 1,450 medals were ordered at cost of \$5,380. Neil will put together a program over Christmas/New Year but won't provide final program until entries close on 14 February 2021. *The next LOC meeting planned for Tuesday 12 January was never held because of the outcome of the final meeting described below.*

13. Final Meeting: Monday 4 January 2021 via ZOOM. The meeting involved all members of the LOC2021 plus Phil Urqhart (AMA president) and Ken Smith (ACTMA president). The recent outbreaks of the coronavirus and closing of state borders created doubt in our ability to organise a successful AMA Championships in March. There would be doubts in the minds of potential participants concerning travel and accommodation. After much soul searching the LOC recommended to AMA the Championships scheduled for March 2021 be cancelled due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting made three decisions – 1. Cancel the 2021 Championships

2. Not postpone the event to later in the year

3. Not seek to host the 2022 Championships.

14. Wind-up Meeting (or WAKE?): Wednesday 10 February at Ainslie Football Club, Ainslie. The purpose of this meeting was to ensure that we had all met our obligations due to the cancellation of the 2021 Championships. Treasurer Jo reported having received deposit back from AIS, refunded early entrants, the ACT Government grant would cover medal expenses and would arrange to acquit and an audit of our finances. Suzie discussed closing the website. Janice had sent thank you letters to all prospective sponsors as had Kathy with the businesses she had been working with. Some of the businesses commented they would be interested in future championships. Janice even asked *Ainslie FC* to consider a “raincheck for seven years’ time”. Neil reported Geoff Sims had written to 25-30 technical officials thanking them for their offer to be involved – many replied saying they were “disappointed but not surprised”. Bob thanked Mick Morris for his assistance in preparing a program and arranging for processing of entries and results. He also thanked government personnel for the financial support offered by the ACT Government. Sherryl had written to all her team thanking them for their efforts. Robyn also thanked all she had dealings with and was thrilled that our order for medals was able to be cancelled. Jayne was happy we didn't need to purchase any new equipment as all had been bought after the burning down of the equipment shed at Woden Track in early 2020.

The meeting closed at 7:40pm followed by dinner.

OUTCOMES

1. A press release by AMA President Phil Urqhart issued 5 January 2021.
2. A letter by Bryan Thomas, Convener of the LOC2021 sent to both AMA and ACTMA.
3. This final report will be sent to AMA, ACTMA and all members of the LOC who had worked so willingly and diligently towards the 48th AMA Championships that had been scheduled to be held in Canberra 5-8 March 2021.
4. Following the cancellation of both the 2020 and 2021 Championships we wish the LOC for next year's championships in Brisbane "all the best". We look forward to being there with you and meeting up with the many competitors that will come from around Australia.

Bryan Thomas
Convener LOC2021