



NZMA President's AGM Report - February 2024

Introduction

The last NZMA AGM we held was back in December 2022, at the NZMA Championships held in Wellington. Following on from the Covid lockdowns and disruptions, it appears that fewer masters are taking part in the sport. I do not know whether that is the reason or not. However, with fewer people taking part, there are also fewer people stepping up to help run the sport within each Centre and this is a New Zealand wide issue. As I prepare this report, there are only 111 entries for the up-coming NZMA Track & Field Championships, to be held at Nga Puna Wai, Christchurch. This is first time since 2010 that the event has been held in Christchurch. Based on previous years, my expectation would be that about 220 will attend, so we will just have to wait and see if we reach that number.

Memorandum of Understanding between Athletics New Zealand (ANZ) and New Zealand Masters Athletics

Since the previous AGM, the NZMA Board has worked with Athletics NZ to refine and update the MoU. The discussions have been between Cam Mitchell (the new Athletics NZ Chief Executive), Hamish Meacham (Community Manager) and Jason Cameron (Competitions Manager) and myself, with all changes being agreed by the NZMA Board. I also had an opportunity to talk with many of the current Athletics NZ Board members and they are all supportive of a closer working relationship.

What became apparent to me during these discussions was that Athletics NZ is understaffed and under resourced in terms of just how much help they can provide NZMA, let alone the New Zealand clubs, which are their primary focus.

We already had a general agreement to work more closely together, which involves promoting our events and publishing articles about our athletes in their online newsletter. We will have to provide 'copy' for their newsletter, so if you have something you feel should be reported on, please let me know.

During the discussion the biggest challenge we faced was finding space in a busy summer season for all events. Those of you who are officials at ANZ events will appreciate the demands and expectation required, given the number of events you can officiate at during the season. There is a limit to the number of times officials are prepared to travel between meetings, often at their own expense.

When we enlisted ANZ's help to find a suitable venue and space in the calendar for our NZMA Track & Field Championships, no clear decisions were forthcoming as they were waiting to finalise their event schedule. An additional challenge was finding a Centre willing to host our event. Given a Master's Centre does not have the people power to do it alone, we are dependent on the ANZ

Centre officials for help. After consultation with ANZ and to ensure we had a venue for the 2023-24 season, I put my hand up to organise it here in Christchurch.

Unfortunately, ANZ then scheduled their Combined Event Championships to be held on the same weekend, in Dunedin. That has created a further challenge, given key officials we were expecting from Otago, are now unable to attend! To further complicate this weekend, Athletics Wellington scheduled their championships for this weekend too.

Exactly when and where we host our NZMA Championship event, is always going to be challenge. If we hold our event in December, it clashes with NZSS Championships, is too close to Christmas and shortens the season. If we wait until late March, closer to the Australian Masters Championships, many officials are 'over it' and want a break, so can we officiate it successfully. If we combine our event with another ANZ competition, when would that be and how would it work? The NZMA Board welcomes any bright ideas as to where and when in the season we hold our major championship. This year we were fortunate that Mark Harris, supported by WMA members, stepped up to run the NI event in Palmerston North and Derek Shaw and his team hosted the SI event in Nelson.

Earlier this month, I reached out to a Centre to ask if they would consider hosting our 2024-25 NZMA event. Hopefully by the time of the AGM, we might have an answer. I know Northland are preparing to host the NI event, but until we know where the NZMA event will be, no firm decision about the SI event can be made.

As part of the new MoU agreement, NZMA now have a 'super' user who can access the Athletics NZ GameDay membership and event database. This means we can promote directly to master's aged athletes within clubs. That may help us to attract more participants to our three championship events. Having more competitors means we would need more officials and that challenge is ongoing.

Athletics NZ & NZMA registrations

The NZMA registration year started as from 1st September, while the ANZ year starts 1st April. ANZ have introduced rolling a 12-month membership model, for all members over 20 years old. It is yet unclear as to how members will be notified when membership is about to expire. Currently 25 NZMA masters joined via the online system setup on our website and given these are all track & field athletes, our rolling year is pretty straight forward to administer. There are less than 40 other masters who have joined NZMA via Centres, who do not belong to ANZ clubs.

Oceania Masters Athletics (OMA) update

Over the past year, there has been significant changes as to how OMA will be run in the future. In previous a Vetline, I have reported on how Oceania Athletics (OAA) are keen to bring OMA under their umbrella by making OMA a Commission of OAA. I attended a Special General Meeting of OMA in Fiji (April 2023) where the Commission idea was discussed. It really was a pointless exercise going as the decision to go down this path was already decided.

This concept has not been met with agreement by Australian Masters Athletics. However, I think we need to be more pragmatic. The OMA Council does not have the resources, nor expertise and connections within the Island Affiliates to make any meaningful difference in fostering athletics in the Islands, nor increasing participation numbers at OMA Championship events. The biggest barrier for anyone attending an OMA Championship is cost.

Without the help of OAA, I believe no meaningful OMA Championship events will occur in the region. While an Australian Masters Centre might have the capability to organise an OMA Championship without OAA's help, it is debatable if any New Zealand Masters Centre could do the same. At the very least, it would require Athletics NZ's help.

The current plan from OAA is to hold the OMA Championships within a bigger OAA regional meeting. This will occur for the second time in Suva, Fiji (4th – 8th June 2024). Information about this event is on our website and in this issue of Vetline, plus a link to the online entries system.

Vetline & its Future:

Since John Campbell stepped down from formatting Vetline, I have taken over the task. It is a slightly slimmed down version. Derek Shaw continues to coordinate the collection and proof reading of the articles. We will continue to create Vetline, but exactly how many issues per year is up for debate. I appreciate the regular contributors and if there is anyone else who would like to be involved, please let me know.

NZMA Athlete of Year Awards:

Due to very few meaningful competitions held during the Covid lockdown period, this year's Athlete of the Year Awards will cover two calendar years, 2022 and 2023. There is a designated NZMA Awards page on our NZMA where information and nomination forms can be found. Previously Michael Wray created an extensive list of potential nominees. However, that is no longer the case. We are happy to look through the SI, NI, NZMA and ANZ Championships results when compiling a list of potential winners. Unless we have a volunteer willing to scroll through all results for all other events, it is the Centre or the athlete's responsibility to put in a nomination form. This year, **Ian** and **Heather Carter** have spent numerous hours to come up with this year's finalists. I appreciate their efforts. An added complication was that the age factors changed, so it required extra work to check that the same age factors were used to generate the percentages.

Fourth Veteran World Games Trust:

Since 1983 this Trust has been in existence. The purpose of the Trust is to support Master's Centres throughout New Zealand, mainly around the purchase of equipment. It offers a donation to the SI, NI and NZMA host Centres and if required, NZMA have applied for an operation cost, such as contributing towards the cost of printing Vetline. Several positions on the Trust are determined by the roles people have within NZMA (President & Treasurer) and Canterbury Masters (President). Other members are elected for a fixed period determined by the Trustees. The Trust is currently working on a more defined succession plan to ensure access to the Trust assets is streamlined by bringing on new

members more regularly. If you have a particular interest in being involved, I would like to hear from you.

NZMA Board

We continue to hold all our Board meetings via Teams, with more meetings per year than when they were face-to-face. Minutes of these meetings are available on the website.

Finding people to assist running the Board is an on-going challenge. The various additional roles I have fulfilled recently has come about as Board members have retired. We have struggled to attract new members with time on their hands, rather than the expertise required. It is not that simple for me to pass over several tasks that have taken me numerous years of practice to master.

Derek Shaw continues to be my 'go to' man, keeping me in line and reminding me of what needs to be done and by when. He has been responsible for creating the Board meeting minutes, chasing up and editing material for Vetline as well as contributing reports, and overseeing the Constitution changes we have implemented.

Ian Carter joined the Board in 2017 and I always value his opinion. This year he has been responsible for collating the data required to come up with the short list for the Athlete of the Year Awards, ably assisted by his wife Heather, whom Ian freely admits has the better computer skills.

Brayden Grant, Hayden Robinson and Carolyn Smith all joined the NZMA Board in December 2022. Brayden has taken over collating the records, previously collated by Michael Wray, plus he creates most of the Facebook posts. Hayden assists with updating the website pages and can create Facebook posts. Carolyn is gearing up to create articles of interests, such as interviewing athletes and then working with ANZ to help profile NZMA better.

The challenge for our younger Board members is that being on a Board can be very time consuming. As mentioned, many of the skills I have, have not been learnt overnight. There is a limit to exactly how much they can contribute, to fit in around their busy work life, family and other commitments. However, whatever they contribute, I appreciate their contribution.

Anna Lynch, whom I was hoping to co-opt onto the Board as our treasurer a couple of years ago, decided to have another baby. Fortunately, she is still willing to help finalise and format our accounts, and her help is really appreciated.

Throughout the year, I have had conversations with Stewart Foster (ex NZMA Secretary / Treasurer), who keeps me up to date about what's going on. I look to him for some 'fatherly' advice from time to time when issues arise. He is also on the OMA Council, along with Joan Merrilees, therefore he can report back on what's happening with OMA. This is very helpful and getting information from the OMA Council has been somewhat inconsistent.

The way forward for NZMA

The biggest challenge we face is attracting people who are willing to help run a Master's Centre or be on an Athletics NZ Centre committee or join the NZMA Board. The MoU clearly identifies the two ways masters aged athletes can join NZMA. It would be fantastic if more of the club-based masters stepped up to be on a committee locally or nationally, to give something back to the sport. My observation is that unless they are competing, they stay away. If I adopted that attitude, I would have been gone ten years ago, given that was the last time I race consistently and with success.

Area we need to focus on include:

1. **Athletics NZ Role:** NZMA needs to continue the discussions with ANZ to form a closer working relationship to identify who does what and when.
2. **NZMA, NI & SI Championship Roster & Timing:** There is a meeting of Athletics NZ Centre leaders occurring in May, during the weekend of the Rotorua Marathon. I understand that the timing of National Championship events is up for discussion. This would be a good time to promote our events too to make sure they are factored in when deciding which events go where and when.
3. **NZMA Role:** Our role traditionally has been to coordinate masters track & field championships, interact with OMA and WMA as and where appropriate, such as to verify members status for overseas events. This still needs to be done. We maintain the Island, National and Championships records, and oversee the annual Athlete of the Year Awards. The change to the Incorporated Societies Act means there will be work involved to update our constitution. The challenge for NZMA is that fewer people are making themselves available to be on the NZMA Board, therefore the workload is unrealistic for those on the Board only. Somehow this situation needs to change.
4. **The future of the NZMA Board:** Currently, I do not believe that ANZ want to take over the organisation of the SI, NI and NZMA Championships. They are happy to assist, but currently we have the skills to handle these events. This year, Mark Harris once again organised the NI Championships of behalf of WMA and I am sure he will be used in the future, as and when needed.
5. **Funding of NZMA / Collection of NZMA Registration Fees:** We currently have \$70k in the bank and the Fourth World Veterans Games Trust has approximately \$150k in assets. What does NZMA need funds for? *Vetline* production costs, awards, medals, uniform stock and Board travel expenses for the one face-to-face Board / AGM meeting held annually. Do we continue to fund this out of our reserves / Trust fund or continue to levy NZMA via membership fees and/or event entry fees? What else could we spend our money on?
6. **The future of the Local Masters' Centre:** Is it time for Masters' Centres to become an operational committee attached to the local Athletics NZ Centre or perhaps merge with the ANZ Centre's Track & Field Committee? I know in some Centre's, this has already happened.

7. Greater inter-Centre Communication: Since Covid 19 has been around, Athletic NZ introduced monthly Centre Zoom meetings as a way of communicating information and seeking feedback from around the country. I would like to introduce these for Master's Centres.

The above list is not necessarily complete. If you have other ideas that you would like us to consider, please send me an e-mail (Andrew Stark – aws@xtra.co.nz)

Last year, I mentioned the personal challenge of being involved in so many committees and the toll that has taken. Fortunately, some of my passion to stay involved has returned. However, I would like the opportunity to be able to step back sometime sooner, rather than later. I know Derek and Ian feel the same.

To all Master's Centre Committee members who have been involved for many, many years like me, the sport has been lucky to have your contribution. I can assure you that the work that goes on behind the scenes has not gone on unnoticed, certainly not by me. I also know that whatever we do, we don't always get it right ... we are simply doing the best we can, with the skills we have and time we can commit to the sport.

Thank you one and all.

Andrew Stark

NZMA President