

## May 2025- New Zealand Masters Athletics President's Report - Andrew Stark

### *Introduction*

The 2024-2025 season has been a challenging one for various reasons. The NZMA AGM has traditionally been held during the weekend of the NZMA Championships, usually at 12 noon on the Friday. In order to provide clarity on the decision-making process, the Board decided to delay the AGM until mid-June 2025. Here are the points for consideration:

- **Future of NZMA:** Attendees at the AGM often include long-term members who have contributed significantly to the sport. However, these attendees may not represent the future of NZMA, apart from younger Board members. There is a need for new leadership to guide NZMA forward.
- **The Role of the Board & Succession Planning:** Recently, the Board has operated with a small group of volunteers balancing commitments with life responsibilities. Recruiting new members with specific skills and knowledge has been challenging. Although efforts have been made, some tasks remain incomplete, including promoting the 2025 AGM as required by the constitution.
- **Advantages of an Online AGM:** Holding the AGM online could enable broader participation from interested members, which is seen as beneficial for the future of NZMA.
- **New DRAFT NZMA Constitution:** A draft constitutional template has been awaited from Sport NZ, Athletics NZ, and their lawyers. Using the initial draft provided and the Incorporated Societies Online Constitution tool, a new draft Constitution has been created, intended to be available before the AGM. However, following advice during the Athletics NZ Centre Leader's meeting in Rotorua on May 4th, it was recommended to hold off presenting the new constitution as some clauses are still under discussion. Once updated, the draft will be posted on the website. Approval can either wait until the 2026 AGM or be addressed in an online SGM prior to that date.
- **Centre Constitutions:** Athletics NZ recommends that all clubs and Masters Centres should be incorporated societies. A template will be created during our constitution drafting process for Masters Centres as well.
- **NZMA Championship Dates:** Discussions had been ongoing with Athletics NZ about the timing and location of the 2025-2026 NZMA Track & Field Championships. Given the busy January-February period, finalizing details took time. Taranaki Masters expressed interest shortly after the Auckland event, and within two weeks, the venue and date were confirmed, thanks to proactive efforts by Karen Gillium-Green and Athletics Taranaki / Taranaki Masters.
- **Workload:** The period from mid-January to mid-March is particularly busy for me due to professional and athletic commitments. Missing the deadline to circulate AGM information added pressure, hence delaying the AGM alleviated some of it. Ensuring the 2025 NZMA championships were well-organized became my priority, and I appreciate the cooperation from Auckland LOC and officials for delivering a positive experience.

Given these considerations, delaying the AGM was deemed pragmatic. To address concerns, five Board members were available at 12 noon on Friday 28th March in the Sir John Walker Lounge (AGM venue) for discussions. Only one person attended, not to complain. Those who had concerns did not engage personally over the weekend, indicating no significant issue for the majority of participants.

***Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Athletics New Zealand (ANZ) and New Zealand Masters Athletics (NZMA):***

The establishment of the MOU aimed to eliminate the barriers faced by Athletics NZ club masters athletes who were previously excluded from our track & field championships unless they paid the NZMA & Masters Centre membership fee in addition to their existing ANZ / Club fees. This situation led to some of our best masters athletes not participating in our events due to confusion or refusal to pay a separate fee. Under the terms of the MOU (available on our website), Athletics NZ club athletes automatically become members of NZMA without needing to pay an additional NZMA membership fee, as stipulated by our constitution. The MOU also clearly delineates the events organized by NZMA and those organized by Athletics NZ, with membership options determining eligibility for entry into specific events. This arrangement is straightforward and appears to be functioning effectively.

Over recent seasons, there has been a continued decline in the number of NZMA non-club members. Several Masters' Centres are encountering difficulties in securing committee members, and some have already merged with the Athletics NZ Centre.

The MOU has maintained consistent attendance at our NZMA Championships, averaging approximately 220 participants. Notably, the recent NZMA Track & Field Championships in Auckland saw a significant increase, with 60 more entries than in previous years. Of the 280 entrants, over 90% were members of an Athletics NZ club. This indicates success, as without the participation of Athletics NZ club athletes, meaningful master's championships would not be feasible. Looking forward, it is plausible that most participants will be club athletes.

The MOU underwent an update in 2023. Over the past fifteen months, Athletics NZ has experienced substantial personnel changes, with roles being redefined to better understand and support the athletic community and clubs. As Board Chair for Athletics Canterbury, I maintain close communication with several Athletics NZ staff and frequently discuss matters relating to Masters.

During the recent NZMA Board meeting in Auckland, considering the time constraints faced by many Board members, we deemed it appropriate to explore the possibility of Athletics NZ taking a greater role in organizing our track & field championship events. I have broached this idea with Athletics NZ, and their response was that 'everything is on the table' for discussion, acknowledging that we are part of one sport. However, given the significant changes introduced this season, it remains uncertain whether Athletics NZ is ready for such an undertaking.

Effective August this year, I will assume the role of President of Athletics NZ, allowing for closer involvement. As Board Chair of Athletics Canterbury and President of NZMA, I have established a strong working relationship with Cam Mitchell (Athletics NZ CEO) and look forward to the forthcoming challenges.

***Athletics NZ, NZMA & Centre Member Registers:***

Under the new constitution, all mentioned groups are required to maintain an accurate register of members for seven years. Given the shared memberships, I have been in discussions with Athletics NZ to ensure compliance with the Incorporated Societies Act. Athletics NZ has expressed willingness to provide NZMA with a list of Masters within their database.

Currently, NZMA has access to GameDay, enabling us to look up all athletes within the Athletics NZ database, although filtering for masters athletes is somewhat challenging.

We already merge the membership data received from each Centre with online data to create a register of non-club members for NZMA and each Centre.

For the Indoor, SI, NI & NZMA meetings, necessary data will be collected from each entrant under the Act, and they will be added to our register upon approval through a tick box in the entry process. We can then split this information into Centre databases and distribute accordingly to create a member register. This procedure includes only Athletics NZ club athletes who compete at our events in the register. Each incorporated Centre requires a minimum of 10 members.

### ***Oceania Masters Athletics (OMA) update:***

Following the Special General Meeting of OMA in Fiji (April 2023), an OAA Masters Commission was created. OAA held the OMA Championships in Suva, Fiji (4th – 8th June 2024). However, this concept has not been accepted by Australian Masters Athletics resulting in a new OMA Council being elected last year. Stewart Foster is on that Council and when a vacancy occurred, he asked if I would rejoin.

The new OMA Council aims to reclaim the OMA Championships as the only official championships in the regions, which they have achieved. Consequently, the OMA Championships will be held in Brisbane this year from 6th – 10th September 2025. Information about the meeting is on the NZAM website. The next OMA Championship event is planned for 2027 here in New Zealand. If your Centre is interested, please inform me.

OAA plans to hold events annually throughout Oceania. These are open regional meetings with Masters events available. Their aim is to promote athletics to the 'island' affiliates where the meeting is held. This year, they are holding a meeting in Tonga from 29th October – 1st November 2025 called the OAA Masters Oceania Cup. Information about this meeting is also on our website.

Offering multiple meetings for masters may potentially reduce attention at one or both meetings. Which meeting you attend is your choice. Currently, over 350 participants are attending Brisbane and fewer than 10 entered for Tonga.

### ***NZMA Athlete of Year Awards:***

This year, Ian and Heather Carter and Dale McMillan have worked extensively to determine this year's finalists. Their efforts are sincerely appreciated as gathering accurate information requires considerable effort.

We moved away from a formal Awards Dinner to a less formal gathering. On Saturday afternoon at Mt Smart Stadium, we celebrated the Awards in the Sir John Walker Lounge. Feedback from attendees is welcomed. Next year, we plan to do something similar in Inglewood, as they have a suitable venue.

### ***Fourth Veteran World Games Trust:***

Established in 1983, the purpose of the Trust is to support Master's Centres throughout New Zealand, primarily around the purchase of equipment. It offers donations to the SI, NI, and NZMA host Centres. NZMA can apply for operational costs, such as contributing towards the cost of medals and formatting of Vetline. Several positions on the Trust are determined by roles within NZMA (President

& Treasurer) and Canterbury Masters (President). Other members are elected for a fixed period determined by the Trustees.

NZMA intends to recommend increasing the donations to each Centre hosting one of our championship meetings. Updates will follow once this has been done.

Current Trustees are two NZMA Life Members, Rob McGregor & Stewart Foster (both Life Members of NZMA), Andrew Stark (NZMA & CMA President), and Hayden Robinson (NZMA Treasurer).

The Trust needs a better succession plan to ensure access to the Trust assets is streamlined by regularly bringing on new members. Interested individuals are encouraged to express their interest.

### ***NZMA Board Going Future:***

The NZMA Board collaborates with several groups, including Athletics NZ, local Athletics NZ Centres, Masters Centres, and members, to successfully run four events. Further investigations into this collaboration will continue.

Board meetings are held via Teams more frequently than face-to-face meetings. Minutes of these meetings are available on the website (once uploaded).

Board members this year include:

**Derek Shaw** ensures tasks are completed on time, creates meeting minutes, edits material for Vetline, contributes reports, and oversees Constitution changes.

**Ian Carter** joined the Board in 2017, collating data for the Athlete of the Year Awards, assisted by his wife Heather. He stepped down in September 2024, with Derek acting as secretary.

**Brayden Grant, Hayden Robinson, and Carolyn Smith** joined in December 2022. Brayden collates records and handles Facebook and other media posts. Hayden assists with the treasurer role, updates the website and co-ordinated updating the Handbook. Carolyn promotes NZMA, interviews athletes, and collaborates with ANZ for profiling. She is stepping down due to other commitments and I thank her for her contribution during the past two years..

**Dale McMillan** joined the Board in February 2024, working with Ian Carter on Athlete of the Year finalists. I really appreciate their efforts, given it is not simple process and I know they are constantly busy and also refining the process

Board members have multiple commitments; however, their achievements have been satisfactory.

**Anna Lynch** (an accountant) assists with annual accounts formatting.

Conversations with **Stewart Foster** (former NZMA Secretary/Treasurer) provide guidance on various issues. He also serves on the OMA Council.

Feedback from **Joan Merrilees** on the OAA Masters Commission is minimal.

In my previous reports, I have never actually articulated what I do or have done. I am a self-employed desktop publisher, I have written 150 mathematics resources for primary school teachers. For the past 14 years, I have often spent more time during the week working on athletics activities than on 'real' work, given I do a similar role for Athletics Canterbury, particularly during the summer season.

Using these skills, my involvement in athletics has included assisting to build the website back in 2011, followed by reformatting the layout of the records, handbook and constitution, creating almost all of the other documents you see on the website. I created the generic NZMA Track & Field programme, designed the NZMA medal and ribbons. I understand the membership and event software (GameDay, Meet Manager & AthleticNET), handle online entries and all organisation prior to the delivery of our events. I have created programme booklets and race numbers for numerous South Island & NZMA Championship meetings, plus OMA event in Otago. I have overseen the treasurer's role since Stewart Foster stepped off the Board. Recently, I have worked on the new constitution, with the assistance of Derek. Despite the time-consuming nature, prioritising pre-event organisation ensures we have had meaningful competitions for masters. I appreciate the positive feedback that many of you have expressed to me, as I walk around the venues, year after year.

### ***The Way Forward for NZMA***

I fully acknowledge that there is need for me to share many of these tasks listed above. Acquiring the tasks has taken me numerous years. Many of not governance roles and do not need to be done by a Board member.

The greatest challenge we face is attracting individuals willing to assist in managing a Master's Centre, participate in an Athletics NZ Centre committee, or join the NZMA Board. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) identifies two ways for masters-aged athletes to become members of NZMA. It would be commendable if more club-based masters took initiative by joining local or national committees, thereby contributing back to the sport. My observation suggests that unless they are actively competing, they tend to remain disengaged. Had I adopted this mindset, I would have exited a decade ago, as my last consistent and successful race occurred over ten years ago.

### **Areas of Focus:**

**Greater Involvement from Athletics NZ:** As highlighted in the initial section of this report, the NZMA Board faces challenges due to several members being 'time poor' and others serving long terms. Eventually, readers of this report will need to step up and contribute. If not, our organization might consider enlisting Athletics NZ to take greater control over the summer events, similarly to how they organise Colgate Games. They establish MoUs between the host Centre LOC and share in the surplus. Currently, we manage our four events adequately by relying on Mark Harris and myself for necessary groundwork. Mark has introduced AthleticNET / AthleticLIVE in New Zealand and offers a range of technology that enhances event experiences. I intend to continue using this system in the future.

**NZMA, NI & SI Championship Roster & Timing:** The 2025-2026 roster includes:

- NZMA Indoor Championships – Hastings (16th/17th August 2025)
- NI Championships – Tauranga (29th November – 30th December 2025)
- SI Championships – Nelson (23rd – 25th January 2026)
- NZMA Championships – Inglewood (13th – 15th March 2026)

Details about each meeting are available on the NZMA website. Confirmation is pending regarding the locations and dates for the 1-mile and 10000m track championships, which are included in other meetings, not organised by NZMA. Centres interested in hosting NI or NZMA Championships for the

2026-2027 season should inform me. Indoor Championships are expected to remain in Hastings, while SI will be held in Invercargill.

**NZMA's Role:** Historically, our role involves coordinating masters track & field championships in New Zealand and engaging with OMA and WMA where appropriate. World Masters mandates the existence of a national master's body within each country, thus maintaining this a requirement. Given the extensive tasks undertaken by each Board member, a significant amount of work occurs behind the scenes. At times, this effort seems underappreciated or taken for granted. Ultimately, as my tenure on the Board nears its conclusion, future Board members will dictate whether we continue independently or seek greater involvement from Athletics NZ.

**New Board Members:** Serving on the Board transcends passion for Masters athletics. Effective succession planning necessitates identifying essential skills. Presently, we require individuals proficient in accounting, familiar with Xero software, and experienced in secretarial roles. Interested parties should contact me. Although nominations for this year have closed, the Board retains the option to co-opt members.

**Future of Local Masters' Centres:** Last year, I questioned whether Masters' Centres should function as operational committees attached to local Athletics NZ Centres or merge with ANZ Centre's Track & Field Committee. Some Centres have already implemented these changes. Your opinion on this proposition is welcome.

**Vetline:** Derek Shaw and I have been compiling this publication. While there are no fixed issue dates, which some find frustrating, editions are staggered throughout the year to align with our championships. We appreciate contributions from volunteers. Anyone interested in assuming this responsibility should contact us; reimbursement is provided for your efforts.

For additional suggestions, please email me at Andrew Stark – [aws@xtra.co.nz](mailto:aws@xtra.co.nz).

To all Master's Centre Committee members who have contributed extensively over many years, the sport has benefited greatly from your involvement. Your behind-the-scenes efforts are recognised and valued by me. Despite occasional shortcomings, we strive to perform our best with the resources and expertise available.

Thank you in advance for your engagement at our championship events and the up-coming online AGM.