



AUSTRALIAN MASTERS ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS HOSTED BY NSWMA

(Excepts from 'A historical summary by Bryan Thomas')

Australian Veterans' (or Masters') Athletics Championships have been conducted in one of the state capitals and territories on or around the Easter period since 1973. The 'Nationals' now include all track and field events, a road walk and cross-country conducted in five-year age groups while an official social function is always an important and popular component. In 2002 the championships changed its name from 'Australian Veterans' to 'Australian Masters' Athletics Championships.

SYDNEY, 1974: The 2nd annual Australian Championships were at the new track at Hensley Athletics Field in Botany, and held in atrocious weather over the Easter weekend. Official events were still restricted to men over 40 and conducted in 10 year age groups. The most significant outcome of the championships was the establishment of the **Australian Association of Veteran Athletic Clubs (AAVAC)**.

SYDNEY, 1979: The 7th Championships were held at the Hensley Track in Botany. Women were officially permitted to participate in the championships for the first time.

SYDNEY, 1987: Nine World and thirty-six Australian Records were broken or established during the 15th Championships at E.S. Marks Field. The outstanding athlete was M40 Garry Hand (ACT) who won five gold medals, including two ARs (5000 and 10000m), less than a week after winning the Canberra Marathon in an AR 2.19. NSWVAC introduced two innovations that have since become features of all subsequent championships; they produced a distinctive medal to replace the generic AAVAC medal, and organized the first 'Champion of Champions' sprint spectacular.

SYDNEY, 1994: The 22nd Championships were held at the new Olympic Games warm-up track in Olympic Park, Homebush. Unfortunately, many throwing events, especially hammer, could not be accommodated and were conducted in open fields, lacking shade, seats or water for either athletes or officials.

SYDNEY, 2001: The 29th Championships were held at the new Bass Hill Track. Beautiful Indian summer weather delighted everyone involved. Highlights of the dinner/dance were the stage entertainments by each state.

SYDNEY, 2008: The 36th Championships were conducted at the Blacktown Olympic Park in western Sydney, with the cross-country held near Parramatta 26km from the stadium, and the road walks along a recreation path within a nature reserve at Greystanes. Periods of heavy rain affected some events like the throws and jumps during the first two days, as well as sadly causing the abandonment of the traditional medal presentations. However, despite these difficulties the carnival generally ran to time and a big thank you is owed to officials and volunteers who stood out in the inclement weather for many hours each day. All events were efficiently controlled by NSW Athletics officials prominent in their purple and yellow shirts assisted by an army of young volunteers. There were many outstanding performances, most notably two World Records: David Carr (WA) in the M75 steeplechase and a composite women's team for the W35 4x100m relay. Ruth Frith (QLD) at 98 years-of-age was once again an inspiration performing well in all throwing events.

SYDNEY, 2015: The 43rd Championships were held at the Bankstown Athletics Field at the Crest. Four days of torrential rain made running the event a huge challenge, but the LOC, ANSW officials and the Bankstown Club members worked tirelessly to overcome the issues. This event saw new initiatives in a market expo area, the combination of the previously separate Coaches and Athletes Forums into one very successful event, and an impressive and extensive merchandise offering. The AMA Awards Dinner held at the Bankstown Sports club was however a resounding success, with live entertainment and dancing, and four new Hall of Fame inductees: David Carr, Heather Carr, Heather Doherty and Wal Sheppard (*posthumous*).

SYDNEY, 2023: The 51st Championship - Watch this space