



***Australian
Masters Athletics***

1974 – 2024

**FIFTY YEARS of
VETERANS / MASTERS
ATHLETICS in AUSTRALIA**

Half a Century of Competition and Comradeship



President's Message:

Fifty years of masters athletics in Australia have flown by! During those fifty years, Australians have had to overcome pandemics including COVID, economic downturns, including stock market crashes and recessions, changing community priorities, the introduction of technology such as the internet, mobile phones and laptop computers and many other political, economic, and social changes.

However, through all those changes, Australian masters athletics has focused on creating a great athletic experience, having fun, keeping fit, and enjoying the fellowship and camaraderie of masters athletics.

At the heart of the masters athletics experience has been the participation of people in our sport, regardless of whether they have been beginners or elite athletes, officials, coaches or administrators. We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who made our sport a success.

This focus has served us well for fifty years, and will serve us well for another fifty years.

We hope you will enjoy the celebration of this fantastic milestone in Australian sporting history.



John Clark
AMA President

2024 AMA Board:

Vice President	Jill Taylor
Secretary	Judy Farrell
Treasurer	Lisa Attenborough
Board members:	Jayne Hardy
	Bruce Bodsworth
	Rob Mayston
	Pramesh Prasad

*Our AMA 50th Anniversary
Commemorative Medallion,
which will be presented
to all entrants in the 2024
National Championships*



**Main story supplied by Brian Thomas,
supplementary wording and photographs supplied by Jill Taylor*

TRAILBLAZERS

The early 1970s witnessed a spectacular growth in jogging for fitness throughout Australia, and the Western World. In Australia a small number of 'older men' (and even fewer 'mature women' competed with their local amateur athletics clubs. Within a few years some would go on to be major players in the creation of the Veterans Athletics movement within Australia.



In 1966, the United Nations World Health Organisation produced a magazine called 'Condition', that mentioned a group of German runners who competed in road races from 10km to the marathon in ten-year age groups from the age of 40.

SAN DIEGO EXPERIENCE WAS CATALYST TO AN AMBITIOUS IDEA

By the end of the decade the trend towards recognising that older men could safely participate in serious athletics was gradually becoming acceptable. In 1969 Richard Nixon, USA President, gave the veterans' movement credibility when he said in a letter supporting the 2nd US Masters Championships in San Diego 1970: *"It gives men over 40 the opportunity to engage in athletic competition...Age should be no barrier in the pursuit of excellence"*.

Wal Sheppard travelled to San Diego for the championships, where he produced outstanding runs in both half mile and mile. While there, the organisers suggested that Australia should join the US Masters tour of Europe planned to coincide with a visit to the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. Rather than link with the Americans, Wal considered the exciting possibility of organising an independent Australian team to participate in Europe.

1972 EUROPEAN TOUR

This tour incorporated the first international track and field championships for men over 40 to be held at Crystal Palace in London and Cologne in Germany.

Jack Pennington and Wal Sheppard were involved in selection and obtaining government support for an official national team to participate in the tour. They convinced the Australian Amateur Athletic Union that a team worthy of representing Australia had been selected, so it was granted permission to use their official badge with the words *"International Veteran Athletics, Cologne 1972"*. They also received some government support and private sponsorship, enabling each team member to be outfitted with a green and gold track suit and a blazer.

The international meet, featuring USA, Great Britain and Australia, was conducted over two days in August. Australians won six gold medals. Wal Sheppard was again one of the most outstanding athletes, setting M50 world-best times in the 800 and 1500m.

The team then attended the Munich Olympics as spectators, before participating in the highlight meet of the tour - the *International Athletics Championships for Men over 40* in Cologne, West Germany. Although the track was cinders, it was considered to be of international standard, and as the meet being only two days it was difficult for competitors to

participate in more than one event. Competition was conducted in four 10year age-groups; designated as Grade 1 (M40-49), Grade 2 (M50-59), Grade 3 (M60-69) and Grade 4 (M70+).

Apart from those mentioned above, other Aussies went on to enjoy long and successful careers in veterans' athletics; for example - Victorian distance runners Theo Orr grade 1, Jack Stevens and Ron Young grade 2 and Gus Theobald grade 4 racewalks, while a couple of NSW grade 1 runners Olympian Dave Power and sprinter Norm Windred were also prominent.

BACK HOME - CLUBS FORMED and INAUGURAL 'NATIONALS'

Even before a club for veteran athletes was established in Australia, celebrated NSW racewalker and secretary-manager of Randwick Botany Sports Club, **Logan Irwin** organised the first athletics carnival specifically for mature-aged men. This first NSW Championships, a full-scale track and field meet for men over 35 incorporating all traditional events, was held at Hensley Field in Sydney in March 1971. Events were conducted in four age categories: 35-39 years (designated Juniors), then in age groups 40-49 (Seniors), 50-59 (Masters) and over 60 years (Grand Masters). The championships were unanimously acclaimed a success. So five of the most enthusiastic and influential participants; **Wal Sheppard (Vic), Cliff Bould (WA), Al Digance (SA), Jack Pennington (ACT)** and **Frank McCaffrey (NSW)** met with Logan, and decided the sport of veteran athletics should be promoted throughout the country.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA has the honour of being the first state to officially form a veterans' club. In early 1971, **Al Digance** and **Ron O'Neill** discussed establishing a club for older athletes who at the time were participating in regular Saturday afternoon inter-club competitions. Al, chairman of the SA Amateur Athletic Association cross-country committee, was keen to have more competition for men over 40. He arranged for persons interested in the concept to attend a meeting in his garage on 21 January, and within two weeks the eleven attendees had drafted a constitution.

NSW VETERANS ATHLETICS CLUB was formed within a week of the South Australian decision, when Logan Irwin called a meeting for 20 April,, at which 26 mature-aged athletes attended and agreed to form the **Wirrinum Veteran Athletic Club**, which was renamed in 1974.

VICTORIAN VETERAN AMATEUR ATHLETICS CLUB was established shortly after and in less than three months conducted its first championships at the Box Hill in April 1973. The program was ambitious for a one-day meet as it incorporated four age-groups (35-39, 40-49, 50-59 and over 60) in most track and field events. It was originally hoped a first Australian Veterans Championships would be held in Melbourne sometime around Christmas 1972; but as a large team from USA were expected to visit during the following year, it was decided to conduct the championships while they were in Australia. Thus, the inaugural Australian Championships were held over a December 1973 weekend, where a large team of US Masters participated alongside Australian athletes.

QUEENSLAND VETERANS ATHLETICS CLUB was the result of a meeting of nine men at the Toowong RSL Club, Brisbane in September 1973. A month later 40 competitors took part in the club's first meet consisting of 60, 100, and 800m runs, a walk, long jump and shot put. The new club was for men only, and this did not change until women were granted associate membership in 1975.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA VETERANS AMATEUR ATHLETICS CLUB was formed in 1974 after a long gestation period. The idea of establishing a WA veterans' club was first mooted by Cliff Bould, John Gilmour and Col Junner following their successful trips to San Diego to participate in the USA Masters Championships in 1968 and 1971.

Atrocious weather over Easter 1974 was not enough to spoil the 2nd Australian Championships (but considered the first because it was the time and place of the establishment of our national association), which was held at the Hensley Athletics Field in Botany, Sydney. Although official championship events were again restricted to men over 40 and conducted in 10year age-groups, pre-veteran men (35-39) were catered for. Six Queenslanders, the first from their state to participate at a national championship, were amongst the 105 competitors.

TASMANIA and ACT ESTABLISH CLUBS

Clive Roper's advertisement in the *Hobart Mercury* January 1979 invited interested persons to participate in a series of 'Come-and-Try' events as part of the Tasmanian '*Life Be In It*' program. As a result of good attendances, a second advertisement was placed in the *Mercury* calling for a meeting to establish a club for mature-aged athletes. From its beginning the **VETERAN ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION of TASMANIA** included women members.

Seventeen persons responded to Ken Daniels' advertisement in the *Canberra Times* (February 1979) and attended a meeting held in a private home with the aim of forming a veterans' club. After several meetings, the inaugural AGM chaired by 1956 Olympic shot putter Peter Hanlin was held, and the **ACT VETERANS ATHLETICS CLUB** was born. However, the local athletics establishment was not keen on admitting the new club into its organization but soon after the rebuttal the ACT club, like Tasmania, encouraged women to become members.

AAVAC is BORN

The most significant outcome of the 1974 Australian Championships in Sydney was the establishment of the **AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF VETERAN ATHLETIC CLUBS (AAVAC)**. Having established AAVAC, several items of general business were decided; each state club to pay an affiliation fee to the Association of 20c per member, the next three national championships would be in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth, a national uniform for overseas competitions was agreed on, as was how Australian Records were to be ratified. The first official competition conducted under the auspices of the newly formed national association was a Veterans' Cross-Country Championship held in Shepherds Hill Area, Adelaide in June

1974. The 3rd Australian Championships were conducted over the 1975 Easter weekend at Olympic Park, Adelaide. More than 200 men, including three Queenslanders and several from WA participated, and it was the first time at a national meet that events were conducted in 5-year age-groups, but athletes over 60 were still grouped in one category.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS and BIRTH OF WAVA

The year 1975 was a momentous time for veteran athletics - both at home and abroad. AAVAC had just enjoyed its first year of existence, during which time it had become a lean and efficient organisation, looking after the best interests of athletics for mature-aged Australian men and was now looking forward to the inaugural World Masters Championships in Toronto.

Having learnt from and inspired by the success of the 1972 Crystal Palace and Cologne meets, the Canadian LOC planned for a larger more complex championships that would be conducted over five days, have a fairer age-group system and women were invited - although the only events offered to them were 100, 400, 1500 and 5000m on the track and marathon.

The memorable 1972 European Tour had been undertaken by an officially recognised Australian Team. In keeping with this philosophy, **Jack Pennington** approached the Minister of Sport seeking assistance for an Australian Team to participate in Toronto. He was advised if they were to receive financial assistance the team should be competitive. Thus, performance standards for athletes wanting to be part of an official team were published; although, not being able to meet the standards did not preclude an athlete from participating in Toronto. Those who had achieved the standards received a government grant of \$200 to help cover their costs.

The 1st World Veterans' Championship held in Toronto in August 1975 was a great success. More than 1400 competitors from 27 countries, including 80 women, participated. The Australian team was very successful - winning 16 gold, 12 silver and 12 bronze medals while four athletes were multi-gold medallists: M50 Theo Orr stood on top of the podium three times, for the 3000, 5000 and 10.000m; M55 John Gilmour won both the 3000 and 5000m and was later announced WA Sportsman of the Year; Dick Horsley set WRs for the M60 5000m and 25km race-walks and M40 Olympian Albie Thomas won both 1500 and 3000m.

Because the two attempts at conducting world championships had been so successful, a group of enthusiastic officials met to formally establish a body to oversee world veteran athletics; thus, the **World Association of Veteran Athletes (WAVA)** was born.

The 2750 competitors, including 241 women, from 44 countries who participated in the 2nd World Veterans' Games in Gothenburg, Sweden in August 1977 almost doubled the Toronto numbers. The addition of two field events, long jump and discus, to the women's program encouraged more women to participate. Several former Olympic medallists participated, giving the event valuable publicity and credibility. Australia had a smaller team than at Toronto, but again there was some outstanding performances; for instance, our M55s were

particularly impressive - John Gilmour winning both the 800 and 5,000m, George McGrath's (NSW) victory in the cross-country and Alan Merrett (SA) winning the steeple. Former Commonwealth Games champions Tony Blue (Qld) and Noel Clough (Vic) finished first and second in the M40 800m with the same time of 1.54.8, while Noel also won gold in both the 400m and 400m hurdles.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS COME TO SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

There was some trepidation as to whether veteran athletes from Europe and North America would be prepared to pay their way to the Southern Hemisphere to participate in the 4th World Veterans' Games in Christchurch. Not only was it far away, but as the championships were scheduled for January 1981 they were outside the Northern Hemisphere season. The LOC need not have worried, as 2400 competitors (400 women) from 44 countries guaranteed the success of the championships. The Opening Ceremony was considered an improvement on those used previously as participants entered the stadium in age groups, beginning with the youngest and ending with the eldest, rather than in teams.

Australia was well represented by more than 700 athletes and despite most participating in their first international competition, they performed remarkably well - setting many Australian and a number of WRs. John Gilmour was again one of the most outstanding athletes, easily winning the M60 800, 1500, 5000 and 10,000m. Three other Aussies were triple gold medallists; W40 Kath Holland (WA) and M45 Hal Thomas and M50 Lloyd Snelling (both SA) each winning the 100, 200 and 400m in their respective age group.

MELBOURNE HOSTS 1987 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The WAVA General Assembly, held during the 1985 Championships in Rome, awarded the next World Veterans' Games to Melbourne in 1987. Delegates were confident that the event was in good hands under the leadership of Victorians Peg Smith and Ray Callaghan as executive director and competition manager respectively.

The 1987 World Veterans' Games in Melbourne was the first taste of international competition for most of the large Aussie contingent of almost 2000. The Australian team looked splendid in their bottle-green track suits and green, gold and white competition uniforms. At the time it was the world's largest athletics meet, with 4817 competitors (22% women) from 51 countries. Former WR holder for the mile, John Landy opened the Games after receiving the commemorative torch from fellow Olympian Raelene Boyle.

It was not surprising Australian competitors performed better at these championships than ever before winning 93 (56 by women and 37 by men) of the 412 individual events contested and adding to this remarkable gold medal tally were nine won by our 4x100 and 4x400m relay quartets. In the road walks and cross-country our teams won most age-groups and we won all team events in the marathon. Of the 111 WRs set 40 were by Australians of which four set two or more – Tasmanian W60 Shirley Brasher in the 1500, 5000 and 10,000m; and Victorians

M65 Jack Ryan in 1500, mile and 5000m; W65 Gwen Davidson in both high and triple jump and M90 Gus Theobald in the 5000m and 20km walks.

2001 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN BRISBANE

The 14th World Veterans' Athletics Championships were held in Brisbane in July 2001. More than 6000 competitors from 79 countries participated at the three track and field venues and the attractive cross-country and road courses for the walks and marathon respectively.

The host nation is always expected to do well, and it was certainly the case in Brisbane. Australia won 75 individual gold medals, while six of the 35 World Records achieved were by Australians, including two by 101 year-old Queenslander Leslie Amey in the 100 and 1500m. Other Aussies who set WRs were - Marie Kay (NSW) W40 heptathlon, Christine Shultz (Vic) W50 throws' pentathlon, M85 Eddie Gamble (Vic) steeplechase and our W50 4x400m relay team.

Several important decisions were made by the WAVA General Assembly; the most significant being to change its name from World Association of Veteran Athletics (WAVA) to World Masters Athletics (WMA). Two months later AAVAC officially became Australian Masters Athletics Inc. (AMA).

WOMEN GET A FOOT IN THE DOOR

The status of women in veterans' athletics had been heatedly debated for some time. NSW had reported they were "not keen to accept women as it would require changing their constitution - but wives and female friends could compete unofficially". Heather Doherty approached the Queensland VAC at the start of 1976 regarding women joining and as a result women were permitted to participate in invitation events. SA said: "a number of women were interested but were not allowed to register". Victoria had some women members and WA put on one event per meet.

Following token efforts to cater for women at the previous two national championships and the addition of long jump and discus at the 1975 World Championships encouraged both Queensland and WA to accept women as members. The QVAC admitted women as Associates with their subscription being half that of males. Heather Doherty, who had led the push for female participation, was approached to form a Women's Committee within QVAC - but declined saying "All veteran athletes (male and female) should be equal and should work together as a united force". Subsequent modifications to their constitution permitted female membership; but not as equals - however as Heather said: "We now have a foot in the door!". A representative of the WA club stated in Gloria Seymon's *History of the Veterans' Athletic Movement in Australia*: "In 1977 it was realised lady members should be admitted and from then on women have been an integral part of club activities".

The 1978 Australian Championships at Melbourne Olympic Park were historically important because it was when females demonstrated they would soon be a significant force. Five women were grudgingly permitted to participate in a paltry three events in Brisbane in 1976 and the following year the same number were involved in five events. But in Melbourne 32 women ranging in age from W30 to W55 ran, walked, jumped and threw. The majority of these trailblazing women were from Victoria. Several would go on to be major players in the future of our sport; for example - Tasmanian W50 Shirley Brasher in all events from 800m to the marathon, W35 NSW Olympian Helen Searle (nee Frith) began her outstanding veterans' career by winning the 100m, long jump and shot put while Victorian W45 Shirley Young's achievements in the marathon and ultra-marathon are legendary. Three other Victorian women - Anne Callaghan, Jean O'Neill and Peg Smith went on to make their mark as successful administrators.

One of the more outstanding athletes at the 1985 World Championships in Rome was SA sprinter Wendy Ey. Wendy had participated in the 1958 Empire Games and in 1977 was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to athletics.

FIRST WOMAN ELECTED NATIONAL PRESIDENT

New ground was broken at the AMA AGM, held in Sydney, August 2003, when **Lynne Schickert** from Western Australia became the first woman to be elected leader of our national association. Lynne replaced Stan Perkins, who had served 15 years on the Board including two periods as president (from 1992 to 1994 and again from 1998 to 2002) as well as being secretary between 1989 and 1992. Wilma Perkins was elected Vice President.

As if to mark a new era for the Association, a new flag to represent AMA was unfurled, a rudimentary website was established by Ian Richardson (Qld), and the Strategic Plan, originally accepted in 1996, was revised.

MASTERS versus VETERANS

World Championships return 'Down Under', and the debate over whether we should be 'Masters' or 'Veterans' had almost run its race. Debate over the most appropriate name for our level of sport had been going on for many years. Until near the turn of the century 'Veterans' was the most commonly used term in Australia to define men and women athletes over the age of 30, although some countries (especially USA, Japan and Canada) preferred 'Masters'. It used to be easy within Australia to distinguish the type of competition and organisers by whatever term they used; for example, Veterans' Championships usually referred to events conducted by our Association, whereas Masters' Games most often indicated a multi-sports carnival. Nowadays it is more blurred. Queensland Veteran Athletics Club changed their name to **Queensland Masters Athletics** in 1998, and most national delegates to the WAVA General Assembly in Brisbane 2001 voted in favour of a name change

for our international body, now to be known as **World Masters Athletics (WMA)**. Subsequently our national body changed its name from Australian Association of Veterans' Athletics Clubs (AAVAC) to **Australian Masters Athletics Inc (AMA)**.

By 2003, every Australian club (except the ACT) and the New Zealand and Oceania Associations had changed their name from Veterans, to Masters. The NSWVAC, established in 1971 under its original name Wirrinum Veteran Athletic Club, changed its name to NSW Veterans' Athletics Club in 1974, and changed again in 2001 to **NSW Masters Athletics Inc. (NSWMA)**. The following year South Australia and Tasmania became Masters, then in 2003 Victoria and Western Australia followed. The South Australia Veteran Amateur Athletics Club, now **South Australian Masters Athletics Inc (SAMA)**, was the first officially established club for mature aged athletes (April 1971). The Veterans Athletics Association of Tasmania (established 1979) became **Tasmanian Masters Athletics Inc. (TMA)**. The Victorian Veteran Athletics Club, established 1972, now **Victorian Masters Athletics Inc. (VMA)** is by far the largest club in Australia consisting of 16 venues, four of which are in the country. Western Australia Veterans Athletics Club was established in April 1974 as a 'men only' club, but women were granted membership three years later. In 2003 it became **Masters Athletics WA Inc. (MAWA)**.

INAUGURAL WORLD INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

The inaugural **WMA Indoor Championships** was held in March 2004 at Sindelfingen, a suburb of Stuttgart, Germany. As the decision to stage a biennial indoor championship was only made at the General Assembly in Carolina, the LOC had just seven months to prepare. However, as there had already been three successful European Championships held, there were many experienced administrators and officials available and the Sindelfingen facilities were very good. Eight of the 2405 competitors from 54 countries were Australians, and despite the Aussies not having much or any experience at participating on an indoor track, they performed well. Most successful of the Aussies were a pair of Victorian middle distance runners; M60 Neil Macdonald was a gold medallist in both the 800 and 1500m, and M55 Kevin Solomon won gold in the 1500 and silver in the 3000m. Peter Crombie from NSW was runner-up in the M55 400m and a bronze medallist in the 200m.

"OLDIES" IMPRESS A NATION

RUTH '100 NOT OUT' BECOMES A CELEBRITY

Ruth Frith deservedly received a lot of attention during the World Masters Games (WMG) in Sydney in October 2009. Having celebrated becoming a centenarian in August, Ruth was the most photographed and interviewed personality of more than 28,000 participants. She was one of the Games' most recognisable symbols and after being introduced to Prince Frederick of Denmark she was the 'face' of the Games. Organisers could not have had a better example of a mature-aged sportsperson who demonstrated the benefits expressed in their motto "*fit, fun and forever young*". Whenever Ruth entered a competition, a media scrum formed in which journalists sought a unique interpretation of her longevity and athleticism. Ruth of course won gold in all five W100 throwing disciplines, as well as in the throws pentathlon.

Ruth had been a world-class athlete for a long time and two decades earlier was also a sprinter and triple jumper who participated with distinction at most Australian, Oceania and World Championships. Throughout her athletics career Ruth enjoyed the company, assistance and encouragement of daughter Helen Searle (nee Frith), herself a world-class thrower, and former Commonwealth and Olympic Games long jump and pentathlon competitor.

STRONGMEN AND STRONGWOMEN

Big Grant Edwards launched his best-selling autobiography *The Strong Man* in August 2019 a week before he featured in a *Canberra Times* story that told of his retirement as a Commander in the Australian Federal Police after serving 34 years in a variety of postings in Australia and overseas. Because many deployments exposed him to stressful and life-threatening situations, Grant suffered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

He was an outstanding performer at the 2007 World Law Enforcement Games in Canada, the inaugural AMG in Adelaide and AMA Winter Throwing Championships in Canberra where he won all throwing events. It was no surprise because Grant had a background in numerous sports including rugby league, athletics and a former scholarship gridiron player at the University of Hawaii as well as being recognized as one of the world's strongest men.

In the 1990s Grant participated in a variety of Highland Games strong man contests performing spectacular exhibitions of strength, such as pulling semi-trailers, jumbo jets, Manly Ferries and heavy steam locomotives. Grant made a comeback to these type of challenges in 2017 by hauling a heavy-duty police rescue vehicle along the edge of Lake Burley Griffin as part of an AFP promotion drawing attention to PTSD.

Apart from Grant, many other notable strong men have participated in local veterans/masters athletics competitions. Some who have enjoyed considerable success in throwing events over a number of years include Commonwealth Games representatives Stuart Gyngell (NSW) and Hans Lotz (Vic), dual Olympian Warwick Selvey (Qld) and Wim Van Weenan (Vic), who became an M75 in 2007 and could still toss the heavy weight further than most younger throwers. There have also been many prominent Australian female veteran/masters athletes, especially amongst the throwers, who were capable of performing impressive feats of strength. A few who would certainly qualify being referred to as strong women include Heather Doherty (Qld), World Record holder for both the W50 and W55 hammer throw Marja-Leena Parviainen

(NSW), Rome and Tokyo Olympian Helen Searle (Qld), Chris Schultz (Vic) and Commonwealth and Olympic representative Karyne Di Marco (NSW).

STAN PERKINS ELECTED WMA PRESIDENT

The 2009 WMA General Assembly, held in conjunction with the World Championships in Lahti, Finland, elected Stan Perkins as WMA President. Stan brought many years of experience to this powerful position as leader of World Masters Athletics. He had been a participating athlete and an official and administrator for a long time. His resume of involvement in Veterans/Masters Athletics since 1981 was an impressive document - listing such achievements as being a Life Member of QMA, a member of the its executive for several years including being president and secretary, a member of the Australian delegation at all WAVA/WMA General Assemblies since 1987, leader of Oceania for three years and its delegate to WMA, chair of the WMA Doping and Medical Committee, and had been employed with the Queensland Events Corporation from 1993 to 2003.

AMA HALL of FAME

In 2006, AMA announced its intention to establish a Hall of Fame, and at the 2009 Championship Awards Evening in Adelaide, the highlight of the evening was the announcement of the inaugural inductees into the AMA Hall of Fame - Alan Bradford (Qld), Ann Cooper (SA) and John Gilmour (WA).

INAUGURAL 'AMA HALL of FAME' INDUCTEES:

ALAN BRADFORD a champion middle-distance runner who had set several World and many Australian Records in the 800, 1500m and steeplechase, as well as winning numerous Australian and World titles.

ANN COOPER had been a member of the gold medal winning 4x100yards relay team at the 1950 Empire Games in Auckland. Many years later, she enjoyed considerable national and international success as a sprinter and held numerous ARs for W70 and W75 sprints.

JOHN GILMOUR was a champion runner in his youth, but returned home a physical wreck after suffering three years as a POW. At 50 years-of-age, he began competing again and went on to set numerous WRs, and won more than 60 international races. In 1975 John was WA Sportsman of the Year, and the following year awarded the Order of Australia.

SUBSEQUENT 'HALL of FAME' MEMBERS:

2010 REG AUSTIN at the time of the WAVA Championships in Brisbane 2001 Reg was one of only a few who had participated in all World Championships to that time. In fact, the 2001 championships were the first at which Reg did not win a gold medal in the sprints.

2010 SHIRLEY BRASHER participated with much success as a distance runner and racewalker, and later also as a jumper and thrower in all Australian, Oceania and World Championships for more than a quarter-of-a-century.

2013 PETER CROMBIE has been one of our best male sprinters since 1987 - winning more titles and medals than any other Australian sprinter at national and World Championships. In 2010 he was recognised by IAAF as World Masters Athlete of the Year.

2013 JACK PENNINGTON did more than anybody to spread the word of Veterans Athletics within Australia as well as being very influential abroad. He was instrumental in establishing our sport and in the founding of AAVAC and both the NSW and ACT clubs.

2015 DAVID CARR had been an Australian and World middle-distance and steeplechase champion as well as an energetic administrator for many decades. When he became an M90 he continued in this vein constantly rewriting the WR in his favourite events.

2015 HEATHER CARR was our greatest female racewalker for more than two decades; winning many medals and setting Australian and WRs every time she moved up to an older age group. Heather is now also a world-class steeplechaser.

2015 HEATHER DOHERTY through her many years of protesting and her own performances as a champion thrower, can be credited for the recognition of women athletes in our sport. Heather was not only a very good athlete she was also a long-serving administrator.

2015 WAL SHEPPARD was one of the “Founding Fathers” of veterans’ athletics both in Australia and abroad. He was part of the small group responsible for the historic 1972 Australian Veterans’ tour to Europe. Wal was a world-class middle-distance runner.

2016 MARG ALLISON has been outstanding in sprints, middle-distances, steeple, hurdles, jumps and of course pentathlon for more than 40 years. She was our flag bearer at the Opening Ceremony of the 1995 nationals in Townsville and the 1996 World Championships.

2016 LYN VENTRIS regularly participated in the racewalks in both open and Masters Athletics in which she set a numerous state, Australian and WRs from 1500m on the track to 20km on the road.

2017 ANDREW JAMIESON was a good junior racewalker but gave the sport away for many years while working as a doctor. He returned to the sport in 1997 as an M50 and went on to set many records. In 2016 he was WMA Male Athlete of the Year.

2018 LAVINIA PETRIE was a founding member of Victorian Masters, who excelled as a champion distance runner winning numerous world titles and records on the track and cross-country in events ranging from 800m to 100km. In 2018 she was awarded an OAM.

2018 WILMA PERKINS was an active and talented athlete and administrator with QMA for more than 30 years. Wilma was a world-class competitor in an amazing variety of events including sprints, jumps, hurdles, throws and of course pentathlons.

2018 STAN PERKINS management skills were valued by athletes and officials throughout Australia and around the world. He served as secretary and president of QMA, AMA and Oceania and was president of World Masters Athletics from 2009 to 2018.

2019 LYNNE SCHICKERT contributed 40 years of service to athletics at local, national and international levels as a competitor, official and administrator. She was president, vice president and Life Member of WA AMA president and a vice president of WMA.

2019 MARY THOMAS commenced her athletics career at the age of 14. Mary went on to successfully compete, especially throwing the javelin, at every state, national and world championships since making her debut as veteran athlete in 1976.

2020 BOB SCHICKERT has over 40 years' experience as a competitive runner and administrator in local, regional and international Masters Athletics. He is a Life Member of MAWA and was a recipient of the Australian Sports Medal in 2000.

2020 ROYCE FOLEY was inducted posthumously for his contribution as a champion thrower, innovator, athletics statistician and coach. In the 1970's he was an instigator of the throws' pentathlon as well as developing age-graded tables for all throwing disciplines.

2022 FRED O'CONNOR inducted posthumously, was a supreme multi-event athlete in his youth. Fred joined the NSWVAC in his fifties and went on to excel in sprints, hurdles, jumps and decathlon. He won 5 gold, 4 silver and 5 bronze medals at WMA Championships.

2022 GEORGE WHITE was introduced to racewalking at the 1987 World Championships in Melbourne and has now won over 40 Australian and 5 World titles. Since joining SA masters in 1990 George has served the club as president, secretary, registrar and statistician.

2023 JANICE BANENS wanted to compete at the 1987 World Championships in Melbourne so asked Royce Foley to teach her how to throw the hammer. So successful was it, that Jan has gone on to win many medals in the throws at 14 World Championships.

2023 MARIE KAY dominated women's Masters Athletics from 1994 until retiring in 2016. Marie set a multitude of records and won many titles in sprints, hurdles, jumps and multis, at all levels in indoor and outdoor championships. In 2000 she was IAAF World Masters Female Athlete of the Year.



AUSTRALIAN MASTERS ATHLETICS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

1973 Melbourne	1999 Canberra
1974 Sydney	2000 Hobart
1975 Adelaide	2001 Sydney
1976 Brisbane	2002 Adelaide
1977 Perth	2003 Perth
1978 Melbourne	2004 Melbourne
1979 Sydney	2005 Brisbane
1980 Adelaide	2006 Canberra
1981 Brisbane	2007 Hobart
1982 Perth	2008 Sydney
1983 Melbourne	2009 Adelaide
1984 Canberra	2010 Perth
1985 Hobart	2011 Brisbane
1986 Adelaide	2012 Melbourne
1987 Sydney	2013 Canberra
1988 Brisbane	2014 Hobart
1989 Perth	2015 Sydney
1990 Melbourne	2016 Adelaide
1991 Canberra	2017 Darwin
1992 Hobart	2018 Perth
1993 Adelaide	2019 Melbourne
1994 Sydney	2020 - Cancelled due to COVID
1995 Townsville	2021 - Cancelled due to COVID
1996 Perth	2022 Brisbane
1997 Melbourne	2023 Sydney
1998 Brisbane	2024 Hobart

1971-72
Leaders in the formation of first State Veterans (Masters) Associations



Logan Irwin (NSW)
Convened meeting on 21 April 1971 to establish Warrimun Veteran AC. Was Secretary & the heart and soul of NSW association over many years



Al Dignance (SA)
Driving force in formation of SA Veteran AAC on 14 April 1971 at a meeting held in his house. Inaugural President



Wal Sheppard (Vic)
Influential as runner, writer and lobbyist. Encouraged SA to hold first meeting. Active in creation of Vic Veterans AAC on 24 Jan 1972

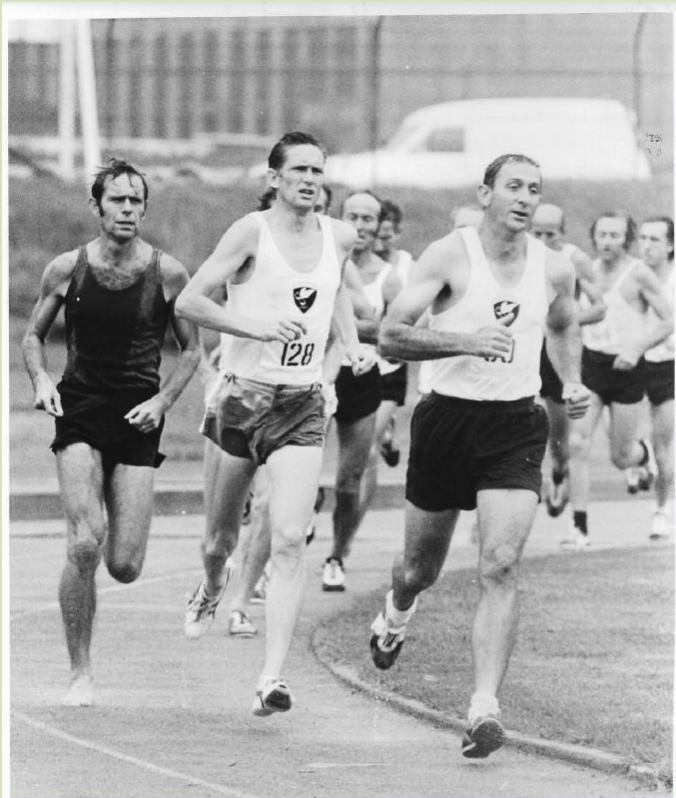
Photos from cover of 1979 Nationals program

1973 Melbourne

3000m Walk - Mixed ages
Vic Townsend (NSW) M50 1st



Photo supplied by Logan Irwin



1974 Sydney

10,000m Mixed ages
1st lap

front runners: Ken Mitchell, Jim Beisty
(#128), Bill Hunter

visible following runners: Tony Visalli,
Peter Piper, Fred Devlin, Ron Witham
(all from NSW)

Race winners: Tony Vissali (M40) & the
legendary Dave Power (M45) who is
obscured behind Jim Beisty

Photo supplied by Jim Beisty



1975 Adelaide

1500m M50

Jack Pennington (ACT)
3rd

Pioneer advocate for older athletes

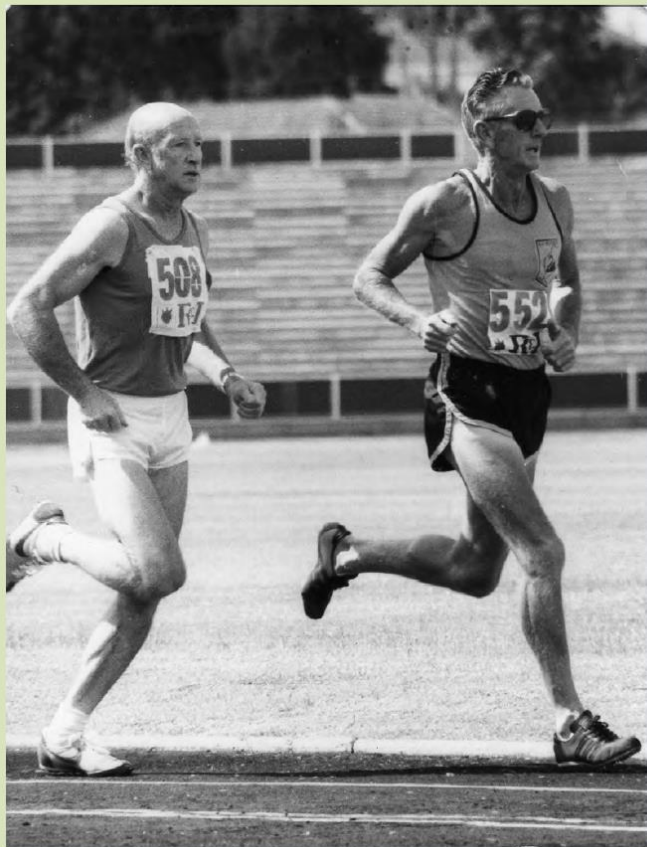
Photo supplied by Mike Hall



1976 Brisbane

NSW Sprinters:
Nev Fletcher (M40)
[1st 100m, 200m] &
John McKenney (M45)
[3rd 100m, 200m]

Photo supplied by Brian Sharpe



1977 Perth

1500m mixed age men

Wal Sheppard (Vic) [winner M50]
following
John Gilmour (WA) [winner M55]

Photo from AMA archives

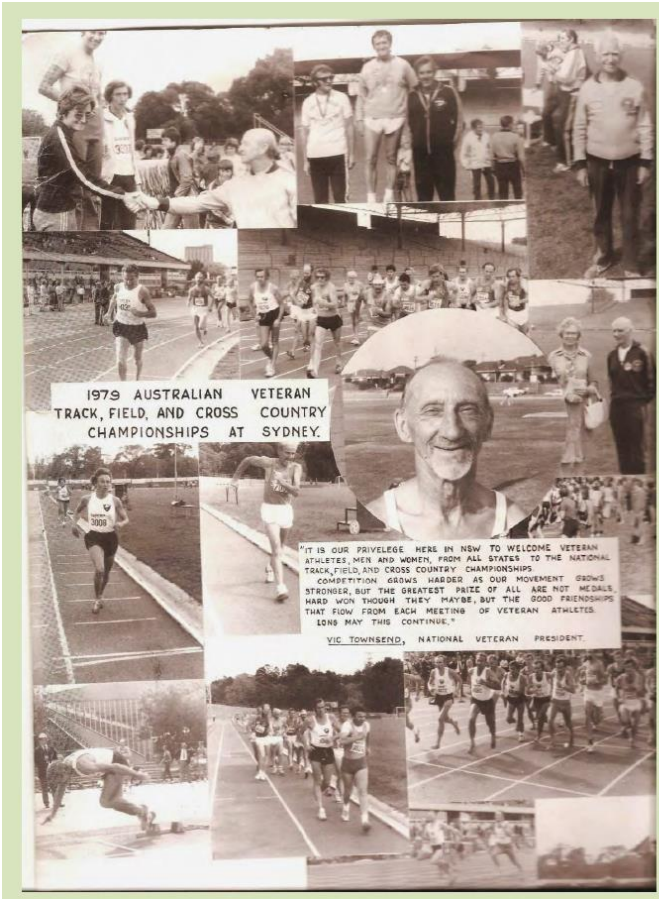
1978 Melbourne

800m M45

Bill Grady (Qld) [eventual 1st] leads Brian Sharpe (NSW) [3rd] and K. Lodge (Vic) [2nd]



Photo supplied by Brian Sharpe



1979 Sydney

Program front cover

[See next slide for persons on the cover who influenced the creation of Masters athletics in Australia]

Photo supplied by Mary Thomas

1979 Sydney

1500m M45

G. Day (Qld) [eventual 3rd] leading Ron Young (Vic) and World Record Holder Tom Roberts (Vic) [1st] Brian Sharpe (NSW) [2nd] Alex Hutt (NSW) & R Sahnd (WA)



Photo supplied by Brian Sharpe



1980 Adelaide

1500m W40

Medallists

- 1st Sue Beisty (NSW)
2nd Margaret Thunig (SA)
3rd Glenda Humphreys (Vic)

Photo supplied by Jim Beisty



1981 Brisbane

800m M40

- Alan Bradford (Qld)
1st

Photo supplied by Mike Hall



1982 Perth

10,000m M60

John Gilmour (WA)
1st

Photo supplied by Mike Hall



1983 Melbourne

10,000m M50

Jim Seymon (Vic)
1st

Photo supplied by Mike Hall

1984 Canberra

5000m W45 to W70

Paula Ryan (NSW) [4510] 1st W45, Norma Ducker (NSW)[4500] 2nd W45, Jean Albury (Vic) [5000] 1st W50, Shirley Brasher (TAS) [5511] 1st W55



Photo from AMA archives



Top: **Long Jump** medallists
Noel Peters (NSW) [1st]
Peter Lambert (NSW) [2nd]
John Gates (NSW) [3rd]

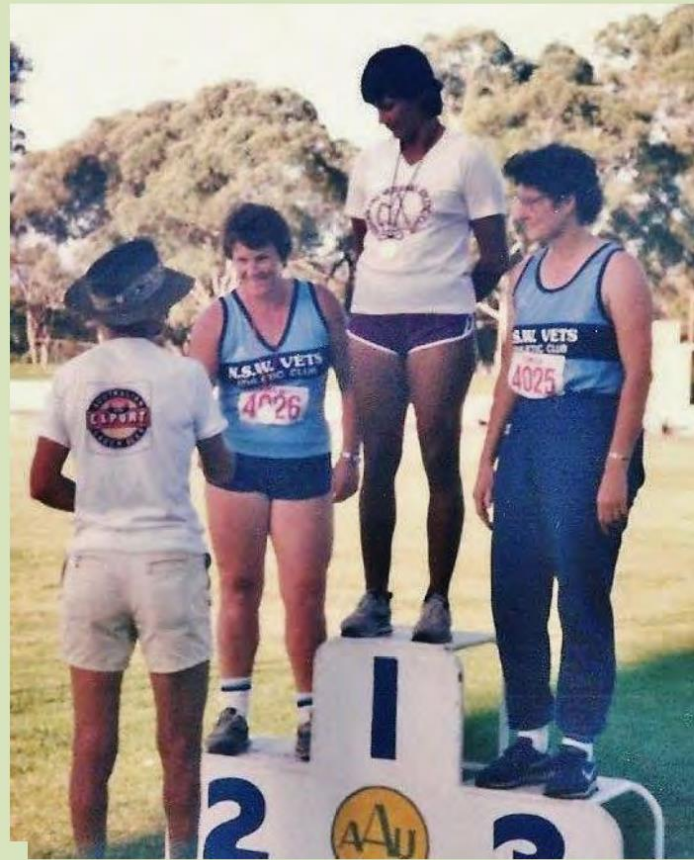
Right: **Triple Jump** medallists
Peter Lambert (NSW) [1st]
Noel Peters (NSW) [2nd]
G. Stretton (ACT) [3rd]

1985 Hobart

The Noel Peters & Peter Lambert
M35 Jumps show



Photos supplied by Brian Sharpe



1986 Adelaide

Discus W40

1st Una Lund (QLD)
2nd Mary Thomas (NSW)
3rd Val Roberts (NSW)

Photo supplied by Mary Thomas



1987 Sydney

Pole Vault M55

Jim McGrath (NSW)
1st

Photo supplied by Tim McGrath



1988 Brisbane

5000m Mixed age men

Geoff Moore (ACT) [M35] leads
Bryan Thomas (ACT), the M45
winner

Photo from AMA archives



1989 Perth

Road Walk (all ages M&W) - Men 20km - Women 10km

Lynne Schickert (WA) W45
Jim Turnbull (WA) M50

(Both came 3rd in respective age group)

Photo from AMA archives

1990 Melbourne

100m W45

Una Lund (Qld) & Noreen Parrish (NSW)



Photo supplied by Graham Ford



1991 Canberra

Hammer M45

Medallists

- 1st: R. Guy (Vic)
- 2nd: John Reynolds (Vic)
- 3rd: G. Rose (Vic)

Photo supplied by John Reynolds



1992 Hobart

Hammer Throw W55

Heather Doherty (Qld)
1st

Photo from AMA archives



1993 Adelaide

**Pentathlon W40
800m**

Eileen Hindle (WA)
1st overall

Photo supplied by Mike Hall



M30 110 METRES SPRINT HURDLES

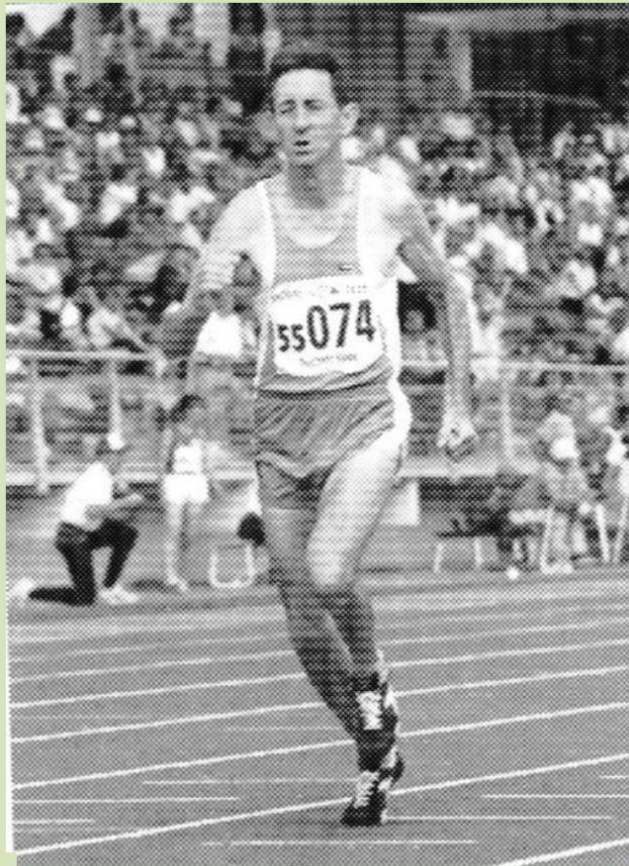
1st	T. BALDWIN	VIC	15.78
2nd	P. DOHNT	SA	15.88
3rd	GEORGE JANKOWSKI	NSW	18.80

1994 Sydney

110m Hurdles M30

Medallists

Photo supplied by George Jankowski



1995 Townsville

100m M55

Hugh Coogan (Qld)
3rd

Photo supplied by Mike Hall

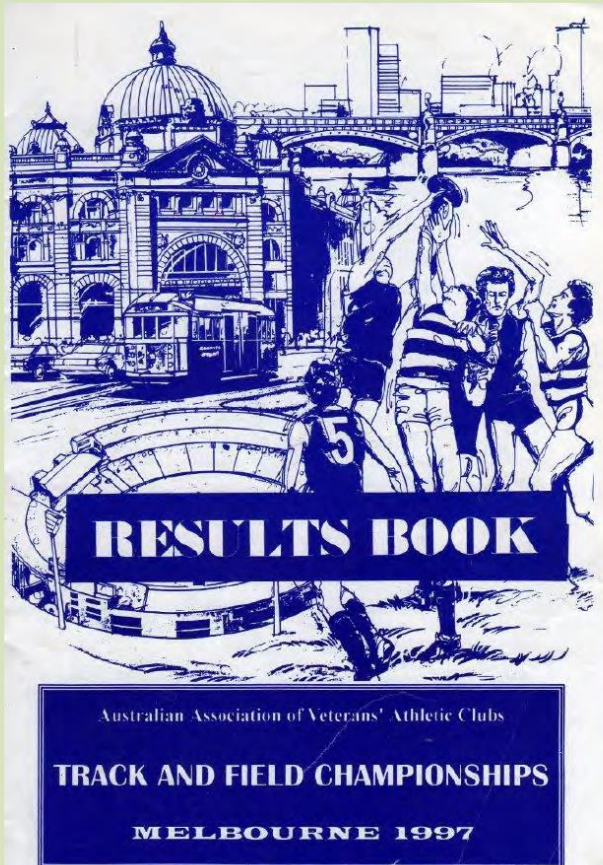
1996 Perth

10,000m M50: Team WA on the move

Ivan Brown & John Pressley lead David Roberts, Bob Schickert & Frank Smith



Photo supplied by Bob & Lynne Schickert



1997 Melbourne

Photo supplied by Bob & Lynne Schickert
and also by Russ Dickenson

1998 Brisbane

W50 Throwers

Marja-Leena Parviainen (NSW), Mary Thomas (NSW), Sharon Reynolds (Vic),
Trish Thomas (ACT), Astrid Rose (Vic)



Photo supplied by Mary Thomas

1999 Canberra

Champion of Champions Javelin Competitors

Mary Thomas (W50) [NSW], Heather Doherty (W65) [Qld], Mary Wahern (W60) [ACT], Gwen Davidson
(W70) [Vic], Jen Bourke (W55) [ACT], Jayne Hardy (W35) [ACT], Louise McPaul (W30) [NSW]
Louise McPaul (Curey) was silver medallist at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics



Photo supplied by Mary Thomas

2000 Hobart

1500m M70+

M75 & M70 winners: Lloyd Laing (NSW) [7507] & Norman Pearce (Qld) [7016]



Photo reproduced from Veteran Athlete



2001 Sydney

5000m Walk

Robyn Wales (Qld) W45

Photo supplied by Robyn Wales



2002 Adelaide

2000m Steeple W40

Donna Monahan (NSW)

Photo supplied by Mary Thomas

2003 Perth

Weight pentathlon M50 & M55 competitors & officials



Photo supplied by John Reynolds



2004 Melbourne

**Winners
Champion of Champions
(Javelin)**

Mary Thomas (NSW) [W55]
&
Bob Watson (NSW) [M60]

Photo supplied by Mary Thomas

2005 Brisbane

High Jump W45

Medallists: (left to right) Rhonda Guiney (Qld), Cristine Bridle (Vic), Jill Taylor (NSW)



Photo supplied by Jill Taylor

2006 Canberra

Weight pentathlon M60 & M65 competitors



Photo supplied by John Reynolds



2007 Hobart

1500m W35

Cristine Suffolk (NSW) wins by 0.1 sec
from Amanda Coombe (Tas)

Photo supplied by Cristine Suffolk



2008 Sydney

800m W45

Victoria Gunn (Tas)
1st

(also winner at 1500m)

Photo from AMA archives



2009 Adelaide

800m M70+

Alan Bradford (Qld) 1st M70
David Carr (WA) 1st M75

Photo from AMA archives



2010 Perth

Triple Jump W40

Kylie Strong (NSW)
1st

Photo from AMA archives



2011 Brisbane

Women's Throws Champion of Champions

Above: Hammer finalists

Jill Taylor (NSW), Sharon Gibbins (ACT),
Hilary Gatenby (Qld), Lynette Smith (NSW),
Rhondda Dundas (Vic), Val Worrall (Vic),
Lorraine Mussett (Vic)

Right: Winner Jill Taylor (NSW)





2012 Melbourne

Pole Vault W55

Dawn Hartigan (Vic)
1st

Photo supplied by Russ Dickenson



2013 Canberra

4x100m relay M120+

Christopher Brack (NSW)

Photo by Andrew Atkinson-Howatt



2014 Hobart

5000m Women
mixed age

Lavinia Petrie (Vic)
1st W70

Photo taken by Anita Welsh,
supplied by Russ Dickenson

2015 Sydney

M55+ 10,000m start



Photo taken by Matt Whitbread



2016 Adelaide

M65-89
1500m Race Walk

George White (SA) leading
Russ Dickenson (VIC) in the
M70 age group



2017 Darwin

Even the local
wildlife came out to
the Arafura Stadium
for the NT's first
hosting of the
National
Championships



2018 Perth

W45 100m

Ranell Hobson (NSW) shows her gold medal flanked by Lee-Anne Nelson (QLD) and Lisa Limonas (WA)



2019 Melbourne

W55 800m

In an outstanding performance, Sarah Chinner (SA) wins from Vicki Gunn (Tas) and Susan Howell (Vic)

2020 and 2021

Our National Championships were cancelled in these two years, due to the COVID Global Pandemic.



2022 Brisbane

M60-64 800m

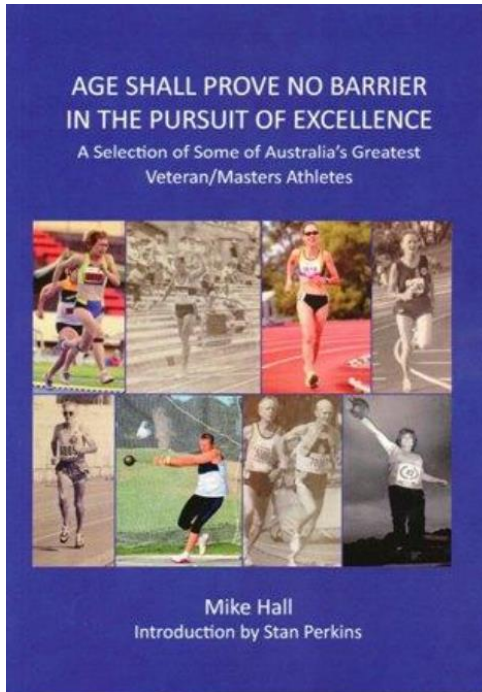
In a close finish, Mark Hepworth (Vic) takes gold from Mark Lepper (Qld) followed by Brad Sharpe (NSW) in 3rd spot.



2023 Sydney

The iconic Sydney Olympic Park Athletics Centre was the venue, and the **SYDNEY** sign became THE place for those athlete photo sessions

MORE PUBLICATIONS ON OUR AMA HISTORY:



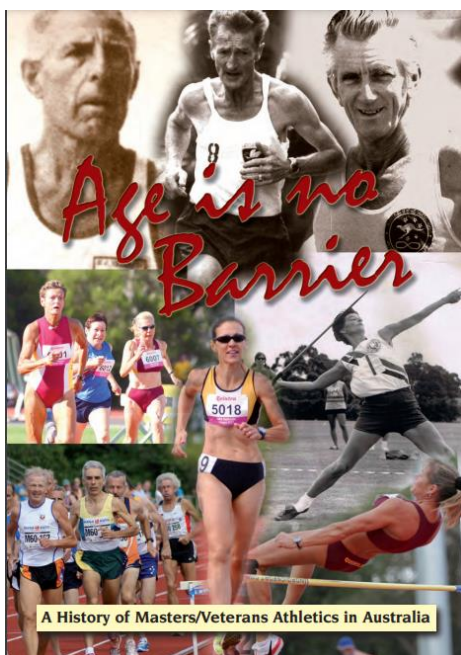
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[A History of the Veterans' Athletic Movement in Australia](#)

A Detailed Study By Gloria Seymon



[Age Is No Barrier](#) – A History of
Masters/Veteran Athletics

Bryan Thomas