

CMA / NZMA Submission Hearing Notes – Tuesday 27th January 2015

I am here representing Canterbury Masters Athletics (as President) and New Zealand Masters Athletics (as Vice-President).

I am also the Chairman of Athletics Canterbury Track & Field Committee and therefore I am fully involved & committed to the sport, both as an administrator, an official and as a competitor within the master's ranks.

Following my comments, you will hear from the Liz Keenan who is President of the Canterbury Children's Athletics Association.

Together I believe we are all united with a common goal in mind ... that is, to be able to provide athletes of ALL ages within the Canterbury region an opportunity to perform at their very best.

This is not possible for our track competitors without an all-weather track & field facility to replace what we had at QEII. Hence we are fully supportive to a change to the Nga Puna Wai Management Plan as outlined, so that a new sports hub can be built within this space.

I ask this rhetorical question "What other sport has gone back to using pre 1973 facilities?" That is what racing on grass means for us and all track athletes.

As I am here to represent Master's Athletics, I will comment about how this section of the sport within our region has been affected by the loss of QEII, in particular the loss of an all-weather track.

- There are two ways a master's aged athlete can take part in our sport.
 - By joining a club and paying a registration fee to Athletics Canterbury. This entitles them to compete throughout the year - in track & field, cross country and road events. Masters athletes within this group have almost all turned their back on track & field.
 - Of all the runners who competed in the 2014 Canterbury Road Championships or the Cross Country Championships only about 6% of those runners have raced on the track this summer.
 - Where have they gone? They prefer to run in a series of 5km road races held throughout the summer, rather than race on grass.
 - *(Quote registration numbers only if asked: 2013/2014 Registration 268 registered, 133 social members = Total 401)*

- A second group join the Canterbury & New Zealand Masters Association. This is the group that I represent here today.
- This entitles them to compete at regional, national & international Masters Track & Field events.
- Some club athletes do join both, but only if they intend to compete at any of the above events on the track.
- When Canterbury Masters last hosted the NZMA Track & Field Championships in 2010, we had a membership of 160, which included some registered club athletes.
- Local membership also goes up when hosting a national championship.
- Therefore our membership is affected by not being able to host this event, because we do not have an all-weather track.
- As at today we have only 60 members ... 62% down from 2010.
- We all need goals in life ... a reason to get up in morning and get on with the day. We have national and world class athletes within our ranks who are motivated by setting goals, such as breaking age groups records, myself included.
- Every five years you move up an age group and a whole new set of records becomes the new set of goals to aim for.
- In the season prior to the earthquake, 28 Canterbury Masters athletes broke 88 records, 41 were track records broken while competing at QEII.
- This season 3 athletes have broken 5 records! Only two while competing on the track at Rawhiti Domain.
- One other athlete has been denied a javelin record because the in-field at Rawhiti Domain is too uneven, i.e. sloping downhill greater than the allowable limit.
- For these athletes, the playing field has changed significantly by not having an all-weather track.
- It is more difficult to stay motivated ... to train hard on those cold day or when you are feeling sore ... knowing that the likelihood of achieving your goal while competing on grass is slim ... if not impossible.
- Our track athletes are now only likely to break records or simply perform at their best when they compete away from home.
- This same issue applies to all track athletes... of all ages ... within Canterbury.

These statistics speak for themselves ... no all-weather track ... for some ... less interest in the sport ... so retaining or attracting new members will be a problem. Having a new all-weather will go a long way to rectifying this issue ... again not only just for masters.

In my submission, I commented about how it made me feel, competed on QEII for the first time in the 1973. Even now whenever I put on my spike running shoes, step out onto an all-weather track in preparation for a race, the same excitement within me returns and adds to my sense of wellness ... unfortunately I run a bit slower now, but it still feels just the same ... so I am so looking forward to and can't wait until a new track is built!

Finally ... at our opening Masters track & field meeting back in October, I was explaining the submission process that we were currently going through and what was involved. I was asked by one of our members who is only 60.

“Will we see a new track in our lifetime?”

As I looked around the room, I hesitated before I replied ... I saw five members who were all about 85, ... all have been involved in athletics for many, many years

I politely replied, “Probably not for some of you!”

An uncomfortable laugh filled the room, followed by silence ...

We have another gathering planned for mid-March. On this occasion I look forward to being able to report to our members ... that we have had a positive decision from this Council and that the new sports hub project IS going ahead. So, on their behalf I ask, please change the management plan and commit to building this Sports Hub, not so much for us now, but for future generations of athletes of all ages !!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I am a happy to answer any questions you may have.